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EDITORS' NOTE

In November 2015, the publisher of “Ante Portas – Security Studies”, at the time College of Business and Entrepreneurship in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, was a host of the international scientific conference “The Ukrainian Crisis and its Significance for the International Security”. The conference was held eighteen months after the outbreak of fighting in Donbas and twenty months after the troubles in Crimea. The conference articles were published in two “Ante Portas – Security Studies” volumes – 2(5)/2015 and 1(6)/2016. I remember the Editor’s Note I wrote in the first one, especially one paragraph: The successive phases of the Ukrainian crisis confirm the collapse of the international security system that has been in place for more than two decades on the Russia-NATO and, more broadly, the Russia-West axis. The Kremlin's expansive policy and the violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity also impact the national security systems of individual NATO states, especially the Baltic states and Poland. The international balance of power in Central and Eastern Europe, formed after the collapse of the USSR, has, throughout the past few years ceased to be valid. Eight years later, these words are still relevant.

But the next stage of the Russo-Ukrainian which broke on the 24th of February 2022, has also another dimension. A few days after Russian troops invaded Ukraine and threatened Kyiv, one of the 2015 conference participants (she was a student at one of the Ukrainian universities at the time) wrote me to ask if Poland is ready to provide a refuge for her and her baby – she was deadly frightened. At that moment we all realised, that this is a very real war – not the one we used to write or speak about, not the war somewhere and someone else’s, but a war in a neighbour state, a close one, it was our war too. It is very hard to be objective in such a situation, stand aside and comment on reality as we used to do.

The articles, I am pleased to present, bring the topic of the Russo-Ukrainian War from different perspectives – neighbours of Ukraine and those, who look from a greater distance. The issue opens with three articles by Prof. Svetlana Cebotari and her colleagues, concerning the Moldovian and Georgian views on the war and its influence on security in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea Region. Other neighbours’ representatives, Hungarians, Prof. Maria Bordas and Dr János Tomolya discussed the perversity of war and mistakes made by Russian troops and command, while retired officer, Col. Crăişor C. Ioniță showed the Romanian perspective on the security changes in the region. A very interesting and complex impact of the war on the Scandinavian countries was presented by Dr Carsten Sander Christensen from Denmark. The Russo-Ukrainian War is a good example to

describe the Military Response Options in Hybrid Warfare, which were described by Slovakian military researchers Ivan Majchút and Michal Vajda. Dr Khatuna Chapichadze from Georgia is the author of an extended and very interesting commentary on the Georgian National Legion, its role in the Ukrainian front, and its significance in Georgia. The issue is supplemented by an article by Prof. Wiktor Adamus and Karolina Kowalska, not related to the subject of the war, but devoted to ecological security and biochar technology.

I hope that the articles of researchers from Denmark, Georgia, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia and Poland will be an interesting look at the sensitive problems of security in the modern world – security considered on various levels, but referring to the most important threats in the modern world.

Jakub Žak
Editor-In-Chief

I. ARTICLES

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THE ‘NATIONAL INTEREST – SECURITY’ CORRELATION: CONCEPTUAL-THEORETICAL IDENTIFICATIONS

Abstract: During the last three decades of the 20th Century more often among political leaders and within the academic community, the essence of the ‘national interest – security’ correlation is discussed. In specialized literature, the concept of ‘national interest’ is often approached in connection with the concept of ‘security’. Thus, the present article aims to highlight the main conceptual-theoretical approaches to ‘national interest’ and ‘security’. Also, this article highlights the main aspects of the existing correlation between these two phenomena: ‘national security – interest’.

Keywords: concept, national interest, security, state, international relations, correlation

Introduction

During the last three decades of the 20th Century, the high degree of complexity of relations regarding the security of geopolitical actors and their interests (in this case the states) gave rise to active theoretical debates. Thus, more and more often in the discussions of political leaders, but also within the

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academic community, conversations appear vis-à-vis the essence of the ‘national interest – security’ correlation. In specialized literature, the concept of ‘national interest’ is often approached in connection with the concept of ‘security’. For a better understanding of the existing correlation between the concept of ‘national interest’ and ‘security’, there is a need to highlight some approaches concerning these phenomena, the argumentation being focused on the attempt to highlight their main characteristics. Thus, the first concept that must be analyzed refers to that of ‘national interest’.

Conceptual-theoretical delimitations of the ‘national interest – security’ correlation

In the analysis literature, the concept of ‘national interest’ was included in circulation in 1935, in the Encyclopedia of Political Sciences edited at Oxford³. The multitude of definitions, more or less developed, more precise or more confusing, led to the outline of several approaches regarding the definition of the national interest dimension in the context of foreign policy.

The first approach, that of the objective or ‘political realism’ current is represented by H. Morgenthau, A. Wolfers, W. Hippman, H. Thompson, R. Tucher and current scholars W. Lippman, K. Thompson, H. Kissinger, W. Rostov, D. Bolles et al. According to this doctrine, the national interest is defined as:

1. an ideal and normative complex of goals,
2. a central phenomenon of international relations, perceived in terms of force,
3. a fundamental factor in identifying necessary paths through the labyrinths of international politics⁴.

Thus, in Hans Morgenthau's vision, the national interest is a ‘hard seed’, that is present in any circumstance and a shell made up of variable elements that change depending on the concrete historical circumstances. The ‘hard seed’ of national interest consists in the preservation of the political and cultural identity of a nation and are related to the assurance of national independence, the preservation of territorial integrity, internal order and balance. The reinterpretation of national interest at each stage of a state's development is inevitable due to the mobility of international relations and the change in the balance of power. Only standing on the positions of political realism is the most

³ V. Juc, T. Spinei, V. Stan, V. Andrieș, *Interesul național al Republicii Moldova*, “MOLDOSCOPIE. Probleme de analiză politică”, 2019, No. 2 (LXXXV), p. 71.

⁴ V. Saca, *Evoluția conceptului de interes național în condițiile globalizării*, “Interacțiuni în contextul globalizării. Materialele conferinței științifice integraționale din 20-21 noiembrie 2004”, Iași 2005, p. 120.

effective way to understand the interest of a state⁵. H. Morgenthau states that „the building block that helps political realism find its way in the landscape of international politics”. This is the concept of interest that is defined in terms of force. Power or force includes the whole set of phenomena that are the basis of man's control over man and are capable of maintaining it. Power and force are what distinguish politics as an independent sphere of action and knowledge, different from other spheres such as economics, and aesthetics. The force factor, dimensioned by Morgenthau in military, industrial, demographic, and political aspects, determines the interests of states in the international arena and imposes itself as the final arbiter in the struggle between powers. Through the prism of this factor, in Morgenthau's opinion, the term ‘national interest’ is accompanied by numerous specifications: vital, main and secondary, stable and changing, common and specific, identical and conflicting. At the same time, the author considers it necessary to conform the notion of interest to the resources available to society, to achievable goals. From here he ranks the interests and goals of the American foreign policy as a) the interest that must be achieved at any cost; b) the interest that is realized under favourable conditions; c) desired but achievable interests and goals⁶.

Referring to the national interest, the Russian researcher A. Pozdnyakov classifies it depending on the degree of functionality into two levels: the level of main interests and the level of specific interests. For the first level, A. Pozdnyakov includes the interests of the state's foreign policy that are related to ensuring its security and integrity in the social-economic, political, national-historical and cultural community. Also here there are included interests related to the defence of economic and political independence and the place and role of the state in the international relations system. These interests are ensured by all means: military, economic, diplomatic and ideological ones. Such interests determine the function of the state's foreign policy. As long as the state remains a socio-economic and political community, its interests remain unchanged. Depending on the changes in the international system, the concrete content of the external activity, directed towards securing the interests, also changes.

The second level, that of specific interests, includes individual interests, which have a special significance in the external relations sphere. Here the author includes the interests of foreign policy related to concrete processes and events of the national system, and in particular of international relations, conflict situations, and crises. Also here there are included the foreign policy

⁵ M. Wight, *Politica de putere*, Chişinău 1988, p. 103; S. Tămaş, *Geopolitica o abordare prospectivă*, Bucharest 1995, p. 169.

⁶ V. Saca, *Interese politice și relații politice. Dimensiuni tranzitorii*, Chişinău 2001, pp. 69-74; S. Gorceac, T. Dumitraş, I. Rusandu, *Conceptul „interes național” în geopolitică*, “Economica. Supliment”, Chişinău 1997, p. 24; H. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York 1955, pp. 3-12.

interests caused by the external economic and commercial relations of the states, relations in the field of mutual aid in the sphere of cultural, scientific and other collaboration. The specific interests depend on the main ones and are limited by them; at the same time, they are partially autonomous and determine the content of the political activity functionality of the state in certain directions and in practical actions⁷. The boundary between main and specific interests is conventional and mobile. In concrete situations, specific interests can become the main ones.

Another approach, that of the 'subjectivist' current (R. Snuyder, E. Furnes, N. Forward) considers the national interest a phenomenon of international relations, whose main bearer is the narrow group of political leaders and officials, who are in power, that is, those who make political decisions. These scholars interpret the national interest through the prism of certain criteria, namely: 1) maintaining 'national integrity'; 2) ensuring 'national security'; 3) preserving the 'national role'; 4) of precedent as a model for the future; 5) maintaining 'reputation'; 6) of the 'international standard'. These criteria produced a special influence on political dimensions, in general, and on the 'national interest' concept in particular⁸.

Researching the phenomenon of national interest, A. Wolfers has a predisposition towards the concept of 'national goals'. He describes the interdependence of state interests and individual interests through the relation of 'direct' or 'indirect' national goals. By 'direct' national goals he means ensuring national security and independence. These goals can be important for individuals only in the case of their identity with their national state⁹. For J. Rosenau, the national interest cannot serve as an analytical tool. According to him, it is impossible to fully understand the nature of the nation. Therefore, he considers well-defined criteria for determining the national interest, and the causes would be the following: the undefined nature of the nation and the difficulties in determining whose interests it includes; the impossibility of finding criteria to determine the existence of interests and tracking their presence in the independent manifestations of politics; lack of a procedure for accumulating interests as soon as they are identified¹⁰.

G. Modelski has a completely different conception of national interests. According to Modelski, national interests have some requirements regarding the behaviour of other states, and the main role in expressing community interests and transforming them into policy goals belongs to the political leader.

⁷ S. Pozdnyakov, *Vneshnepoliticheskaya deyatel'nost' i mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya*, Moscow 1986, pp. 45-49; S. Mitrokhin, *Natsional'nyy interes kak teoreticheskaya problema*, "POLIS", 1997, No. 1,

⁸ V. Saca, *Evoluția conceptului...*, pp. 120-121.

⁹ V. Saca, *Interese politice...*, pp. 73-74.

¹⁰ I. Rosenau, *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy*, New York 1971, pp. 243-244.

Modelski considers the term 'national interest' scientifically unfounded. He emphasizes that the interests expressed by the politician are not the interests of the nation, nor of the state, but of the community. The state is the necessary condition for the existence of a politician, it provides him with the means to capitalize on his goals. The limits of the community are at the same time narrower and wider than the borders of the state: they are narrower because the politician does not express the interests of all social groups and citizens of the country. They are broader because not expressing the interests of all social groups and citizens of his state, the politician embodies the interests of other states, allies or friends, other groups or individuals, including those from non-allied states. According to the American analyst, there are three types of interests that the politician must take into account:

1. the requirements of the community, i.e. interests resulting from the capitalization of goals from the past by politicians;
2. the requirements of the temporary collaborators, i.e. the interests related to the capitalization of current goals;
3. the requirements of enemies or adversaries, i.e. the interests that are ignored in the name of future goals.

Therefore, in the process of defining the interest, the politician takes into account all the requirements related to his policy. He can make decisions or neglect certain interests, but he cannot ignore the consequences of this neglect for his policy and, emerging from the various interests, the politician forms the goals of his foreign policy (he transforms the interests of his community into foreign policy goals)¹¹.

For M. Wight, the vital interests of a state are what he believes they are and not what another power says they should be. He correlates vital interest with honour in the international relations system. In turn, the idea of honour is closely related to the idea of prestige, which is one of the most important elements of international politics. Honour is the halo around interests, and prestige is the halo around power¹². Unlike M. Wight, S. Brucan states that „national interest includes the desires that are the fundamental stimuli of a nation's activity in international politics, and its content can be found more easily by studying the social and national relations that generated these desires”¹³.

The changes in the territory of the USSR since the end of the 1990s have contributed to changing the views on the national interest of the newly emerging states. In such conditions, the concept of 'national interest' is defined

¹¹ G. A. Modelsky, *Theory of Foreign Policy*, London 1962, p. 8-20; Saca V. *Evoluția conceptului...*, p. 121.

¹² M. Wight, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

¹³ S. Brucan, *Dialectica politicii Mondiale*, Bucharest 1997, p. 133.

not only by the value content but also by the factor of pragmatism, of the state's ability to propose and achieve certain goals. Currently, in the specialized literature, we are looking for new positions in the approach to the national interest, the main of which are those with a national-conservative and national-liberal character. For the followers of the first position (D. Rogozin), the 'national interest' is identical to the 'state interest'. They examine the state as the main factor expressing national interests. The national-liberal position is distinguished by a strict terminological delimitation of the categories 'national interest' and 'state interest'. The followers of this current (E. Sorokin) argue that civil society will become the subject of national interests, to which the right regarding the formation and formulation of these interests must belong¹⁴. The multitude of definitions, more or less complete, more or less precise or confusing, allow us to make the main differences, among them we emphasize:

1. In some definitions, national interests are considered to be the fundamental objective and the last determinant that guides the political decision-makers of a state, exclusively in the implementation of foreign policy. Others note the mutual or determining influence between national interests and domestic policy.
2. Other definitions approach national interests as distinct elements and others only as component and constitutive parts of a highly generalized concept of those elements that constitute the most vital needs¹⁵.

These interpretations, taken as a whole, although they are different, complement each other, and allow us to conceive interest in a broad sense as a fundamental sociological and political notion.

Currently, the concept of interest, including national interest, takes on new meanings, generated by integrative and disintegrative processes that take place on the European continent. If in the conditions of Western Europe, this concept is considered somewhat of an obstacle to integration, then in Eastern Europe it is imposed on the foreground, reflecting the tendencies of the states here to consolidate their identity of interest, to find themselves even in spite of disintegrations¹⁶. Therefore, in our view, a real national interest and an effective foreign policy become possible when the state and civil society complement each other.

¹⁴ I. Yetinger, *Gosudarstvennyye, natsional'nyye i klasovyye interesy vo vneshney politike i mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniyakh*, "Mezhdunarodnaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya", 1995, No 2; B. Mezhujev, *Ponyatiye «natsional'nyy interes» v rossiyskoy obshchestvenno. Politicheskoy mysli*, "POLIS" 1997, No. 1.

¹⁵ I. Pîntea, *Identitatea pericolelor, existente și probabilă pentru interesele naționale de bază ale Moldovei*, Chișinău 2001, p. 33.

¹⁶ S. Cebotari, V. Saca, I. Coropcean, *Politica externă a Republicii Moldova în contextul proceselor integraționiste*, Chișinău 2008, pp.18-19.

In the specialized literature, a multitude of approaches has been imposed with reference to the given term. The concept of 'security' represents a multidimensional term, which refers not only to political and military aspects, but also to economic, social, cultural, ecological, and even demographic ones. Specialists tried to find a clear, precise and comprehensive formulation of the security concept, most of the internationally accepted definitions highlight different aspects of security, such as national values, duration and intensity of threats, lack of war, acceptable way of life, etc. According to the definition given in the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian language, security represents "the state of being safe from any danger". Also, by definition, security is "the feeling of confidence and peace of mind that the absence of any danger gives one". According to J. Balazj international security is "fundamentally determined by the internal and external security of different social systems, by the extent to which, in general, the identity of the system depends on external circumstances". A new definition with reference to the security concept is introduced in the scientific circuit in 1952 by A. Wolfers, according to which "security measures the absence of threats to acquired values, and in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked"¹⁷. A framing of the concerns of Security Studies in the area of international military relations is carried out in 1988 by J. Nye and S. Lynn-Jones according to which they are general problems (the causes of war and alliances, political orientations, the presence of military or other threats, faced by certain countries). The field includes fundamental theoretical research into the causes of conflict and war in the international system, the dynamics and outcomes of conflict, the nature and perception of threats, and efforts to "ameliorate and resolve conflicts caused by such threats"¹⁸. In specialized literature, the terms peace and security are often used in a slightly different manner. Thus, in the text of the United Nations Charter, both terms are treated together. However, their meanings differ. Peace refers to the absence of armed conflict, while security refers to the absence of threats¹⁹. Security is becoming a concern of all states, and tensions are a universal phenomenon of social life that occur both in the sphere of domestic affairs and in the sphere of foreign affairs²⁰. Thus, security is a complex and controversial notion. Security appears central to a political dispute when actors threaten or use force to get what they want from each other²¹. Also, security is a phenomenon that continues to be created by human intention or action. It includes all those changes between

¹⁷ E. A. Kolodziej, *Securitatea și relațiile internaționale*, Iași 2007, p. 36.

¹⁸ A. Miroiu, R. S. Ungureanu, *Manual de relații internaționale*, Iași 2006, p. 17.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p.180.

²⁰ H. Morghenthau, *Politica între națiuni. Lupta pentru putere și lupta pentru pace*, Iași 2007, p. 470.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

people and agents – states, international organizations, corporations, and associations – in which actors not only pursue certain outcomes but are willing to use coercive violence and intimidation to get what they want²².

At the theoretical level, the conceptualization of the idea of security experienced a deep transformation in the period after 1989, when the term was expanded according to the changes existing in the international arena. The concept of security cannot be analyzed without taking into account the changes in perspective and the emergence of new ideas in the discipline of international relations and in their practice. Security is the condition or state in which an entity is certain of its survival. Security can be defined as the study of threats, use and control of military force. In the fundamental sense of the term 'security', it denotes a situation in which a state does not face threats (or does not perceive them). Thus, the notion of security was extended to a systemic level, indicating the presence of a non-conflictual situation between states, especially between the great powers²³. The supporters of expanding the scope of defining security are the representatives of the Copenhagen School: B. Buzan, O. Waever and J. de Wilde. They define security according to the perception of the threat to the existence of a reference object. It can be part of a multitude that includes non-state actors, abstract principles and even nature. The source of the threat can be identified as aggressive states, negative social trends or cultural diversity. In the Copenhagen School's view, threats can manifest in different fields: political, military, economic, demographic, cultural, ecological, etc. Thus, the issue of security becomes an area of research for B. Buzan who observes the ambiguity of the term security. In his opinion, security can be located at the individual, state and systemic levels and identifies both a reason for the behaviour and a possible universal condition. Once expanded into this broader framework, the ambiguity that plagues its use at the national level becomes a quality rather than a disadvantage. The idea of security encompasses both the dynamics of conflict and harmony or rather the breadth of the sphere covered makes it necessary when applied to the international system as a whole. According to B. Buzan, international security is defined according to three main elements. Thus, B. Buzan first posits that states must be considered objects of reference, given the fact that they constitute the framework of order and the highest form of government. Secondly, the systemic conditions in which influencing states evolve, how safe they are/feel relative to each other, and what is the degree of involvement with reference to ensuring international security. The security of each state, in Buzan's opinion, will be a problem that can only be considered in relation to that of other states. Thirdly, security is not only a relational problem but also one that can only

²² E. A. Kolodziej, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²³ A. Miroiu, R. S. Ungureanu, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

know temporary solutions. The very anarchic nature of the environment in which states evolve defines the competitive nature of the relations between them²⁴.

The Cold War privileged the realistic approach to security issues. From this perspective, the states, the reference objects taken into consideration must ensure the preservation of cardinal values, the first of which is survival, and the military tool is the one called to fulfil this task. Until now, no methodology has been published to analyze the concept of security, but its definition is an important topic that can also be found in the official documents of some international organizations. Security becomes a concern of all states, and tensions are a universal phenomenon of social life that affects both the sphere of internal affairs and the sphere of foreign affairs²⁵. Thus, security is a complex and controversial notion. Security emerges as a central feature of a political dispute when actors threaten or use force to get what they want from each other²⁶. Also, security is a phenomenon that continues to be created by human intention or action. It includes all those changes between people and their agents – states, international organizations, corporations, and associations – in which actors not only pursue certain outcomes but are willing to use coercive violence and intimidation to get what they want²⁷.

Thus, in accordance with the text of the United Nations (UN) Charter²⁸, especially according to the provisions of Article 2 of Chapter I, all members must resolve their international disputes by peaceful means, in a manner in which international peace, security and justice are not endangered. All members shall refrain, in their international relations, from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or in any other manner contrary to the purposes of the United Nations. Nothing in this Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in issues that essentially belong to the internal jurisdiction of any state, nor should they initiate such claims of agreement based on this Charter; this principle must not prejudice the application of the imposition measures of Chapter VII. Also, according to the provisions of art. 51 of Chapter VII, nothing in the content of the Charter must prejudice the inalienable right to individual or collective self-defence in the conditions where an armed attack takes place against one of the UN members, until the Security Council takes the necessary measures for maintaining international peace and security.

In 2003, the UN General Secretary, K. Annan, organized a meeting with 16 specialists from various countries to analyze future threats to international

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

²⁵ H. Morghenthau, *Politica între națiuni...*, p. 470.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p.36.

²⁷ E. A. Kolodziej, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²⁸ *United Nations Charter*, <<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>> (20.07.2022).

peace and security. The debates also concerned the definition of the security concept. UN experts have proposed a definition of security that includes two categories of risks to it: 'hard' type, such as international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, intra- and interstate conflicts, and 'soft' type, such as extreme poverty, lack of culture, unemployment, contagious diseases, environmental degradation, religious extremism, violation of human rights, etc. The conceptual definition of the security term is also given in the statute of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Thus, in accordance with the provisions of art. 2 of the Statute, "the Parties will contribute to the continuous development of international relations of peace and friendship by consolidating free institutions, by facilitating a better understanding of the principles on which these institutions are founded and by promoting the conditions of ensuring stability and well-being. They will seek to eliminate conflicts from their international economic policies and will encourage bilateral or multilateral economic collaboration"²⁹.

In this context, the provisions of art. 3 are also included, according to which, in order to more effectively fulfil the objectives of the Treaty, the Parties, separately or together, through self-help and continuous mutual support, will maintain and develop their individual and collective resistance in the face of an armed attack. The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them, in Europe or North America, will be considered an attack against all of them and, accordingly, agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in the exercise of the right to individual or collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, shall support the Party or Parties attacked by immediately carrying out, individually or jointly with the other Parties, any action it deems necessary, including the use the armed forces, for restoring and maintaining the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures adopted as a result thereof shall be immediately reported to the Security Council. "These measures will cease after the Security Council adopts the necessary measures to restore and maintain international peace and security". Also, according to art. 8, each Party declares that none of the international obligations, in force at a given time between it and any of the other Parties or a third state, is in contradiction with the provisions of this Treaty and undertakes not to assume any international obligation in conflict with this Treaty. Attempts to define the concept of security were also made during the June 2004 NATO summit in Istanbul. Thus, within the Istanbul Summit, the concept of security was analyzed through the prism of the organization's following objectives: the creation of a 'multilateral bridge' across the Atlantic, collective defence, the application of the indivisibility of

²⁹ *The North Atlantic Treaty*, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm> (20.07.2022).

allied security, countering threats to the allies' territory, whatever their source may be³⁰.

As an important strategic partner of NATO, the European Union (EU) tried to fulfil the objectives of the Maastricht Treaty through its own security strategy. Thus, according to the provisions of the European Security Strategy, which has been launched at the end of 2003, the EU has as its starting point the premise which claims that the response to risks, dangers and threats to European security must be adapted to each type of them, through multiple strategies and a comprehensive approach. The Solana Strategy, as this document is also called, identifies some threats and vulnerabilities that derive from political, economic, demographic, ecological, scientific and technological developments. The threats identified by the Strategy are: international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failed states, organized crime, etc. Among the vulnerabilities highlighted by the Strategy are: Europe's energy dependence, and global warming, but also risks and dangers such as poverty. The Joint Declaration for the Integration of European Defense (2004) reinforces the European concept of security and also emphasizes the role of cooperation and consensus in achieving and preserving security (EU Security Strategy)³¹.

The conceptualization of the security term is also defined in the statute of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Thus, in the field of security, the OSCE aims to prevent conflicts and manage crises; control arms and disarmament; increase trust and security; cooperate in economic, cultural, humanitarian and ecological fields, to conceptualize a security model in its area of responsibility. The OSCE Security Concept is defined in the Charter for European Security according to which each participating state has an equal right to security. Also, the OSCE Security Concept reaffirms the inalienable right of each participating state and all participating countries to freedom of choice of their own security arrangements, including alliance treaties, as they are issued. According to the provisions of the Concept, each state has the right to neutrality. Each participating state shall respect the rights of all others in these respects. They will not strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other states. The states will build their relations in accordance with the concept of common and comprehensive security, guided by the equal partnership, solidarity and transparency. The security of each participating state is inseparably linked to the security of the other ones. It is important to address the human, economic, political and military dimensions of

³⁰ E. Nistor, *Teorii despre crize și comunicare și comunicarea de criză*, <<https://ru.scribd.com/doc/38174766/Comunicare-Si-Negociere-in-Afaceri-Ionel-Nistor>> (20.07.2022).

³¹ Council of the European Union, *European security strategy. A secure Europe in a better world*, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30823/qc7809568enc.pdf>> (20.07.2022).

security as a whole. Thus, in order to maintain peace, the military intervention of strong nation-states is no longer sufficient, but a network of regional collective security arrangements such as the UN, NATO, EU and OSCE is needed.

The security problems that the states have proposed to solve have determined the increase in the number and volume of international bodies. As a result of the activity of these international bodies, the dangers and threats have decreased, however, armed conflicts have not been eradicated. The main areas of instability were included in the stabilization processes, but the results were not always those intended. The expansion of NATO's defence and security system was evident, by welcoming new members, as well as the European Union's efforts to develop a model for managing security dynamics in Europe³².

Conclusions

Returning to the issue of the 'national interest – security' correlation, it should be noted that no interest can be achieved outside and without the involvement of states, which have certain interests, and apart from sovereignty, one of the main interests is that of ensuring national security, whether regional and last but not least, international security. Thus, from the previously stated assertion, we can advance the following conclusion: there is a direct correlation between the concept of 'national interest' and that of 'security'. Each state has certain interests, and one of the main interests of the state is that of ensuring its own security. Based on these reasonings, we can mention that between the phenomenon of 'national interest' and that of 'security' there is a relationship of complementarity, each phenomenon mutually complementing the other. Thus, security becomes a component part of each state's interest and, at the same time, security becomes an environment for realizing the state's interests in the international arena.

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³² C. Moștoflei, P. Dușu, A. Sarcinschi, *Studii de Securitate și Apărare*, Bucharest 2005, pp.15-16.

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THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR. CAUSES OF EMERGENCE

Abstract: *The Russian-Ukrainian war is not just a regional war. The war marks a rupture in relations between Russia and the West, a war that will have profound repercussions for Europe and the world. The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation tends to become the most important military conflict since the end of World War II. Thus, the actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine become a topic of discussion not only in the chancelleries and in the speeches of Western leaders but also constitute a topic worthy of consideration for the academic community. This article aims to highlight the causes of the emergence of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The article will highlight the actions taken by the Russian Federation in Ukraine over three decades.*

Keywords: *USA, Russian Federation, Ukraine, EU, NATO, war, impact, causes.*

Introduction

The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation tends to become the most important military conflict since the end of World War II. The Russian-Ukrainian war is not just a regional war. The war marks a rupture in relations between Russia and the West, a war that will have profound repercussions for Europe and the world. The overall consequences of this war will be considerably greater than the 9/11 attacks. For the first time, a military conflict has the potential to involve Russia, NATO and China. Russia and NATO have

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already positioned themselves and are active parties to the conflict, but China seems undecided for the time being³.

Ukraine is an Eastern European state with long and intense connections with Russia and Central and Eastern Europe. The toponym ‘Ukraine’ was not the name of a country, but of a region, or more precisely, its geographical position was shown. ‘Ukraine’ (a word derived from the Russian ‘u kraia’ or ‘okraina’) and translates as ‘on the periphery’, ‘on the edge’ or simply ‘periphery’, the root being the word ‘krai’ – ‘margin’⁴.

Ukraine declared independence in 1991 amid the process of dissolution of the Soviet Union. On 16th July 1990, the new parliament adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, which established the principles of self-determination of the Ukrainian nation, democracy, political and economic independence, and the priority of Ukrainian law on Ukrainian territory over Soviet law. With a population of 45,6 million, Ukraine has the largest border between Russia and the EU. Until 1991, Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, and after the collapse of the former Soviet bloc, it tried, like the other former Soviet republics, to regain its identity. However, Ukraine failed to find its own way and quickly became a ‘pawn’ in the ongoing dispute between Russia and the West.

Causes of the emergence of the Russia-Ukraine war

For a better understanding of the Russia-Ukraine war, there is a need to make a brief retrospective of the causes of its emergence. Tensions between Russia and Ukraine have a history that goes back to the Middle Ages, making the relations between the two states quite complex. The roots of both countries are common and are found in the so-called Kievan Rus, which is why many experts often refer to the existence of ‘one people’. In reality, the two nations have been separated for centuries, with two languages and two cultures developing – related and yet different from each other. While Russia evolved politically into an empire, Ukraine failed to establish its own state. In the 17th Century, large areas of present-day Ukraine were part of the Tsarist Empire. After its disintegration, in 1917, Ukraine briefly became independent, until Soviet Russia regained it in 1920.

³ C. Roșu, *Rusia pierde în Ucraina puterea de negociere cu China și apartenența la spațiul european*,

<<https://adevarul.ro/blogurile-adevarul/rusia-pierde-in-ucraina-puterea-de-negociere-cu-2161963.html>> (20.11.2022).

⁴ I. Manea, *Ucraina, identitate națională și război istoriografic*,

<<https://historia.ro/sectiune/general/ucraina-identitate-nationala-si-razboi-584624.html>> (20.11.2022).

The collapse of the Soviet Union and Ukraine's independence serves as a reason for the Russia-Ukraine differences. At the meeting in Brest, Belarus, on 8th December 1991, and then at the meeting in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, on 21st December 1991, the leaders of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine formally dissolved the Soviet Union and formed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Out of a desire to maintain its influence, Moscow lays the foundations of the CIS as a tool of control over the post-Soviet space. Moscow believed that the neighbouring state, Ukraine would remain a reliable ally, including through its dependence on Russian gas. But the reality is different. While Russia and Belarus formed a close alliance, Ukraine, during its three decades of independence, had a Euro-Atlantic foreign policy (depending on the political leadership of the government). Although the Kremlin was irritated by the vector of Kyiv's foreign policy, no conflict occurred in the 1990s. Moscow seemed relaxed because the West did not intend to integrate Ukraine. In the early 1990s, Russia itself was weakened economically and was also involved in the Chechen war. By signing the so-called 'Friendship Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation' in 1997⁵, Moscow recognized Ukraine's borders, including the Crimean Peninsula, inhabited mostly by ethnic Russians.

Another aspect, which can be considered as a reason for the differences between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, refers specifically to the year 2000 when Vladimir Putin came to power in the Russian Federation. Thus, during President Putin's first term of office, the first major diplomatic crisis between Moscow and Kyiv took place. In the autumn of 2003, Russia surprisingly began building a dam, from the Russian Taman Peninsula close to the Russian island of Tuzla in the Kerch Strait. Kyiv believed that by building this dam, Russia was trying to re-establish its state borders. The conflict initially intensified but was defused after a meeting of the presidents of the two states. Although the construction of the dam was stopped, the declared bilateral friendship gained its first cracks.

In the context of the analysis of the causes of the emergence of the Russia-Ukraine war, another aspect that conditions the appearance of divergences between the two countries is the fourth electoral campaign during the presidential elections in Ukraine, in 2004, on 31st October (first round) and 21st November (second round)⁶. Russia supported the pro-Russian candidate Viktor

⁵ *Dogovor o druzhbe, sotrudnichestve i partnerstve mezhdru Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Ukrainoy (Kiyev, 31 maya 1997 g.)*, <<https://likbez.org.ua/dogovor-o-druzhbe-sotrudnichestve-i-partnerstve-mezhdru-rossiyskoy-federatsiyey-i-ukrainoy-kiev-31-maya-1997-g.html>> (20.11.2022).

⁶ *Prezidentskiye vybory v Ukraine 2004 goda (Svobodnoye Otechestvo)*, <https://althistory.fandom.com/ru/wiki/%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B7%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5_%D0%B2%D1%8B%D0%B1%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%8B_%D0%B2_%D0%A3%D0%BA%D1%>

Yanukovych. The ‘Orange Revolution’ prevented the falsification of election results, with the election being won by pro-Western politician Viktor Yushchenko. During his tenure, Russia suspended gas supplies to Ukraine twice in 2006 and 2009, the transit to the European Union being interrupted as well (Ukraine suspended Gazprom’s transit to the EU on 1st January 2009)⁷.

In the analysis of the causes of the Russian-Ukrainian divergences, the events that took place in 2008 during the NATO summit in Bucharest are of no less interest⁸. The attempt by former US President George W. Bush to integrate Ukraine and Georgia into NATO, as well as the preparation of a program to prepare for their accession to NATO, can serve as a pretext for differences between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, including Georgia. NATO member states welcomed Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations for integration into the Alliance, the Joint Statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission Meeting being signed on 4th April 2008⁹. President Putin expressed his disagreement with the possible accession of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO. At the NATO summit in Bucharest, the two states were offered the prospect of being admitted to NATO, but without setting a specific date in this regard. Moscow has made it clear that it does not fully accept Ukraine’s independence, and Germany and France have thwarted the plan of US President G. W. Bush. In order to achieve its goal of joining NATO, Ukraine has sought to move closer to the West through an association agreement with the EU. In the summer of 2013, just months before the document was signed, Moscow exerted economic pressure on Kyiv by banning imports from Ukraine¹⁰. In this context, the government of then-President Yanukovych, which had won the 2010 election, suspended the Association Agreement with the EU, which conditioned the outbreak of opposition protests in Ukraine, which resulted in Yanukovych’s flight to Russia in February 2014.

Taking advantage of the situation and the power vacuum, Moscow occupied the Crimean peninsula. Thus, the occupation of the Crimean peninsula serves as a turning point in Russia-Ukraine relations, laying the foundations of

80%D0%B0%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B5_2004_%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B0_ (%D0%A1%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B5_%D0%9E%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE)> (20.11.2022).

⁷ *Okonchaniye vtoroy gazovoy voyny: Yevropa zhdet gaz*, <<https://ria.ru/20090120/159650411.html>> (20.11.2022).

⁸ *Summit-ul NATO de la București (2-4 aprilie 2008)*, <<https://www.mae.ro/node/1574>> (20.11.2022).

⁹ *Declarație comună. Reuniunea Comisiei NATO-Ucraina la nivel de șefi de stat și de guvern Bucureți, 4 aprilie 2008*, <https://www.mae.ro/sites/default/files/file/pdf/2008_04_04_Declaratie-Nato-Ucraina.pdf> (20.11.2022).

