



BLACK SEA AND BALKANS 2024 SECURITY FORUM

23-24 May - Bucharest - Eight Edition



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2024 SECURITY FORUM**

- Eight Edition -

New Strategy Center

**Bucharest
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The eighth edition of the Black Sea and Balkans Security Forum took place on May 23-24, 2024, in Bucharest. The event brought together 169 speakers and featured 38 panels on various topics. Organized by the New Strategy Center with support from the Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the University of Agricultural Sciences, and co-sponsored by the NATO Public Diplomacy Division, the Forum continued its role as a key platform for discussing critical security issues in the Black Sea region and the Balkans.

The 2024 conference focused on the emerging signs of "war fatigue" in the West, as resolve to counter Russian aggression against Ukraine appeared to weaken. The Russian military onslaught, compounded by energy and economic crises and uncertainties about Western support for Ukraine, highlighted the stakes for Ukraine's sovereignty and European security. With upcoming elections in several EU countries and the US, the transatlantic link faced significant challenges. Resisting Russia's hybrid tactics, including misinformation and political interference, required improved solidarity and stronger societal resistance mechanisms. Russia's aggression had intensified with support from allies like Iran and North Korea, while China's neutrality and trade provided critical resources. The Black Sea remains a vulnerable place for NATO's Eastern Flank due to Russia's aggressive posture and historical ambition to control it. The region's geostrategic importance, linked to the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean, emphasized the need for continued support for Ukraine. Ukraine's battlefield resilience had already contributed valuable lessons in modern warfare, strategic thinking, and tactical innovation. Continued support for Ukraine is the main objective for the democratic world in 2024. A potential victory for Russia will increase Putin's appetite for new conquests, undermine the democratic world and encourage countries like Iran and North Korea to become more aggressive. It is a clash between authoritarianism and democracy, and the West must also find the domestic resources to stop Russia in Ukraine.

The Forum's reputation is supported also by the fact that it brought together political leaders, officials, analysts, scholars, civil society representatives, and corporate leaders. The discussions covered the war in Ukraine, reconstruction efforts, emerging technologies, hybrid threats, and shared values, providing a comprehensive analysis of interconnected threats and opportunities in today's geopolitical landscape.

The New Strategy Center expresses its gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Defence as institutional partners, NATO's Public Diplomacy Division for its support, the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine for being our partners in organizing the event, to the partners in organizing the panels, the media partners and the sponsors, without whose support this event would not have taken place.



- 6 Introduction
- 8 Panel I. Two Years of Russia's War in Ukraine and its Impact on Security in the Black Sea Region. EU Integration and Resilience of the Republic of Moldova to Current Challenges
- 9 Panel II. European Integration of Ukraine and Republic of Moldova. How Do We Support this Process in the Current European Context?
- 10 Panel IIIa. NATO and the US Policy in the Black Sea Region. From Short-Term Crisis Management to a Long-Term Vision
- 11 Panel IIIb. The Black Sea and the Potential for Regional Energy Cooperation
- 12 Panel IIIc. The Black Sea and the Global Impact on Food Security
- 13 Panel IV. What New Megathreats? The Global Economy facing the Security Front of Challenges
- 14 Panel Va. Disruptive Technologies and the War in Ukraine. Lessons for the Future
- 15 Panel Vb. Reconstruction of Ukraine. Opportunities and Challenges
- 16 Panel VIa. Russia's Hybrid War in the Balkans. How Do We Enhance Societal Resilience?
- 17 Panel VIb. Current Challenges for Critical Communications Infrastructure
- 18 Panel VIIa. What Kind of Security Guarantees Should Ukraine Receive? How Fast Will Ukraine's NATO Integration Process Happen?
- 19 Panel VIIb. Energy and Technology. The Impact of New Technologies on the Development of Energy Projects in the Black Sea and Balkans Region
- 20 Panel VIIc. Environmental Diplomacy - A Tool for Cross-Border Ecological Security and Peace
- 21 Panel VIIIa. Russian Hybrid Warfare and Threats from the High North to the Black Sea
- 22 Panel VIIIb. Conservative America and Its Foreign and Security Policy. How Will Transatlantic Link Evolve?
- 23 Panel IX. Western Sanctions and Social Economic Effects on the Russian Federation. How Effective Have Sanctions Been so far?
- 24 Panel X. The Black Sea Area and Possible Security Developments for Short and Medium Term – in partnership with Institute for European Policies and Reforms, Republic of Moldova
- 25 Panel XIa. Current Challenges for Europe in the Context of Elections for EU Parliament. What Will the EU Look Like in the Next Four Years?
- 26 Panel XIb. Middle East (In)Security and Global Impact. Old Actors, New Developments – in partnership with the Abba Eban Institute, Israel
- 27 Panel XIIa. The Strategic Stakes of Freedom of Navigation in the Black Sea
- 28 Panel XIIb. Russian Hybrid Warfare in the Context of the 2024 Electoral Year in the EU and the US – in partnership with Delphi Economic Forum, Greece
- 29 Panel XIIc. The China-Russia's 'Friendship Without Limits' and the Implications for Europe's Security
- 30 Panel XIIIa. The Strategic Importance of the Black Sea. Why Do We Need a Free and Open Black Sea?
- 31 Panel XIVa. Middle Corridor and Three Seas Initiative. Strategic Connectivity in the Current Challenging Times – in partnership with Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), Türkiye
- 32 Panel XIVb. Global South and the War in Ukraine. Perspectives and Attitudes, Similarities and Differences
- 33 Panel XV. How Can the US Manage Multiple Security Crises? A Discussion about War Fatigue, Transatlantic Link and the Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Area
- 34 Panel XVIa. Why the Black Sea Matters? How Can We Better Face the Multiple Security Challenges? – in partnership with Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Germany
- 35 Panel XVIb. Lessons Learned from the Ukrainian Front for the Unmanned Systems and Counter-drone Technologies – in partnership with National Defence University, Romania
- 36 Panel XVIc. Migration Challenges of the War in Ukraine – in partnership with Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Germany
- 37 Panel XVII. Si Vis Pacem, Para Bellum! NATO's Defence Policy on the Eastern Flank.



Chair: [Ambassador Sorin DUCARU](#), Președinte de onoare al Consiliului Științific, New Strategy Center; Director, Centrul Satelitar al Uniunii Europene, România;

[H.E. Dorin RECEAN](#), Prime Minister, Republic of Moldova (via VTC);

[H.E. Denîș ȘMÎHAL](#), Prime Minister, Ukraine (video message);

The primary goals discussed were to ensure long-lasting peace in the region and to protect the citizens of neighboring nations. The Ukrainian efforts in the Black Sea have significantly improved regional security, allowing for the resumption of commercial routes