¹⁰ A. Zanuda, *Sanktsii Rossii protiv Ukrainy: bol'she politiki, pritsel - na vybory* <<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-russian-46064882>> (20.11.2022).

the war. Thus, on 18th March 2014, by approving Federal Law no. 36 F-3, with 443 votes in favour and 1 against¹¹, the signing of the International Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea¹² on the acceptance of the Republic of Crimea as part of the Russian Federation and the formation of a new subject of Russia. According to the Treaty which entered into force on 21st March 2014, Crimea is considered a component part of the Russian Federation, in which a new subject is formed – the Republic of Crimea and the city of federal importance, Sevastopol, and the citizens living at that time on the territory of the new subjects, were recognized as citizens of the Russian Federation, having the right to decide within one month from the signing of the Treaty their citizenship. Becoming a subject of the Russian Federation, the legislation of the Russian Federation also enters into force on the territory of Crimea. The demarcation of the state borders between the Russian Federation and Ukraine takes place as a result of the occupation of the Crimean peninsula and the city of Sevastopol. The land border between Crimea and Ukraine is declared the border between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and the borders in the Black Sea and Azov waters are subject to delimitation according to the principles of international law. Another milestone in which the Russian Federation justifies its actions in Ukraine is the decision to validate the Treaty, focusing on the results of the free election of the referendum held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol on 16th March 2014, as a result of which Crimean citizens decided to join the Russian Federation with the rights of the subjects of the Russian Federation and against the provision of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Crimea and the status of Crimea as a component part of Ukraine. In this context, on 17th March 2014, President V. Putin by Presidential Decree no. 147 “On the recognition of the Republic of Crimea”¹³, taking into account the right of states to determine their fate, recognizes the Republic of Crimea as a sovereign state – subject to international law¹⁴.

At the same time, Russian paramilitary forces managed to mobilize the population in the mining area of Eastern Ukraine. Led by the Russians, the

¹¹ *Gosduma ratifitsirovala dogovor o prinyatii Kryma v sostav Rossii*, <<http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2014/03/20/gosduma>> (20.11.2022).

¹² *Dogovor mezhdru Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Respublikoy Krym o prinyatii v Rossiyskuyu Federatsiyu Respubliki Krym i obrazovanii v sostave Rossiyskoy Federatsii novykh sub"yektov*, <<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20605>> (20.11.2022).

¹³ *Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 17 marta 2014 g. No. 147 "O priznanii Respubliki Krym"*, <<http://www.garant.ru/hotlaw/federal/531533/>> (20.11.2022).

¹⁴ A. Moiseyev, *O nekotorykh mezhdunarodno-pravovykh pozitsiyakh po ukrainskomu voprosu*, “Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn”, No. 5, 2014, pp. 54-55.

Lugansk and Donbas regions proclaimed themselves ‘people’s republics’¹⁵ (as a result of the referendum on 11th May 2014, 89,7% of those who voted supported the independence of the regions), demanding The Russian Federation to accept these territories as part of it¹⁶.

The Kyiv government waited until after the May 2014 presidential election to launch a large-scale military offensive called a ‘counterterrorism intervention’. In June 2014, the newly elected Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Vladimir Putin met for the first time at events marking the 70th anniversary of the Normandy landings, through French and German mediation. This is how the so-called ‘Normandy Format’ came into being¹⁷. By its resolution of 4th February 2015, the European Parliament called on the Russian Federation to negotiate with Ukraine on the settlement of the Crimean issue. Also, taking into account point A of the European Parliament Resolution of 4th February 2015¹⁸, the Russian Federation violated international law, including the United Nations (UN) Statute¹⁹, the Helsinki Final Act²⁰ and the 1997 Treaty with Ukraine on the status and conditions of the Black Sea Fleet²¹. On 27th March 2014, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, which denies the validity of the referendum held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol²².

Attitudes towards the actions of the Russian Federation in Crimea and the city of Sevastopol were also expressed by the UN Human Rights Committee, which adopted a resolution condemning Russia’s ‘temporary occupation’ of Crimea. The UN also reiterated that the territory of the Crimean Peninsula belongs to Ukraine. For the first time, an official UN document clearly states that the Crimean peninsula is a ‘temporarily occupied territory’. In addition, the resolution calls on Russia to end abuses against the Crimean people, release illegally detained Ukrainians and allow international observers to monitor the

¹⁵ S. Smirnov, *Donetskaya narodnaya respublika provozglasila sebya suverennym gosudarstvom*, <<https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2014/05/12/dnr-provozglasila-sebya-suverennym-gosudarstvom>> (20.11.2022).

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ "Normands'kiy format": radniki zustrinut'sya u Berlini 10 lyutogo, <<https://www.dw.com/uk/normandskiy-format-radnyy-zustrinutsia-u-berlini-10-liutoho/a-60716349>> (20.11.2022).

¹⁸ *Rezolyutsiya Yevroparlamenta po Krymu. Polnyy tekst*, <<http://www.blackseanews.net/read/111972>> (20.11.2022).

¹⁹ *Carta Națiunilor Unite din 26 iunie 1945*, <http://www.anr.gov.ro/docs/legislatie/internationala/Carta_Organizatiei_Natiunilor_Unite_ONU_.pdf> (20.11.2022).

²⁰ *Helsinki Final Act*, <<http://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act>> (20.11.2022).

²¹ *ONU condamnă oficial anexarea Crimeei de către Rusia*, <<http://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/mapamond/document-onu-rusia-a-ocupat-crimeea-613424>> (20.11.2022).

²² *L'Assemblée adopte une résolution soulignant que «Le Référendum organisé en République Autonome de Crimée et la ville de Sébastopol le 16 mars 2014 n'a aucune validité»*, <<http://www.un.org/press/fr/2014/AG11493.doc.htm>> (20.11.2022).

situation. 73 countries voted in favour of the document, 76 abstained and 23 voted against it, including Russia, Syria, North Korea and Venezuela. Countries that opposed the resolution included China, Iran, India, Syria, South Africa, Serbia and North Korea. Many Latin American and African countries have abstained. The Crimean peninsula was part of Russian territory but was ceded in 1954 to Ukraine, then a Soviet republic. The region has maintained close ties with Russia all this time, thanks to the large number of ethnic Russians living here, about 70% of the population. Despite the historical circumstances used by Russia to justify the annexation, the international community says that such an act is illegal and still considers the peninsula to be Ukrainian territory. Russia's annexation of Crimea has violated many international commitments, including the provisions of the UN Charter, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Helsinki Final Act and the 1997 Treaty with Ukraine on the status and conditions of the Black Sea Fleet. Also on 15th November 2016, in New York, 193 UN member states participated in the vote on the resolution on Crimea. 73 states signed the resolution, 23 voted against it, 76 abstained, and 21 states did not vote²³.

Although the Ukrainian army managed to oust the separatists, at the end of August 2014, Russia intervened en masse with military forces, accusing Kyiv of violating the rights of the population in the self-proclaimed regions, and the Ukrainian territories in the Ilovaisk area, east of Donetsk, were conquered. Thus, the year 2014 serves as a turning point in the relations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

The war between Russia and Ukraine that we are witnessing did not break out suddenly, it stems from the conflict between the two countries, which began in February 2014. The Russia-Ukraine war focuses on the status of Crimea and Donbas. The war on the extended front ended in September with the signing of the Minsk Armistice²⁴. After nearly 16 hours of negotiations, Vladimir Putin, Petro Poroshenko, Angela Merkel and Francois Hollande agreed on an armistice, which would enter into force on 15th February 2015. The agreement provided, among other things, for the withdrawal of heavy weapons and the creation of a demilitarized zone along the front line.

Since then, there has been a real war. In early 2015, the separatists went on the offensive again, with Kyiv accusing the Russian army of supporting them, accusations rejected by Moscow. The Ukrainian soldiers suffered a defeat, this

²³ *Résolution de l'ONU sur la Crimée: pour l'Ukraine ou la Russie, telle est la question?*, <<https://www.lecourrierderussie.com/international/2016/11/ukraine-onu-crimee-resolution/>> (20.11.2022).

²⁴ *Armistiul de la Minsk. Putin anunta Acord de Pace in Ucraina. Filmul celor 16 ore de negocieri*, <<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/summit-de-pace-la-minsk-filmul-celor-12-ore-de-negocieri-cei-patru-lideri-s-ar-fi-inteles-in-proportie-de-80.html>> (20.11.2022).

time in the strategic area of the city of Debaltseve. Then, with Western mediation, the foundations of the Minsk Agreement 2 were laid, which has so far remained the foundation of peace efforts, but has not been implemented as such.

A last effort to bring these regions back under the jurisdiction of Kyiv was made in the autumn of 2019. Then it was possible to withdraw some troops from certain demarcation lines. But after the 'Normandy Format' summit in Paris in December 2019, no such meetings have taken place, with Russian President V. Putin reluctant to meet with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, arguing that he does not respect, from Russia's perspective, the provisions of the Minsk Agreement²⁵.

Some European leaders saw the Minsk Agreement as a plan to ease the current crisis. Its provisions included exchanges of prisoners, deliveries of humanitarian aid and the withdrawal of heavy weapons. However, the agreement quickly fell apart, with violations on both sides. The Minsk agreement provided for a special political status, within Ukraine, for the territories under the control of the separatists. However, the 12-point peace plan was never fully implemented and fighting has continued over the years. Moreover, the initial ceasefire in September 2014 was not respected, with fighting being resumed in early 2015. Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and former French President Francois Hollande mediated negotiations between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his then-Ukrainian counterpart Petro Poroshenko. The Minsk plan was extended from 12 to 13 points and, according to them, has become more concrete.

However, Russia has revealed that it has practically never been a party to the agreement and that it has acted only as a mediator, as have the French and German parties, and is therefore not obliged to abide by the terms of the agreement. The 13 points of the Minsk II Agreement of February 2015 focused on the following provisions:

- Immediate and comprehensive ceasefire;
- Withdrawal of weapons by both sides;
- Monitoring by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe;
- Dialogue on autonomy for Donetsk and Lugansk, in accordance with Ukrainian law, and recognition of special status by the parliament;
- Pardons, amnesty for fighters;
- Exchange of hostages, and prisoners;
- Humanitarian assistance;
- Resumption of socio-economic ties, including pensions;

²⁵ *Rusia și Ucraina: Cronica unui război nedeclarat*, <<https://www.dw.com/ro/rusia-%C5%9Fi-ucraina-cronica-unui-r%C4%83zboi-nedeclarat/a-60523314>> (20.11.2022).

- Ukraine to restore control of the state border;
- Withdrawal of foreign armed formations, military equipment, and mercenaries;
- Constitutional reform in Ukraine, including decentralization, with specific reference to the Donetsk and Lugansk regions;
- Elections in Donetsk and Lugansk;
- Intensifying the work of the Trilateral Contact Group, including representatives of Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE.

Although several exchanges of prisoners took place, involving hundreds of people captured in the fighting, the OSCE reported violations of the agreement. According to it, the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front line was never fully achieved. In addition, both sides used reconnaissance drones, despite a flight ban. Also, the full restoration of socio-economic relations, including the payment of pensions, has not been achieved. Since 2017, the separatist territories have been the subject of a complete economic blockade by Kyiv, with the exception of only humanitarian aid. In 2019, new agreements were negotiated. In December 2019, new agreements were negotiated in Paris that were stronger than the 2015 Peace Plan. For example, it was decided to continue the gradual military disengagement along the front line. However, this was done slowly, with some provisions being completely disregarded, with both sides accusing each other of failing to open two new crossing points between government-controlled territory and the separatist region²⁶.

From the beginning of the war in 2014 until the end of 2021, the situation in the area has not changed much. The outbreak of a new crisis between the two countries dates back to the end of 2021. In November 2021, tensions between Ukraine and the Russian Federation rose sharply, with Russia sending 100000 troops near the Russian-Ukrainian border. The Ukrainian government, in agreement with the US and NATO, raised alarm over a possible attack by Moscow.

Talks followed between Russia, the United States and NATO, from which Ukraine itself was effectively excluded. Russia has called for restrictions on NATO action in the region, including a ban on further enlargements, and the withdrawal of forces from countries that joined the Alliance after 1997 (a bloc of countries that includes much of Eastern Europe, from the Baltic countries to

²⁶ M. Ionescu, *Ce prevede acordul de la Minsk, despre care Putin spune că nu mai e valabil? Cele 13 puncte ce nu au fost implementate în 7 ani*, <<https://www.kanald.ro/ce-prevede-acordul-de-la-minsk-despre-care-putin-spune-ca-nu-mai-e-valabil-cele-13-puncte-ce-nu-au-fost-implementate-in-7-ani-20203721>> (20.11.2022).

in the Balkans). These demands, both for the United States and for NATO, at the risk of a failure of the diplomatic process, were considered unacceptable²⁷.

Conclusions

The year 2022 is not only the eighth anniversary of the emergence of the Russia-Ukraine War but also the year that directly marks international security. 24th February 2022 is the day when the Russian Federation attacked Ukraine, carrying out the so-called 'special operation', an operation that not only determined the fate of Ukraine but directly influenced relations between states in the international arena. The war in Ukraine is becoming a direct threat to international security, including the security of the Republic of Moldova. In this context, in order to resolve the Russia-Ukraine war as soon as possible, there is a need to unite all efforts of the international community.

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²⁷ A. Elisei, *Conflictul Rusia-Ucraina*, <https://www.academia.edu/7683899/CONFLICTUL_RUSIA_UCRAINA> (20.11.2022).

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MOLDO-EUROPEAN AND GEORGIAN-EUROPEAN RELATIONS IN THE PROCESS OF THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS

Abstract: *The annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014, as well as the events in the region, resulting in the military aggression of the Russian Federation on Ukraine on 24th February 2022, accelerated the dynamics of relations between the Republic of Moldova and Georgia with the European Union. Currently, Moldovan-European and Georgian-European relations are conditioned by the events in Ukraine, which have oriented the foreign policy vector of the Republic of Moldova and Georgia versus the EU. The submission of the application for EU accession by Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, as well as Moldova's obtaining the status of a candidate country for EU integration, tells us about the desire of the states to align with the processes of the European integration space. The objective of this article is to highlight the relations between Georgia and the EU, as well as the conditions under which the Republic of Moldova obtained the status of a candidate country for the EU. Also, this article is subject to an analysis of the conditions imposed by the EU regarding the resilience of the Republic of Moldova to European standards.*

Keywords: *European Union, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, status, candidate state, European integration.*

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Introduction

The military aggression of the Russian Federation on Ukraine on 24th February 2022, has a direct impact on the relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union (EU) and Between Georgia and EU. Although the relations between the Republic of Moldova and Georgia and the EU were dynamic, the ‘special operation’ carried out by the Russian Federation in Ukraine conditioned the acceleration of the Moldovan-European and Georgian-European political dialogue. Today, the Moldovan-European and Georgian-European relations are conditioned especially by the events in Ukraine, which have oriented the vector of the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova and Georgia versus the EU and show the state’s desire to align with the integrationist processes in the European space.

Also, lately, we are witnessing the acceleration of the foreign policy vision of the states of the Eastern Partnership associated with Trio (Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine) versus the EU, an acceleration influenced by the military aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine. Any war, especially of this intensity, which we are witnessing in Ukraine, is usually an element of political, and economic change, which also conditions changes on the dimension of security. Therefore, the war in Ukraine is an element of change for the entire relationship of the states of the Eastern Partnership with the European Union. In this context, we should recognize that the strategy adopted by the countries of the Eastern Partnership and by the European Union in general, in the context of the war, has changed the foreign policy approach of states such as Ukraine, Georgia, including the Republic of Moldova.

Moldovan-European relations in the context of the crisis in Ukraine

For a better understanding of the Moldovan-European relations, influenced by the war in Ukraine, there is the need to highlight the main events present in the Republic of Moldova-EU dialogue. Of course, given the magnitude of the subject, we do not pretend to cover the multitude of aspects involved, but we will point out the most important moments.

Thus, on 28th February 2022, Ukraine applied for EU membership, and the next day, on 1st March 2022, MEPs approved by a majority of 637 votes the resolution that gives Ukraine a European perspective. For the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, which together with Ukraine are part of the associated trio of the Eastern Partnership countries group, this moment serves as the European perspective and the objective of becoming full members of the EU. In the circumstances of the war in Ukraine, two days away from Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova submitted applications for membership in the Union. For these countries, candidate status serves as a political shield of

protection from Russia, which has never agreed to the proximity of the Eastern Partnership associated Trio States to the EU⁴.

The step that brought the Republic of Moldova closer to the EU was the signing on the 3rd March, by President Maia Sandu of the application for the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union. The request was also signed by Parliament President Igor Grosu and Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilița, and forwarded to French President Emmanuel Macron, leader of the country holding the rotating presidency of the European Union⁵.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the speech of the head of state according to which “the citizens of the Republic of Moldova demonstrate to the world that they are a mature people” and that they do not allow “tyranny to settle in the country, [...] that we will live according to the rules when we defended democracy in elections”. In the conditions of the war in Ukraine, when the cannons are heard on the border of the Republic of Moldova, the citizens remain mature and offer help to refugees from the neighbouring country. “We also maintain our neutrality but remain solidary, calm, generous and responsible. Some decisions take time to ponder. It took us 30 years to grow up, during which failures and errors were committed. Currently, in the conditions of the war in Ukraine, according to the statement of President Sandu, we are ready to take responsibility for the future of the country. We want to live peacefully, in democracy as part of the free world.” According to the statement of President Sandu, “some decisions need time, others must be made promptly and decisively, using the opportunities offered by the changing landscape of the world. We must act immediately when circumstances require it and we see clearly the opportunity to ensure future generations a safer, better life. Achieving this goal is our duty to the citizens. The Republic of Moldova must have a clear European path. We are ready to do everything to achieve this fundamental national goal. Citizens have chosen this option. We know what steps we need to take and we are ready for this process. Step by step, resolutely, we will go through all the stages, in order to build the prosperous and peaceful future of the Republic of Moldova”, said Maia Sandu⁶.

According to the statements made by the Foreign Minister, Nicu Popescu, “this procedure is a historical one and a step of major importance for our

⁴ *Analiză. Integrarea Ucrainei, Georgiei și a Republicii Moldova în UE în timp de război: quo vadis?*, <<https://agora.md/stiri/99539/analiza-integrarea-ucrainei-georgiei-si-a-republicii-moldova-in-ue-in-timp-de-razboi-quo-vadis>> (23.12.2022).

⁵ V. Ursu, N. Popescu, *Moldova a depus cererea de aderare la UE. Ce urmează?*, <<https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/nicu-popescu-moldova-a-depus-cererea-de-aderare-la-ue-ce-urmeaz%C4%83-/31734555.html>> (23.12.2022).

⁶ *Maia Sandu a semnat cererea de aderare a Republicii Moldova la UE*, <<https://www.dw.com/ro/maia-sandu-a-semnat-cererea-de-aderare-a-republicii-moldova-la-ue/a-61005520>> (23.12.2022).

country and society, it is a step in the direction of peace. The European Union is an institution, a family of countries that knew how to ensure peace on the European continent. For the Republic of Moldova accession to the European Union is a way of ensuring the peace, stability and freedom of our country”⁷.

Thus, 3rd March 2022, is a historical date for the Republic of Moldova, it is the date when the application for accession to the European Union was officially submitted. This step marks a significant change in relations between the Republic of Moldova and the EU, as the Republic of Moldova has officially started the EU accession process. This development of relations will have a significant effect on the EU’s requirements for the Republic of Moldova and on Moldova’s approach to the European Union. Even if the existing Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the EU is very demanding, the application for the accession of the Republic of Moldova will raise the requirements to a higher level. The application was submitted according to Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which provides that “any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and undertakes to promote them may apply to become a member of the Union”. Also, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, on the one hand, and the Republic of Moldova, on the other hand, recognize the European aspirations and the European choice of the Republic of Moldova.

Having regard to the common values and close links between the Parties, established in the past by the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part, and which develops within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, and recognizing the common desire of the Parties to develop, strengthen and further expand their relations. Furthermore, following the provisions of the Agreement, the common values on which the EU is founded, namely democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, also constitute the very essence of political association and economic integration provided for in this Agreement. The agreement will open the way for future progressive developments in EU-Moldova relations. Recognizing that the Republic of Moldova, as a European country, has a common history and shares common values with the Member States and is committed to implementing and promoting these values, which are a source of inspiration for the European choice of the country. Also, recognizing the importance of the Action Plan for the implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement contributes to the gradual economic integration and deepening of the political association. Committed to strengthening respect for fundamental freedoms,

⁷ V. Ursu, N. Popescu, *op. cit.*

human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, democratic principles, the rule of law, and good governance, efforts are being made on behalf of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova to develop a democratic and European country, integral and free⁸.

Using Article 2 of the Treaty of Accession to the European Union we can mention that the values on which the EU focuses are: “Respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, as well as respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society where pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail”. Any potential future EU Member State will be assessed against these values. The country's ability to demonstrate its readiness to act following these values will be essential for EU membership. As the EU is at its core the largest European peace project of all time, sharing and promoting these common values becomes particularly important in the light of the war in Ukraine and other threats to European peace⁹.

In the strengthening Moldovan-European relations in the context of the war in Ukraine was the submission of the European Commission questionnaire on the application for EU membership of the Republic of Moldova, no less important moment¹⁰. After receiving Moldova's request, the Council invited the European Commission to present its opinion on Moldova's application as the EU's first step in the accession process. To draw up such an opinion, the Commission submitted a detailed questionnaire to the Republic of Moldova. Based on the questionnaire replies, which were developed and submitted by the Republic of Moldova, the Commission delivered its opinion with the following recommendations:

1. To recommend the granting of candidate status for Moldova and the possibility of Moldova starting accession negotiations;
2. To recommend the granting of candidate status, but only after the fulfilment of specific conditions by Moldova.

The EU Member States have decided on Moldova's application for EU membership, acting unanimously based on the Commission's opinion. Once the

⁸ *Cererea de aderare a Republicii Moldova la Uniunea Europeană – pași următorii și provocări*, <<https://eu4moldova.eu/ro/cererea-de-aderare-a-republicii-moldova-la-uniunea-europeana-pasi-urmatorii-si-provocari/>> (23.12.2022).

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Șanse semnificative ca R. Moldova și Ucraina să primească statutul de țări candidate la UE. Opinia unui jurnalist, după dezbaterile de luni ale Comisiei Europene*, <<https://agora.md/stiri/103610/sanse-semnificative-ca-r-moldova-si-ucraina-sa-primeasca-statutul-de-tari-candidate-la-ue-opinia-unui-jurnalist-dupa-dezbaterile-de-luni-ale-comisiei-europene>> (23.12.2022).

Republic of Moldova has been granted candidate status, the date of the opening of EU accession negotiations has been set (most likely after the Republic of Moldova will meet additional conditions). Accession negotiations will be conducted until the country meets all EU accession requirements, in particular the requirements for political criteria, as the EU's fundamental values as defined in Article 2 TEU are assessed within the political criteria. Once the conditions for accession of the Republic of Moldova are agreed, the Accession Treaty is negotiated, approved and signed by Moldova and all EU Member States and the date of accession is set. Also, to legitimize this step, the Republic of Moldova will organize a referendum in which its citizens will decide on the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union. The Accession Treaty must also be approved by the European Parliament and ratified by the Republic of Moldova, as well as by the national parliament of each EU Member State before it enters into force.

The Commission's questionnaire is the first crucial step in the EU accession process, which will demonstrate Moldova's readiness to react with prompt and precise responses. The questionnaire, according to the position of the European officials, should be perceived as an image of the Republic of Moldova at the specific time of sending the answer, no more, no less. The last questionnaires developed for the Western Balkan countries contained 2.500-3.000 questions each. They were a snapshot of how each country worked and how close each country was to meet EU membership requirements when they submitted their questionnaire replies. For the Republic of Moldova, the number of questions is higher, to suit the specific circumstances of the country. The questions are multilayered and required the involvement of the entire state administration and numerous consultations between various state institutions. Further follow-up questions will then be sent to clarify the responses of the Republic of Moldova. The answers provided the European Commission with a clear picture of Moldova's readiness to conduct accession negotiations and the capacities of the Moldovan administration. Failure to answer a question or too long time to submit questionnaire replies will also be an indication of the lack of capacity of the Republic of Moldova. The questionnaire has also been structured in such a way as to comply with the format of the accession negotiations, which are organized in such a way as to include the Copenhagen accession criteria of 1993:

1. Political criteria: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
2. Economic criteria: a functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competition and market forces; and
3. The ability to assume the obligations arising from EU membership, including the administrative and institutional capacity to effectively

implement the entire EU acquis (organized in more than 30 negotiating chapters).

Thus, on 11th April 2022, in Luxembourg, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi handed over to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Nicu Popescu the questionnaire of the European Commission on the application for EU membership of the Republic of Moldova. The answers to the questions in this questionnaire will be a radiography of the current situation in our country, showing the level of preparation for accession to the European Union and, at the same time, will highlight the areas where further efforts are needed. “Our country is accelerating its European path. We reiterated that we are part of Europe not only geographically, but also through the identity we bear, the values we share, through the Romanian language, the official language of the EU we speak and through the common history we have” Deputy Prime Minister Nicu Popescu said.

According to the position of the head of the diplomacy of the Republic of Moldova, from the moment of receipt of the questionnaire, there follows an intense period of work, mentioning that the state institutions are ready to provide the necessary information in the shortest time. At the same time, the Moldovan official communicated about the involvement in the process of completing the questionnaire not only of the authorities but also of the civil society, given that the accession to the European Union is a country project aimed at the future of each citizen. “Once again, we want to demonstrate that we are a country where democracy works, reforms are possible, processes of transformation are working and our European future is irreversible” – added Minister Nicu Popescu¹¹.

The questions received were divided between the institutions of the newly established working groups (which will then be converted into negotiating groups) so that all competent bodies/actors could contribute to each question individually. The answer to a single question required the work of several institutions which, by common agreement, provided a common and uniform answer to that question. All responses within a chapter should be synchronized and a common response for the whole chapter should be defined. All chapters should be synchronized by the institution that runs the whole process. The final answers should be adopted by the Government and then sent to the European Commission from Brussels. Answers to all questions can amount to about 8.000-10.000 pages.

¹¹ *Ministrul Nicu Popescu a recepționat chestionarul Comisiei Europene cu privire la cererea de aderare la UE a Republicii Moldova: „Țara noastră își accelerează parcursul european”*, <<https://mfa.gov.md/ro/content/ministrul-nicu-popescu-receptionat-chestionarul-comisiei-europene-cu-privire-la-cererea-de>> (23.12.2022).

Also, all answers (which will be prepared first in Romanian) must be translated by the Republic of Moldova into high-quality English. If the translation is not made properly, the quality of the responses of the Republic of Moldova will suffer and/or be inaccurate. In addition, all legislation of the Republic of Moldova (primarily laws and some regulations) that underlie the answers must also be translated into English and attached to the answers. Therefore, the Government of the Republic of Moldova should set up a translation service/unit to coordinate and ensure quality translation of questionnaire replies and relevant legislation and subsequently for all documents related to accession negotiations. The application for EU membership and the resulting questionnaire did not represent a challenge for the Republic of Moldova, as this represented the beginning of a completely different and broader level of relations with the European Union. This step is unknown and new. However, the past experiences of many countries (including all new EU Member States in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as most Western Balkan countries) that responded to the questionnaire provide a source for many lessons learned.

Since 2014, the Republic of Moldova implements the Association Agreement with the European Union. Whether there will be the necessary political support (recognizing that the answer to the future questionnaire is a strategic priority for the Republic of Moldova) and whether all the necessary administrative preparations will be carried out in the coming months (including the establishment of working groups and the organization of the translation process), then there is no reason to doubt that the Republic of Moldova can achieve this stage with as much success as many of the previous countries. The EU-funded technical assistance project “support for structured political dialogue, coordination of the implementation of the Association Agreement (AA) and improvement of the legal approximation process in the Republic of Moldova” provides the necessary support, based on the experience gained from the answers to the last questionnaire, as well as based on internal reorganization in different Western Balkan countries¹².

A no less important step in Moldovan-European relations was the working visit of the Head of State to Brussels and Paris on 17-18 May 2022, during which Maia Sandu had meetings with the President of France, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium and the President of the EU Legislature¹³.

The speech of Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova, delivered on 18th May, at the European Parliament in Brussels, represents the

¹² *Cererea de aderare a Republicii Moldova la Uniunea Europeană...*

¹³ A. Baci, *Maia Sandu a ținut un discurs în Parlamentul European: Acordarea statutului de țară candidat este decizia cea bună (LIVE)*, <<https://agora.md/stiri/102605/maia-sandu-a-tinut-un-discurs-in-parlamentul-european-acordarea-statutului-de-tara-candidat-este-decizia-cea-buna-live>> (23.12.2022).

European desideratum and aspirations of the Republic of Moldova: “I condemned the Russian war against Ukraine. We support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, as we have always done. Crimea is Ukraine, Donbas is Ukraine, Kyiv is Ukraine.” Also, Maia Sandu left no doubt about an essential request which depends on the movement of her country toward the free world: “Moldova is, according to the Constitution, a neutral state – a provision that is supported by the majority of citizens. However, to be truly neutral, we call for the withdrawal of Russian troops from our territory, because their presence in the Transnistrian region fundamentally violates our neutrality and independence”. The Russian troops in the separatist enclave, the existence of this conflict ‘lit’ and ‘frozen’ by the Russians, according to the mafia principle: I create the problem for you so that you come to me to clear it and give me something in return, if you do not want me to amplify it more (See also the ‘Minsk 1’ and ‘Minsk 2’ agreement simulacrum around Donbas) – this conflict was and remains the millstone that has so far submerged Romanian and pro-Europeans aspirations of Basarabians.

Maia Sandu also spoke about the economic crisis, about the inflation that reached a record 27% due to the pandemic and the war, and asked the Western democracies to help Moldova return the money stolen by the oligarchs fleeing to the West and also to the country to give the criminals to the prosecutors. It is one of the basic electoral commitments of the current power: The recovery of stolen billions would ease the burden of expenses for Moldovans¹⁴. In Brussels, Maia Sandu discussed with the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, the agenda for Moldova’s European integration. NN speech in the European Parliament, the Moldovan president insisted on offering the status of candidate country for Moldova – a signal of encouragement and support for the program of reforming the country according to the European model. Moldovans need this clear prospect of accession to coagulate around this goal. Without a tangible national idea that unites them, they will oscillate indefinitely, from an electoral point of view, between West and East

The status of the candidate country would also mobilize the authorities to identify real solutions to two big problems that Moldova has because of accession: the Transnistrian problem and cleanliness in the justice field. “The completion of the integration will be possible only when the Transnistrian problem is solved, but this should not prevent us from working on the other files”, said MEP Siegfried Mureşan. And Chisinau is linking its hopes for the settlement of the Transnistrian dispute with a possible victory of Ukraine in the war launched by Russia against it – a victory that would radically change the optic of the pro-Russian separatist regime on the left bank of the Dniester River.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*

Also, according to the statements of President Sandu on the eve of the visit to Brussels, Chisinau does not expect to be spared in the process of Eurointegration and is ready to take full responsibility for this path. According to the President of the Republic of Moldova, there is no competition between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in the process of obtaining the status of a candidate for accession, and Kyiv deserves to be privileged in this respect. “We believe in meritocracy and every country will be judged by merit. It is also better for Ukraine to be part of the EU, but for us, it is better for Ukraine to join,” explained President Maia Sandu¹⁵.

In the context of the Republic of Moldova obtaining the status of candidate for EU accession, Romanian Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă had on 31st May a discussion with the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen and with the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola. During this discussion, the importance of the European Commission issuing a positive opinion on Moldova’s EU accession application was underlined. The Romanian official asked the Brussels executive to recognize the prospect of Chisinau’s European integration and to recommend the status of the candidate for EU membership. Another topic of discussion was the importance of the European Union’s active support of the European path of the Republic of Moldova, as well as of the reforms initiated by the President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu¹⁶.

Against the background of the war in Ukraine, Chisinau was visited by several European officials, including EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell and European Enlargement Commissioner Oliver Varhelyi. The visit is important as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called for his country to be admitted to the European Union through an emergency procedure, signing a formal request for Ukraine’s EU membership.

The date of 19th May 2022, for the Republic of Moldova is an important one. It is the date when the European Parliament adopted the annual report on the implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, with 512 votes in favour, 43 votes against and 39 abstentions. The report includes a call on the European Union to provide more strategic support to Moldova after the application for membership of the bloc is submitted. In the context of a deteriorating security environment, the text acknowledges that the war in

¹⁵ *Statutul de candidat la aderare ar fi ideea națională care ar coagula moldovenii*, <<https://www.dw.com/ro/statutul-de-candidat-la-aderare-ar-fi-ideea-na%C8%9Bional%C4%83-care-ar-coagula-moldovenii/a-61837566>> (23.12.2022).

¹⁶ C. Bolotnicov, *Prim-ministrul României solicită Comisiei Europene să recomande acordarea statutului de țară candidată la aderarea la UE pentru R. Moldova*, <<https://agora.md/stiri/103127/prim-ministrul-romaniei-solicita-comisiei-europene-sa-recomande-acordarea-statutului-de-tara-candidata-la-aderarea-la-ue-pentru-r-moldova>> (23.12.2022).

Ukraine has disproportionately affected the Republic of Moldova. Its economy has been affected by the loss of import and export opportunities and the rapid increase in energy prices, and Moldova has also received the highest number of Ukrainian refugees relative to the population than any other country, putting pressure on public services.

Motivated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Moldova's official application for EU membership on 3rd March was welcomed by MEPs, as it confirms the country's European path. They call on the EU institutions to grant Moldova the status of candidate country, together with Ukraine and Georgia, following Article 49 TEU and 'based on merit'. Meanwhile, MEPs believe that the European Union and the Republic of Moldova should continue to work on the country's integration into the EU's single market.

The resolution calls on the European Commission to help Moldova prepare a credible strategy for the pre-accession period. MEPs also draw attention to the need for more strategic assistance for Moldova, in particular by setting up a Commission support group for this country, similar to the one existing for Ukraine. The report also stresses that the accession applications of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia open a new chapter in their European integration, which should be characterized by enhanced efforts to implement Association agreements and trade liberalization components. Last but not least, MEPs express their concern about some recent security incidents in the separatist region of Transnistria and condemn them as dangerous acts of provocation committed in a highly volatile security situation. They reiterate their support for a peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. "The EU must urgently grant Moldova and Ukraine the status of candidate countries," said Romanian rapporteur Dragos Tudorache, from Renew Europe group. "This is a message to the world that the EU supports and with which we share the same values in a concrete, tangible and committed way. It is a message to Putin and all the dictators of the world that we will remain United in the face of any aggression and such actions will only strengthen us"¹⁷.

The text of the resolution states that the Republic of Moldova was disproportionately affected by the Russian war in Ukraine. This is mainly due to the arrival of more than 450.000 Ukrainian refugees since the beginning of the invasion – of which almost 80.000 remained in the Republic of Moldova – but also due to the decrease in trade and the increase in energy and transport prices. To this end, MEPs call on the EU to provide more support to the country, namely through new macro-financial assistance, additional measures

¹⁷ I. Chirtoc, *Sprijin masiv din partea Parlamentului European pentru aderarea Republicii Moldova la UE. Rezoluția privind statutul de țară candidată*, <<https://ziare.com/razboi-ucraina-rusia/aderare-ue-republica-moldova-parlamentul-european-1741909>> (23.12.2022).

to liberalize transport and trade, and continued support for refugee management and humanitarian purposes.

In the context of Russia's war against Ukraine, the Parliament welcomes Moldova's official application for EU membership lodged on 3rd March 2022 and states that the EU should grant it candidate status, following Article 49 TEU and "based on merit". In the meantime, the European Union and the Republic of Moldova should continue their efforts to integrate the country into the EU single market and strengthen sectoral cooperation. MEPs also call on the European Commission to swiftly complete the assessment of the application and to provide Moldova with full assistance during this process. They say that, without anticipating the content of the Commission's opinion, the Moldovan authorities are undoubtedly on the right path through the adoption of key reforms, in particular as regards democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

The resolution also expresses its deep concern about developments in the territory of the Transnistrian region, which recorded a series of 'security incidents' in April 2022 considered by MEPs as dangerous provocative acts in a highly volatile security situation. They also reiterate Parliament's support for a "comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict", namely based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders, as well as the withdrawal of Russian forces stationed there.

Parliament stresses that it is unacceptable for Russia to use gas supplies as a weapon to exert political pressure on Moldova, and to influence the country's political trajectory and geopolitical orientation, especially after the recent establishment of the country's pro-Western government. MEPs call on the Commission and EU countries to support Moldova in ensuring its energy independence, connectivity, diversification and energy efficiency, as well as in accelerating the development of renewable energy sources¹⁸.

Through the 'historic' decision taken unanimously by EU leaders, Ukraine and Moldova have been granted the status of candidate countries for EU membership. By granting candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, the paradigm of EU enlargement has changed, and the enlargement policy has received a new impulse, calling the decision of EU leaders a 'big step' and a historical step.

During a press conference, held following the decision of the European Commission, the President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu, came with a message to the citizens. "With yesterday's decision, the EU member states confirmed their desire to support the Republic of Moldova in the process

¹⁸ PE: UE trebuie să acorde Republicii Moldova statutul de țară candidată la aderare, <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/ro/press-room/20220429IPR28232/pe-ue-trebuie-sa-acorde-republicii-moldova-statutul-de-tara-candidata>> (23.12.2022).

of preparing to join the EU family. We are grateful for this opening. (...) this event does not change things overnight in our country, but it gives us greater support on the path of the EU. (...) the status of the candidate country gives us a clear direction of development, support on this path and, more importantly, hope” – says Maia Sandu.

Also, according to the statements of the President of Romania, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia have received a new impulse to implement the reforms and projects that are still necessary to take the next step in the historical achievement. Giving the European perspective to the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia are important step forward. This decision brings hope and confidence to the European future for the people of these countries and represents a great responsibility for their leaders. Romania is ready to continue supporting Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia on their European path. In this context, the statements of Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă who welcomed the ‘historic decision’ and promised that Romania will remain firm in supporting the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia on their European path. EU leaders stressed that these countries will have many ‘themes to do’ and that, having started the most ambitious enlargement since Eastern European countries joined after the Cold War, they will have a lot of ‘themes to do’. the EU may need to change its mode of operation to deal with it. According to the statement of Ukraine’s EU Ambassador, Cențov Vsevolod, “the green light received by these two states is a signal to Russia that Ukraine, but also other countries of the former Soviet Union, are not obliged to remain within the Russian sphere of influence”¹⁹.

Although the Republic of Moldova received on 23rd June 2022 the status of candidate country for accession to the European Union, this status does not offer the status of EU member state, as Moldova needs to meet many accession conditions, as well as apply European legislation in all areas. Experts in the field of international relations and European integration mention that the European path of the Republic of Moldova is difficult and that, in the context of the challenges faced by the EU, but also the countries with the status of candidate for accession, it can last for an unpredicted period. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called the 23rd June event “a defining moment and a very good day for Europe”. The President of the European Commission reiterates that “there can be no better sign of hope for the citizens of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in these troubled times”. As for the reforms to be undertaken in the accession process, President von der Leyen

¹⁹ *Moment istoric: Moldova și Ucraina au primit statutul de țări candidate la aderarea la UE. Ce urmări ar putea avea această decizie,*
<<https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/ue/klaus-iohannis-participa-la-consiliul-european-liderii-ue-discuta-cererile-de-aderare-ale-ucrainei-republicii-moldova-si-georgiei-1985665>>
(23.12.2022).

notes that they are beneficial for the new candidate countries and their democracy, as they strengthen competitiveness and ultimately benefit their citizens. Ursula von der Leyen also said that this decision will “further strengthen” the EU, in the context of threats from the Russian Federation. “The decision taken [...] strengthens Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in the face of Russian aggression. And it strengthens the European Union because it once again shows the world that the European Union is United and strong in the face of external threats”. In the context of the statements made by the European leaders regarding the obtaining of Republic of Moldova the status of candidate country for EU accession, the statements of the Romanian Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova deserve attention. Thus, according to Sorin Ionita, in the process of EU accession, Moldova must solve two major problems in order not to stagnate in this process: “The first basic problem is maintaining the popular consensus for the Western/EU direction because public opinion is important and can derail the process, such as the (unofficially expressed) doubts that everyone in Europe has about the popular support of the EU agenda in Serbia, which has created political bottlenecks. The second is Transnistria.” With the accession of the EU candidate country, the tasks of the governors are multiple, but inevitably or unknowingly some major responsibilities can be omitted or simply considered non-essential, which would be a major error. Here we will not refer to other escapes that seem, apparently, insignificant because they are not expressly exposed in the firm commitments that the Republic of Moldova assumes in this context. Thus, the country risks remaining captive to the status of candidate for integration for more than 30-50 years. The EU has granted this status for 2 reasons: the existence of a pro-Euro-PAS governance and the presence in the region of the war in Ukraine as a political antidote against Russian aggression in the neighbouring state²⁰. Also, Sorin Ionita claims that the accession paths of Romania and the Republic of Moldova are different²¹. The Republic of Moldova’s relationship with the European Union brings security support to Romania even in the context of the war in Ukraine²² of 150 million euros for Moldova’s support. The assistance is made up of non-reimbursable funds of EUR 30 million and loans on advantageous terms of EUR 120 million. The Republic of Moldova is a European country, which has

²⁰ M. Coștu, *Una-i să obțin statutul de candidat la aderare în UE, alta-i să-l și păstrezi*, “Moldova Suverană”, 19.07.2022, p. 1-3.

²¹ O. Meica, *Republica Moldova – țară candidată pentru aderarea la Uniunea Europeană. Care sunt pașii următori și cât poate dura perioada de aderare*, <<https://www.zdg.md/stiri/stiri-sociale/r-moldova-tara-candidata-pentru-aderarea-la-uniunea-europeana-care-sunt-pasii-urmatori-si-cat-poate-dura-perioada-de-aderare/>> (23.12.2022).

²² *Expert: Chestionarul e o treaptă, reformele sunt scara spre Uniunea Europeană*, <<https://stiri.md/article/social/expert-chestionarul-e-o-treapta-reformele-sunt-scara-spre-uniunea-europeana>> (23.12.2022).

received the largest number of refugees from Ukraine in proportion to its population. More than 370.000 refugees crossed the border of the Republic of Moldova (Republica Moldova va primi). Thus, the Plenum of the European Parliament by a large majority, 558 votes in favour and 10 abstentions and 20 against decided to grant macroeconomic assistance to the Republic of Moldova²³.

In the context of the war in Ukraine, Oliver Varhelej, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement mentioned that the EU increased the budget support provided to the Republic of Moldova. The EUR 6 million support provided in December 2021 for the management of the energy crisis is supported by another EUR 75 million. The money was offered to overcome the challenges posed by Russian military aggression in Ukraine. In addition to managing the crisis, the EU continues to support the long-term resilience of the Republic of Moldova, in particular through the Eastern Partnership Investment Plan, which involves providing 34 billion EUR for public and private investment in the public and private investment in several key areas: support for SMEs, trade facilitation, energy efficiency²⁴.

The EU-Georgia relations in the context of the Ukrainian crisis

The EU-Georgia relations have been transformed in the geopolitical frame and developed more dynamic manner since 2013. Georgia's gradual integration into the European structures represents one of the most important directions of the nation's political and economic development. Strengthening the cooperation with the EU supports the further promotion of Georgia's democratic institutions and security, as well as the development of foreign-trade relations with the EU. Broadening institutional frameworks of the relationship with the European Union is important for Georgia. Georgia intends to gain the Four Freedoms (free movement of people, goods, services, and capital) with the EU. The majority of the population of Georgia considers the European Neighborhood Policy and Eastern Partnership as significant aspects contributing to Georgia's integration into the EU. Georgia conducted negotiations and on 27th June 2014, when signed the Association Agreement with the EU to achieve a higher level of political association and economic integration with this organization, including the development of deep and comprehensive free trade relations. Georgia pays important attention to the successful implementation of the visa simplification and readmission agreements with the EU, with the final goal, to achieve visa-free travel.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ *UE își extinde sprijinul bugetar pentru Moldova, "Moldova Suverană", 22.07.2022, p. 1.*

Furthermore, Georgia strives to establish sectoral cooperation with the EU in energy security, transport, education, culture, and other spheres is important for Georgia. The country does its best for the involvement of the EU in resolving the Russian-Georgian conflict and de-occupation of the two historic Regions of Georgia by peaceful means. EU must recognise the occupation by the Russian Federation two territories of Georgia²⁵.

It is of strategic importance to Georgia that the EU represents the mediator of the Russian-Georgian Ceasefire Agreement of 12th August 2008, and continues its diplomatic pressure on the Russian Federation to respect the norms and principles of international law and the international obligations it has undertaken²⁶.

The main EU-Georgia cooperation objectives and priority fields are outlined in three key documents: the Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013 (CSP), the National Indicative Program 2007-2010 (NIP) and EU-Georgia Association Agreement (signed on 27th June 2014).

The Country Strategy Paper, prepared by the European Commission, covers the political, economic, social and institutional situation in Georgia. The report assesses when and how relations with the country can deepen and is the basis on which a political decision is taken for the next stage – the Action Plan. Georgia's CSP includes eight priority areas for action: Rule of Law, Improvement of Business Climate, Economic Development and Poverty Reduction, Cooperation on Justice, Law, Security (JLS) and Border Management, Regional Cooperation, Resolution of Internal Conflicts, Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy, Transport and Energy. EU Georgian relation comprises Political and economic relations, technical and financial cooperation, infrastructure, environment and rural development, human rights, democratization and Civil society building, assistance in justice, achieving freedom and security, education, health, and social development.

Georgia has made significant progress in carrying out economic reforms in the last few years. To create a sustainable environment for economic development, the European Union (EU) has provided assistance to Georgia in reforming its tax collection administration and procedures and fighting corruption. It has thus contributed to opening up the country to foreign investment, facilitating trade and empowering the private sector as a driver of economic growth. The EU supports also the Regional development policy of Georgia to create new economic development opportunities in Georgian

²⁵ *European Parliament resolution of 17 November 2011 containing the European Parliament's recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the negotiations of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (2011/2133(INI))*, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-7-2011-0514_EN.html> (04.12.2022).

²⁶ *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, (2011)*, <http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=12> (04.12.2022).

regions. Trade cooperation is a key issue on the country's agenda since Georgia is engaged in a preparatory process for a Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreement (DCFTA).

For human rights, the main source of funding comes through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) which has financed a wide variety of projects in Georgia since 1998, both through large projects managed from Brussels and through the micro-projects which are managed directly by the European Union Delegation to Georgia.

The relatively new Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development Program are aimed at developing the capacities of these two entities to support all aspects of the participative democracy process at a local level, as well as building cooperation between them in the pursuit of this goal. On the central level, the EU works to strengthen key pillars of good governance. Support for the development of independent media has been delivered through several projects such as training for the Georgian Public Broadcaster and strengthening of the role of the media as a watchdog in Georgian society. Over the years, the Georgian Parliament has benefitted from a variety of actions, both in terms of material support in the shape of equipment and library resources, as well as in the reform of its administrative procedures. All aspects of the electoral system have received intensive support from the EU. In this area, the EU has employed a multi-vector approach, supporting efforts to reform the legislative framework, working with the election administration officials, providing training for non-partisan election observers and strengthening media awareness of their rights. Support to civil society is mainstreamed through all the above-mentioned instruments, as well as increasingly through sector support and budget support programs. Increased involvement of civil society is an aspect of its cooperation to which the EU is firmly committed.

Assistance to a broad field of legal and administrative reform has been one of the key areas of the European Union's assistance to Georgia since the early 90ties. Since the November 2003, 'Rose Revolution' in Georgia, the EU assistance was strongly focused on the reforms of the justice system in Georgia. At the new stage of the Georgia-EU cooperation, EU-Georgia Action Plan puts special emphasis on cooperation in the fields of Rule of Law and Justice.

The EU has within this broader area of assistance provided support in a variety of areas related to Justice, Freedom and Security also. These projects have covered an array of specific fields within the sector and were implemented by using different funding instruments. In the area of fighting against illegal drugs, the EU has provided funding for the regional South Caucasus Anti-drug Program.

The EU has supported Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to implement selected projects in the field of migration under different

instruments. The Georgian Government has achieved measurable progress in certain areas of cooperation under Justice, Freedom and Security, notably the fight against human trafficking, however, the other fields of cooperation in this sector remain to need additional contributions for achieving sustainable positive results. The EU has made considerable contributions to the criminal justice system reform in Georgia through various projects aiming at capacity building of key justice sector institutions, providing expertise on legal and structural reforms and more importantly, through being engaged in a structured policy dialogue with the Georgian Government on Criminal Justice reforms. Assistance in these areas is delivered through many different instruments and programs allowing the European Union (EU) to employ a variety of approaches at a central, regional or local level, depending on what is most effective in the given context.

In the field of Higher Education, there are several programs (TEMPUS, ERASMUS MUNDUS, Jean Monnet) facilitating higher education institutions' cooperation with European universities, and increasing the mobility of students, researchers and university staff. Through various programs, the EU greatly supports the progress towards integration of the Georgian Vocational Education and Training (VET) system into the common European educational space²⁷.

The European Union is supporting the government in the implementation of the Primary Health Care Reform Program aimed at improving the equitable coverage and utilization of quality Primary Health Care services by the Georgian population in several regions of Georgia. Civil society representatives are also grantees of the EU and are involved in the capacity building of the non-governmental and community-based organizations for achieving better access by the poor people of Georgia to quality health care, improving access to the quality primary health care for the vulnerable population. The case of child welfare reform is also a field in which the EU is very active which includes improving the quality and coverage of the services provided to children, ensuring that all children in need of support in Georgia can benefit from quality, individualized social services, that children in need are where possible kept in their families or a family-like care environment and that every child in Georgia is protected by the State from all types of abuse, exploitation and neglect. Moreover, there are three main directions where the EU and Georgia are cooperating and the directions are having more geoeconomic importance rather than geopolitical ones. The directions include the following:

1. Transport. Due to its strategic geographical location, Georgia is a crucial hub and a key transit point for the whole Caucasus and beyond. Furthermore, improving the transport infrastructure is a crucial requirement for the country to achieve in full its economic and social

²⁷ I. Chkhikvadze, *EU-Georgia Relations: Where It Starts and Where It Goes*, Tbilisi 2013.

development objectives. In response to this context, the European Union (EU) is actively involved in assisting Georgia to improve its transport networks (aviation, railways and marine transportation). Most of the transport-related initiatives assisted by the EU in Georgia are implemented through the TRACECA Program (Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia)²⁸. TRACECA is an ambitious regional action aimed at supporting the political and economic development in the Black Sea Region, Caucasus and Central Asia using the improvement of international transport²⁹;

2. Energy. Energy issues become more and more important for both Georgia and the EU. It has been reflected among others in the Eastern Partnership initiative. Within its framework, the cooperation between the EU and the partner countries will be enhanced in several energy-related areas (creating regional electricity markets, improving energy efficiency and promoting renewable energy, developing mutual energy support and security mechanisms, etc.). The EU has recently carried out a feasibility study for the project ‘Trans-Caspian-Black-Sea gas corridor’; The EU has financed numerous projects within the framework of its INOGATE program – mainly technical assistance; The Georgian Policy and Legal Advice Centre (GEPLAC), financed by the EU, has assisted the government concerning the energy policy and legislation, recently in the preparation of a law on energy efficiency³⁰;
3. Environment. Georgia is one of the richest countries in the world when it comes to the diversity and uniqueness of its environment. The protection of the environment is among the key objectives of the European Union worldwide. The EU assists Georgia not only to implement concrete environmental projects but also helps draft policies, strategies and legislation³¹.

The activities financed by the EU concern all the key areas of environmental protection – climate change, nature protection, waste management, air protection, water protection and prevention of natural disasters. Many activities also focus on raising awareness about the environment and on encouraging communities to get involved in environmental protection. Management of solid waste is one of the most serious environmental problems in Georgia – both hazardous and municipal waste is

²⁸ TRACECA main page, *Current/Upcoming News 23rd September 2014*, <<http://www.traceca-org.org/en/home/>> (04.12.2022).

²⁹ N. Chitadze, *Geopolitics*, Tbilisi 2011.

³⁰ N. Chitadze, F. Gursoy, *Economic and Political Environment of Georgia after the Restoration of National Independence*, [in:] *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies*, Brussels 2012.

³¹ G. Chufrin, *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*, Oxford 2001.

mostly dumped in landfills, dangerous both for human health and the environment or even dumped in nature. The EU approach is based on recycling, reusing and composting waste from households on one hand and safe disposal of hazardous waste on the other. The EU approach to water protection is based on the integrated management of river basins. These basins usually cover the territory of several countries. The largest one in the southern Caucasus is the Kura-Aras river basin. The EU helps countries of the southern Caucasus to protect this river basin through several projects (ca EUR 5 million for Georgia) by developing their water legislation, collecting the necessary data, providing them with laboratory equipment for monitoring water quality, etc. The EU is also very active in the protection of the Black Sea and its coast. Air prevention: the quality of air, especially in major Georgian cities, is rather poor. The EU, therefore, helps Georgia to measure the number of dangerous substances in the air and to draft legislation and strategies to improve the current situation.

Natural and man-made disasters, such as landslides, erosions, droughts and floods, become more and more frequent in Georgia. The EU, therefore, helps the most affected regions, especially in the mountains, in the prevention and reduction of natural disaster risks. At the same time, the EU enables these regions to respond to these disasters in a coordinated and efficient manner. EUR 2 million has been granted in this sector.

However, the bilateral relations could be transformed into a concrete geo-economic development case with direct involvement of the Caucasus region. In this case, Georgia is going to seek the most vital position. However, it is less probable that Georgia would take part in the format as its foreign policy orientation prescribed in Article 78 of the Georgian Constitution adopted in 2020 is making impossible such participation (the Article implies irreversible foreign policy goals achievement in membership in NATO and EU structures). Moreover, Georgia earlier proposed its regional security format '3' (with the participation of all three local actors: Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia) and that is precisely fitted in the aegis of the Western identification of the region as 'Central Caucasus'. It is very clear that the Georgian approach to the regional security format is unfit for the other actors and evermore contradicts their interests. It seems that key regional hegemony: Russia, Turkey and Iran are eager to block any entrance to the region of other global and regional hegemonies, like the USA, the EU and maybe to some extent even China. The modality of the regional security is indeed oriented toward the East and by its geostrategic provision has a so-called 'orientalist' provision with aiming of creating new kinds of geopolitical axes: 'MENA-Transcaucasia-Central Asia' with partial incursion as well as South Asia as India and Pakistan are also seeking to pursue their interests to the 'geopolitical triangle'. Namely, Pakistan has joined the tripartite military alliance: Azerbaijan-Turkey which was formed in November 2020 due to the Karabakh war consequences Pakistan has also

been participating in the project: 'One Belt, One Road' launched by China and promoted the 'Oriental Silk Road' perspectives toward the Caucasus region. The same rest for the other geopolitical project: the 'Lazurit Project' (namely the realization of the project was linked realization of the Anaklia seaport building in nature) that also geo-economically pinches Pakistan and India into the region. As for both countries, Pakistan and India despite their rivalry, separately, are looking forward to realizing fully the other newly endorsed geoeconomic project: Pakistan-Iran-Azerbaijan-Georgia-EU thus boosting the most interesting geopolitical axes: 'South-North'. Quite recently as it is known has been arranged a deal between Iran and Azerbaijan on building 4 ride bridge on river Astarachai as it fastens cargo delivery several times and reaches turnover in both directions up to 80 million tonnes annually that more increased EU-Iran trade turnover that is now at the rate of \$5 billion (the same rate for EU-Pakistan is \$11 billion and for EU-India is about \$62 billion). The project is to be a continuation of the so-called 'Zanzegour Corridor' and promote dialogue among the regional actors. It is clear also that the '3+3' exactly reoriented toward Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution and attained common geostrategic provisions sponsored by Türkiye and Russia. Hence, the regional security format '3+3' is a joint Turkish-Russo project and has also correlations with the adjustment of the common geopolitical interests in the Middle East in the aegis of the Syrian crisis.

Conclusions

The war in Ukraine and increased attention to this region opened an opportunity for associated states in the Eastern Neighbourhood, including the Republic of Moldova, by unanimous decision from EU member states to obtain EU membership. Although this status does not imply EU membership, it is still a possibility, but also a hope of Moldova's accession to the EU.

After obtaining the status of candidate country for EU accession, the Republic of Moldova will benefit from several advantages, such as a concrete prospect of accession to the European Union, fair justice, resilient public institutions, access to an extensive international market for Moldovan producers, sustainable development, economic and energy independence, etc. The Republic of Moldova's obtaining the status of candidate country for EU accession is a remarkable result of the efforts to be put in by the country and the government, and the EU will continue to support the reforms necessary to bring Moldova closer to the European community.

The EU-Georgia relations are considered to be developing more stable and predicted stage as Georgia was granted 'European Perspective' status instead of 'Membership Candidate'. The European Commission recommended to the Council that Georgia should be given the perspective to become a member of

the European Union. The body recommended that the country be granted the membership candidate status once the priority items on the reform agenda are addressed³². The Commission will monitor Georgia's progress to address these priorities and report on them by the end of 2023. The EU leadership identified 12 concrete political problems causing problems in promoting Georgia's membership in the European Community. The problems are identified in directions as high levels of polarization in the political system of Georgia, corruption, rule of law, organized crime groups, etc. These obstacles are the main problematic cases for attaining Georgia's constitutional clause in membership to EU and NATO and create a security dilemma for Georgia's foreign policy.

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³² *Borell: Georgia will be granted “automatic” EU candidate status when criteria are met (23 June 2022)*, <<https://agenda.ge/en/news/2022/2396>> (04.12.2022).

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RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE – WAR OF SURPRISES

Abstract: *The war between Russia and Ukraine is still ongoing and very difficult to predict when and how will be finished. This war started between Ukraine and Russia (together with pro-Russian separatist forces) in February 2014 following the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity so-called ‘Euromaidan’³, and initially focused on the status of Crimea and the Donbas, internationally recognized as part of Ukraine. Western military analysts believed that the Russian leadership initially thought its ‘special military operation’ would reach the capital and other big Ukrainian cities within 2-3 days, forcing the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky to resign and the Ukraine government to capitulate and which act allows for Russians a puppet, pro-Russian administration to be installed. From the military point of view, the Russian Army made childish mistakes. Russians overestimated their military capabilities, but they faced disorganization, underperformance and huge losses in manpower and military hardware as well. The President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin announced in his speech has attempted to justify Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine by constructing a narrative showing a military operation was unavoidable. He stated that the government of Ukraine is a ‘neo-Nazi regime’ and the alleged ‘genocide’ is being carried out by Kyiv in the Ukrainian separatist territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Nevertheless, as this research paper is arguing, at least two Russian neo-Nazi groups are fighting for Russian forces against Ukrainian*

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³ The Euromaidan was a wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in Ukraine, which began on 21st November 2013 and ended on 21st February 2014 when the pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich left the country.

Armed Forces, throwing into question Moscow's claims of 'de-nazifying' Ukraine. At the beginning of the war, nobody believed that Ukrainian Armed Forces will be able to resist against Russian invasion. Russian Army faced with determined Ukrainian Army causing several bad surprises for Russians. The war caused many unpleasant surprises for the Putin regime in the political arena as well. Russia against his initial expectation, now should face to more determined, stronger, enlarged NATO, a more unified European Union, and a lot of painful economic sanctions. Russia strategically already lost this war. After the war will be a weakened, discredited, and outcast country.

Keywords: *Russo-Ukrainian war, Putin, Russian aggression, political miscalculation, military surprises, Russian neo-Nazis*

Introduction

It is well known that the war between Russia and Ukraine is the biggest in Europe since the end of World War II finished in 1945, indiscriminately spilling the blood of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers and innocent civilians. This war is also demonstrating that the world is a far more complicated place than leaders thought. The war is still ongoing, and nobody knows when and how will be ended. However, it must be noted this Russo-Ukrainian war started not on 24th February 2022, but almost exactly 8 years earlier on 20th February 2014, when Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, President of the Russian Federation decided to annex Crimea and occupy the Donbas.

It is obvious, every war brings surprises, but the current war of Russia against Ukraine is full of bad surprises for Russia. From a politico-strategic point of view, Russia already lost this war. In the international political arena, Russia lost its reputation and became an isolated country. Militarily, Putin's army after gaining the Luhansk oblast could occupy the Donetsk oblast as well but the main political goals of the aggression such as the regime change in Kyiv, taking under control a large part of Ukraine, interdiction of NATO enlargement, and disintegration of EU and NATO already are not feasible or cannot be met. Putin, because of his megalomania, did almost the same miscalculation as Saddam Hussein with the invasion of Kuwait concerning the reactions from Western countries, especially from the US⁴.

In fact, against Putin's will, the EU and NATO became more unified and stronger even though Mr Orbán, PM of Hungary, permanently try to block sanctions against Russian aggression and Ukraine got EU membership

⁴ S. T. Hosmer, *Why the Iraqi Resistance to the Coalition Invasion Was So Weak*, Santa Monica 2007, pp. 20-21.

candidate status. Moreover, despite the billions of petrol dollars spent, the image of the Russian Army as a modern high-tech army is broken forever. Russian Army already suffered heavy and sensitive losses in manpower and military hardware as well.

Of course, both sides are hiding the real figures. Both Russian and Ukrainian sources are widely considered to inflate casualty numbers in opposing forces while downplaying their losses for the sake of morale. Both sides also tend to be quieter about their military fatalities, and the number of Russian deaths is a closely guarded secret. Moscow in March 2022 placed the death toll at 1.351, but even then, there was reason to believe it was far higher.

The British estimate in April put the number around 15.000⁵ – more than were killed in the Soviet Union’s nine-year war in Afghanistan – while other estimates project that as many as 40.000 have been injured⁶.

Nevertheless, the future of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is in doubt. Russia’s large-scale invasion of Ukraine in clear violation of the OSCE’s commitments to territorial integrity, sovereignty, and human rights, has put unprecedented strain on the world’s largest regional security organization, raising questions about its viability as a forum for engagement between Russia and the West⁷.

As well known, the food price increases due to the Russia-Ukraine war are jeopardizing food security around the world. According to the FAO data estimated around 27,3 million people are facing acute food insecurity between March and May 2022. This number is projected to increase to an unprecedented 38,3 million between June and August 2022 if humanitarian interventions are not scaled up⁸.

Furthermore, in the international arena, one of the geopolitical consequences of the invasion that have the potential to severely degrade Russia’s international reputation and position. At the NATO summit in Madrid, allied leaders agreed to invite Finland and Sweden to join the alliance which means both countries will be soon NATO members. On 5th July 2022, a week after the Madrid Summit, Finland and Sweden completed accession talks at NATO Headquarters in Brussels. Both countries formally confirmed their

⁵ A. Patil, *Roughly 15,000 Russian troops have died since start of war, UK estimates*, <<https://www.sanjuandailystar.com/post/roughly-15-000-russian-troops-have-died-since-start-of-war-uk-estimates>> (26.07.2022).

⁶ P. D. Shinkman, *Russian Troops in Ukraine Face ‘Extraordinary’ Casualty Rates: U.K. Intelligence*. <<https://www.usnews.com/news/world-report/articles/2022-06-22/russian-troops-in-ukraine-face-extraordinary-casualty-rates-u-k-intelligence>> (26.07.2022).

⁷ *Can the OSCE Survive the Ukraine War?*, <<https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/eastern-europe/ukraine/can-osce-survive-ukraine-war>> (26.07.2022).

⁸ *FAO/ GIEWS: Special Alert No. 349: West Africa - Sahel, 16 May 2022*, <<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/faogiews-special-alert-no-349-west-africa-sahel-16-may-2022>> (27.07.2022).

willingness and ability to meet the political, legal, and military obligations and commitments of NATO membership⁹.

Moreover, Denmark, after having a referendum, has joined the EU's defence policy. Some other European countries traditionally having and exercising the principle of neutrality such as Ireland, Austria, Malta, and Switzerland are overhauling their defence policies because public opinions are shifting to the favour of NATO. Hence, the war against Ukraine and indirectly against the whole democratic West and civilized world, resulted in completely inverse outcomes for Putin.

Putin has argued that one of the main reasons for the war is the 'Nazi government' in Kyiv, and the genocide of Russians in the Donbas¹⁰. Not so many believe Putin's justification. Contrary, following the data of the Pew Research Centre, confidence in Putin reaches a 20-year low in most countries. Moreover, consistent with trends for Russian favourability, majorities in almost every country surveyed express little confidence in Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Across 18 nations, a median of 90% say they do not have confidence in Putin to do the right thing in world affairs, and nearly eight-in-ten (78%) express no confidence at all in Putin¹¹.

As this essay goes to print, the war is still raging, and it is difficult to draw dawn lessons learned from the war's events. However, it is already clear, Russia experienced several bad surprises in this war. The current paper will cover the question of the real *casus belli* of entering the war on Ukraine and in the second part of the article, the surprises for the Russian Army will be analysed.

What was Putin's real *casus belli*?

On 24th February, Russian dictator Vladimir Putin sparked one of the biggest security crises in Europe since World War II by invading Ukraine, with barrages of missiles and artillery accompanying troops as they entered the country from multiple directions. However, the scale and dimensions of the aggression were a big surprise for many specialists. Even just a day before the

⁹ *NATO Allies sign Accession Protocols for Finland and Sweden*, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_197763.htm> (29.07.2022).

¹⁰ *Address by the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin on 24 February 2022*, <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>> (23.07.2022).

¹¹ R. Wake, J. Fetterwolf, M. Fagand, S. Gubbala, *Ratings for Russia drop to record lows*, <<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2022/06/22/ratings-for-russia-drop-to-record-lows/>> (26.07.2022).

aggression, he announced the withdrawal of Russian troops from the border of Ukraine¹².

Of course, he was laying, just he did as Saddam Hussein¹³ on the eve of the invasion of Kuwait. The Invasion of Ukraine was not the first time when Putin's led Russia had invaded the sovereign territory of another country (Georgia's 2008, and 2014 assaults on Crimea and Donbas).

Vladimir Putin on 24th February 2022 gave the order to conduct a so-called 'Special Military Operation' for Ukraine¹⁴. In his speech delivered the same day, he was reasoning the war by mentioning three main reasons: the de-Nazification of the Kyiv regime, the genocide of Russians in the Donbas and an act of self-defence against NATO expansion¹⁵.

Of course, for someone who does not know Putin's past, his belief in Bolshevism and the resurrection of Stalin's Soviet Union, all of this is completely bizarre and illogical.

So, who Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin is? He was born in 1952 in Saint Petersburg, he is a former KGB agent who was stationed in East Germany in Dresden when the Soviet Union collapsed. His grandfather was a cook, who was cooking for Lenin and Stalin as well. His father was a member of the NKVD unit responsible for sabotage actions during World War II.

Putin, in 1990 retired from active KGB service with the rank of lieutenant colonel and returned to St. Petersburg. Soon afterwards Putin became an adviser to Sobchak, the mayor of St. Petersburg. After winning Sobchak's confidence and becoming known for his ability to get things done and in 1994 he got the post of first deputy mayor.

In 1992, Putin was investigated for a deal he oversaw while an official in the mayor's office. The deal involved the export of \$100m worth of raw materials in exchange for food for the citizens of St. Petersburg. The materials were exported, but the food never arrived.

As an outcome of his action in 1992 – when there was no food at all – the city of St. Petersburg was left with nothing. So, conspiracy, antihumanism and brutality always were part of his personality.

¹² S. Roy, *Russia announces withdrawal of troops from Ukraine borders: what this means*, <<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/russia-troops-withdrawal-ukraine-border-explained-7776444/>> (26.07.2022).

¹³ *This Day in History August 02*, <<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/iraq-invades-kuwait>> (26.06.2022).

¹⁴ *Vladimir Putin's Televised Address on Ukraine*, <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-24/full-transcript-vladimir-putin-s-televised-address-to-russia-on-ukraine-feb-24>> (26.06.2022).

¹⁵ *Obrashcheniye Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii, Putin soobshchil rossiyanam o nachale voyennoy operatsii na Ukraine*, <<https://www.interfax.ru/russia/824020>> (27.06.2022).

Putin had business not only with ‘raw materials for foods’, but acquired with his former KGB man and the FSB (The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation¹⁶) cronies, the so-called ‘Siloviks’,¹⁷ all the trade and industry of St. Petersburg¹⁸. Not accidentally, they called themselves between each other’s ‘chekists’¹⁹.

Putin moved on from the oil for food scandal, rising through the ranks and being elected president in 2000, after serving in the role for several months following the resignation of Boris Yeltsin. He was supposed to be loyal to the ‘Family’, i.e. Yeltsin and his men, but most importantly, the democracy the Yeltsin government established. It was because before being appointed as a prime minister in 2002, and then elected as president soon, he pretended to be obedient to Yeltsin and his administration. No one knew that Putin had already worked with his former cronies and intended to eliminate all the democratic results of the Yeltsin government. Putin later cut out Yeltsin’s oligarchs and replaced them with his cronies, the FSB, the next oligarch of Putin to control the entire Russian economy. It served their enrichment on one hand, but to acquire a huge amount of funds to undermine Western countries in many ways. For example, unleashing wars in the neighbouring countries, annexing them to Russia, also to influence the political life of Western countries, such as in the presidential election in 2006 in the United States, misleading corrupt Western politicians, and businessmen, and also, used social media to achieve this goal. As a result, Russia has interlaced all Western society, as a net²⁰.

In 1996 Putin moved to Moscow, where he joined the presidential staff as deputy to Pavel Borodin, the Kremlin’s chief administrator. Putin grew close to fellow Leningrader Anatoly Chubais and moved up to administrative positions. In July 1998 President Boris Yeltsin designated Vladimir Putin as the director of the Federal Security Service, and shortly thereafter he became secretary of the influential Security Council. Yeltsin, who was searching for an heir to assume his mantle, appointed Putin prime minister in 1999.

¹⁶ The principal security agency of Russia and the main successor agency to the Soviet Union's KGB. See: E. Schneider, *The Russian Federal Security Service under President Putin*, [in:] S. White (ed.), *Politics and the Ruling Group in Putin's Russia*, London 2008, pp. 42-62.

¹⁷ J. Langton, *Meet Russia's "Siloviki" – Putin internal circle*, <<https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/2022/03/15/meet-russias-siloviki-putins-inner-circle/>> (27.07.2022).

¹⁸ C. Belton, *Putin's people – How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took the West*, London 2020, pp. 91-92.

¹⁹ K. Wilson, *Putin the Chekist: a sacred calling*, <<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/putin-the-chekist-a-sacred-calling/>> (25.07.2022).

²⁰ C. Belton, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-467.

In 2005 he said: “The demise of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century”²¹. Even so, Putin the president of the aggressor country, at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum claimed that the Soviet Union is historically Russian territory²². Moreover, Putin made clear that he does not accept Europe's post-Cold War security architecture anymore²³.

So finally what does Putin want? Logically as a brainwashed Soviet-Stalinist fan, and as an individual with a damaged personality chasing the nightmare of the great Soviet Union, he definitively wants to re-establish the former Soviet Union by using aggression, now under the Russian flag.

With regard the Putin's causes belli so-called ‘de-Nazification of the Kyiv regime’, it is easy to refute it. Unlike in many countries, there is not a single neo-Nazi in the current Ukrainian parliament. De facto the far rights (Party Svoboda) received only 2% of the vote in Ukraine's 2019 parliamentary elections far less than in most of Europe, and they have no sit in the Parliament.

At the same time, the ‘Nazis’ like to talk about the Azov battalion, which was defending Mariupol, in which there were indeed militants with neo-Nazi views. After the disbandment of the battalion and the integration of its forces into the Ukrainian army, they were expelled from the army, and the perpetrators of various war crimes were brought to court. It is also true that the Azov battalion is officially part of the Ukrainian Defence Forces, but the fact that there is a battalion of 1.000 people in the 250.000-strong Ukrainian army, some of whose members are far-right, does not mean that the entire state is Nazi.

Ukraine's famed Azov Regiment was indeed formed out of a right-wing militia called the Azov Battalion that gained renown in the early days of the war. The group's leaders and founders openly espoused xenophobic and anti-immigrant rhetoric. Its logos bore a close resemblance to some used by Nazi units during World War II.

The Azov battalion was incorporated into Ukraine's National Guard, Azov has toned down extremist rhetoric but retained a reputation as a formidable fighting unit.

Another completely mind-blowing element of this is ‘de-Nazification’, that fact the leader of the ‘Nazi clique’ would be the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, who was born in Eastern Ukraine into a Russian-

²¹J. Nundy, *Decoder: What was the Soviet Union? Why does Putin miss it?*, <<https://news-decoder.com/decoder-what-was-the-soviet-union-why-does-putin-miss-it/>> (26.07.2022).

²² K. Tyshchenko, *Putin considers entire Soviet Union to be historical Russian territory*, <<https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2022/06/17/7353151/>> (27.06.2022).

²³ Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, *Russia's Proposal to Redraw European Security 'Unacceptable,' U.S. Says*, <<https://www.rferl.org/a/nato-russia-security-guarantees/31614168.html>> (27.06.2022).

speaking Jewish family. One-half of the Zelensky family perished in the Holocaust, and the other half fought against the Germans as soldiers of the Red Army.

What has received less coverage is the Putin regime's record of collaboration with far-right extremists. Even as Russian diplomats condemned 'fascists' in the Baltic states and Kremlin propagandists railed against imaginary 'Ukronazis' in power in Kyiv, the Russian state was cultivating its own homegrown Nazis, especially two groups namely the 'Nashi' or 'Ours'²⁴ (according to an estimate from the Russian Interior Ministry press service, by 2007 the number of Nashi numbered over 100.000) and the *Russkii Obraz* ('Russian Image', or 'RO' for short) which was boosted by the Putin's regime policy of so-called 'managed nationalism' and used against opponents of authoritarianism²⁵.

A lot of Russian neo-Nazis are fighting in the territory of Ukraine, like Alesei Michakov who openly determined himself as a neo-Nazi. It is worth mentioning the group called 'Russian Imperial Movement', which is a Russian ultranationalist, white supremacist, far-right paramilitary organization which operates out of Russia, has several thousand members and was founded by Stanislav Vorobyev in 2015²⁶.

According to a confidential report by Germany's Federal Intelligence Service, which was obtained by *Der Spiegel* and excerpted on 22nd May 2022, numerous Russian right-wing extremists and neo-Nazis are fighting in Ukraine²⁷.

Finally, we could argue that at least two neo-Nazi groups are fighting for Russian forces in Ukraine, throwing into question Moscow's claims of 'denazifying' Ukraine.

Putin has also accused Ukraine of committing genocide against ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the Donbas region, where Kremlin-backed rebels have been fighting with Ukrainian forces since 2014.

In contrast, the reality is that the war in eastern Ukraine, which broke out in 2014, had a total of 14.000 deaths by 2021, of which more than ten thousand were

²⁴ O. Wales, *Skinheads and Nashi: What are the reasons for the rise of nationalism amongst Russian youth in the post-Soviet period?*, "SLOVO", 2016, Vol. 28, No. 2, p. 111.

²⁵ R. Horvath, *Putin's Fascists. Russkii Obraz and the Politics of Managed Nationalism in Russia*, Sydney 2021, pp. 44-45.

²⁶ Center for International Security and Cooperation, *Russian Imperial Movement*, <<https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/russian-imperial-movement>> (27.07.2022).

²⁷ M. Eckel, *Who Are the Neo-Nazis Fighting for Russia in Ukraine?*, <<https://www.rferl.org/a/russian-neo-nazis-fighting-ukraine/31871760.html>> (17.07.2022).

soldiers. According to UN data, 3.393 civilians lost their lives during this period, most of them, 3.038, died in 2014-2015, during the months of active war²⁸.

There were 26 civilian victims of the conflict in 2020 and 18 in 2021, but real military actions, such as shelling, killed ‘only’ seven people last year. There were victims on both sides, although there were more dead and wounded among the separatists. Although the death of all civilians is a crime, the actions of the Ukrainian forces can hardly be called genocide. Among the civilian victims are the 298 people who lost their lives when separatist forces shot down a Malaysia Airlines flight departing from Amsterdam on 17th July 2014, probably by mistake. So, we could conclude there was no so-called ‘Russian genocide’.

The third element of Putin’s strange war justification was an act of self-defence against NATO expansion, in other words, Moscow wanted to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO and the former Soviet republic from becoming a staging ground for the North Atlantic military alliance against Russia.

Ukraine wanted to get closer to NATO, and even though the intention to join NATO and the EU was recorded in the Ukrainian constitution, in reality, de facto there was no chance that the accession would take place in the foreseeable future because of the ongoing war with Russia in the Donbas.

Although many NATO weapons and experts have indeed appeared in the country in recent years, this mainly took place after 2014, when Moscow annexed Crimea, part of Ukraine, and supported the separatist armed forces in eastern Ukraine. It is also important that Ukrainian society was strongly opposed to NATO membership before 2014 and turned towards the West only after the outbreak of the conflict²⁹.

However, two contradictions emerge from Putin’s latest *casus belli*. First, the timing of Russia’s invasion was arbitrary, Putin himself decided when the Russian army will attack Ukraine, and consequently, there was no imminent threat. The absence of anything on the order of a ‘Russian 9/11’ led some analysts to speculate that Russia would create a false flag attack, but it was not necessary for Putin. De facto, in January there were zero ceasefire violations in the Donbas, and there was no provocation that Putin could point to as the catalyst for urgent military action.

Furthermore, from Putin’s point of view, there is another real reason for invading Ukraine, besides the rebuilding of the Soviet Empire, the natural gas business.

28 UN OHCHR, *Conflict-related civilian casualties in Ukraine*, 27.01.2022, p. 3, <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Conflict-related%20civilian%20casualties%20as%20of%2031%20December%202021%20%28rev%2027%20January%202022%29%20corr%20EN_0.pdf> (27.07.2022).

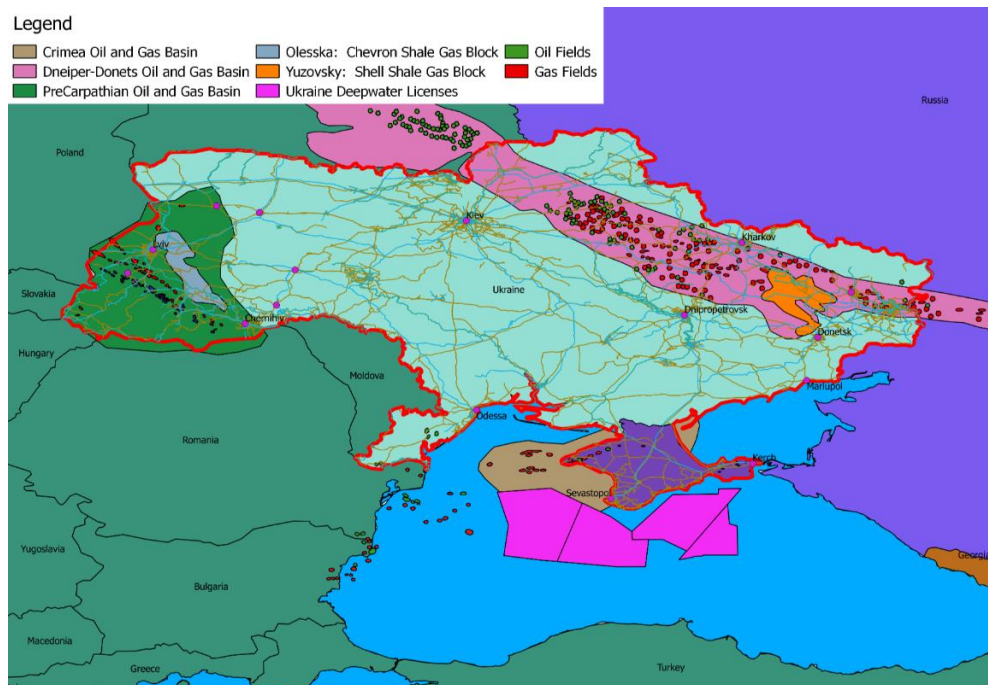
29 J. Ray, N. Esipova, *Before Crisis, Ukrainians More Likely to See NATO as a Threat. West and Central Ukraine warmer toward NATO than East*, <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/167927/crisis-ukrainians-likely-nato-threat.aspx>> (27.06.2022).

Ukraine today holds the second biggest known gas reserves in Europe. As of late 2019, known Ukrainian reserves amounted to 1.09 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, second only to Norway’s known resources of 1.53 trillion cubic meters. Up to now, these enormous energy reserves of energy remain largely not yet exploited or neither used. One of the reasons for this underutilization is the war started in 2014.

It is well known that Shell and Chevron were already contracted with the Ukrainian government but because of the war³⁰, they stepped back.

Today, Ukraine has a low annual reserve usage rate of about 2 per cent. Moreover, more active exploration may yield previously undiscovered gas fields, which would further increase the overall volume of Ukraine’s deposits (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Ukraine’s gas reserves.



Source: The Energy Consulting Group, *Map detailing the largely untapped gas and oil fields in Ukraine (2015)*, <https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/t22zkc/map_detailing_the_largely_untapped_gas_and_oil/> (27.06.2022).

³⁰ P. Polityuk, R. Balmforth, *Ukraine signs \$10 billion shale gas deal with Chevron*, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-chevron-idUSBRE9A40ML20131105>> (26.06.2022).

If Ukraine will be able to explore and use this gas reserve, it could lead to an enormous income for the Ukrainian government because Europeans could buy instead of Russian gas the Ukrainian gas, even maybe at a cheaper price. It is not just about the money pouring into the country but also the share European gas market, less portion for Russian GAZPROM, and less income for Putin's Russia. In this case, Ukraine could be a prosperous, democratic country, potentially having EU membership and a vision for NATO membership as well.

For autocrat Putin, who grew to maturity in the Soviet era, who was a servant of the Communist state, who has an opinion that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a tragedy, who re-created the cult of Stalin, over glorification of the USSR's role in the Second World War³¹, created of a cult of fear, militarism, restricted on free speech and free association and has sought to establish Russia as a counterweight to the liberal Western order, a potentially prosperous and democratic Ukraine was intolerable.

For Putin, real democracy is disgusting and unbearable and Ukraine after two revolutions, the Orange Revolution in 2004, and the 'Revolution of Dignity' in 2014 was on the way to being a democratic and Russia-dependent country. In 2004, after the Orange Revolution Russia did not use its army against Ukraine but used other instruments of influence to help his protégé, Viktor Yanukovich, narrowly win the Ukrainian presidency six years later. The problem was for Putin that Yanukovich was making limbo between Russia and the West keeping a connection with both sides. In November 2013, Putin forced the president of Ukraine to choose between membership in Russia's Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union³² association agreement and Yanukovich was in favour of choosing Russia.

This decision triggered mass demonstrations in several cities of Ukraine, especially in the western and central parts of the country. This series of events from November 2013 and February 2014, become known as the Euro Mайдan or 'Revolution of Dignity'.

The mass demonstrations, clashes with police and street protests lasted several weeks, punctuated tragically by the killing of dozens of peaceful protestors by the government. The outcome was the collapse of the pro-Russian government and Yanukovich's flight to Russia in February 2014, and a new pro-Western government taking power in Kyiv. Putin had lost his influence over Ukraine for the second time in a decade (the first time in 2003), again

³¹ F. Georgesco, *The Russian myth of the Great Patriotic War and its manipulations*, <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/05/03/the-russian-myth-of-the-great-patriotic-war-and-its-manipulations_5982273_4.html> (30.06.2022).

³² The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU or EEU) is an economic union of some post-Soviet states located in Eurasia created by Russia in 2014. Member states are as follows: Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia.

because of democratic regime change. Putin became extremely furious, and this time decided to use armed forces against Ukraine, according to his rhetoric to punish the alleged U.S.-backed, neo-Nazi regime in Kyiv.

Russian armed forces seized Crimea; Moscow later annexed the Ukrainian peninsula. Putin also provided money, equipment, and soldiers to back separatists in the Donbas, fuelling a bloody eight-year war in Donbas that claimed the lives of approximately fourteen-thousand people³³. After invading – not before – Putin amped up his criticisms of NATO expansion to justify his belligerent actions.

Bad surprises for Russia

The Russia-Ukraine crisis has also brought about many surprises. Putin, like Adolf Hitler before World War II³⁴, believed the West is weak, and divided and liberalism is obsolete, the democracy outlived its purpose³⁵. He probably assumed that, like the annexation of Crimea and the war provoked by Russians in the Don Basin, the US and Western democracies would react weakly and accept the imminent military victory and the Zelensky government change by a pro-Russian regime because of the EU's oil and gas dependence. Putin miscalculated completely the political reactions of the civilized world.

The first miscalculation and extremely bad surprise for Putin were that the large-scale aggression against Ukraine has united Europe rather than divided it. The United Kingdom and Poland called for support from the European Union and like-minded nations, and then, after some reluctance, Germany joined the countries supporting Ukraine.

In fact, against Putin's will, the EU and NATO became more unified and stronger. It has happened even though Mr Viktor Orbán, the recently re-elected Prime Minister of Hungary, notoriously try to block all European Union's sanctions against Russia punishing Putin's aggression. Despite Orbán's subversive, troublemaker, disruptive, and Putin-supporting policy, the European Union has already accepted six sanctions packages against Russia.

³³ The overall number of confirmed deaths in the so-called War in Donbas, which started on 6th April 2014, was estimated at 14.200–14.400 through 31st December 2021, including non-combat military deaths. Most of the deaths took place in the first two years of the war between 2014 and 2015 when major combat took place before the Minsk Agreements. See: UN OHCR, *Conflict-related civilian casualties in Ukraine...*

³⁴ *Appeasement before WWII*, <[https://www.historycrunch.com/appeasement-before-world-war-ii.html#/>](https://www.historycrunch.com/appeasement-before-world-war-ii.html#/) (27.06.2022).

³⁵ J. Marcus, *Putin: Russian president says liberalism 'obsolete'*, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48795764>> (27.06.2022).

Concerning Ukraine's EU membership, Putin failed as well. It has happened that, on 17th June 2022, the EU Commission officially announced its recommendation to grant Ukraine EU candidate status.

Moreover, on 23rd June 2022, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the immediate granting of candidate status for EU membership to Ukraine and Moldova³⁶. On the same day, the European Council granted Ukraine the status of a candidate for accession to the EU, and finally, Ukraine got the EU's membership candidate status³⁷.

Putin-led Russia failed to achieve what was most probably its main political objective: to overthrow the Kyiv government in a blitzkrieg military operation. The President of Ukraine remained in his place, and he is supported by the Ukrainian population. The astonishing personal bravery and fearless leadership of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, has taken the world by surprise and he has won the admiration of the European and American public and even a lot of experienced politicians in different countries.

His courage does not leave but stays in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, with his cabinet under siege by Putin's forces, was a real game-changer and encouraging factor for the people of Ukraine. He became a symbol of resistance and national identity and the determined element of the world's view of the conflict³⁸.

In the military dimension, the Russian Army was surprised by the determination of the Ukrainians. The Russians have forgotten the fact that the soldiers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces are fighting for their national survival, their homeland, and their way of life, and they have the home-field advantage, knowing the terrain and communities. Moreover, the Ukrainian Army is different from the army in 2014.

In 2014, Chief of the General Staff General Viktor Muzhenko described the situation as "an army literally in ruins, Russian generals at the head of Ukrainian Armed Forces and security agencies, total demoralization"³⁹. In 2016, Ukraine has started a comprehensive reform of the armed forces having an ambitious goal, to meet NATO standards by 2020. This goal was not achieved but the Ukrainian Army got Western-type training from American Canadian and British trainers, new equipment, and new leaders.

³⁶ European Parliament, *Grant EU candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova without delay*, <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220616IPR33216/grant-eu-candidate-status-to-ukraine-and-moldova-without-delay-meps-demand>> (27.06.2022).

³⁷ *Ukraine has officially received the status of a candidate for EU membership*, <<https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2022/06/23/7141922>> (27.06.2022).

³⁸ *The courage of Ukraine's unlikely wartime leader*, <<https://www.ft.com/content/3e637a26-b608-4f45-9501-bd64753480c9>> (27.06.2022).

³⁹ V. Torba, *Armiya. Voina. Ekzamen. Interview with general Viktor Muzhenko*, <<https://day.kyiv.ua/ru/article/podrobnosti/armiya-voina-ekzamen>> (12.07.2022).

Of course, Russian planners wanted to blind the Ukrainian command and control system, but they failed. From the very beginning of the war, the United States provided satellite communication and an internet connection to Ukraine. This was a reasonable way for the Russian offensive cyber operations and electronic warfare failed to block Ukrainian command and control efforts, and critical governmental infrastructures and deliver Russian propaganda to the Ukrainian population. Russian Army was completely not prepared for such a situation.

Moreover, the United States and the United Kingdom provided vital intelligence data for Ukrainians which helped on the ground to resist successfully against Russian military machinery. Most probably, on 14th April 2022, American intelligence assisted in to sink of the Russian flagship “Moskva”⁴⁰.

Before the Russian Army aggression started a lot of observers believed that due to Russian absolute overwhelming military combat power, Ukraine will be defeated within days. For example, with regard the air power, Russian Airforce had a clear advantage in the air, with the combat aircraft it had moved near the border outnumbering Ukraine's air force by more than three to one. Logically, most military analysts predicted that Russia would quickly gain air superiority, but it has not happened. The Russian air force failed to achieve air superiority against the Ukrainian air defence system which is still limiting the Russian Airforce’s ability to manoeuvre. Moreover, the Russians lost a significant quantity of UAVs as well.

The Russian ground forces suffered unexpected heavy losses. According to independent sources, almost 900 Russian tanks have been destroyed (this number could significantly higher because this number contains only documented losses)⁴¹. These heavy losses could be explained by the fantastic effectiveness of the Western-made anti-tank weapons such as the US-made FGM-148 Javelin and the advanced tactics of the Ukrainian Army. According to some sources, already by 4th March 2022, almost 300 armoured vehicles were destroyed by Javelins⁴².

Moreover, despite the billions of petrol dollars spent, the image of the Russian Army as a modern high-tech army is broken forever. The huge losses in military hardware and the extremely big number of technical failures could influence the Russian arms trade negatively.

⁴⁰ K. Dilanian, C. Kube, C. E. Lee, *U.S. intel helped Ukraine sink Russian flagship Moskva, officials say*, <<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/us-intel-helped-ukraine-sink-russian-flagship-moskva-officials-say-rcna27559>> (30.06.2022).

⁴¹ S. Mitzer, J. Oliemans, *Attack On Europe: Documenting Russian Equipment Losses During The 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine*, <<https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/02/attack-on-europe-documenting-equipment.html>> (6.06.2022).

⁴² D. Achom, *300 Shots Fired, 280 Russian Tanks Gone: US Missiles in Ukrainian Hands*, <<https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/how-small-ukraine-force-is-killing-russian-tanks-with-us-javelin-missiles-2803289>> (17.07.2022).

Putin also assumed that he would overrun Ukraine in three days, and we see that more than several months have passed since then. With this, he weakened himself not only in Russian mass support, but he weakened his image as a big strategist and now he is leading to the strategic collapse of Russia.

Russia has already lost it since it was never interested in being dragged into a long-standing conflict without a clear winner. The costs of the war are enormous for the Russian regime and society and might potentially lead to an even higher price to pay in the future. After adopting the sixth package of sanctions, the EU is currently preparing the next package of sanctions. In this package of sanctions, the European Union will target Russian gold export⁴³, an embargo on technologies that can still be supplied to Russia and used by Russia in its industry, on maritime supplies of oil and petroleum products from Russia while seeking to ‘close exit routes’ that circumvent its previous packages too⁴⁴.

Even Switzerland, a non-EU member, who stayed neutral in the First and Second World War and did lucrative business with Nazi Germany, even do was not a member of the UN until 2002⁴⁵, has joined the party and taken strong action with full EU-style sanctions against Russia and Russian oligarchs trying to hide their fortunes in Swiss bank accounts.

Sanctions after sanctions it is visible that the EU and US are cutting not just political but economic links as well. This means it is a real cut-down momentum for Western relations with Vladimir Putin, as the West is finally willing to fully isolate Russia on the international stage.

The war between Russia and Ukraine became a war which cannot win by Putin in a meaningful sense.

How it is possible that Russia cannot win this war? The Russian armed forces are the unquestioned second-strongest military power in the world. Russia has the world's largest tank fleet, the second largest aircraft fleet behind the US, and the third largest submarine fleet behind the US and China⁴⁶. Firstly, it is well known, that not always the bigger one wins the war, for example, Afghanistan, or Vietnam.

Secondly, since Putin came to power in 1999, the use of the Russian armed forces in war has taken place in the so-called Second Chechen War and the

⁴³ A. Brozowski, *A preview of EU's seventh sanctions package on Russia, to be agreed by next week*, <<https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/a-preview-of-eus-seventh-sanctions-package-on-russia-to-be-agreed-by-next-week/>> (18.07.2022).

⁴⁴ *British man captured by separatists in Donetsk dies*, <<https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-british-man-held-by-russia-backed-separatists-dies-as-it-happened/a-62479923>> (17.07.2022).

⁴⁵ *Switzerland in the United Nations*, <<https://www.aplusforpeace.ch/switzerland-united-nations/>> (17.07.2022).

⁴⁶ *The world's 20 strongest militaries*, <<https://www.businessinsider.in/defense/ranked-the-worlds-20-strongest-militaries/slidelist/51930339.cms#slideid=51930374>> (18.07.2022).

creation of the puppet states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, created to the detriment of independent Georgia. In parallel, Russia, after a period of partial suspension of implementation, fully withdrew from the implementation of the obligations of the CFE Convention in 2015⁴⁷. There are also opinions that already by 2003, Vladimir Putin had built a system that had almost all the characteristics of a dictatorship⁴⁸.

The new use of Russian armed forces took place during the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, and then direct Russian military intervention was necessary on the side of the two separatist puppet states created in Eastern Ukraine, the 'Luhansk People's Republic' and the 'Donetsk People's Republic'. Moreover, the Russian intervention in Syria started in 2015, successfully saving the Assad regime but already presented Russian brutality and ruthlessness by killing thousands of innocent civilians. Also, after the elimination of the independence of Belarus, Russia's intervention saved the pro-Russian leadership in Kazakhstan in January 2022.

Yes, Putin's foreign military successes in different countries but those achievements were all achieved by using small units of elite forces, mercenaries (for example the Wagner group which has been used in Syria, Mali, Libya, Sudan, Madagascar, Mozambique and Central African Republic, Belarus, Nagorno Karabakh and currently in Ukraine as well) and local militia groups alongside Russian air power.

Above mentioned engagements were always against weaker forces but now they should face an army having Western training and fantastic motivation for fighting.

Unfortunately, in every case in the past, Putin's Russia moved swiftly and ruthlessly in ways the civilized Western countries were unable to replay or counterbalance Russian aggressive actions except impose sanctions but without any measurable success. Practically, Putin created new facts on the ground, and he believed that Western democratic countries will always accept his political actions.

In the large-scale war that started on 24th February, the president of Russia tried the same again on the grandest possible scale in Ukraine, he wish to achieve his goals, including the governmental change, within about 72 hours in a country having 41 million people occupying the second biggest land area in the European continent⁴⁹. It was an astonishing and reckless gamble and it

⁴⁷ R. Wicker, *Russia's withdrawal from CFE Treaty work a 'dangerous move'*, <<https://www.osce.org/pa/144946>> (17.07.2022).

⁴⁸ C. J. Friedrich, Z. Brzezinski, *The General Characteristics of Totalitarian Dictatorship*, [In:] *Comparative Government*, ed. by J. Blondel, London 1995, pp. 189-194.

⁴⁹ There are different estimations of population. The latest official census was held in 2001, and the population of Ukraine was around 48,5 million. For 2021 (before the war) the "Trading Economics" data has been accepted. Trade Economics, *Ukrainian population*, <<https://tradingeconomics.com/ukraine/population>> (20.07.2022).

failed already in the first week of the invasion, and this failure of ‘blitzkrieg’ represented an extremely bad operational surprise for the Russian Army.

After the first bad surprise arrived the second military failure because the Russian Army was unable to occupy Kyiv and Kharkiv by using military operational manoeuvres.

The performance of the Russian Armed Forces was very poor. The Russians had a lot of problems concerning the leadership, logistics, and tactical unpreparedness against an army conducting dynamic defence and some even asymmetric methods of warfare.

Moreover, it turned out that Ukraine is too big of a bite, and the Russian Army cannot dominate such a big country.

Then, the frustrated Russians moved to the new plan. They give up on Kyiv, and Kharkiv and regrouped the forces into the Donbas. De facto, because of the frontline configuration, Russians have advantages and the force ratio also against Ukrainians, especially in terms of artillery. With the reserves coming from Russia, even if they could take over not just Luhansk but Donetsk regions, will be a pyrrhic victory for Putin’s regime.

From a strategic point of view, this war became a war of attrition. From the four strategic directions of attack, the Ukrainian Armed Forces managed to eliminate the threat in two directions (Kyiv and Kharkiv), in Southern Ukraine the situation is frozen, and in Eastern Ukraine, the Ukrainians are losing territory.

Nevertheless, Putin will declare a military victory after taking over the Donbas, in his rhetoric ‘liberation of Luhansk and Donetsk peoples republics’, the Russian president will have only a choice between different types of defeat. Moreover, even if the Russians Armed Forces will be able to take under control the whole territory of the Donbas and the complete territory of Southern Ukraine, which is still far the case, they should have to hold those territories for the indefinite future in the face of several million Ukrainians who don't want them there.

On the southern front, Ukrainians had a promising success, taking back Snake Island, which has strategic importance in the Western part of the Black Sea⁵⁰. The Russian retreat from Snake Island is a strategic win for Ukraine and a boost for morale as resources run low in the east, where Russia is trying to take more territory. Moreover, it also means, the storm against Odessa is not feasible anymore.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian control over Snake Island gives Ukrainian Joint Forcers a real chance to disrupt Russian shipping lanes in the Black Sea and weaken Russia's hold on southern Ukrainian land too.

⁵⁰ E. Fang. *Ukrainian invasion explained, Ukraine wins back control over Snake Island*, <<https://www.npr.org/2022/06/30/1108855805/russia-withdraws-snake-island-ukraine>> (20.07.2022).

One of the unbelievable surprises for the Russian navy was the capacity of Ukrainian Joint Forces to strike the navy ships at Berdyansk port which attack could limit Russia's ability to supply its forces fighting in the Donbas and could be a major logistical percussio for the Russian Army⁵¹.

Most probably the war will go on in summer and in the autumn as well. Considering the promised Western weapons and ongoing training in Poland, and the United Kingdom, the Ukrainian Army will possibly strike back and at least try to take back some occupied territory from the Russians⁵².

If the battle reaches an autumn stalemate, he will have precious little to show for so much loss and pain. If the military momentum shifts and his forces get pushed back, even more so.

Ukraine is sacrificing a lot in manpower and infrastructure as well. From the Ukrainian point of view, not collapsing at the very beginning of the invasion, is already a moral victory.

It has been believed that the Ukrainian Army will be outmatched early in Russia's invasion. Meanwhile, should be noted that the fact of not losing the war itself is still far from a victory for Ukraine. The difference between expectations and the surprising resilience of Ukraine's military makes it easy to misinterpret the current situation in Ukraine's favour. Ukraine and its army are in far worse shape than commonly believed and need, and will continue to need, a staggering amount of aid and support to win.

Conclusions

The war between Russia and Ukraine reminded Europeans and the entire civilized world again that freedom is not free and not cheap. The freedom requires an autonomous defence, military, and energy policy, rather than dependence on Russian oil and natural gas. Finally, the European Union learned that Russia must never again hold Europe hostage to energy imports.

This war became not just an armed conflict between two countries, but it also became a clash between the civilized, international law-based world and barbarism, annexationist law of the jungle.

A possible failure to respond strongly to Russian aggression against Ukraine is appeasement and an incentive to further erode the international system. Consequently, the international community must take measures to halt

⁵¹ B. Forest, N. A. Youssef, *Ukraine's Surprise Strike on Russian Fleet Hobbles Putin's Donbas Strategy*, <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-surprise-strike-on-russian-fleet-hobbles-putins-donbas-strategy-11649250001>> (20.07.2022).

⁵² T. Balmforth, P. Polityuk, *Ukrainian rockets hit Russian-held area as Kyiv readies southern counterattack*, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-prepares-fresh-russian-assault-west-braces-worsening-energy-crisis-2022-07-12/>> (20.07.2022).

Russian aberrant foreign policy, expel Russian occupants from the territory of Ukraine and uphold the global order.

Contrary to his justification, Putin's aggression against Ukraine, as argued in this paper, is a war of choice, a personal decision of the Russian president and was not necessary. This brutal invasion is just the latest of a ruthless trend dating back to wars in Chechnya, Georgia, Crimea, Donbas, and Syria. The real casus belli of the Russian aggression was Putin's hatred of democracy and the will to restorative the former Soviet Union.

Putin's fatal political error is the non-observance of Ukrainians' enormous resistance and free spirit. This spirit will never allow them to give up on their country and its territory and they will never surrender to Moscow's authoritarian rule and control.

As Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War*: "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting." "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles"⁵³. It is already obvious, the Russians failed to learn the oldest military philosopher and strategist adviser laws of warfare or have forgotten to use them.

After more than four months of the war between Russia and Ukraine, there are still many uncertainties about the outcome of the war, but the result of this war is beyond doubt: Putin will lose, and all of Russia will lose with him.

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⁵³ L. Gilles, *Art of War by Sun Tzu Chapter 3. Attack by Stratagem*, points 2 and 18, <https://www.utoledo.edu/rotc/pdfs/the_art_of_war.pdf> (20.07.2022).

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RUSSIA AS A CHALLENGE TO EUROPEAN SECURITY – A ROMANIAN PERSPECTIVE

Abstract: *The year 2022 was characterised by a major conflict in Europe and numerous crises worldwide. The conflict started in February 2022 with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, being considered the most demanding and strange conventional war since the Second World War. Even though it was described by Kremlin as a ‘special military operation’, the duration, political objectives, participants and ways of conduct made it a real conventional war that takes place at the Eastern European flank, with major implications for the European current order and the international security environment. The two nations involved in the conflict – Russia and Ukraine – are not NATO members, but they have a special status of partnership with the Alliance. This is why, the NATO decision-makers could not directly military interfere in the conflict, but political-diplomatic and STRATCOM only. The NATO Secretary General encouraged Member States and the EU to take all necessary measures to support Ukraine and sanction Russia, including arms sales to Ukraine and soft military participation for counselling and advice. The conflict itself deepened the international consequences of almost two years of the Coronavirus pandemic that led to not only an international sanitary crisis but also economic, financial and social ones. It amplified the disastrous security situation not only in Europe but worldwide, by creating additional crises for energy (gas) and food (grains). In its turn, the food crisis was and continues to be highly influenced by some climate change consequences, including draught and the great hit wave in Europe, North America and Africa during this Summer. Even if we are not at the end of the war in Ukraine and no participant can consider itself as being victorious so far or achieving its political objectives, there are some lessons identified for the military field that should be considered for the future security of Europe and the international environment,*

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as well. These lessons have and will continue to present geopolitical implications for Europe, having also some national implications, as well.

Keywords: *Ukrainian war, special military operation, European security, lessons identified, energy crisis, food crisis, Extended/Wider Black Sea Area, geopolitical implications, the Minsk Agreement, the Montreux Convention*

Introduction

In the last ten years or so, the Geostrategic situation in Europe was not easy or relaxed. Moreover, we can affirm that it was very complicated and sensitive, with a lot of unpredicted violent actions, crises and even conflicts taking place inside. It is worth mentioning here the 2014 Ukrainian crisis (the Russian new type of Hybrid Warfare), the ‘Wave of Terror in Europe’ between 2015 and 2018, the illegal migration between 2016 and 2020, as well as the BREXIT and the EU internal crisis of ‘one Europe with two speeds’ and the NATO internal crisis with Türkiye. More recently, there was Catalonia’s drive for independence in 2019 that plunged Spain into its biggest political crisis for 40 years, as well as the Armenia-Azerbaijan war of 2020 or the continued Greece-Türkiye crisis in the Eastern Aegean Sea. All this volatile security situation was exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic and the counter-Covid 19 measures undertaken by all European states to escape from the fifth and sixth waves of the disease.

We all know what happened in 2014 and how Moscow conducted a new type of ‘Hybrid Warfare’ to destabilise Ukraine and not let it become a democracy. Kremlin aimed to keep Ukraine under its control. To stop this ‘Hybrid War’, Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists agreed on a 12-point ceasefire deal in Minsk, in September 2014 (Minsk I). Followed quickly by violations from both sides, representatives of Russia, Ukraine, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the leaders of two pro-Russian separatist regions signed a 13-point agreement in February 2015. This new agreement called ‘Minsk II’, was supported by France and Germany. It set out military and political steps that remain unimplemented. A major blockage has been Russia’s insistence that it is not a party to the conflict and therefore is not bound by its terms.

Another bold move of the Kremlin was to start building impenetrable lines of defence against the West at its buffer zones, including the terrestrial and maritime borders. Throughout history, there are a lot of examples when big powers have built castles, trenches, walls (e.g. Great Wall of China), defence lines (e.g. Maginot Line) and now Anti-Access and Aerial Denial (A2/AD) capabilities to undermine the freedom of movement and operational access of

foes. This is why, considering that the US became the most powerful nation with immense military power, from 2014 until now, Russia was building A2/AD systems in the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, the Baltic Sea and the Arctic Ocean². The aim is to deny the US and NATO free access in the respective areas, being under strategic interest for Kremlin.

Moreover, in 2021 Russia started to change its military posture alongside the Ukrainian borders, using some joint strategic–operational exercises with Belarus (Zapad-2021), including testing of its nuclear missiles to increase its nuclear deterrence (Grom-2022). It also launched a hitherto unprecedented political rhetoric, drawing a ‘red line’ on Ukraine and Georgia's joining NATO and increasing the presence of Allied forces in Eastern Europe. These events have convinced Western political and military decision-makers that such major military action in the area is imminent. Actions were even expected to begin during the Chinese Winter Olympics. So, using the operational-strategic exercise ‘Zapad-2021’ in Western Russia and Southern Belarus, the posture of Russian military forces on the border with Ukraine has changed, by bringing about 20.000-30.000 soldiers and military equipment from other districts and relocating them to training areas near the western border³. Meanwhile, Kremlin has decided to create 20 new large units in the Western Military District, to discourage the expansion of the North Atlantic Alliance to the east.

During the strategic nuclear exercise ‘Grom-2022’, President Putin ordered the launching of two nuclear ballistic missiles – one from northwestern Russia and the second aboard a submarine in the Barents Sea. In this exercise, in which the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, was also invited to participate, Kalibr cruise missiles and Zircon hypersonic missiles were launched by ships of the North and Black Sea fleets, against naval and ground targets, and the planes launched Kinzhal hypersonic cruise missiles against ground targets⁴.

The Geopolitics of the Extended/Wider Black Sea Area was very complicated even without what happened in Ukraine and what Russia has done near the Ukrainian border. This is true because we can speak of the persistence of ‘frozen conflicts’ in the region, especially in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria, where some actions were endangering the security of the region. For example, the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, which took place between 27th September and 10th November, had and continues to

² K. Muzyka, *Russia Goes to War: Exercises, Signalling, War Scares, and Military Confrontations*, <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-goes-war-exercises-signaling-war-scares-and-military-confrontations>> (28.02.2022).

³ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁴ T. Balmforth, M. Kiselyova, *Putin leads sweeping nuclear exercises as tensions soar*, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-starts-russias-strategic-nuclear-exercises-tensions-soar-2022-02-19>> (28.02.2022).

have implications up-to-day for regional security. This conflict there involved Azerbaijan, militarily supported by Türkiye against the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh and Armenia, supported by Russia. The conflict represented a defeat of Armenia, which had to return all surrounding territories occupied since 1994, as well as a marginalization of Russia's influence over the region⁵.

Another example is Transnistria, the Moscow-backed separatists' region of Moldova, where, at the end of April this year, a governmental building was hit by rocket-propelled grenades⁶ and several shootings happened a mile away from Cobasna, the largest ammunition depot in Eastern Europe. This provocative act was seen by the Republic of Moldova's pro-EU president, Maia Sandu, who blamed the blasts on infighting between rival factions in Transnistria, prompting growing concern that the country could be dragged into the Ukraine conflict. The region still hosts 1500 Russian troops, as well as 20.000 tons of ammunition stored in Cobasna and is long used by Moscow as a bargaining chip in its efforts to influence the Republic of Moldova⁷.

Therefore, my article is aimed at analysing the very hot topic of the current security environment in Europe related to Russia and how it is perceived by Eastern European countries for the security of the region. In the end, it represents the Romanian view of the current Russia-Ukraine war, highlighting the geostrategic impact of this conflict against European and national security. For nations living at the edge of this conflict and being neighbours with Russia, the approach and effects understandings are different from the rest of Europe.

Military Aspects and Lessons Identified from the Russian-Ukrainian War

On 24th February 2022, around 05.00 a.m., Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an unprovoked war against Ukraine, called by Kremlin 'a military special operation'⁸. Previously, on 22nd February, the Russian Duma recognized the two self-declared independent states Luhansk and Donetsk and,

⁵ S. Fraser, *AP Explains: What lies behind Turkish support for Azerbaijan*, <<https://apnews.com/article/turkey-territorial-disputes-azerbaijan-ankara-armenia-9a95d9690569623adedffe8c16f3588d>> (13.05.2022).

⁶ H. Fot, *Explosions hit state security building in Transnistria*, <<https://www.ft.com/content/1e811d5d-3972-4bde-abc5-acac7dd4832b>> (30.04.2022).

⁷ O. Adey, *Moldova: shooting near Russian ammunition depot in Transnistria*, <<https://gettotext.com/moldova-shooting-near-a-russian-ammunition-depot-in-transnistria/>> (15.05.2022).

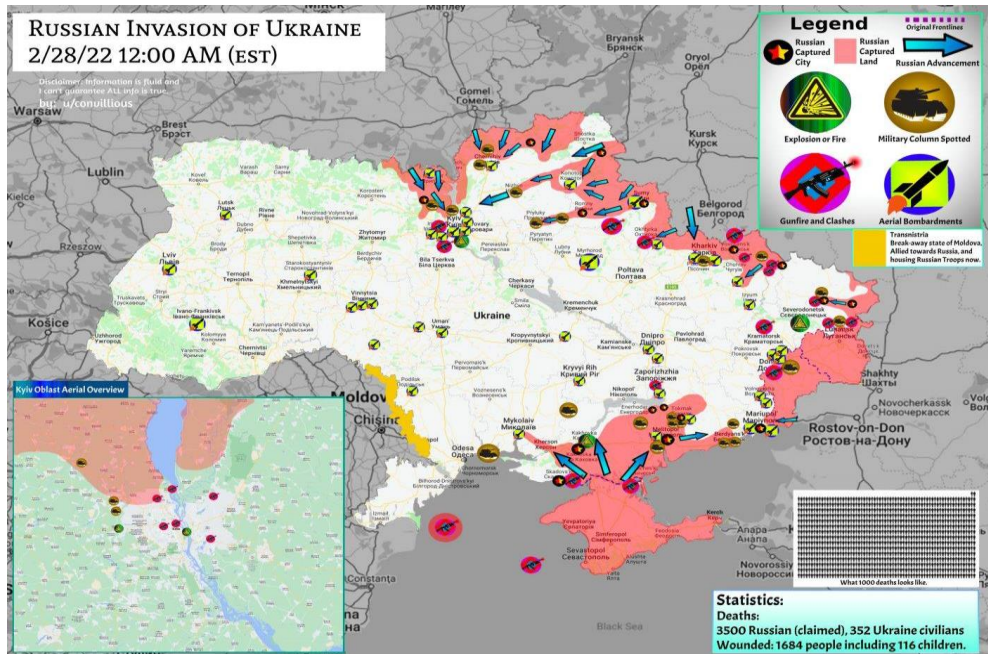
⁸ P. Kirby, *Why has Russia invaded Ukraine and what does Putin want?*, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-5672058>> (11.03.2022).

on 23rd February, the Ukrainian Rada proclaimed the State of Emergency on the entire territory of the country.

The Russian land offensive simultaneously started in four directions – NORTH, from Belarus towards Kyiv, NORTH-EAST, from Russia towards Kharkiv, EAST, from Russia to support separatists in Donbas, and SOUTH, from Crimea towards Odesa and Mariupol – and was supported by heavy air and missile attacks against command and control (C2), air defence (AD) installations, airports and military bases (see fig. 1). The initial strategic objectives of the Russian Armed Forces were:

- conquest IOT control of the central and eastern parts of Ukraine, by developing the offensive in the Southern directions (Crimean Peninsula), Eastern (Donbas region) and Northeast (Kharkov) – military victory;
- conquest of the Northern part and Kyiv (later joining forces with the forces on the Dnieper River) IOT capture, remove the political leadership of Ukraine and replace it with a pro-Russian one – ensuring political victory.

Figure 1. The Start of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine



Source: corneliupivariu.com personal blog.

It was characterized by: a slow, unexpected pace; very predictable directions, manoeuvres and tactics; being delayed by an efficient Ukrainian resistance, amplified by the Western support; being sporadically and divergently supported by Air and missile; increased distance and effort for logistic supply lines⁹.

On 18th March, Russia launched the second phase of its ‘special military operation’ in the Eastern part of Ukraine, with the main effort on the integral conquering of the Donbas region and securing it (see fig. 2)¹⁰.

Figure 2. The Second Phase of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine



Source: Institute for the Study of War (21:00 GMR, 5 June)

⁹ P. Bergen, *Gen. Petraeus: Invasion reveals a host of weaknesses in Russia's military*, <<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/15/opinions/russia-ukraine-petraeus-bergen/index.html>> (16.03.2022).

¹⁰ As the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made it clear, the liberation of the Donbas region in Eastern Ukraine is an ‘unconditional priority’ for Moscow and other territories should decide their own future.

Concurrently, an additional offensive operation was launched on a secondary line of effort towards south IOT deny Ukraine access to the Black Sea and establish a corridor from Crimea to Transnistria. To successfully implement the new phase of warfare, President Vladimir Putin nominated, on 9th April 2022, a new Theatre Commander in Ukraine – Gen. Alexander Dvornikov, known also as ‘the butcher from Syria’¹¹. By appointing him to lead the ‘special military operation’ in Ukraine, it is expected to change the operational-strategic approach so far, moving to the so-called ‘scorched-earth’ strategy, in which will be conducted ‘quick battles’ in several areas at the same time.

The Ukrainian well-conducted counter-offensive and counter-attacks slowed down the Russian offensive in the central part of Donbas, stopped/pushed back Russia's advance in the Kherson and Mykolaiv area and forced Russian troops to withdraw from Kharkiv, letting Ukrainian forces regain some part of their NE border. The strong resistance of Ukrainian forces in the area of Kharkiv and Mariupol significantly delayed this offensive and caused many tactical and operational challenges to the Russian Theatre commander of the operation¹². Ukrainian commanders use the so-called ‘porcupine defence’ tactics, a concept that was described by Dr Harlan K. Ullman¹³. What characterises but also differentiates this type of defence in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is the great superiority of the Ukrainian military equipment, which is at allied standards, compared to those used by the Russian army in Ukraine (for example, Russia has removed 50-year-old T-62 tanks from storage¹⁴). This unexpected success made Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko interfere at the Belarus border with Ukraine by establishing a Military Command ‘South’ and deploying tactical Battle Groups (BGs) of Mechanised Infantry and tanks near the border¹⁵.

¹¹ In Siria, General Dvornikov used ‘scorched earth’ tactics to lead prolonged sieges of smaller cities and towns, which he bombarded at length, with much loss of life and destruction of infrastructure and residential areas, forcing the leaders of those localities to hand them over so that they are no longer bombed.

¹² R. Burns, Y. Hope, *US doubts new Russian war chief can end Moscow's floundering*, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-appoints-new-ukraine-war-commander-dvornikov-225f976f9abfb5aff6154ac3b77c21e6?utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=AP&utm_campaign=SocialFlow> (11.04.2022).

¹³ The name ‘porcupine defence’ was given by Dr Harlan K. Ullman, Doctor Honoris Causa at the Carol I National Defense University and represents the avoidance of decisive actions by using small, battalion-type formations and company, flexible and very well equipped, to inflict such great losses on the adversary that it abandons the offensive.

¹⁴ *Latest Developments in Ukraine: May 27*, <<https://www.voanews.com/a/latest-developments-in-ukraine-may-27/6591796.html>> (27.05.2022).

¹⁵ *Live updates. Mayor: Some 1,500 killed in Sievierodonetsk*, <<https://thepublicradio.org/article/live-updates--belarus-sending-troops-to-ukraine-border>> (30.05.2022).

While the Russian invasion of Ukraine appears to be a land war, there was a Kremlin desire for establishing a land bridge to Crimea and deny Ukraine access to the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. From the beginning, Moscow was confident with its sea power in the South, by controlling and denying the command of the sea for the Black Sea through A2/AD systems deployed in the Crimean Peninsula and two Naval Groups established in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean. The Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) consisted of missile corvettes and frigates, as well as some Kilo-class submarines, joined by the old Slava-class cruiser Moskva as the flagship and was reinforced just before invasion by amphibious ships from the Baltic and Northern Fleets. BSF largely bottled up the smaller Ukrainian patrol forces in port at the start of the war and established command of the sea via blockade by closing the Kerch Strait and strikes on Ukraine's ports. Being an unofficial maritime blockade, it trapped also neutral vessels and ships, using naval fire and commercial blockade to ensure that Ukraine is cut off from the economic lifelines necessary to support its war, making the country entirely reliant on direct financial support from the West, as well as eliminating the ability to resupply the Ukrainian military via the sea. At the same time, the Russian Navy has established a total maritime blockade against the grain transport from Ukraine towards the Middle East and North Africa, thus creating an international food crisis¹⁶.

The first Russian 'naval success' was the occupation of Snake Island, a very important strategic point for controlling the traffic in the North-western Black Sea and the Danube Delta. Immediate after occupying the island and following the sinking of its flagship Moskva on 14th April, by two Ukrainian missiles, Kremlin started to reconsider the protection of supply ships in the area and deployed long-range AD systems (S-400) on the island to defend their squadrons and give Russian troops the possibility to break into Transnistria¹⁷. Being forced by Ukrainian heavy artillery fire and missile strikes, Russian forces have withdrawn from Snake Island at the end of June 2022.

Moskva was not the first or last Russian warship sunken by Ukraine – the large patrol boat RFS Vasily Bykov was destroyed with MLRS fire on 7th March and the Alligator-class amphibious ship Saratov was sunken in the port of Berdyansk on 24th March. The Black Sea was also in the Media's eyes because of the 18 March NAVTEX message regarding the danger of almost 420 Ukrainian anchored mines drifting in the Black Sea. In several days, the floating mines were spotted in Romanian, Bulgarian and Türkiyesh waters.

¹⁶ K. Atwood, A. Marquardt, J. Hanster, *The US is working closely with allies to try to develop routes to get vital grain supplies out of Ukraine*, <<https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-05-17-22/index.html>> (18.05.2022).

¹⁷ A. Macias, *Russian forces bolster defenses on Ukraine's Snake Island in Black Sea, U.S. Defense official says*, <<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/05/26/russia-ukraine-live-updates.html>> (27.05.2022).

From the air power point of view, Russia was expected to achieve air superiority, but that does not seem to have happened. The AWACS and AEW&C have hardly been seen. Fighter strikes have also been limited. Air and ground-launched Cruise missiles and Ground-based Multi-Rockets have been used more. The Russian Air Forces' action was focused on close air support (CAS) rather than extended suppressed enemy's air defence (SEAD), here again, limited by a lack of multi-role platforms and operational exposure/training standards. Since the war is all in Ukraine only, there was no air defence requirement for Russia, except to destroy any aircraft that tried to engage in combat with them. As British researcher Peter Hoare has several times mentioned "Air defence integration has always been Russia's Achilles' Heel"¹⁸."

The Ukrainians have integrated a range of air and anti-air capabilities to stymie the much larger Russian air force. Starting with cheap, handheld, portable surface-to-air missiles, the Ukrainians have been able to restrict Russian airpower to a few eastern and southern areas, greatly limiting Russian freedom of manoeuvre. The addition of much more potent, and longer-range, S-300 missile systems from Slovakia makes the Russians even more vulnerable. The threat of the S-300s forces individual Russian aircraft, which generally lack refuelling, electronic warfare, and command-and-control support, to fly low to the ground to screen themselves from attack.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine can be considered a 'strange war', in which one cannot even speak of the application of General Gerasimov's doctrine of 'Active Defence', presented in 2019, or of a so-called continuation of the Hybrid Warfare started by Russia in 2014 when it took over the Crimean Peninsula 'on the edge of legality' and supported the launch of separatist actions in the Donbas region. The whole military action after February 24th brings to mind the operations of the First World War and not a conflict of the 21st Century. As per Lt. Gen (Ret) Ben Hodges, Former Commander of the United States Ground Forces in Europe (USAREUR), the main effort was to conquer the capital Kyiv and other major cities, to change the Ukrainian political leadership. Nor did the relocation of the main effort after 18th March 2022, in Eastern and Southern Ukraine help the Kremlin's strategies to achieve the effects of a 'blitzkrieg' and the 'tank-aircraft' binomial, as the Germans did in World War II, leading to a quick victory and an end to the conflict in favour of Moscow¹⁹.

¹⁸ *Ministerul britanic al Apărării: Apărarea antiaeriană a Ucrainei are un „succes considerabil” împotriva avioanelor rusești*, <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-razboi_ucraina-25421449-ministerul-britanic-apararii-apararea-antiaeriana-ucrainei-are-succes-considerabil-impotriva-aeronavelor-rusesti.htm> (03.09.2022).

¹⁹ B. Hodges, *The War in Ukraine and its Consequences on the Easter Flank. Acting as One*, a PowerPoint presentation sustained during a public debate organized by the New

More than four months after the start of the so-called ‘special military operations’ of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, there is no possibility of a ceasefire and to start serious negotiations to sign a ceasefire agreement. Even though Moscow recently announced that there would be a possibility of a meeting between the two presidents if a substantial ceasefire document is drafted, the two states involved in the conflict accuse each other of the persistent situation. For Moscow even returning to the negotiating table will be difficult due to the intention of Washington, London and Brussels to use Ukraine to gain a strategic advantage. As a result, US President Joe Biden believes that what happens in Ukraine “...goes beyond the European continent and becomes a global problem”²⁰.

This is why, even for time being, we can consider some lessons identified at all levels of conflict, as follows:

1. At the Strategic level:

- a. the Russian strategy of blitzkrieg (fulfilling its objectives in a couple of days) did not properly work, because it represents a WWII type of strategy, its aim was the conquer of cities, including the capital, that in turn necessitates long-term siege operations and was very predictable;
- b. lesser effort to end the war and conclude negotiations from all parties involved, demonstrating no interest in negotiations and the fact that Türkiye’s implication did not help and the US and European implication did not support, as well;
- c. in the war of ‘David and Goliath’, Western support was crucial to prolong Ukrainian resilience, to demonstrate that technologically advanced weapons systems can win the war, as well as the fact that training and counselling/advising is vital;
- d. International Law and war customs were not respected or at the edge, because there was no declaration of war, the 1936 Montreux Convention was somehow illegally used by Türkiye and Russian forces used cluster ammunition, thermobaric missiles, phosphorus bombs, fléchettes and unguided missiles on residential areas;
- e. strong Ukrainian population support was crucial for resilience, which represented a direct involvement in the conflict, heavy support for Ukrainian troops and the conduct of a guerrilla-type of warfare;

Strategic Centre and CEPA on 7th April 2022, <<https://newstrategycenter.ro/the-war-in-ukraine-and-its-consequences-on-the-eastern-flank-acting-as-one/>> (30.06.2022).

²⁰ *Russia Intensifies Assault on Ukraine’s Donbas Region*, <<https://www.voanews.com/a/ukraine-calls-for-faster-weapons-deliveries/6586691.html>> (27.05.2022).

- f. STRATCOM is paramount, but in this conflict, there have been official statements regarding Media control of information warfare, with no/few official statements regarding the conflict situation, letting Media and Social Media lie and present fake news and demonstrating no STRATCOM strategy from NATO and Member States.
2. At the Operational level:
 - a. there were no Joint Operations conducted in Ukraine;
 - b. no Air Superiority was ever gained by Russia – Air Parity?
 - c. difficulties in combining Air with Land throughout the whole campaign;
 - d. Intelligence gathering and analysis – a failure for Kremlin;
 - e. no immediate Plan B in place after the failure of taking Kyiv;
 - f. no coherent effort between services and poor logistic support;
 - g. no effective Theatre and Regional C2 and lack of best practices;
 - h. manpower issues – use of mixed professionals with conscripts, as well as foreign fighters²¹;
 - i. Order of Battle (ORBAT) to fight against NATO – no flexibility in Task Organization;
 - j. Cyber Operations are not at the forefront – only an enabler role;
 - k. no Space operations.
 3. At the Tactical level:
 - a. the use of Air power was poor and demonstrated the superiority of modern AD systems against Russian air fighters;
 - b. same happened with the superiority of modern anti-tank systems against not so developed Russian tanks;
 - c. mix of Russian new and old generations of material/equipment demonstrated that the modernisation and procurement processes are not mature yet;
 - d. President Putin’s discourse radicalisation towards the collective West;
 - e. Russian troops did not fight as they were trained;
 - f. the issue of morale – Ukrainian versus Russian troops;

²¹ According to the announcement made by the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, about 20.000 international volunteers from 52 countries have arrived in Ukraine to fight against the invading Russian forces. They, are part of the so-called ‘International Legion for the Territorial Defense of Ukraine’, and have joined the National Guard of Ukraine, which has 100.000 reservists reinstated since the beginning of hostilities. At the same time, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said more than 16.000 foreign volunteers, mostly from the Middle East, Libya and Syria, had joined the Russian forces in the conflict, mainly to help pro-Russian separatists. They are being recruited by the Russian Wagner Paramilitary Group.

- g. NCOs are not the backbone of the Russian Armed Forces;
- h. WWII tactics versus modern warfare;
- i. little use of Cyber-attacks and Electromagnetic Warfare actions.

Many military specialists around the world considered the Russian “special military operation” not only a strange war but the largest conventional war in Europe since the Second World War that has marked a major escalation of the conflict between the two countries since 2014, shattering the peace in Europe and endangering the entire European security environment. The consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine are not only politico-military for the region but encompass energetic, food and financial crises with international repercussions.

Geopolitical Implications for Europe

The escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict towards the East and South of Ukraine and the possibility of its long duration with numerous human victims and collateral damages has transformed it into a real conventional war that had and continues to have many implications for the Geopolitics of Europe. These implications refer to the volatile security situation in Eastern Europe, being characterised by the migration crisis, as well as energy, economic, financial and grain transportation crises, which, in turn, could change the current European order.

In response to Russia’s actions and because of the special status of the two countries involved in the conflict, NATO’s response was and continues to be just politically, involving numerous Secretary General statements, statements from Alliance’s Heads of state and Government during the Extraordinary NATO Summit in Brussels, on 24th March 2022 and Madrid Summit of 28-30 June 2022, as well as the diplomatic pressure on Russia. At the same time, the North Atlantic Council decided to provide political and practical support, but not military, to Ukraine, in the format of assistance in cybersecurity, protection against CBRN and extensive humanitarian support. Internally, NATO decided to activate its defence plans, deploy elements of the NATO Response Force, and place 40.000 troops on the Eastern flank, along with significant air and naval assets, under direct NATO command supported by Allies’ national deployments. It also established four additional multinational battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. NATO took and continues to take all measures and decisions to ensure the security and defence of all Allies

across all domains and with a 360-degree approach. Its measures remain preventive, proportionate, and non-escalators²².

The Heads of State and Government decided at the Extraordinary NATO Summit in Brussels, on 24th March 2022, to accelerate NATO's transformation for a more dangerous strategic reality, including through the adoption of the next Strategic Concept in Madrid. In light of the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades, they also significantly strengthened NATO's longer-term deterrence and defence posture and further developed the full range of ready forces and capabilities necessary to maintain credible deterrence and defence. These steps are to be supported by enhanced exercises with an increased focus on collective defence and interoperability.

At the Madrid NATO Summit on 28-30 June 2022, Heads of State and Government nominated Russia as "the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area²³" and highlighted the need to include energy security inside the resilience. Even it is considered a national responsibility under Art. 3 from the 1949 Washington Treaty, the current energetic crisis in Europe and how Russia uses it as a weapon against European countries forced Allies to consider energy security as a collective commitment to ensure reliable energy supplies to NATO military forces.

Moreover, the Secretary-General encouraged Member States to support Ukraine with modern military equipment at NATO standards, sending also military advisers to train the Ukrainian Armed Forces to know how to use this equipment and host millions of refugees on their territories. Nevertheless, one of the positive implications of this conflict was the national decision of Finland and Sweden to stop their neutrality and join NATO. Even with Türkiye's objections from the beginning, their requests have been approved and the two countries were invited to become Allies at the Madrid Summit. The Accession Protocols for Finland and Sweden were signed by Allies at Brussels, on 5th July 2022 and are now to the Member States for ratification, according to their national procedures²⁴.

On the other hand, the EU from the beginning strongly condemned Putin's decision to recognise the non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk and Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. It also condemns Belarus' involvement in Russia's military

²² *Statement by NATO Heads of State and Government, NATO Press Release (2022) 061*, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_193719.htm?selectedLocale=en> (02.08.2022).

²³ *Madrid Summit Declaration, NATO Press Release (2022) 095*, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_196951.htm> (02.08.2022).

²⁴ *Finland and Sweden complete NATO accession talks, NATO Press Release (2022) 108*, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_197737.htm> (02.08.2022).

aggression. In response to the military aggression, the EU has acted both politically and economically, through the European Council and the Council of the EU statements, as well as massively expanded sanctions against Russia, by adding a significant number of persons and entities to the sanctions list, and by adopting unprecedented measures. In this respect, the EU has adopted six packages of sanctions designed to weaken Russia's economic base, depriving it of critical technologies and markets, and significantly curtailing its ability to wage war, including here: individual sanctions against Russian and Belarussian VIPs; restrictions on economic relations with Donbas Region; suspension of visa for diplomats, officials and businesspeople; closure of EU airspace and EU ports; SWIFT ban for Russian banks; suspension of broadcasting for Russia Today and Sputnik; and the prohibition on imports and exports, including energy²⁵.

The EU has shown unity and strength and has provided Ukraine with coordinated humanitarian, political, financial and material support – €243 million in humanitarian aid for Ukraine and Moldova, material assistance to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries through the EU civil protection mechanism, €1,2 billion in macro-financial assistance to foster stability and €2 billion to support the Ukrainian armed forces under the European Peace Facility mechanism. Therefore, since the Russian aggression started, the EU has committed to mobilising around €5,4 billion to support Ukraine's overall economic, social and financial resilience in the form of macro-financial assistance, budget support, emergency assistance, crisis response and humanitarian aid. In addition, military assistance measures have been provided under the European Peace Facility, amounting to €2,5 billion, which will be used to reimburse Member States for their in-kind military support to Ukraine²⁶.

The EU is committed to continuing to show solidarity and provide support to the refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine and the countries hosting them – reception of refugees through the temporary protection mechanism and €17 billion to support member states hosting refugees. It is also coordinating with partners and allies, within the UN, OSCE, NATO and the G7. Moreover, it encouraged Ukraine's accession to the EU, a joint venture started on 28th February 2022, when President Volodymyr Zelenskyy requested his country's immediate admission to the EU. On 17th June 2022, the European Commission presented its Opinions on this application, considering also other applications

²⁵ *EU sanctions against Russia explained, European Council/Council of the European Union*, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/sanctions-against-russia-explained/>> (02.08.2022).

²⁶ *EU assistance to Ukraine, European Commission*, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/eu-solidarity-ukraine/eu-assistance-ukraine_en> (02.08.2022).

sent by Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. Based on these opinions, the EU leaders gave a European perspective and granted candidate status to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova at the EU Summit on 23-24 June 2022, by unanimous agreement between all 27 EU Member States²⁷.

The most spectacular change after the start of hostilities in Ukraine was in Germany, where Chancellor Olaf Scholz planned 100 billion euros for weaponising Germany, sending weapons and military equipment to Kyiv (including 100 Armoured Personnel Carriers) and giving up a dependence on Russian gas. Considered by Chancellor Scholz a ‘Zeitenwende’ (epochal change), the new German foreign policy exceeds the 2% of GDP approved annually for the defence ministry (€70 billion, more than France, which spends €41 billion annually on the military) and encounters great resistance among the German population and businessmen regarding the post-war national identity of a peaceful nation with an export-based business policy, which made it the most developed European country²⁸. The return to the concept of ‘power politics’ in Europe is about to change the European political and security order, and Germany wants to play a more active role.

Another country that wants to play an active role in the Russian-Ukrainian war is Türkiye, because of its Geostrategic position in the region and its national interests. From the beginning of the conflict, the Black Sea security situation represented for Ankara both a challenge to take heavy decisions in keeping a balanced relationship with the two countries involved in the conflict and an opportunity to diminish and even solve the differences between the US and NATO. Therefore, the strategy followed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was focusing on supporting Ukraine as an Ally, being, at the same time, reluctant to jeopardise the close bilateral relations he has with Russian President Vladimir Putin. As a result, he believes that Ankara would only suffer in the case of direct action against Moscow because a confident or desperate Russia would produce a series of vulnerabilities in the Eurasian security of which Türkiye considers itself a part²⁹.

After the Türkiyesh Foreign Affairs minister qualified Russia's intervention as “unacceptable” and “a serious violation of international laws”, declaring it as “an act of war” – this declaration gave Ankara the possibility to close the straits and prohibit the access of warships of the belligerents through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, according to Art. 19 of the 1936 Montreux

²⁷ *European Council, 23-24 June 2022, European Council/Council of the European Union*, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2022/06/23-24/>> (02.08.2022).

²⁸ *Ukraine war pushes Germans to change. They are wavering*, <<https://indianexpress.com/article/world/ukraine-war-pushes-germans-to-change-they-are-wavering-7869097/>> (15.04.2022).

²⁹ J. Mankoff, *Turkey's Balancing Act on Ukraine Is Becoming More Precarious*, <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/10/turkey-ukraine-russia-war-nato-erdogan/>> (13.05.2022).

Convention³⁰, President Erdogan's main effort was to ensure a major role of negotiator to support the cessation of hostilities and the bringing to the negotiating table of the high representatives of the two countries at war.

The existing tensions in South-eastern Europe and its neighbourhood constituted and continue to represent a real threat to European security and, above all, to the cohesion of NATO. To defuse the existing situation in the region after the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the US, NATO and the EU put great pressure on the Turkish and Greek governments to improve their diplomatic ties, especially by resuming discussions on the settlement of maritime disputes in the eastern Mediterranean.

Some National Considerations for the Regional Security

The Extended/Wider Black Sea Region is of strategic interest to Romania because it represents the region where we live. The situation here is very challenging as there are numerous tensions, crises and even conflicts in the area. It is worth mentioning here the current Russia – Ukraine war, the 'frozen conflicts' in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria, as well as the Turkish dual position. To make the situation even worse, there are unfinished conflicts in the neighbourhood, including the Syrian insurgency, as well as the Libyan Civil War, which presented additional risks and threats for the region, like international terrorism, mass migration and illegal trafficking.

A new threat occurs in July 2022 in Western Balkans, when new tensions arise in North Kosovo after Pristina announced new border rules (regarding temporary IDs and vehicle registration plates) that will impact ethnic Serbs living there³¹. Immediately, Kremlin announced its support to Serbia and Kosovo Serbs, including military ones if necessary. In turn, the European Council started to reconsider the integration of six Western Balkans countries (Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Kosovo) into the EU by 2033, as a political solution to contribute to regional stability and counter growing Russian and Chinese influence in the area. This solution was discussed during the EU – Western Balkans Summit held on 23rd June 2022, in Brussels, as well as the next day, in the plenary of the EU Summit.

Romania, as a NATO and EU Member State and neighbour with Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia, is directly interested and involved in how the situation evolves and how and when it is possible to be solved. Through the

³⁰ M. Colla, *Turkey plays the dance of the go-betweens in Ukraine war*, <<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/turkey-plays-dance-go-betweens-ukraine-war>> (2.08.2022).

³¹ *Kosovo delays planned Serbian border rules after tensions rise*, <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/1/kosovo-delays-planned-serbian-border-rules-after-tensions-rise>> (3.08.2022).

Black Sea, Romania is also a neighbour of Russia and Türkiye, two major powers in the region with common interests in controlling the area, having, sometimes, antagonistic and competitive approaches. For Romania, Türkiye is a friendly country and an Ally, through which, together with Bulgaria, we want to counterbalance the military power of the Russian Federation at the Black Sea. But the fact that Türkiye has control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits between the Mediterranean and the Black Seas through the 1936 Montreux Convention, as well as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's intention to become a caliph of the Arab world, make the Türkiyesh Geostrategy on the Extended/Wider Black Sea Area to not correspond to the Romanian one, especially in the relationship with Moscow, but also in the Ankara position towards the 'frozen conflicts' of the area that are not conditioned by the religious differences between Christians and Muslims.

Therefore, for the national security of Romania, the difficult situation in the Extended/Wider Black Sea Area, including the Russia-Ukraine war, had and continues to have both positive effects and negative aspects. One positive effect is represented by the fact that the Romanian President proposed the increase of the defence budget from 2% to 2,5%, starting with 2023. At the same time, we benefit from the enhanced NATO and the US Forward Presence on the Romanian territory, which represents a guarantee of our security at the Eastern European border, just near the conflict.

As the European Air Space Agency approved, after the beginning of the war in Ukraine, we took over serious international air transport activities. Also, at NATO and Ukraine's request, we started to provide maintenance services for Ukrainian aircraft (Su 27 and MIG 29) and helicopters (H225). From 2023, Romania will host a Regional Agrometeorological Centre for Europe, which has been approved by the World Meteorological Organization. It will play an important role in supporting adaptation to climate change.

Unfortunately for Romania, the Russian 'special military operation' demonstrated that a former threat became a real danger to our security. This fact was exacerbated by the multitude of President Putin's threatening and warning statements regarding Romania, as well as the Russian military presence near the Danube Delta.

Since the beginning of the war, more than 1.000.000 refugees have crossed the Ukrainian-Romanian border, and the humanitarian support offered by Romania has been very consistent. A humanitarian hub for the collection and distribution of international humanitarian aid is functioning since March near the Romanian-Ukrainian border.

Romania contributes with a significant number of medical facilities (field hospitals) and medicines, as well as personal protective equipment (vests and helmets), but also with ammunition items, with an estimated value of 3 million euros.

It also do multidimensional efforts in support of Ukraine, aimed at the one hand at supporting the Ukrainian economy and, on the other hand, at limiting the effects of the global food crisis, by facilitating transport on Romanian territory for carriers from Ukraine and by offering alternative routes for grain exports from this country, including through the Black Sea port of Constanta and Romanian ports on the Danube. In this respect, Romania is one of the best-placed countries to act as a transit and export hub for grain from Ukraine and pointed out that since the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, more than 240.000 tonnes of grain from Ukraine have been exported through the port of Constanta, the largest port on the Black Sea.

Instead of conclusions, it is worth mentioning here what President Joe Biden told to the Naval Academy graduates on Friday, 27th May 2022, that they will be “representatives and defenders of our democracy”, as free societies are under threat from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine to China’s maritime expansion: „The Western response to Russian President Vladimir Putin’s ‘brutal’ war in Ukraine shows the world is aligning not on geography, but in terms of values. The invasion represents a direct assault on the fundamental tenets of rules-based international order. The actions taken by Putin were an attempt to Finland-ize all of Europe, to make it all neutral. Instead, he NATO-ized all of Europe³².”

Therefore, Romania, as well as NATO and the EU, are very much interested in solving the conflict situation in Ukraine as soon as possible, to mitigate or diminish the effects of the ongoing crises in Europe and all around the world, including the energetic, economic, financial, humanitarian and food ones. NATO’s new Strategic Concept ensures the collective defence based on a 360-degree approach and describes the three core tasks – deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security – together with its enhanced Forward Presence and newly enhanced posture of deterrence and forward defence, represent a firm engagement of the Alliance on the European Eastern flank to protect populations and defend every inch of Allied territory at all times.

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HOW THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CRISIS, IN THE YEAR 2022, HAS CHANGED AND COULD CHANGE THE BALTIC SEA REGION'S SECURITY POLICY OF THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES

***Abstract:** How do you best describe the consequences of the future Swedish and Finnish membership in NATO? Yes, like a game changer. That might sound like a bit of an exaggeration. However, is it an exaggeration or not? The expansion of NATO with the two Nordic partner countries could be the start of a completely new chapter for Nordic security. But it will be a game-changer on distinct levels. Not only for the two Nordic countries, which are taking the historic step away from non-alignment, which is a far better word than 'non-alignment'. Because the events of the last seven months in Ukraine have shown that there is no freedom in being outside NATO and the defence alliance's security guarantees. In this article, we will analyse, the changes in the security policy in the Baltic Sea Region of Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, because Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine on 24th February 2022. Furthermore, the probable future consequences of the Russia-Ukraine crisis in the Baltic Sea Region, we will take into consideration.*

***Keywords:** NATO, Sweden, Finland, Neutrality, Baltic Sea Region, Denmark, February 24 2022, Nordic countries*

The Russia-Ukraine crisis – Thursday, 24th February 2022

On 24th February 2022, Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine. The pretext given by Vladimir Putin for the Ukrainian invasion was the same as the Germans in the German annexation of Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia in September 1938. Protecting German, respectively Russian speakers, and uniting them with their

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homeland. In this context, it is also interesting that the right to self-determination and oppression of Germans, respectively Russians, in the occupied territories, were used in both cases. Russian troops, therefore, crossed the border and air forces violated Ukrainian air territory. The Russia-Ukraine crisis, which began in the winter of 2013-2014, escalated to a hitherto unheard-of degree. Fighting was very intense in the first months, especially around the capital Kyiv and the second-largest Ukrainian city, Kharkiv, near the northern Ukrainian-Russian border.

In the following springtime months, the war became a war of positions around the border of the Black Sea from Kherson in the west to Mariupol in the east and the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk. The Donbas area. In August/September 2022, the Ukrainian armed forces are attacking Russian military bases and facilities on the Crimean Peninsula and in the Russian Belgorod oblast near the city of Kharkiv. Furthermore, the Russian army is far from having essential momentum on the Ukrainian steppe land.

In other words, the security political situation changed with great speed at the start of the war and with the rapid suppression of Ukraine in February/March, the Baltic countries and Western Europe had also been under security pressure. But already after a few months, it was clear that Vladimir Putin had made up his mind wrongly and a Ukrainian victory on the battlefield is now possible. From the early summer of 2022 until September there has been no notable change in the previous security balance. Furthermore, Vladimir Putin is running out of both weapons and ammunition, just as the use of nuclear weapons in every respect seems more and more utopian.

The Russia-Ukraine relationship and contemporary events

Politically, Ukraine took advantage of the unique momentum after the collapse of the Soviet Union to finally gain more autonomy and opted for a less obliging membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Since the 1990s the Ukrainian elites tried to steer the nation-building process away from major controversies while maintaining a necessary degree of antagonism with Russia. Although the ruling elite supported the myth of national liberation, it adopted the view that Ukraine is a common home for all its citizens. The Ukrainian Declaration of Sovereignty from 16th July 1990, included a section on 'citizenship' grounded in a civic idea that somehow prioritized the state over the nation, especially defined in ethnocultural terms. This inclusive approach was central to preventing the alienation of Ukraine's multi-ethnic and bilingual population with close links to Russia. Nevertheless, domestic political forces and the cultural intelligentsia advocated the 'national idea' and sought to ground the national identity in the Ukrainian language and culture and reverse the effects of Russification.

However, it is impossible to understand what is happening in Ukraine, without knowledge of its past. Since the 1300s, Russia has considered the territory of Ukraine (especially the area around Kyiv) as the motherland of the Russian people. A Russian territory. Like Western imperial powers had former colonies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It is in that light, the events in the Russia-Ukraine area must be understood. 23rd February 2022, marks the ‘Defender of the Motherland Day’ in Russia devoted to soldiers and patriotism. As mentioned above, on 24th February 2022, Vladimir Putin dispatched troops on a so-called ‘peace-keeping mission’ to save Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. In Putin’s eyes a failed state and a Western puppet state. Besides that Putin named the West as the enemy as well for Russia and the oppressed Ukrainian people. NATO became, hereby, a direct enemy posing a severe threat to Russia’s national security and existence as an independent state. If NATO should expand into Ukraine. Over the years Ukraine and Russia contested territory, history, and cultural heritage, by asserting that specific myths, symbols, or ancestry are part of their distinctive national pasts. The Ukrainian identity debates, which originated in the Tsarist times, contributed to Ukraine’s brief independence in 1917-1919 and later led to the pro-independence movement in the 1980s².

In this light, the war in Ukraine is a reflection going beyond the regional balance of power. For the Russian side, the unification of the Russian world and bringing Ukraine back to Russia marks the completion of Putin’s higher political mission and legacy. For the Ukrainian side, the mass Russian military invasion is a culmination of a long struggle for national self-determination. In this struggle, the harder Ukraine tries to pull away from Russia, the harder the backlash from Kremlin. While the Russian iron grip on the region might prove hard to challenge, many ties between the two countries were already fragile in the build-up to the war – as Ukraine has strived for years to be closer to Europe, by right and by choice³.

During the first month of fighting, Ukrainians repelled many Russian attacks, conducted counter-offensives, and liberated some areas, most significantly around the capital Kyiv. On 2nd March 2022, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution reaffirming Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity with a broad majority. Based on the Russian view mentioned above, this narrative in Russian foreign policy is not new. As early as 1994, at the first post-USSR international forum on NATO enlargement to the East with representatives from the West and the former Eastern-Bloc

² M. R. Olesen, J. L. Schmidt, *Ruslands fremfærd i Ukraine presser de nordiske lande tættere sammen*, <<https://www.diis.dk/publikationer/ruslands-fremfaerd-ukraine-presser-nordiske-lande-taettere-sammen>> (22.08.2022).

³ I. Surwillo, V. Slakaityte, *Ukraine is closer than you think*, <<https://www.diis.dk/en/research/ukraine-is-closer-than-you-think>> (12.08.2022).

Vladimir Putin spoke of Crimea as a temporarily tolerated territory of Ukraine. At the time, as an advisor on international affairs to St. Petersburg Mayor's office, Putin stated that 25 million Russians were forced to live as second-class citizens because of the Union's collapse, adding that Russia only agreed to tolerate these developments due to diplomatic reasons⁴.

Vladimir Putin's views have only radicalized during the three decades that followed, especially concerning Ukraine. Inspired by the Russian philosopher Ivan Ilyin as well as the Russian General Anton Denikin, and their shared lack of belief in the basis for an independent Ukrainian state, Vladimir Putin on several occasions expressed the opinion that "Ukraine is ancient Russian soil", and that "Russians and Ukrainians were one people – a single whole". He reiterated his stance in an essay published in 2021 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians'. In this piece, Putin argued that Ukraine never truly had statehood and that the Ukrainian nation itself was manufactured by Lenin by carving people out of Russia, thereby artificially dividing one nation. The history of Ukraine is, therefore, marked by a complex struggle for independence from Russia. In this centuries-long process, Ukrainians not only faced the challenge of establishing independent statehood but also a deeper sense of national distinctiveness from their Russian neighbour. The Ukrainian identity has been formed in opposition to Russia, seeking to distil the difference and establish what lies at the core of being Ukrainian⁵.

Sweden – abrogation of two hundred years of neutrality

The legacy of Olof Palme (Social Democrat) rests heavily when it comes to protecting the freedom of alliance and not joining NATO. In his 1968 May Day speech, Palme stated: "We decide the Swedish neutrality policy ourselves. Its meaning is non-alignment in peace aiming at neutrality in war. That is why we do not join military alliances, do not join any great power bloc. Therefore, through firmness and consistency, we must create confidence in our ability to stick to the chosen line of action, confidence in our willingness not to give way to pressure from a foreign power."⁶

This has been a foundation for social democracy ever since the time of Tage Erlander (Social Democrat) and Palme. Heavy social democratic names such as Göran Persson, Stefan Löfven and Pierre Schori (all Social Democrats) say no to NATO membership. Other representatives of the Social Democrats, such as S-women's chair Annika Strandhäll and Faith and Solidarity chair Sara

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ O. Palme, *Första-maj tal i Stockholm och Sundbyberg*, pp. 3-4, <http://www.olofpalme.org/wp-content/dokument/680501a_stockholm_sundbyberg.pdf> (11.05.2022).

Kukka-Salam believe that membership goes against the fight for nuclear disarmament. Pierre Schori is on the same line where he links back to Palme and believes that the nuclear weapon states are holding us all, hostage. But even the current SSU chairman Lisa Nåbo believes that “Sweden benefits from being a non-aligned party, between the great powers.”⁷

As recently as during the party congress in November 2021, the party congress decided that the stance that appeared on the party's website would be preserved; “Military non-alignment is a foundation of Sweden's security policy. We do not want Sweden to apply for NATO membership”. But then came Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022.

On 8th March 2022, the issue still seemed to be out of the question when Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson made statements that our freedom of military alliance was still intact and NATO membership was out of the question as it would “further destabilize the situation in Europe”. Three weeks later, however, the attitude changed when the state ministers in SVT were asked about NATO and she answered, “I do not rule out NATO membership in any way”⁸.

Leading social democrats such as Karin Wanngård, opposition councillor in the city of Stockholm and party board member, have since spoken out. She believes that it would be unwise if the social democrats were to oppose NATO membership under the guise of such a changed security situation. She told Aftonbladet that Sweden sends weapons and equipment to Ukraine and that NATO is the only defence alliance that can push Russia back. In this, she meant that Sweden must make a common cause with Finland. Aftonbladet's editorial page, which is independent social democratic, changed sides within a few days of this statement and now supports Swedish membership in NATO. Its political editor-in-chief Anders Lindberg wrote: “Vladimir Putin's war shows that we need to join NATO to guarantee Sweden's security”⁹.

The former foreign minister Margot Wallström is among those who have also changed sides even though she was and is a strong voice against nuclear weapons and military rearmament. To “Dagens Industri” she says on 7th March, that NATO is indeed part of a nuclear weapons doctrine, but now she is more sympathetic to a yes. Finland's stance is decisive here when she says that “I find it difficult to see that we could take a different position than joining NATO”.

Social Security Minister Ardalan Shekarabi is also among those leaning towards a yes. He believes that NATO would be the most deterrent option right

⁷ A. Dybelius, *Elva frågor om NATO och Sverige samt Socialdemokraternes hållning i frågan*, <<https://ju.se/portal/vertikals/blogs/anders-dybelius/bloggposter/2022-05-11-elva-fragor-om-nato-och-sverige-samt-socialdemokraternas-hallning-i-fragan.html>> (11.05.2022)

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

now and contribute with military capacity. However, he has not officially decided or taken a stand.

Defence Minister Peter Hultquist is responsible for the strongest and perhaps most remarkable turnaround. At the party congress in November 2021, he made the following statement about NATO membership; “I will definitely never, as long as I am Minister of Defence, participate in such a process. I can guarantee that to everyone”. On Tuesday, 10th May he told Ekot that “the common defence of the Nordics would be strengthened if Sweden and Finland joined”. Furthermore, he now claims that “then the effect will be that we become stronger together. This is something that could happen if we choose to join NATO”¹⁰. Hultquist also argues for NATO membership by claiming that joint planning around defence would make “Gotland less vulnerable. That is a central point in the Baltic Sea that must not fall into the hands of anyone else”.

As the quick overview shows, the party is in an intense debate and most likely the party will conclude that Sweden should apply for membership in NATO. If this happens, there will be a majority in the Riksdag. An expression of interest can then be submitted. Finland and Sweden will make a joint decision. On 14th May the Finnish Social Democrats will announce their decision according to party secretary Anton Rönholm. After that, it can go fast. “I think the application period can be quite flexible. The only thing I am saying today is that there are no other countries that are closer to NATO than Sweden and Finland”, said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg earlier in April, according to TT. After the expression of interest is submitted, it must be reviewed by NATO. Since Sweden and NATO already have close cooperation, it can be ready in a few days. All 30 member states must then accept Sweden as a new member. How long the entire application process will take is difficult to say but should the Social Democrats and a majority say yes to membership, Sweden could be a member of NATO this fall¹¹.

After the Soviet collapse, Sweden reduced its territorial defence capabilities and shifted the focus of its military planning to international peace operations. In 2008 the Russian invasion of Georgia energised NATO defence planning for the Baltic states, which had implications for Sweden. NATO concluded that it would need access to Swedish territory in operations to defend Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia. Gotland is strategically important in such scenarios, as the deployment of surface-to-air missiles on the island would help a military power gain control of the southern part of the Baltic Sea. Sweden has a long history of military non-alignment. The country declared its neutrality at the start of the second world war and built a strong national defence capability during the cold war without joining NATO. After Sweden joined the European

¹⁰ *Ibidem.*

¹¹ *Ibidem.*

Union in 1995 – a move made possible by the fall of the Iron Curtain – the concept of Swedish neutrality became obsolete¹².

Tanks on the streets of the medieval tourist city Visby this spring. Other military deployments on the strategically important island of Gotland, in the Baltic Sea. Swedes are waking up to security challenges in light of Russia's troop movements and threats against Ukraine. Although a direct military attack on Sweden seems unlikely, the Swedish debate on NATO membership has been reignited by Russia's actions. Because of the serious global security situation following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there has been an agreement on enhancing Sweden's preparedness. The Swedish Armed Forces have adapted readiness measures and, among things, strengthened their presence on Gotland. Since 2015, the capabilities of the Swedish Armed Forces have been significantly heightened, including through the 2015 and 2020 defence resolutions, and an overall increase in appropriations of 80 per cent.

In April 2022, the Riksdag decided that Sweden's defence capability will be boosted and the scale-up accelerated. According to the Riksdag decision, the appropriations to military defence for 2022 will increase by a further SEK 2 billion, while the Swedish Armed Forces authorisation framework for military equipment orders will receive an additional SEK 30.9 billion. In the 2022 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill, the Government proposed an increase in the appropriations to the civil defence of SEK 0.8 billion. The Government has also instructed the defence agencies to present proposals for a step-by-step investment plan for military defence appropriations reaching two per cent of GDP.

Sweden has always been described by NATO as one of the most important and active of the alliance's cooperation partners. In 1994, Sweden joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP). The partnership aimed to build trust between NATO and other states in Europe and the former Soviet Union and would also improve the ability of partner countries to cooperate with NATO. Through the partnership, Sweden has participated in PARP, Planning and Review Process, which is a defence planning process for partner countries in which cooperation capabilities are developed¹³.

Since the 1990s, the Swedish Armed Forces have increased their ability to cooperate with NATO by adopting NATO standards, for example, English as the command language. Through participation in NATO operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq, the Swedish Armed Forces have also

¹² A.-S. Dahl, *Svensk forsker: Sverige og Finlands medlemskab af NATO er en gamechanger i Østersøen*, <<https://www.altinget.dk/forsvar/artikel/svensk-forsker-sveriges-og-finlands-medlemskab-af-nato-er-en-gamechanger-i-oestersoen>> (20.06.2022).

¹³ M. Engström, *How the Russia-Ukraine crisis could change Sweden's security policy*, <<https://ecfr.eu/article/how-the-russia-ukraine-crisis-could-change-swedens-security-policy/>> (02.06.2022).

adapted to NATO. Since 2013, Sweden has participated in NATO exercises relating to collective defence and Article 5 scenarios, i.e., scenarios with an armed attack against one of the member states. In 2014, Sweden and Finland became Enhanced Opportunities Partners to NATO, which means, among other things, a deepened security policy dialogue about the Baltic Sea area and access to more information. In 2016, Sweden signed an agreement on host country support with NATO. The Host Country Agreement makes it easier for Sweden to receive support from NATO in the event of a crisis or war and regulates what happens if a foreign troop under NATO command is on Swedish territory. This has made it easier for Sweden to host joint international exercises.

For Sweden, the application for membership in NATO on 18th May 2022, was not only a giant step after 200 years of first neutrality and then non-alignment, but also completely unexpected. Finland's and Sweden's application for membership in NATO has been described as a new period in European history and one of the biggest paradigm shifts in security policy since the fall of the Berlin Wall. But what will it really mean when both Finland and Sweden, by all accounts, become members of NATO? What does this mean for the security of Denmark, the Nordic region and Europe? Could it be an advantage for the common Nordic foreign and security policy, the Nordic role as a power factor in NATO (and vis-à-vis the USA) and in European security policy in general? Will it affect the balance of power and geopolitics between East and West in Europe? And how should we expect Putin to react?¹⁴

An important factor in discussions as well as in applying for membership in NATO was the Swedish public sentiment for membership. In the last decades, support for NATO membership has been between 35% and 40%. As recently as January 2022, support was only 37%. The events in the Ukraine area totally changed the Swedes' view of NATO influence in Sweden. In less than two months, support increased to over 50%. Only the Swedish left-wing parties demanded a referendum on possible membership. At the end of April, support exceeded 60% and at the final admission application, more than 62% were in favour of membership. Following the completion of the talks, Allies are due to sign the Accession Protocols for Finland and Sweden at NATO Headquarters on 5th July 2022. The Accession Protocols will then go to all NATO countries for ratification, according to their national procedures. Membership is therefore a reality in autumn 2022.

For Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson (Social Democrat), her government and party, non-alignment – however, they use the word ‘non-alignment’ – has always been a matter of ideology and almost part of the social democratic DNA. So, it has not been easy for the Swedish Social Democrats to change gears either. Magdalena Andersson still repeats, somewhat

¹⁴ *Ibidem.*

nostalgically, the traditional mantra that military non-alignment has been serving Sweden well. Only a short time before the historic decision to apply for membership in NATO, Magdalena Andersson had also rejected the possibility that Sweden would follow suit with Finland. Such a change in Swedish security policy would lead to a destabilization of security in the Baltic Sea region, according to the Swedish prime minister. And that was exactly what Putin wanted to hear in Moscow¹⁵.

Solidarity with other Western democracies is a fundamental part of Sweden's security policy. During the current Russia-Ukraine crisis, NATO states such as the Netherlands have demonstrated their ability to help Sweden defend Gotland from a Russian attack. Such cooperation has been the focus of several recent exercises. So, at a time when Russia seems poised to invade Ukraine, why shouldn't Sweden join NATO if it already cooperates with the alliance so closely? Opponents of Swedish accession to NATO argue that such a move could increase tensions in the Baltic region, that non-membership will provide Sweden with greater strategic flexibility in the long term, that NATO's nuclear policy would undermine the country's long-standing commitment to nuclear disarmament, and that it would be unwise to join an alliance that offers security guarantees to Turkey. Proponents of membership argue, inter alia, that this would formalise the sides' close cooperation, that only Article 5 of NATO's founding treaty (on mutual defence) would provide Sweden with enough security, and that widespread misgivings about membership are overstated¹⁶.

With Joe Biden (Democrat) in the White House, at least until 1st January 2025, Swedish policy on EU defence is unlikely to change much. Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist (Social Demokrat) is a strong supporter of cooperation with the US, while many Swedish senior military officers have received training there. Swedish defence industry cooperation with the United Kingdom, including on fighter aircraft, contributes to scepticism about greater cooperation with EU member states such as France. However, if US democracy remains unstable and Trump-style politicians gain even more momentum, Sweden may gradually change its position on EU defence. Were this to happen, there would suddenly be a parliamentary majority for accession to the alliance. In any case, Sweden will likely accelerate its efforts to strengthen its military capabilities in the coming years. Much will depend on how the Russia-Ukraine conflict continues to change Swedes' concept of security.

But, in the long term, the Swedish position might not be as fixed as it first seems. As with many other EU member states, Swedes have doubts about whether the United States' commitment to European security will outlast the

¹⁵ *Ibidem.*

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*

Biden administration. In parallel, France has a growing interest in the Baltic region. In recent years, the country has increased its military presence in the Baltic states and conducted many exercises in the area. Sweden has joined the French-initiated European Intervention Initiative (EI2). And Sweden and France recently signed a Letter of Intent on defence cooperation.

Daniel Färm – editor-in-chief of the Social Democratic Party magazine *Aktuellt i Politiken* – has argued for a more positive Swedish view of EU defence. Referring to former US president Donald Trump, he asked: “What happens if and when Sweden and Finland find themselves in a difficult security situation, and an American president either acts weakly towards Russia or concludes that it is not a sufficiently strong US interest to support our countries against Russian aggression?” Even supporters of NATO accession are nervous about Trump or someone like him gaining the presidency¹⁷.

Finland – the changed neighbourhood with the Russian bear

On Wednesday morning, 18th May 2022, the Finnish Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Mr Klaus Korhonen and the Swedish Ambassador to NATO, Mr Axel Wernhoff, handed in Finland and Sweden’s official letters of application in the Alliance’s Brussels headquarters. The applications were filed after months of national domestic debates on both sides of the Gulf of Bothnia following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on 24th February. In his remarks, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed the requests, saying that this was a good day, at a critical moment for our security. The Norwegian Secretary-General continued that every nation has the right to choose its path¹⁸.

Like in Sweden, an important factor in discussions as well as in applying for membership in NATO was the Finnish public sentiment for membership. In the last decades, support for NATO membership has been between 25% and 30%. As recently as January 2022, support was only 28%. The events in the Ukraine area completely changed the Finnish people’s view of NATO influence in Finland and the rest of Scandinavia. In less than two months, the support increased to over 51%. Only the Finnish left-wing parties discussed a referendum, but not in the Finnish parliament on possible membership. At the end of April, support exceeded 57% and at the final admission application, more than 75% were in favour of membership. Following the completion of the talks, Allies are due to sign the Accession Protocols for Finland and Sweden at NATO Headquarters on 5th July 2022. The Accession Protocols will then go to

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Finland’s application for NATO membership*, <<https://um.fi/finland-is-applying-for-nato-membership>> (31.08.2022).

all NATO countries for ratification, according to their national procedures. A membership is like Sweden, therefore, a reality in autumn 2022, when the parliaments of all member states have ratified the agreement with the two Nordic countries¹⁹.

On the eve of the Madrid NATO Summit on 28-30 June 2022, the outcome was far from certain, as an ascension of any country to the alliance will need to be unanimously accepted by all members. Previously Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had threatened to veto membership talks in response to Finland and Sweden's refusal to extradite alleged members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which is designated as a terrorist organization by the US, and the EU. To mitigate risks during the precarious ascension period, Finland and Sweden sought and received security guarantees from France, Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom. However, ahead of the NATO leader's Summit, Türkiye lifted its opposition to Finland and Sweden's NATO bid after long negotiations and signed a trilateral memorandum to support the invitation of the countries to NATO. Finland and Sweden have long had close security cooperation as militarily non-aligned Western countries. With shared values and widely integrated economies, both countries joined the EU in 1995, thus ending their status as politically neutral nations.

That being said, both countries had previously decided not to join NATO, opting to keep NATO membership as an option. Since the end of the Cold War, Finland and Sweden have shared similar political paths; they differ, however, in terms of their choices related to defence preparedness and spending. Sweden downsized their military capabilities after the collapse of the Soviet Union, culminating in the steep reduction in the number of conscripted servicemen from a peak of nearly 37.000 annual conscripts in 1994, to a low point in 2007 when only 4.730 attended conscription service. Ultimately, Sweden abolished their conscription service during peacetime in 2010 and transitioned to a small yet nimble professional military. Finland, on the other hand, never abandoned their stance of keeping up a credible independent military deterrent. Even though economic downturns, like the financial crisis of 2009, had significant detrimental effects on the Finnish economy and government coffers, the support for a relatively strong, independent conscription-based defence force never waned. The support for mandatory conscription is shared across the whole political spectrum in Finland and is commonly argued for on economic, historic and geographic grounds²⁰.

¹⁹ J. V. Bendtsen, *Sverige på nippet til NATO: nu kommer det store opgør med selvforståelsen*, <<https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/udland/sverige-paa-nippet-til-nato-nu-kommer-det-store-opgoer-med-selvforstaaelsen>> (12.05 2022)

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

Sweden came to a turning point in its approach to national defence with Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. That was a wake-up call for most eastern European countries of a possible aggressive Russian foreign policy that included the use of military force to drive its national agenda. Sweden explicitly linked its increase in national security resource allocation to Russia's military assertiveness. This led to Sweden increasing its military spending and a partial reactivation of mandatory military service. Simultaneously, this development led to a new form of enhanced bilateral Swedish-Finnish security collaboration. This alignment in thinking and resources was based on a shared situational awareness of the increased Russian threat and an understanding of the need for broader and deeper military collaboration, which was not achievable through the European Union in the short term.

In 2014 Finland and Sweden already shared similar security policies, and many forums for collaboration, including through the United Nations, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF), civil security collaboration, the EU's defence collaboration, and NATO's Partnership for Peace for non-member collaboration. However, the bilateral security and defence collaboration journey that the countries started went much deeper than any of these previous forms of multilateral collaboration. In 2014, Helsinki and Stockholm published a political action plan, which was followed by a joint report by the Finnish Defence Forces and the Swedish Armed Forces that set a vision for the shared use of naval bases, mutual support for and the partial integration of their respective air forces, and the development of a combined Finnish-Swedish Brigade Framework that included force integration and interoperability. The report highlighted the need for bilateral agreements, the political mandate and the legal arrangements that were needed to achieve this shared vision. Since then, Sweden and Finland have signed many defence cooperation agreements, including a memorandum of understanding on defence cooperation (2018), host nation support for military activities (2022), and military strategic concept for deepened defence cooperation (2019) to ensure that no legislative hurdles put any objections to military cooperation when needed.

The development of these agreements has made military cooperation possible beyond peace, which previously was not part of any multilateral collaboration between the countries. The stated objective is to create permanent conditions for military cooperation and joint operations covering times of crisis, conflicts, and war, without any pre-set restrictions for intensified bilateral cooperation. The plans set in motion in 2014 have already borne fruit, including the establishment of a brigade-size common training exercise for Finnish and Swedish army troops, the Swedish-Finnish Amphibious Task Unit (SFATU), and the Swedish-Finnish Naval Task Group (SFNTG) which will reach full operational capability by 2023. Furthermore, Finland and Sweden train actively

in joint exercises together and with other allies, of which the ongoing Baltic Operations BALTOPS22 hosted by Sweden is the most recent with over 45 ships, 75 helicopters or aircraft, and over 7.000 personnel from 14 NATO allies and two partners. The two countries have also recently agreed on joint procurement of military systems, such as the new Nordic combat uniform, small firearms and collaboration on an R&D program for a common armoured 6x6 vehicle system. These developments not only enhance the operational capabilities of these two countries but also publicly confirms the political alignment on common security of the two nations²¹.

The Finnish Defence Forces have a long history of close cooperation with NATO – in addition to the United States and neighbouring Nordic countries. As Finland chose to replace its current fighter aircraft, the F/A-18 Hornet, with F-35 Joint Strike Fighters from the United States, this cooperation has deepened further and provides an opportunity for enhanced airpower collaboration among the Nordic states. The F-35 variants stand out as a front-runner for most recently announced fighter jet procurement deals for several European NATO countries. The Finnish F-35 project (previously called the HX program), launched in 2015, was started to replace Finland's current fighters at the end of their lifespan by 2030. Requests for information on multi-role fighters were originally sent out in 2016 to the defence administrations of the United Kingdom (Eurofighter Typhoon), France (Dassault Rafale), Sweden (Saab JAS E/F Gripen) and the United States (Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II). Based on a thorough tendering process and comprehensive testing, the Finnish government decided to procure the Lockheed Martin fighter jets²².

The deal signed in February 2022 is worth a total of 8.4 billion euros (USD 8.9 billion) and it is the largest military procurement deal ever made by Finland and one of the largest in Europe. The contract includes 64 F-35A Block 4-multi role fighters to be delivered during 2025-2030 (EUR 4.7 billion; USD 5 billion) equipped with AMRAAM and Sidewinder air-to-air missiles (EUR 755 million; USD 800 million). The rest of the sum is allocated to maintenance and service equipment and services (EUR 2.9 billion; USD 3.1 billion), construction of operational facilities in Finland (EUR 777 million; USD 820 million) and another 824 million euro (USD 873 million) for subsequent contracts and contract amendments²³.

As part of the deal, an Industrial Participation Agreement was signed with the fighter manufacturer Lockheed Martin and Pratt&Whitney worth at least

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² R. Forsberg, A.-M. Kähkönen, J. Öberg, *Implications of a Finnish and Swedish NATO membership for Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, <<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/implications-finnish-and-swedish-nato-membership-security-baltic-sea-region>> (29.06.2022).

²³ *Ibidem*.

30% of the actual contract price, approximately 2-3 billion euros. By industrial participation Finland thus ensures the know-how and material needed to operate the fighter jets under exceptional circumstances and adds local technology transfers which will improve the technological capabilities of the Finnish defence industry. Expected to stay in operation until the 2070s, the F-35 procurement marks a long-term commitment to deeper cooperation between Finnish and US Air Forces and the American fighter jet industry that has endured since the initial order of F/A-18s in 1992²⁴.

Finland and Sweden – two stable Nordic democracies – are the final vital pieces missing from completing NATO’s northern security architecture, where a Finnish and Swedish NATO membership would increase the security of both NATO and the Baltic region. Firstly, geostrategically, Finland has gained over 100 years of valuable experience as Russia’s neighbour, the two sharing a 1.340 km (832 miles) land border. Finland has accumulated valuable intelligence on border activity in the East. The Åland Islands, an autonomous demilitarized region of Finland, together with Gotland, a Swedish island with a military base, are important hubs connecting trade lanes across the Baltic Sea. As members of the Arctic Council, Finland and Sweden have valuable practical insights into operating their societies in sub-Arctic climates with long, cold snowy winters in the north. Secondly, in addition to their critical geostrategic locations, Finland and Sweden as countries are technologically advanced with leading solutions in 5G technologies and cybersecurity. As prospective NATO members, Finnish and Swedish domestic small and medium-sized enterprises with cutting-edge solutions in the defence, aerospace and security sector would have enhanced preferential access to national procurement processes at NATO’s Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD). With seats at the right tables, companies would get their products to market faster and more cost-effectively, benefitting the whole Alliance. As countries across the transatlantic sea renew their capabilities because of a changed security reality, there is a renewed demand for Finnish and Swedish technology. And thirdly, Finland has valuable military leadership know-how generated from its national conscription since the beginning of the 20th Century. Finland and Sweden can manoeuvre and maintain operations in both Arctic conditions on land and in the sea, as well as control the skies in the northern Baltic Sea region. Moreover, as close partners of NATO over two decades, with frequent experience conducting military exercises together – Finnish and Swedish armies are NATO compatible and interoperable.

The northern expansion of NATO would push NATO’s eastern border closer towards two important Russian cities; St. Petersburg, which has an important seaport, and secondly the important military base of Murmansk,

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

where the Russian Northern Fleet with its nuclear submarines resides. The new border would enable a new ring of defence for the whole of Western Europe as anti-air capabilities and early-warning detection could be based nearer to the Alliance's border²⁵.

Denmark – the apparent embrace of the European Union

Denmark, a founding member of NATO, has stayed on the sidelines of EU efforts to build a common security and defence policy, for more than 30 years, in parallel with the trans-Atlantic alliance. It was one of four opt-out moves that the Danes insisted on before adopting the EU's Maastricht Treaty, which laid the foundation for the political and economic union. The 1992 waiver means Denmark hasn't participated in the EU's discussions on defence policy, its development and acquisition of military capabilities and its joint military operations, such as those in Africa and Bosnia and Herzegovina²⁶.

The Danes also opted out of EU cooperation on justice and home affairs, the common currency and citizenship. The opt-out decision on citizenship, which said European citizenship wouldn't replace national citizenship, has since become irrelevant as other members later adopted the same position. But the other provisions remain intact despite efforts by successive governments to overturn them.

In a 2000 referendum, Danish voters decided to stay outside the eurozone, and 15 years later they voted to keep the exemption on justice and home affairs. This time, however, the Danes appear ready to say goodbye to opting out of common defence. Social Democratic Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen called for the referendum on 8th March, less than two weeks after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine on 24th February. She called on citizens to vote 'yes' to abolishing the exception, saying to do so would strengthen Denmark's security. Only, the far right and far left wings argued against²⁷.

The 'yes' side has had a clear lead in polls, with about 40% in favour of dropping the exemption and 30% against. About a fourth of voters say they are still undecided. There is widespread support for dropping the defence opt-out decision in Parliament. Only three small parties want to maintain it, two on the right and one on the left. The Danish government led by Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has announced the country will hold a referendum to reconsider the

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ M. Marcussen, *EU-forbeholdene og det danske mulighedsrum i verden*, <https://politica.dk/fileadmin/politica/Dokumenter/politica_45_4/marcussen.pdf> (20.07.2022).

²⁷ C. Nissen, *Det danske forsvarsforbehold: Hvorfor, hvad og med hvilken betydning?*, <<https://www.diis.dk/publikationer/danske-eu-forsvarsforbehold-hvorfor-hvilken-betydning>> (02.05.2022).

30-year-old opt-out clause that has so far kept Denmark away from the EU common defence policy²⁸.

The referendum was held on 1st June. Frederiksen also said the government will boost its defence spending to meet NATO's 2% of GDP target by 2033, up from its current 1,44% share. The last time the country surpassed the 2% mark was in 1989."Putin's pointless and brutal attack on Ukraine has heralded a new era in Europe, a new reality", Frederiksen said at a press conference in Copenhagen. "Ukraine's struggle is not just Ukraine's, it's a test of strength for everything we believe in, our values, democracy, human rights, peace and freedom". A document signed by Frederiksen's Social Democrats alongside four other parties speaks of a "new security situation" that must be confronted "with our allies in NATO and the EU". Besides changes to the country's defence policy, the parties touched upon Europe's heavy reliance on Russian gas. A tailor-made provision for Denmark, the U-turn is momentous²⁹.

The opt-out clause was introduced at Denmark's behest as part of the 1992 Edinburg Agreement, a text specially designed to allow the Danish country to ratify the 1991 Maastricht Treaty, which Danish citizens had narrowly rejected with 50,7% of voters against. The agreement proposed tailor-made provisions that clarified Denmark's participation in four new fields where the EU had begun to deepen its integration: citizenship, justice and home affairs, the monetary union (Denmark rebuffed the euro and kept the national krone), and defence. Today, the opt-out is still in place and applies to the so-called Common Defence and Security Policy (CDSP), one of the main elements of the bloc's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

Consequently, Denmark, which is a NATO member, removes itself from all foreign policy decisions that have defence implications. During the in-person meetings of foreign affairs ministers, the Danish representative usually leaves the room when defence topics are broached. In practice, this means the Nordic country participates in collective action related to, for example, economic sanctions, as has been the case against Russia, but stays clear when it comes to military deployments, such as Operation IRINI, created to enforce the United Nations arms embargo on Libya. These overseas missions are carried out under the leadership and coordination of the EU, but their military forces are seconded by member states on a case-by-case basis³⁰.

Over 5.000 EU military and civilian staff are currently stationed in CSDP missions across Europe, Africa and Asia, with most of them focused on crisis management. A total of 37 operations have been launched since 2003: almost half of them are still ongoing. If Danish citizens vote to repeal the opt-out

²⁸ M. Marcussen, *op. cit.*

²⁹ C. Nissen, *op. cit.*

³⁰ *Ibidem.*

clause, the country will become immersed in the common defence policy and Danish troops will be deployed around the world under a centralised command.

As of 1st July 2022, the Danish defence reservation was lifted. As a result of the defence reservation, Denmark has until then not participated in “the preparation and implementation of the Union's decisions and actions which have an impact in the field of defence”. This has been the case since 1993 when the defence reservation came into force with the Edinburgh Agreement. In practice, this has meant that until the abolition of the defence reservation, Denmark has, among other things, been barred from contributing to military EU missions and operations and from participating in cooperation on the development and acquisition of military capabilities under EU auspices. With the abolition of the defence reservation, Denmark is fully included in European cooperation on security and defence.

The defence reservation came about – like the other Danish EU reservations – after the Danish 'no' in the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. After the referendum, most of the parties in the Folketing agreed on the so-called ‘national compromise’, which meant that Denmark took reservations about EU cooperation in four areas. These reservations were accepted by the other EU countries with the Edinburgh Agreement in December 1992. The Edinburgh Agreement was subsequently approved by a referendum in Denmark in 1993.

As a result of the abolition of the Danish EU defence reservation, as of 1st July 2022, Denmark is fully involved in European cooperation on security and defence. This means that Denmark can choose to contribute to the EU's military missions and operations as well as participate in the permanent structured cooperation in the field of defence (PESCO) and the European Defence Agency (EDA). The EU's common security and defence policy

The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) forms an integral part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Through the EU's common security and defence policy, the EU countries can jointly launch civil and military efforts that can contribute to crisis management, conflict prevention and peacekeeping tasks outside the EU's borders. The EU does not have its military forces. It is the individual Member States that make civilian and military capacities available to the Union for the implementation of the common security and defence policy³¹.

Considering the terrorist threat and the increased level of conflict in and around Europe, the EU's Foreign Representative presented the EU's Global Strategy in 2016, which sets the framework for strengthened security and

³¹ J. Liboreiro, *Explained: Denmark's Surprising U-turn on the EU common defence policy*, <<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/03/07/explained-denmark-s-surprising-u-turn-on-the-eu-common-defence-policy>> (07.07.2022).

defence policy cooperation. Since then, a few important initiatives on security and defence have been launched, of which the European Defence Fund (EDF), the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Peace Facility (EPF) are among the most important.

In March 2022, the EU's foreign and defence ministers adopted a new strategy for the EU's security and defence for the coming decade – the so-called ‘strategic compass’. The compass is divided into four core sections crisis management, resilience, capabilities, and partnerships. The most prominent elements in the compass are the establishment of an EU emergency capacity of 5.000 people who must be able to react quickly in crises, the creation of a hybrid toolbox and the establishment of even closer EU-NATO cooperation. In the process, Denmark has been particularly active in areas such as hybrid and cyber, maritime security, climate security and strengthened EU-NATO cooperation³².

Denmark could contribute to the EU's military missions and operations, which align with Danish security interests. The decision to deploy Danish soldiers will always require the involvement of the Danish Parliament. In addition, we will in future be able to participate in the permanent structured cooperation in the field of defence (PESCO), which particularly concerns the development of defence capabilities, and the European Defence Agency (EDA), which aims, among other things, to promote EU cooperation on defence equipment. In addition, a large part of the EU's defence cooperation is carried out under the auspices of the EU's wider policy areas, including research, industrial cooperation, and the transport area, in which Denmark participates to a large extent. Denmark also participates in cooperation on military mobility, internal security (Frontex) and cyber³³.

The Baltic Sea Region, the European Union and security policy

The European Defence Agency was established as an intergovernmental agency under the Council in 2004. The purpose of the agency is to strengthen the EU's defence capacity in crisis management, develop and promote EU cooperation on defence equipment, strengthen technology and research in the field of defence and create a competitive European market for defence equipment. It is voluntary for the EU countries to participate in the agency, whose work is financed by the participating member states. The Defence Agency acts as a link between the Member States and the EU's defence policies. The agency also has agreements with several countries outside the EU, including Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, and Ukraine. Within the framework of

³² *Ibidem.*

³³ *Ibidem.*

the EU-NATO joint declaration from 2016, the agency also cooperates with NATO³⁴.

The common security and defence policy has been operational since 2003 when the EU took over the leadership of NATO's military operation in FYROM (today North Macedonia) and the UN's police mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since then, the EU has carried out and completed a total of 19 military and civilian crisis management efforts. Currently, the EU has seven military and 11 civilian missions and operations. The specific tasks of the missions vary, but as a rule, these are relatively small engagements with a limited number of deployed. There is a total of approximately 4.000 deployed to the EU's active missions and operations, which are roughly equally divided between civilian and military efforts³⁵.

The EU has four active military training missions (EUTM) in Mali, Somalia, Mozambique, and the Central African Republic respectively. The purpose of these missions is to train, educate and advise military forces in, among other things, human rights, international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians. In addition, the EU has two military operations with a focus on maritime security in the waters off the Horn of Africa (EUNAVFOR ATALANTA off Somalia) and in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI off Libya). In addition, the EU's oldest and largest operation, EUFOR ALTHEA, has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2004 to train armed forces and support the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in maintaining the Dayton peace agreement from 1995. The EU also has 11 active civilian crisis management missions that seek to create stability in fragile states through, among other things, building up the judiciary and police, border administration, civil administration, and the like. Geographically, they are deployed to the EU's eastern neighbourhood (Kosovo, Georgia, and Ukraine, which are currently evacuated), Africa (Somalia, Niger, Mali, Libya, and the Central African Republic) and the Middle East (Iraq, Ramallah, and Gaza)³⁶.

The EU and NATO have a lot in common. 21 EU countries are also members of NATO. Both organizations focus on how we can best meet the global security policy challenges of our time. Regular meetings are held between the two organizations where the development of the collaboration is discussed. The work of the two organizations complements each other. NATO stands for territorial defence and is the guarantor of European security, the EU has the tools to deal with threats from, for example, irregular migration, cyber-

³⁴ R. Csernatoni, *The EU's Defense Ambitions: Understanding the Emergence of European Defense Technology and Industrial Complex*, <<https://carnegieeurope.eu/2021/12/06/eu-s-defense-ambitions-understanding-emergence-of-european-defense-technological-and-industrial-complex-pub-85884>> (06.08.2022).

³⁵ A.-S. Dahl, *op. cit.*

³⁶ *Ibidem.*

attacks and hybrid threats against, for example, critical infrastructure and military activities in Europe's immediate area. Since 1993, the cooperation has developed to also include broader issues of defence planning and capability development in the field of defence. This development has not changed the premise that the EU's defence policy must always be compatible with NATO's policy³⁷.

The Baltic Sea Region

In a report that came out a few months before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we showed in collaboration with Nordic research colleagues, among other things, that Sweden and Finland had already approached NATO and the United States to a significant degree before the invasion, which both countries now considered their most important partner in security policy³⁸.

The Swedish and Finnish decision-makers also increasingly saw Russia as a security policy challenge, as it was then formulated. But at the same time, it was clear at the time that not least the popular reluctance in both countries made the question of NATO membership irrelevant³⁹.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022 resulted in a further shift in the threat perception of Russia by Finnish and Swedish decision-makers.

But just as importantly, it led to a fundamental change of mood in the Swedish and Finnish populations. Most significantly in Finland, where support for NATO membership rose from just over a quarter in January 2022 to more than three quarters in May. The development looked just like that in Sweden, albeit less violent. Against this background, both Finland and Sweden applied in mid-May for admission to NATO⁴⁰.

Finnish and Swedish NATO membership holds good opportunities for NATO. Not only does the alliance get to close off the Baltic Sea and, thanks to Swedish and Finnish territory, get better opportunities for defence planning to securing reinforcements to counter attacks on, for example, the Baltic countries.

In addition, both Sweden and Finland have technologically advanced forces whose organization and equipment have been streamlined for years to match NATO's standards. And both countries are stable democracies that fulfil

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ T. Prakash, *Sverige og Finland har kurs mod NATO: 'Jeg tror, at vi i Danmark skal klappe i vore små hænder'*, <<https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/udland/finlaeand-og-sverige-har-lynkurs-mod-nato-medlemskab-det-er-historisk>> (13.06.2022).

³⁹ R. Forsberg, A.-M. Kähkönen, J. Öberg, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ K. Haugevik, Ø. Svendsen, K. Creutz, M. R. Olesen, A. L. Regnér, J. L. Schmidt, *Nordic partnership choices in a fierier security environment*, <<https://www.diis.dk/en/research/nordic-partnership-choices-in-a-fierier-security-environment>> (05.07.2022).

NATO's original objectives of being an alliance for the defence of, among other things, democracy, and the rule of law. For Putin, Swedish and Finnish NATO accession is, conversely, a geopolitical goal of rank. Such a connection was not possible before the invasion, which at once removed decades of NATO resistance in the Swedish and Finnish populations.

The best Putin can hope for is self-imposed restrictions on nuclear weapons and/or foreign troop deployments in the style of the peacetime political reservations Denmark and Norway took in the 1950s⁴¹.

If Finland and Sweden become part of NATO, it will also turn Nordic security and defence cooperation upside down. But at the same time, it is also the culmination of a development that has been underway since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, which brought Finland and Sweden closer to the USA, NATO, and the Nordic NATO countries⁴².

In the report, we have described how similar security perceptions and strategies have made the Nordic countries far more interesting cooperation partners for each other. In addition to increased dialogue at all levels, this has, among other things, resulted in joint exercises and several concrete agreements. Among other things, air surveillance and giving military forces access to each other's territory⁴³.

However, the cooperation has mainly aimed at peacetime and has been limited by the fact that it would formally end in a crisis or conflict situation, where NATO would set the tone for the Nordic NATO countries.

With Finland and Sweden in NATO, the divide that has historically constituted the most fundamental barrier to the depth of Nordic cooperation and defence integration disappears. It provides new opportunities for intensified Nordic security and defence cooperation in both peacetime, crisis, and conflict/war⁴⁴.

The countries' integration into NATO's joint defence planning brings about a wide range of possibilities for Nordic coordination and planning, where areas such as increased cooperation on surveillance and sovereignty enforcement, preparedness cooperation and total defence stand out as some of the most obvious.

This does not mean that Nordic security and defence cooperation must take place exclusively under NATO auspices. NORDEFECO, Nordic Defence Cooperation, for example, remains a relevant forum for Nordic cooperation and consultation.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² J. L. Schmidt, M. R. Olesen, *Det lille store skridt*, <<https://www.diis.dk/publikationer/lille-store-skridt>> (08.06.2022).

⁴³ K. Haugevik, et all, *op. cit*.

⁴⁴ R. Forsberg, A.-M. Kähkönen, J. Öberg, *op. cit*.

However, the central point is that it must be fundamentally rethought and future-proofed based on the new structural conditions that Swedish and Finnish NATO membership constitutes.

Add to this the lifting of the Danish defence reservation and Norway's participation in the EU's defence and security policy cooperation. Overall, this means that the possibilities for intensified Nordic security and defence cooperation are better than at any previous time.

Conclusion

There is right talk of Finnish and Swedish decisions of historic dimensions. But at the same time, it is also a relatively small step, because over the past decades – especially after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 – the two countries have moved as close to NATO politically and militarily as is possible for non-members.

Geostrategically, the inclusion of Finland and Sweden will lead to a significant improvement in NATO's position in the Baltic Sea, with Russia being the only country in the region that is not a member of NATO. NATO will also find it easier to draw up credible defence plans for the Baltic countries because it will be easier to get reinforcements, which has been a significant headache for the alliance so far. In the long term, it will probably also lower the risk of military confrontation in the Baltic Sea region, because it will create clarity about the security policy position of the two countries and make them less vulnerable to Russian intimidation attempts.

In the short term, the situation is of course different, as the transition period from non-aligned to NATO member is difficult. Here, Denmark can play a role by facilitating as short and problem-free a process as possible. For example, through sharing experience for more than 70 years as a Nordic NATO member – even with their own experiences with Turkish resistance in NATO in connection with Anders Fogh Rasmussen's candidacy for the post of Secretary General. And you can help through political support for Finland and Sweden within the alliance.

This has also traditionally been the role that the aspirant countries' neighbours with NATO membership have played in previous enlargement processes. The Danish-Norwegian-Icelandic guarantee that they would assist Finland and Sweden with all necessary means should they be subjected to aggression on their territory, before they obtain NATO membership, should be seen as an example of this.

A united Nordic in NATO benefits Denmark and provides opportunities for increased Nordic security and defence political cooperation. In recent years, Nordic cooperation has gained momentum after the Russian annexation of Crimea, which meant that the Nordic countries gained a more similar

perception of security in the form of a strengthened focus on the immediate area, the view of Russia and the value of a close partnership with the USA. It has, among other things, resulted in Nordic agreements on access to each other's territories in peacetime, on air surveillance as well as various educational and operational measures, for example within the framework of NORDEFECO.

However, the NATO divide, with three countries inside and two countries outside, has always been the central barrier to Nordic defence integration and the depth of cooperation. The interest in closer operational cooperation in the Nordics has been challenged by the fact that NATO would set the tone for Denmark and Norway if a crisis were to take hold in the region. Also, for that reason, even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it was a central priority for Denmark to link Finland and Sweden as closely as possible to NATO. Here they fought, among other things with other NATO countries wanting to maintain a clear distinction between members and non-members.

The Nordic countries have already announced that considering Finland's and Sweden's decisions to apply for NATO membership, they want to increase cooperation and renew NORDEFECO. This is not surprising in a situation where the divergent affiliation of the countries to NATO no longer sets limitations. In this regard, Denmark should buckle down to take advantage of the favourable conditions to further intensify Nordic cooperation within the framework of NATO both within and outside NORDEFECO auspices.

This does not mean that all Nordic security and defence policy cooperation must necessarily take place within a NATO framework. NORDEFECO will continue to be a relevant forum for regional Nordic cooperation and consultation, but the cooperation must be future-proofed. A Finnish and Swedish membership of NATO constitutes such a major shift in the basic prerequisites for Nordic cooperation that a complete rethinking is necessary. Concretely, the new prerequisites for cooperation in both peacetime, crisis and conflict/war, as well as Finland's and Sweden's integration into NATO's joint defence planning, contain a wide range of possibilities for Nordic coordination and planning in areas such as increased cooperation on surveillance and sovereignty enforcement, emergency cooperation and total defence.

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HYBRID WARFARE: MILITARY RESPONSE OPTIONS

Abstract: *The predominance of non-military means in waging hybrid warfare requires various non-military responses supported by adequate military tools. The article outlines a package of possible military response options applicable in hybrid warfare. The authors point out the absence of a universal definition of hybrid warfare, set the frame for its concept and describe fundamental pillars for countering hybrid threats. The need to disposition constantly prepared and updated packages of response options, including military response options, are discussed. The paper menu results of possible military response options are presented. A suggested simplified and generalized package of options is compiled based on observations of recent and ongoing conflicts.*

Keywords: *Hybrid warfare, military response options, hybrid threats*

Introduction

Recently, we have witnessed that conflicts are not conducted in the usual ways. Wars are not declared and do not end by peace agreements. Clashes are still waged with military toolbox instruments. Still, these are getting increasingly outweighed by non-military tools: economic sanctions, restrictions on the energy supplies, information operations, propaganda and dissemination of misinformation, terrorism and increased involvement of non-state actors.

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Systematic attacks on states are called colour revolutions, grey zone conflicts, unconventional wars, unrestricted wars, or non-linear wars. The boundaries between peace and war, combatants and non-combatants, are blurred.

This way of waging wars is usually referred to as a hybrid war, and threats associated with current conflicts as hybrid threats. Due to the blurred or missing boundaries between war and peace, often unclear or covert actors, it is not easy to face such threats. Just as hybrid warfare is conducted by a mixture of military and non-military means, the response to hybrid war must include a mix of military measures complementing a comprehensive package of political, economic, diplomatic and other criteria.

The paper outlines a package of possible options for a military response to hybrid threats. These can be aimed to build resilience and deter the aggressor from attacks, but also as a response to a kinetic or non-kinetic attack. The proposed military response options (MROs) do not represent a response to a specific situation. Therefore, they are not elaborated in the details necessary to serve as a basis for decision-making within crisis response planning. These are simplified and generalized descriptions of possible MROs and their estimated advantages and risks.

A package of MROs was compiled based on observations of recent and ongoing conflicts, particularly of the use of military tools and reactions to them. Before the authors set up a package of possible MROs, they introduced and framed the concept of conducting hybrid wars and introduced general options for response to hybrid threats.

Defining the Concept of Hybrid Warfare

Particularly concerning the security events in Ukraine since 2014, the term hybrid warfare is frequently used in the media, on social networks and in political debates. Hybrid warfare is a topic of security forums and academic discussions, and the term also appears in official documents of national governments and international institutions. The chapter aims to point out different views on the definitions of the hybrid war concept and identify their standard features.

Major William J. Nemeth is considered the first author to use the term ‘Hybrid war’ in his thesis at the US Naval Postgraduate School in 2002. In his work, Nemeth pointed out an unprecedented complex of regular and irregular warfare in a highly flexible and efficient way conducted by Chechens during their 1994-1996 war against Russia³.

³ W. J. Nemeth, *Future War and Chechnya: A Case for Hybrid Warfare*, Monterey 2002, <<https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/5865>> (1.11.2022).

To emphasize the complexity of current wars, James N. Mattis and Frank Hoffmann wrote in the 2005 article “Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars”⁴ defining the concept of hybrid warfare. Evaluating the US military's efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, they concluded that in addition to conventional threats, there would be a significant rise in irregular challenges in future conflicts. In addition to state actors, US troops will have to fight paramilitary groups and radical terrorists simultaneously and face unconventional attacks by non-state actors. Critical infrastructure, communication and computer networks and military and financial targets might also be attacked.

The authors also pointed out the complexity of the operational environment, adding aspects of information and psychological operations. In his later work, Hoffman defined hybrid war as: “Hybrid threats incorporate a full range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder. Hybrid wars can be conducted by both states and a variety of non-state actors. These multi-modal activities can be conducted by separate units, or even by the same unit, but are generally operationally and tactically directed and coordinated within the main battlespace to achieve synergistic effects in the physical and psychological dimensions of the conflict”⁵.

NATO's principal documents do not provide an exact definition of hybrid warfare. According to its official statements: “hybrid warfare, where a broad, complex, and adaptive combination of conventional and non-conventional means, and overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures, are employed in a highly integrated design by state and non-state actors to achieve their objectives”⁶.

Trying to avoid the exact definition of hybrid war, the EU describes the issue by defining hybrid threats instead: “Hybrid warfare can be more easily characterised than defined as a centrally designed and controlled use of various covert and overt tactics, enacted by military and/or non-military means, ranging from intelligence and cyber operations through economic pressure to the use of conventional forces. By employing hybrid tactics, the attacker seeks to undermine and destabilise an opponent by applying both coercive and subversive methods. The latter can include various forms of sabotage,

⁴ J. Mattis, F. Hoffman, *Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, <<http://milnewstbay.pbworks.com/f/MattisFourBlockWarUSNINov2005.pdf>> (1.11.2022).

⁵ F. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Arlington 2007, <http://www.potomac institute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac_hybridwar_0108.pdf> (1.11.2022).

⁶ NATO, *Warsaw Summit Communiqué. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw on 8-9 July 2016*, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm> (1.11.2022).

disruption of communications and other services including energy supplies. The aggressor may work through or by empowering proxy insurgent groups, or disguising state-to-state aggression behind the mantle of a 'humanitarian intervention'. Massive disinformation campaigns designed to control the narrative are an important element of a hybrid campaign. All this is done with the objective of achieving political influence, even dominance over a country in support of an overall strategy"⁷.

Russia's view on new wars being fought in the 21st Century was presented by Russian Chief of the General Staff General Valery Gerasimov in his article "The Value of Science in Prediction"⁸. Western scholars refer to the article as a 'Gerasimov doctrine', describing methods to be developed and used in future operations. Many of those methods can be recognised by analysing the events happening in Ukraine in 2014. According to the leading expert in modern Russia and its security politics Mark Galeotti, Gerasimov "*talk about: how Russia can subvert and destroy states without direct, overt and large-scale military intervention*"⁹.

*Typical features of warfare of the 21st Century, according to Gerasimov doctrine, are: the borders between war and peace are blurred, the role of non-military means has exceeded the power of military force, the concealed character of military means is prevailing, informational operations and actions of special operations forces are present. The overt use of force should be conducted at the final stage of the conflict, masked as a crisis response or peacekeeping operation, to reach final success*¹⁰.

Hybrid war is not different from the wars fought in the past. Conflicts in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Chechnya constituted a mixture of regular and irregular tactics, information operations, actions of state and non-state actors and other military and non-military means characteristic of what is now known as hybrid warfare. Even Clausewitz, in his famous work "On War"¹¹, wrote about indirect war, which aims to achieve the desired political goals by exhausting the enemy's forces, but without trying to achieve a decisive military victory and/or the conquest of territory.

The concept of hybrid warfare can be traced even deeper in history. Its emergence was caused by technological advance which has provided tools that

⁷ EU, European External Action Service, Working Document EEAS (2015) 731, *Food-for-thought paper "Countering Hybrid Threats"*, <<http://www.statewatch.org/news/2015/may/eeas-csdphybrid-threats-8887-15.pdf>> (1.11.2022).

⁸ R. Coalson, *Translation of Gerasimov's article*, <<https://inmoscowshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russiannon-linear-war/>> (1.11.2022).

⁹ O. Manea, *Hybrid War as a War on Governance: Interview with Mark Galeotti*, <<https://csc.asu.edu/2015/08/23/manea-interviews-galeotti-on-hybrid-war-at-swj/>> (1.11.2022).

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ C. Clausewitz, *On War* <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1946/1946-h/1946-h.htm>> (1.11.2022).

enable the concept of hybrid warfare to be fully developed in current conflicts. Hybrid warfare combines conventional, unconventional, cyber and asymmetric strategies, tactics, methods and processes to achieve a set of military goals. This type of warfare connects the civil-military environment, where three parties of the conflict are formed – the armed forces, the population and the opposition forces¹². Mark Galeotti described this phenomenon as: “This is less of a new way of war so much as a way of fighting a war in a new world. It is the world that it has changed rather than the tactics and the ideas“¹³.

Although the term hybrid warfare has been generally accepted by security experts and international organizations and is extensively used in media, a universal definition of its concept does not exist. Some of them prefer to avoid this term. For example, Josef Procházka and Richard Stojar did not use the term hybrid warfare in their article “Approach to the Assessment of the Military Potential of the State – an Example of the Russian Federation”. Nevertheless, their strategic analysis of military potential is provided in political, economic, social, technological, and ecological domains¹⁴. It probably suggests that they were thinking in hybrid warfare dimensions.

Similarly, Radoslav Ivančík avoids using the term hybrid warfare in the article “Information War – One of the Multidisciplinary Phenomenon of Current Human Society”. But he claims that victory in the war will much sooner destroy or disrupt online facilities or services (such as attacking and decommissioning military computers and the commanding communications network) or physical structures that can be attacked through the network (such as launching a dam), interruption of electricity supply, breaking into the information systems of banks, insurance companies, hospitals, etc.). Physical as well as virtual objects accessible via the network thus become increasingly promising targets of potential conflict¹⁵. Signs of hybrid warfare are appearing here as well.

For this article, the authors tried to frame the concept of hybrid warfare by identifying its most common features:

1. Battlespace. Being also fought by non-kinetic means, hybrid war often does not require physical components of the battlefield. Cyberspace is getting more and more important domain. The area of operations is usually non-continuous and non-linear, and the borders of the conflict

¹² V. Vyklický, I. Pikner, J. Procházka, *Approaches to Modernizing the Land Forces of Selected Countries*, “Vojenské rozhledy” 2022, Vol. 31 (1), pp. 003-020.

¹³ O. Manea, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ J. Procházka, R. Stojar, *Approach to the Assessment of the Military Potential of the State – an Example of the Russian Federation*, “Vojenské rozhledy” 2019, Vol 28 (1), pp. 003-015.

¹⁵ R. Ivančík, *Information war – One of the multidisciplinary phenomennes of current human society*, “Politické Vedy” 2021, Vol 24 (1), pp. 135-152.

zone are blurred. The effects of information operations often exceed the location of physical influence and can reach the global population. When fought as a proxy war, decisive actions take place on the third actor's territory. McCuen identified hybrid warfare as "three decisive battlegrounds: within the conflict zone population, home front population and international community"¹⁶.

2. Participants. Adversaries often tend to try to cover their involvement in the conflict. ('Little green men' and 'Russian soldiers on leave' during the Russo-Ukrainian War in 2014). Traditional state actors are replaced or supplemented by guerrillas, private security forces, and terrorist and criminal organizations cooperating in a very sophisticated manner. The distinction between combatants and non-combatants is blurred. The civil population is often involved in direct actions and can overreach the number of engaged military personnel.
3. Methods. Coordinated use of covert and overt kinetic and non-kinetic means, ranging from intelligence, information and cyber operations through small-scale special operations and ending up with high-intensity large-scale combat operations. Supported by disinformation, propaganda and economic pressure.

Hybrid War – Hybrid Response

Hybrid attacks are aimed at exploiting the victim's critical vulnerabilities. The ability to face hybrid threats is based on identifying those weak points, building resilience to deter the adversary, and responding to attacks effectively.

Identification of vulnerabilities. To be able to prevent and prepare for a possible attack, it is crucial to identify own weaknesses. These differ from country to country and also change over time; assessment of vulnerabilities should be a continual process. Countries creating international societies should also pay particular attention to the openness of their member states. The adversary will often try to find and exploit a 'soft underbelly', the weakest place to mount an attack and disrupt a closely cooperating society. The interconnectedness of computer networks, energy supply chains and economics allows the attacker to cause massive damage in a single successful strike. Possible adversaries constantly work on the identification of victims' vulnerabilities. Several cases of Russian spies working under cover of diplomacy within EU member states were revealed in past years. Weak and incompetent governance, widespread corruption, economic dependence, and a

¹⁶ J. McCuen, *Hybrid Wars*, "Military Review", 2008, Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 2, pp. 107-113.

low level of diversification of strategic resources are examples of vulnerabilities calling for attention.

Building resilience. EU and NATO declare that countering and responding to hybrid threats is a national responsibility but also express platforms and tools to support the effort of individual member states to counter hybrid threats. One of the cornerstones for strengthening the country's or alliance's resilience is a robust and reliable political system able to withstand destabilisation attempts. The ability to resist hybrid threats can be increased by increasing the degree of preparedness in various areas: energy security, civil protection, critical infrastructure protection, and strategic communication. To test and increase resilience and to support decision-making processes, it is appropriate to regularly perform exercises with simulated hybrid attacks and practice reactions to them.

Deterrence. It is vital to demonstrate determination, stability, consistency and speed in determining measures to deter a potential enemy. The adversary must be aware that the consequences of his action will cause a significant and painful strike back. The strength of countermeasures and the determination and readiness to use them must be demonstrated regularly and proactively. It is appropriate to use military force as a deterrent, but military actions must be aligned with the overall strategy to contribute to achieving the political goal. NATO has not yet shown much in terms of deterrence. The measures concerning Russia are reactive rather than proactive and do not appear to meet their objectives fully. In a NATO review video¹⁷, Kurt Volker, former US ambassador to NATO, pointed out: "What creates de-escalation is a strong response, that causes Russia to think twice about going any further, stabilizes a tense situation and then allows it to deescalate. This has all been still very reactive, very slow, many of the statements we have heard from NATO leaders have been: If Russia goes further, then we will take additional steps. It ought to be other way around."

Response. Minor or non-kinetic attacks can often be carried out covertly to conceal the actual attacker and thus avoid responsibility and consequences. Hybrid attacks require a hybrid reaction. Diplomatic, economic, cyber, information or kinetic attacks must also be replied to by a whole range of synchronized countermeasures; otherwise, the desired effect will not be sufficient. Swift and firm responses require rapid and coordinated decision-making at the strategic political and military levels. Therefore, it is essential to have constantly prepared and regularly updated packages of countermeasures that the victim or allies can take in a relatively short time and with good effect.

¹⁷ NATO Review, *Hybrid war – hybrid response?*
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ferbM4hqkUA>> (1.11.2022).

Military Response Options

The frequent predominance of non-military means in waging hybrid warfare requires various non-military responses. Economic sanctions, counter-disinformation campaigns, and political and diplomatic pressure can achieve success, mainly in the non-kinetic phase of the conflict. However, they have to be supported by adequate military tools.

In particular, it means the deployment of experienced individuals to reach the level required by national authorities. This requirement cannot be met only by transforming the doctrinal environment but also requires the systematic training of key individuals and their supervision. At the same time, the need to understand the local specifics comes to the fore¹⁸.

In addition to the mentioned personnel, it can also be the deployment of military capabilities, which are oriented towards applying physical phenomena to the armed forces equipment. A typical example is non-lethal weapons that can use chemical substances, electrical or electromagnetic waves, sound waves, optical and other effects¹⁹.

The deployment of autonomous systems, which are gradually becoming a reality in armed conflicts, also comes into consideration²⁰. On the one hand, they show significant effectiveness; on the other hand, they are controversial and offer many negative psychological aspects. Nevertheless, we should reckon with them²¹.

In his interview, Mark Galeotti said: “The military provides a series of capacities within a highly integrated military, political, economic, social media, intelligence campaign to achieve your ends”²²,

This chapter presents a brief overview of possible MROs that could complement other forms of non-military responses. MROs must be chosen to meet the objectives set at the strategic political level. When selecting them, it is necessary to evaluate their mutual advantages and disadvantages and deduce conclusions regarding feasibility and acceptability from this comparison. During crisis response planning, MROs are developed at the military strategic

¹⁸ J. Kompan, M. Hrnčiar, *The Security Sector Reform of the Fragile State as a Tool for Conflict Prevention*, “Politické Vedy” 2021, Vol. 24 (2), pp. 87-107.

¹⁹ N. Świętochowski, *Broń nieśmiercionośna jako środek umacniania bezpieczeństwa państwa*, Poznań 2018.

²⁰ J. Ivan, M. Šustr, O. Pekař, L. Potužák, *Prospects for the Use of Unmanned Ground Vehicles in Artillery Survey*, [In:] *Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Informatics in Control, Automation and Robotics*, Lisbon 2022, pp. 467-475.

²¹ R. Stojar, J. Fučík, L. Frank, *Wars Without Soldiers and Casualties or Victories in Hearts and Minds?*, [In:] *Modelling and Simulation for Autonomous Systems. 6th International Conference MESAS 2019, Palermo, Italy, October 29-31 2019, Revised Selected Papers*, ed. J. Mazal, A. Fagiolini, P. Vasik, Palermo 2020, pp. 372-378.

²² O. Manea, *op. cit.*

level. MROs are analyzed, adjusted and drafted to ensure their best usefulness using collaborative planning and interaction at military strategic, operational and even tactical levels. Properly designed MROs should enable achieving the strategic military objectives and thus establish conditions to attain desired end state. They must be achievable with available resources and means acceptable to political authorities. It is essential to conduct a risk analysis for each drafted MRO and provide decision-makers with risk -assessment and possibilities for its mitigation.

The following list of possible MROs does not aim to name all possible MROs. Similarly, the assessment of individual options' risks, advantages and disadvantages are considerably simplified and generalized. When planning a crisis response for the conditions of a specific conflict, they must be designed more specifically and adjusted for the results of the analysis of the operating environment. The order of the presented MROs does not mean that they are proposed or applied in a specific order and is not based on any qualitative or quantitative assessment of their risks or benefits. The package is based on observations of recent and ongoing conflicts and contains deduced and fictitious options.

Table 1. Military response options.

| Military response option | Advantages/Benefits | Risks/Weaknesses |
|--|--|---|
| <p><u>1. Share military intelligence</u></p> <p>Example: NATO provides member or partner country intelligence contributing to successful attacks against senior military leaders and other high pay-off targets.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing an asymmetric advantage to an ally or partner country facing hybrid threats, - cost-effective, - possible also without direct employment of military units on the battlefield, - ‘clean hands’, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provoking the enemy if revealed or conducted overtly, - the risk of conflict escalation after crossing ‘red lines’, |
| <p><u>2. Supply of weapons and military equipment</u></p> <p>Example: Donations of weapons and military aid by NATO and allied countries to arm attacked countries.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - large-scale supplies can have a significant impact, and act as a force multiplier, perhaps even reversing the balance of power on the battlefield, - sophisticated modern weaponry can provide the receiver with a whole range of known | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vulnerable supply chains, - low level of technical interoperability between donating and receiving armies requires additional measures (e.g. training), - delivery of supplies has to be swift to be effective, - attacks on supply chains |

| Military response option | Advantages/Benefits | Risks/Weaknesses |
|--|--|---|
| | capabilities, - attrition of the aggressor without direct military confrontation with the providing countries, | can cause collateral damage and engage non-interested countries in the conflict, |
| <p>3. <u>Conduct military exercises in the region of crisis</u></p> <p>Example: Conducting a large-scale military exercise involving allies and partners.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - international military exercise with the involvement of a large number of allies shows coherence and determination, - act as deterrence of an aggression, - real action rehearsal opportunity, - increasing the level of interoperability, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cost demanding, - the considerable risk of conflict escalation, |
| <p>4. <u>Conduct military advisory and training missions</u></p> <p>Example: EU training mission within the endangered region of interest to contribute to the reform of the regional defence sector.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strengthening the resilience of receiving country against hybrid threats, - the presence of EU units demonstrates the commitment, - a powerful signal of political support, - low risk of conflict escalation, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the long time needed to bring benefits, - limited scope due to the partner's limited capabilities, |
| <p>5. <u>Develop military infrastructure, increase storage capacity</u></p> <p>Example: Large-scale investments in the defence infrastructure, military mobility, building up stores of fuel, and ammunition, and preparing a prepositioned stock of heavy armament.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reducing strategic vulnerabilities, - building resilience against hybrid attacks, - infrastructure investment can enhance deterrence, - improving the efficiency of movement, - allowing rapid strategic movement of forces, - low risk of conflict escalation, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - long-term actions, - cost demanding, - the effects may not appear immediately, |
| <p>6. <u>Enhance military presence in the region of</u></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a show of force - demonstration of the | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be perceived as a conflict provoking, |

| Military response option | Advantages/Benefits | Risks/Weaknesses |
|--|--|---|
| <p><u>crisis</u></p> <p>Example: NATO members and partners enhance forward presence in the most endangered regions.</p> | <p>ability to act immediately in response to an aggression,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enhancing readiness and interoperability, - a signal of commitment and coherence, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the willingness to accept foreign troops' presence can vary significantly between partners, - must be of sufficient level to act as a natural deterrent, |
| <p>7. <u>Relieve or replace partners to free forces for responding to hybrid attacks</u></p> <p>Example: Reduction or replacement of NATO eastern flank countries' contributions to international crisis management operations.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - countering hybrid threats by native forces is less provocative than the involvement of the Alliance or third countries, - not increasing the conflict between other actors, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the necessity to replace relieved troops , - is unlikely to have a significant impact, |
| <p>8. <u>Strengthening non-military forces by military units</u></p> <p>Example: Enemy hybrid attacks cause refugee waves exceeding the capabilities of non-military crisis response and law enforcement agencies.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - if the intervention is carried out in the territory of the partner country, the signal of coherence and commitment, - deterrent effect, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - deployed military units are not immediately available in case of conflict escalation, |
| <p>9. <u>Development of 'hybrid aggression response plans' and their integration into long-term planning</u></p> <p>Example: Strategic level exercise focused on Identifying the most likely enemy course of action and creation of contingency plans.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identification of own weak points and determining requirements for their elimination, - building resilience, - increasing readiness and level of civil-military cooperation, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - challenges caused by rapidly changing, the complex and unpredictable security environment, |
| <p>10. <u>Enhance capabilities for the rapid integration of Allied forces</u></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a show of permanent NATO presence, - identifying logistical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the willingness to accept foreign troops' presence can vary significantly |

| Military response option | Advantages/Benefits | Risks/Weaknesses |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Example: NATO opens force integration units in endangered countries to facilitate rapid deployment of high-readiness forces.</p> | <p>infrastructure and transportation routes, - deliberate planning of rapid integration and movement of forces, - fostering collaboration between NATO nations,</p> | <p>between partners, - the considerable risk of conflict escalation,</p> |
| <p>11. <u>Perform strategic deployment exercises</u></p> <p>Example: USA and NATO members conduct emergency deployment readiness exercises to show the ability to deploy to the zone of conflict worldwide.</p> | <p>- actual combat deployment rehearsal, - testing the ability to conduct strategic movement with short or no notice to move, - strengthening the NATO deterrence and defensive posture, - testing reception and host nation support capability,</p> | <p>- high risk of conflict escalation, - cost demanding,</p> |
| <p>12. <u>Conduct hidden special operations in the conflict zone</u></p> <p>Example: US conduct a small-scale special operation to provide military assistance for the endangered country against enemy infiltration efforts.</p> | <p>- enhances partner ties, - relatively low cost, - signals commitment,</p> | <p>- very high risk of conflict escalation,</p> |
| <p>13. <u>Train military forces of the invaded country</u></p> <p>Example: NATO member state provides military training to personnel of the country facing kinetic attacks</p> | <p>- allows continuous replenishment of defending units, - an effective way to train units for the use of new types of weapons supplied by NATO countries, - training of mobilized personnel in a safe environment,</p> | <p>- cost and time demanding, - high risk of the conflict spreading to providing country's territory,</p> |
| <p>14. <u>Enforce a no-fly zone</u></p> <p>Example: UN security council passes a</p> | <p>- control of the air space over the conflict zone, - strong deterrent effect, - a decisive signal of</p> | <p>- direct involvement of military forces in the conflict, - very high risk of conflict</p> |

| Military response option | Advantages/Benefits | Risks/Weaknesses |
|---|---|---|
| resolution prohibiting unauthorized flights over specific areas by tasking member states to create a no-fly zone. | cohesion of the tasked member states, | escalation, - the necessity to take offensive actions against no-fly zone violations , |
| <p>15. <u>Combat operation in response to a kinetic attack</u></p> <p>Example: Based on Article V NATO launches a combat operation to defend the territory of attacked member state(s).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a clear and vigorous response to the enemy's kinetic action, - a most effective way to deter the enemy from further attacks , - unprecedented confirmation of collective self-defence mechanism and NATO's cohesion and commitment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extremely high risk of conflict escalation, - 'no other option' scenario, if NATO fails to conduct direct military action, the basic principles of its existence would be violated, - the risk of world war if global powers are involved, - the risk of use of weapons of mass destruction. |

Conclusion

The article outlined a package of possible military response options in hybrid warfare. Due to the absence of a universal definition of the concept of hybrid warfare, the authors first introduced several well-known and familiar reports. They tried to determine the concept of hybrid warfare by framing its concept into space, actors and methods commonly used. The need to respond to hybrid threats in a hybrid way, ideally proactive and not reactive, was emphasized in the second chapter, where fundamental pillars of a successful fight against hybrid threats were also discussed.

The results of the work, the MROs package, were presented in the third part of the work. MROs, as an effective supplement to non-military response options, must support the achievement of political goals. Properly designed MROs should enable achieving the strategic military objectives and thus establish conditions to attain desired end state. They must be achievable with available resources and means acceptable to political authorities. The list of presented MROs does not aim to name all possible options.

Similarly, the assessment of individual options' risks, advantages and disadvantages are considerably simplified and generalized. When planning a crisis response for the conditions of a specific conflict, they have to be designed more specifically and adjusted for the results of the analysis of the operating

environment. Due to the rapidly changing, complex and unpredictable security environment, such analysis should be conducted regularly. The menu of MROs, therefore, should be periodically updated, individual response options adjusted and reactions to hybrid threats scrutinizingly rehearsed. We are witnessing so many new, sometimes surprising or innovative responses, including military ones, that it is impossible to create a final menu of military responses.

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II. COMMENTARIES

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THE GEORGIAN NATIONAL LEGION – THE WAR FOR GEORGIA IN UKRAINE?

***Abstract:** The paper attempts to look closer into and assess one of the truly significant parts of the Ukrainian struggle against the Russian invaders on its territory, the territory of a sovereign post-Soviet state – Russia’s former important ally, with which Russia shares the common history. The Georgian National Legion, which was founded in 2014, joined right away, since then, still ongoing the Russo-Ukrainian War to fight against Russia-backed separatist forces in Ukraine’s Donbas region after Russia annexed Crimea first. In the article, we try to find out what in particular the Georgian National Legion is, who its leadership and members are, and what their motivations actually can be for struggling in Ukraine. Along with the majority of Georgian volunteers, facing and not rarely even personally experiencing Russian aggression against their homeland, Georgia, since the collapse of the Soviet Union and establishment of the independent Georgian state, the legion consists of people from 31 other countries either.*

***Keywords:** Georgian National Legion; Russo-Ukrainian War; Georgia; Ukraine; Georgian volunteers*

What is the Georgian National Legion?

The Georgian National Legion was established in 2014 by a group of Georgian nationals to fight Russia-backed separatist forces in Ukraine’s

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Donbas region, where it took part in hostilities even during the first intense phase of the war in 2014-2015. Since the very start of the conflict in 2014, many Georgian military officers immediately decided to arrive in Ukraine to first of all – help train the Ukrainians, who afterwards have taken part in the fighting.

According to Mamuka Mamulashvili², the commander of the Georgian National Legion, Georgian fighters were in Ukraine already in April 2014, by the time when Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine proclaimed the establishment of the Donetsk People’s Republic (in Ukraine’s Donetsk Oblast) and the Luhansk People’s Republic (in Ukraine’s Luhansk Oblast) obviously, with the decisive support from Russia. The Georgian battalion was fighting on the Luhansk front line from the very beginning.

Noteworthy to mention that in 2016, the Georgian National Legion unprecedentedly till then, became part of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This was indeed the first time in Ukraine’s history when foreigners were officially accepted into the Armed Forces of Ukraine – under the law “On the integration of foreigners into the Ukrainian army”.

The Georgian National Legion began to recruit more personnel after it officially became part of the Ukrainian army. As soon as the contract was signed, volunteers, including the higher level personnel from different countries started joining the legion. As of now, the Georgian Legion is the largest foreign unit in the Ukrainian army.

Since 24th February 2022, the legion has had even more volunteers. And the geography of their origins is not limited to Georgia – the Legion is a battalion-plus strength unit, consisting of ca. 1000 volunteers, half of them Georgians.

Worth mentioning that as Russia’s full-scale invasion began, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky famously called in fact “every friend of Ukraine”, and “Anyone who wants to join the defence of security in Europe and the world”³ to join the Ukrainians’ fight. He announced that his administration would form a new foreign legion, officially called the International Legion of Territorial Defence of Ukraine. It has been unknown though who leads the group, what kind of training they do receive, and how many years fighters are expected to serve. What is interesting is the fact that a lot of foreign fighters still just join Mamulashvili’s legion instead, which suggests that the Georgian battalion has quite a good reputation.

² S. Musaieva, Y. Buderatskyi, *Mamuka Mamulashvili, Commander of the Georgian Legion: Ukraine is the only country to take on the challenge of the barbaric terrorist state that is Russia*, <<https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/articles/2022/07/10/7357256/>> (13.09.2022).

³ *FightforUA*, <<https://fightforua.org/>> (15.09.2022).

Mamuka Mamulashvili claims to speak personally with every person joining his unit to make sure that they are fighting for the right cause. The Georgian National Legion stands for exclusion of the radical views, religious fanaticism, extremism, Nazism, racism, etc. The battalion leader has drawn a distinction between his group and for instance, the Azov Battalion, another segment of the Ukrainian army, which reportedly welcomed neo-Nazis and other white supremacists, cultivating international ties at the same time⁴.

Due to the high effectiveness and particular contribution of the Georgian Legion in the Ukrainians' struggle for their territorial integrity and sovereignty since 2014, which has been recognized by the Ukrainian President and awarded with the corresponding medals for Mamuka Mamulashvili and several other Georgian officers, Russian propagandists, including media and special services, not surprisingly have been raging the multidimensional information war against the battalion, claiming falsely that the Russian units have destroyed some part of it⁵, or that the legion avoids taking prisoners, suggesting – directly killing them instead⁶.

Who are the Leaders and Members of the Georgian National Legion?

The Georgian National Legion is headed by Mamuka Mamulashvili who is the founder and leader of the Georgian battalion of the Ukrainian army. Mamulashvili has personally been fighting against the Russian expansion in wars since his childhood, when he was 14 years old, beginning with the separatist war in Georgia's Abkhazia region that started in 1992.

In his interview with *Ukrainska Pravda*⁷, Mamuka Mamulashvili talked about his relevant family background mentioning his father, who used to be a military general serving in the Georgian army in the 1990s. It was exactly him, who took Mamulashvili to war at the age of 14. He practically grew up on a military base, and at such an early age, the minor already became a soldier as he joined the combat action. A year after the war began, the father with his son got captured together, and they stayed for about three months in captivity. Despite studying to be a diplomat in Paris, France, "...we can't use diplomatic language with Russia at all... We couldn't do it in Georgia and we can't do it in

⁴ J. Shamsian, *A Georgian commander fighting Russian forces in Ukraine says more international support will help defeat Putin*, <<https://www.businessinsider.com/georgian-legion-commander-ukraine-army-russia-war-mamuka-mamulashvili-2022-3>> (14.09.2022).

⁵ F. Akbarov, *Georgian mercenaries participating in killing of Russian servicemen in Ukraine have been destroyed, says Konashenkov*, <<https://apa.az/en/cis-countries/georgian-mercenaries-participating-in-killing-of-russian-servicemen-in-ukraine-have-been-destroyed-says-konashenkov-379540>> (15.09.2022).

⁶ S. Musaieva, Y. Buderatskyi, *op. cit.*

⁷ *Ibidem.*

Ukraine”⁸ – Mamulashvili said. The wars before the Russian-Georgian War of 2008 seem to affect the leader of the Georgian Legion more than the one that happened in 2008. He explains this by noting: “Because it was a very short war, and there were peace agreements with Russia, which Russia still does not adhere to. But that was the beginning of modern wars on the territory of the former Soviet Union. It was an attempt to start the <<reunification of the USSR>>... There was no penalty for Russia in 2008, so its ambitions went further. But Georgia said repeatedly in 2008 that Ukraine would be next.”⁹

The legion overall is comprised of people from 32 different countries, among whom the majority are still Georgians followed by the UK and US citizens, as well as other nationals from various states around the world.

After 24th February 2022, recruiting foreigners to the battalion became quite complicated and it was paused for a while once there had been recruited the optimal number needed for the Georgian Legion. There were selected highly motivated people based on their professional criteria and combat experience as they are not expected to undergo preliminary training to participate in combat operations. The fighters coming from the Western countries majorly gained their combat experience from the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, while the Georgians have been through several wars orchestrated by Russia specifically, and therefore, they have a lot of experience in war against the Russian aggressors. That’s why, it is logical that as of now, the majority in the Georgian battalion are still Georgians as already mentioned above.

The Georgian Legion now contains around 1000 people being divided into special groups that operate as special operations groups, which carry out very specific work along almost the entire front line. The fighters have been purposefully spread on different fronts avoiding their concentration on one place as Russia truly seeks to take a large contingent of the Georgian battalion and kill them.

The Georgian National Legion, involved in the destruction of command centres, the destruction of Russian logistics, etc. reportedly has warfare tactics that are quite focused and very well planned.

Motivations to Fight in the Others’ Struggle

To understand and analyze what drives the members of the Georgian Legion – Georgians and other nationals, we need to illustrate some pieces even from their interviews. “Ukraine is the only country today physically fighting for freedom and democratic ideals... Everybody should get more engaged because

⁸ *Ibidem.*

⁹ *Ibidem.*

it is the only place now where you can see the real fighting for real freedom¹⁰”, Mamuka Mamulashvili, the founder of the Georgian battalion of the Ukrainian army, told Insider.

When it comes to personal motivations for joining the Ukrainians’ struggle to defend their country from Russian aggression currently, Mamuka Mamulashvili’s personal and family story plays a decisive role. As there has been already mentioned above, Mamulashvili keeps fighting against Moscow’s expansion in wars since his teenage years, beginning with the separatist war in Georgia’s Abkhazia region that started in 1992. He noted his inspiration, which he got from the Ukrainian civilians that have made him prouder to fight alongside them, and that he has been impressed with the leadership of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky personally – during the ongoing crisis. According to the leader of the Georgian Legion, for years, he was anticipating Russia’s massive attack on Ukraine, and therefore, has used his group to train civilians across Ukraine, to learn how to handle arms and protect themselves from gunfire. Vladimir Putin’s interest isn’t just in geographical expansion, but to suck the country’s soul – he said¹¹. Mamulashvili’s vision of the prospects for Ukrainians in the war is deeply connected with moral standing, which seems missing in the case of Putin and his occupant forces, which differ from Ukrainians defending their homeland¹². However, the victory from the part of latter would at the same time need collective attempts to resist from Ukrainians and the rest of the world.

The Georgian fighters’ inspiration for joining the Ukrainian struggle can be explained by various special circumstances, but one is especially important – Ukraine is a strategic partner of Georgia. During the first Russian aggression after the collapse of the USSR in Georgia, Ukraine was the only country that openly helped the South Caucasian state and sent volunteers, many of whom died defending Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. “So it was a matter of principle for us to come and help”¹³ – said Mamuka Mamulashvili.

The major motivation seems distinct for everyone and every individual from different countries. One of the reasons that for example, the American fighters give is the fact that the United States is one of the countries, which signed the Budapest Memorandum, and many of them think that the US has not done as much as it should have done for Ukraine. Therefore, the American members of the Georgian battalion intend to show Ukraine that they are standing together with the post-Soviet country. As in the case of several Georgian or other fighters, some US citizens, part of the legion, have been

¹⁰ J. Shamsian, *op. cit.*

¹¹ *Ibidem.*

¹² *Ibidem.*

¹³ S. Musaieva, Y. Buderatskyi, *op. cit.*

killed during the war. The idea behind accepting fighters from different countries in the Georgian Legion used to be the demonstration of how many states support Ukraine. And if there was even one representative from each country, that would be quite a lot of fighters.

After some volunteers from Georgia or other countries have been killed, many more people from those very or other states keep expressing their will and join the Georgian battalion in the Ukrainian war.

According to the Georgian Legion members¹⁴, Russian soldiers, lacking once again, any moral standing in the war, tend to maximally avoid a direct meeting and equal combat with the Ukrainian military. Instead of that, as it is a well-established and widespread fact, the occupants massively rape, kill and torture children and women, along with men, and civilians in general.

When attempting to convince the Western allies to more actively and precisely help Ukraine, the Georgian Legion leader Mamulashvili noted: “Ukraine has taken on the role of protecting all European countries and democratic values – not only its own but also those of the entire Western world. And the West needs to really understand this because this is costing Ukrainians their lives”¹⁵. “We’d rather have more heavy weapons”¹⁶, Henryk Diasamidze, another legion officer commented on the Ukrainian army’s needs, including those of the Georgian battalion either.

To the question, what could be considered a victory for Ukraine in the ongoing war, could it be the return of territory – the return of Donbas or the return of Crimea under Ukraine’s control, and what might victory for Georgia mean for them personally, Mamuka Mamulashvili thoughtfully said: “Today, Ukraine’s victory is also Georgia’s victory”, and “The only option for ending the war in Ukraine is the de-occupation of absolutely all territories of Ukraine, the de-occupation of Crimea and all the occupied territories. [...] 20% of the territories in Georgia are also occupied by Russia. And Georgia today is completely dependent on the war in Ukraine. On how the war in Ukraine will end. [...] I think every citizen of Georgia has to understand that his or her place is in Ukraine today, and it’s not just the fate of Ukraine that’s being decided here. It’s not just Ukraine, but many European countries, NATO countries and Georgia in particular as well. [...] I really want every Georgian to understand that the struggle for Georgia is going on here today, and they should join it”¹⁷.

¹⁴ *Ibidem.*

¹⁵ *Ibidem.*

¹⁶ K. Livingstone, *The Wolves Leading the Pack: Inside a Key Foreign Unit Fighting to Protect Ukraine*, <<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/08/24/wolves-leading-pack-inside-key-foreign-unit-fighting-protect-ukraine.html>> (15.09.2022).

¹⁷ S. Musaieva, Y. Buderatskyi, *op. cit.*

The People and the Government

As the war of 2022 started, the Georgian Government blocked a group of 400 Georgian fighters from joining the legion¹⁸. Georgia keeps avoiding joining international, or the initiation of sanctions against Russia, although officially complies with the existing ones, maintains a visa-free regime for the uncontrollable already and dramatically increases on an ongoing basis – the influx of Russian citizens, while at the same time, in parallel, the country demonstrates clear support to Ukraine though, keeps sending humanitarian aid, supports Russia's suspension from international organizations, etc. All these facts illustrate a very careful and diplomatic position (if that can be called like that), made by the part of the Georgian authorities towards Russia – the occupant of Georgia's officially 20% of the territory as well – and its actions in Ukraine.

As the Georgian Legion leader Mamuka Mamulashvili also points out even just observing the significant number of volunteers coming from Georgia to Ukraine manifests great and genuine support of the Georgian people towards Ukrainians¹⁹. There are popular events, for example, frequently categorical demands towards the Georgian Government raised by the dominant part of civil society, youth and opposition in the country for the much stronger official denouncement of Russian actions, allowing more direct and mobilized involvement of Georgian volunteers fighting in the Ukrainian war, etc. These events are taking place in the South Caucasian state and demonstrate the apparent disagreement between the ordinary citizenry and the country authorities.

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¹⁸ T. Hume, *Georgia Blocked Hundreds of Foreign Fighters from Joining the Defence of Ukraine*, <<https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3vx7k/georgia-blocked-hundreds-of-foreign-fighters-from-joining-the-defence-of-ukraine>> (15.09.2022).

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III. GUEST ARTICLES

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BIOCHAR – AN INNOVATIVE PRODUCT AND A CHANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Abstract: Biochar is becoming the most desirable product to stop global climate change. Climate changes, soil degradation, and increasing water and atmospheric pollution make it necessary to search for new, cheaper, and more effective solutions. Thanks to the use of this raw material in modern agriculture, the environment is regenerated, producers reduce production costs while increasing yields, and consumers can enjoy food free from harmful pollutants. It is a perspective for a better, more sustainable use of the earth's resources, which we finally have a chance to do as it deserves.

Keywords: biochar, CO₂ sequestration, sustainable development

Introduction

According to the idea of sustainable development, society should live in such a way that it takes into account the costs of its decisions. Sustainable means development, equal opportunities, counteracting marginalization and discrimination, and improving the quality of the natural environment, e.g., by limiting the harmful impact of production and consumption on the environment and at the same time protecting natural resources. The word innovation, on the other hand, comes from the Latin *innovatis*, which means renewal, creating

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something new. In Poland, this word is defined as the introduction of something new, a newly introduced thing, novelty, or reform.

This term was introduced to economics by Joseph A. Schumpeter. He was the founder of the Econometric Society and the author of the well-known theory of economic growth and business cycles induced by breakthrough innovations, the theory of the progressive transformation of capitalism into socialism, and a historian of economic thought.

Currently, if a company wants to have continuous and sustainable development, it must constantly expand what it offers. The competitiveness of modern enterprises depends on the introduction of innovation. Enterprises whose goal is constant development must cooperate in the field of innovation with companies from the same industry, other industries in the country and abroad, with universities, R&D institutes, including laboratories, companies intermediating in the transfer, and financing of innovations, with clusters, science and technology parks, representatives of regional, local and self-government authorities and other participants of the innovative environment². For innovation to be successful, it is necessary to closely integrate various departments of the organization. Technical specialists responsible for the design and technology of the new product must cooperate with specialists in economics, management, and finance. The globalization of markets and the accompanying increase in competition, changes in consumer lifestyles and new market challenges that are constantly emerging as a result of socio-economic changes, contribute to the treatment of various forms of innovation as a fundamental and prospective challenge for all participants of this process³.

The production of biochar is part of the scheme offered and recommended by the UN and the European Union for the full management of biomass residues for the production of biochar, which becomes the main product of the sustainable development of civilization. Considering the high usefulness of biochar, it can be confirmed that the results of research conducted by various natural institutes in the country and Canada, including the Research Institute of Pomology in Skierniewice (prof. Sas), the Institute of Life Sciences in Wrocław (prof. Piotr), the Institute of Agriculture in Krakow, the University of Life Sciences in Poznań, Lublin, Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada and others on biochar confirm that the use of biochar improves the yield of many vegetables, plants and trees, prevents the development of moulds and fungi, is a great addition to animal foods, etc. as well as for construction as an additive to concrete and plaster mortars, not to mention that it is a great renewable fuel

² R. Włodarczyk, *Działalność Innowacyjna Polskich Przedsiębiorstw*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Częstochowskiej Zarządzanie", 2017, No. 25, Vol. 2, p. 120.

³ B. Sojkin, T. Olejniczak, *Innowacyjność produktowa przedsiębiorstw na rynku artykułów żywnościowych*, "Konsumpcja i Rozwój", 2012, No 1, p. 130.

(Regulation on renewable fuels of 2018) for heating, energy, but also use by individual customers as an emission-free fuel for fireplaces, stoves, and also for barbecues.

Ecological safety problems

The problem of forest biomass management. Biomass residues resulting from planned logging and biological forest cleaning are powerful source of renewable energy. The average yield of this biomass can be up to 5 Mg of dry matter per hectare of forest. Until recently, Polish law did not allow for this biomass to be used for energy production. Currently, in the era of an energy crisis, this type of biomass can become an excellent source of biofuel production. Raw biomass from forest residues is also not an ideal substrate for energy processes, due to the high moisture content and significant content of harmful substances, e.g. chlorine for combustion installations.

In this situation, it is advisable to use an innovative solution to process forest biomass into a product that will be friendly as an addition to be used in various branches of the economy, including for agricultural and energy purposes.

The problem of management of residues from poultry and livestock farms. Biomass residues from poultry and animal breeding (chicken and manure) are a reservoir of minerals necessary to supplement the soil with nutrients. Even 50 years ago, it was practically the only fertilizer used in small (up to 10 ha) farms. However, this fertilizer poses biological and veterinary problems. To use manure and dust on a large scale, and at the same time to prevent this unfavourable phenomenon, an innovative technology of auto thermal carbonization of this type of biomass can be used. Comparative tests (at IUNG Puławy) of samples of manure from cow farms and biochar obtained from this manure show comparable nutritional values, much lower content of heavy elements than allowed in artificial fertilizers, and no Salmonella bacilli or eggs of intestinal parasites were found in the biochar sample.

The obtained biochar can therefore be freely used in agriculture without the risk of contamination to animal life or the environment.

After processing hemp into hemp products, about 10 tons of hay shives and straw remain. Currently, around 7.000 tonnes a year of hemp residue, from production, remains unmanaged. Modern installations can already produce biochar and renewable heat.

The problem of costly regeneration processes of planting forest resources. A number of studies conducted since 2010 in various agricultural institutes in the country (e.g. Research Institute of Pomology in Skierniewice, IUNG Puławy, University of Agriculture in Wrocław and Kraków), as well as numerous studies around the world, indicate that biochar accelerates the

process of initial growth of tree and shrub seedlings and also increases annual growth and fruiting in later years. Research and experience show that the use of biochar during the production of seedlings shortens the seedling production time from three to two years.

Autothermal processing of biomass left in the forest after felling trees, the result of biological cleaning of forests, biomass residues from agricultural production, manure processing from poultry and cattle breeding, and straw and hemp shives, into an innovative product like biochar, improves the condition of agricultural production and creates a raw material for construction, light industry and in feed. It will reduce the putrefaction process in Poland by about 8.800.000 tons of biomass each year and, consequently, produce about 1.500.000 tons of biocarbon per year. Using it in industry or agriculture (sequestration) we will reduce CO₂ emissions to the atmosphere by about 4.000.000 tons/year.

The problem of low-quality soils. The degradation of arable soils in Poland is a progressive process and covers an increasing area of agricultural land. These phenomena are the result of improper agricultural management in previous years when emphasis was placed on the use of artificial fertilisers. The high degree of degradation and acidification of soils in fruit crops in Poland makes it necessary to use environmentally friendly organic fertilizers that can be used in organic farming. The most important goal in organic farming should be to maintain soils in a high culture by selecting ecological methods of fertilization. The recommended method is natural nodules. In Poland, weak and very weak soils occupy over 50% of the country's territory. These are mainly soils developed on sands of low and medium loam, characterized by a low content of humus (1-2%), low sorption and water capacity. Cultivation on this type of soil is unfavourable in many respects. Firstly, there is a need to increase the consumption of means of production, mainly artificial fertilisers. Secondly, the cultivation of more profitable crops such as canola, wheat and maize can be very unreliable, especially in years with insufficient rainfall. This creates a complicated situation for a country that relies heavily on agricultural production. Possibilities to improve the condition of soils are very limited, in fact, for the last hundred years we have been dealing with their gradual degradation. A manifestation of this is the content of organic carbon in soils, which, according to most scientific studies, has fallen by half. Supplementing the soil with biochar gives a real chance to improve the condition and structure of the soil. The conducted research shows that the addition of 2 Mg of biocarbon per hectare for the next five to ten years (depending on the quality of the soil) will allow the organic carbon to be restored to the state it was in 100 years ago.

Production of High-Quality Bio-Carb Using Innovative Technology in the Industry

One of the basic conditions for the competitiveness of an organization is innovation, understood as a process of continuous change, contributing to a much better functioning of the entire organization or its unit, both internally and concerning its environment⁴. In the management literature at the end of the last century, it was emphasized that innovation is always a response to the needs of the market, so the company must always be close to the market, orientate to the market, and in fact, be inspired by it⁵.

Global convergence is even more about technology and means of production. The best solutions spread rapidly. Those who do not use them are simply eliminated by the competition because their products do not meet the new standards of quality, durability, functionality, aesthetics, etc.⁶. The future is to redefine how coal is used, remodelling the management of residual materials and promoting an innovative supply network.

Striving to meet the constantly growing demand for all forms of energy with new or improved technologies is the reason for modifying the applicable legal and economic regulations. The opposition to the requirements to increase energy and economic efficiency by increasing the intensity and scale of production and the requirements of environmental protection, maintaining biodiversity and the use of areas with limited food usefulness (ILUC – Indirect Land Use Change), led to the adoption by the EU of the RED (Renewable Energy Directive) and FQD (Fuel Quality Directive)⁷.

One of the products that should become the most important product of our civilization for the sustainable development of our planet is biochar. The vision for the future is upcycling (a form of secondary processing of waste, which results in products of higher value, treated as valuable raw materials) of bio-waste to create a valuable carbon storage option and support the development of a circular bioeconomy.

Biochar is a product of thermal, anaerobic processing of plant biomass, residual waste from sawmilling activity, waste from the vegetable and fruit industries, municipal wastewater treatment residue, etc. The world produces over 150 million tons of this type of biomass residue, annually. Until now, these residues in the main mass are decaying, increasing the production of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases every year. The use of this residual waste

⁴ B. Mikula, *Zachowania organizacyjne w kontekście zarządzania wiedzą*, Kraków 2012, p. 63.

⁵ P. Drucker, *Innowacje i przedsiębiorczość. Praktyka i zasady*, Warszawa 1992, p. 42.

⁶ A. K. Kozmiński, *Zarządzanie. Teoria i praktyka*, Warszawa 2002, p. 564.

⁷ A. Roszkowski, *Biomasa i bioenergia – bariery technologiczne i energetyczne*, "Problemy Inżynierii Rolniczej", 2012, Vol. 3(77), pp. 79-100.

for the production of biochar will reduce the emission of these harmful gases into the atmosphere and at the same time will contribute to the production of approximately 20 million tons of biochar.

Biochar acts as a soil conditioner, which, once ploughed, has an effect for decades. Biochar increases soil fertility by stimulating biological activity⁸.

The concept of developing a society's agricultural economy with climate in mind should take into account the sequestration (retention) of carbon dioxide by:

1. The action of plants as carbon 'pumps' (assimilation),
2. Replenishment of the carbon element in the soil,
3. Use of rapidly renewable biomass for the production of energy and raw materials.

Biochar is an ideal product that meets these criteria. To restore a sufficient amount of carbon elements to the land, approximately five tons of biochar should be dosed annually for five to ten years per hectare. It is a retention (*sequestration*) of about 10 tons of carbon dioxide per hectare of land. If we managed to apply 10 million tons of biochar to the earth annually, we would stop the emission of about 20 million tons of carbon dioxide. Modern technologies will create a solution for storing carbon dioxide in the form of a renewable resource with a negative carbon balance.

Renewable fuels, especially biomass: straw, waste wood, chips, sawdust, hemp shives, specially cultivated energy plants and animal biomass are gaining more and more importance for energy purposes. Their combustion significantly reduces NO₂ and SO₂ emissions and, unlike fossil fuels, does not increase the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, therefore they do not contribute to an increase in the greenhouse effect⁹.

Closing the mineral cycle will result in:

1. Increasing the efficiency of nutrients and water,
2. Recycling of plant nutrients,
3. Minimization of nutrient losses.

Biochar also fulfils its task in this compartment, when added to the ground as a porous material, it absorbs minerals, stores them, and retains water. Each grain of biochar stores about 5 times more water than it weighs. During the growing season, plants absorb only as much biochar from the grains as the plant needs, minerals, and water.

Stabilization of the ecosystem occurs through:

1. Promoting biodiversity,
2. Compost humus, biochar,

⁸ J. Siuta, G. Borowski, *Systemy ochrony i odnowy biologicznie czynnej powierzchni ziemi w Polsce*, Lublin 2019, p. 286.

⁹ J. Gładki, *Biowęgiel szansą dla zrównoważonego rozwoju*, Sędziszów 2017, p. 46.

3. Creating a microclimate,
4. Forest plants, cultivation, planting systems,
5. Reduction of pesticides.

Biochar has all the features that allow it to meet the above requirements.

In 2021, a Polish Canadian INNOVATIVE COMPANY was founded, which based on its patent designed installations for the production of biochar. This innovative company has designed a containerized Autothermal Carbonization Installation to process plant biomass residues resulting from logging and biological cleaning of forests, as well as biomass residues from agriculture, including hemp, and waste generated from poultry, pig, cattle, and fur farms.

Today, we know, thanks to numerous scientific studies, that the use of biochar as a component that improves the quality of soils gives us significant benefits both for them and for the environment. Biochar has a highly porous structure with good sorption properties. Biochar is an excellent medium for the transfer and gradual release of nutrients, which then accumulate in the plants and ultimately reach the primary consumers, which in this case is us. In addition, biochar promotes the development of beneficial microorganisms, whose metabolic products are also necessary at all trophic levels (from plants to animals). In addition, when compared to many other soil supplements, biochar does not interfere with the activity of enzymes in the soil, thanks to which the nutrient cycle remains intact over time. Research at Dalhousie University, in Canada, indicated that biochar sorted to 1mm and unsorted biochar created a favourable substrate with a better water ratio and better interaction with plant roots. Thus, the improved properties of the growing medium include available nutrients for the plants and improvements in physical properties such as porosity and water-holding capacity, which in turn improves the growth rate of the plants¹⁰. The alkaline reaction of biochar in the soil, together with the lowered pH, increases the bioavailability of minerals, e.g. zinc, magnesium, potassium, as well as nitrogen and nutrients.

Sample conclusions from the research of biochar as a soil improver:

1. Reduced the number of plant pathogens,
2. Increased the water status of soil and plants,
3. Increased the root, leaf, and fruit system,
4. Accelerated the production process of seedlings of fruit trees, but also of forest trees,
5. Potential fertilizing effect: Possible source of nutrients for plants (Ca, Mg, K, P, Zn, Cu, Mn, Fe, B and others).

¹⁰ L. Abbey, R. Saleh, *RDA Atlantic Biochar Particle Size Effect on Plants*, Truro 2021.

In the use of biochar in greenhouse production, a clear increase in the size of the root structure and the above-ground plant was observed along with the increase in the share of biochar in the substrate¹³ (Figure 1).

Figure 1. An increase in root size and parts of the plant above-ground, concerning increases of biochar (BC) in the substrate

| | Root | Aboveground parts |
|---------|---------|-------------------|
| | g/plant | kg/variant |
| 0% BC | 2,3 | 2,4 |
| 10% BC | 2,7 | 2,6 |
| 25% BC | 3,1, | 3,3, |
| 50 % BC | 3,1 | 4,2 |
| 75% BC | 6,1 | 5,0 |

Triple increase in root mass

Twice the weight of aboveground parts

Source: A. Medyńska-Juraszek, I. Ćwieląg-Piasecka, M. Dębicka, P. Chohura, C. Uklńska-Pusz, W. Pusz, A. Latawiec, J. Królczyk, *Possibility of using biochar in agriculture, horticulture and reclamation*. 1st Conference *Biochar in Poland: science, technology, business*, May 30-31, 2016, Serock, Poland.

A very useful role is played by biochar as an addition to animal feed, reducing susceptibility to digestive system diseases, absorbing dioxins from the body, purifying meat, and limiting the excretion of (greenhouse) gases.

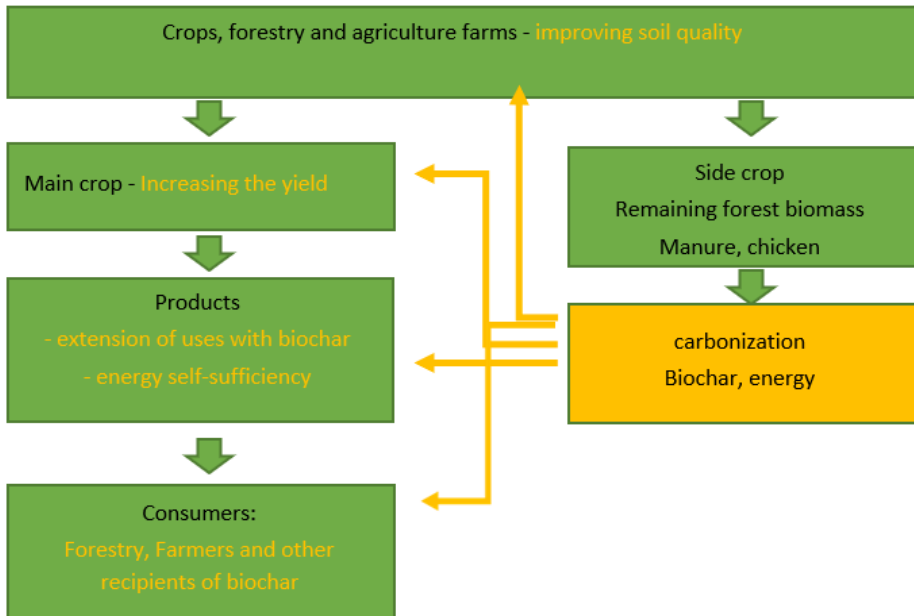
Examples of conclusions from the use of biochar in construction:

1. In addition to external insulating plasters,
2. In addition to masonry mortars during the renovation of historic buildings,
3. In addition to the supplementary layer in historic buildings.

In many unsuccessful renovations or repair procedures, it has been documented that neither pure lime mortars nor cement mortars are effective in carrying out permanent repairs of walls loaded with moisture and salts. Therefore, based on the information available in the literature on renovation works and supplementary mortars, biochar was selected as the basic component of the designed cement mix¹¹.

¹¹ D. Tokarski, *The impact of the supplementary layer with the addition of Biochar on the thermal and mycological properties of partitions in historic buildings (doctoral dissertation)*, Białystok University of Technology, Białystok 2019, pp. 7-15; E. Wojnicka-Szyc, *The Polish Innovative System from the Perspective of Enterprises*, Gdańsk 2004, p. 128.

Figure 2. Integration of the Carbonization Process into the Bioproduct Production Cycle



Source: own source.

Work on the development of modern biochar production technologies has been ongoing in Poland and around the world for 15 years. For over 10 years, research work on the use of biochar has been carried out. We can see that this is a new, little-known product. Among the obstacles hindering the development of innovative forms of using biochar in companies is the lack of sufficient information and knowledge about biochar production technology, lack of knowledge about the results of research on the properties of biocarbon, and lack of knowledge about the biochar market. The use of innovative technologies in the form of biochar as a soil conditioner will also increase the size of the cultivation area on inferior soils that are not used for agriculture, including for food production. Innovation policy in the European Union is currently gaining particular importance. In the era of knowledge-based economies, innovation and innovation policy must have an impact on all policy areas. This is the so-called ‘third-generation innovation policy’, which recognizes the central importance of innovation for all aspects of economic life. It is important to disseminate knowledge about innovative forms of development and access to the research database.

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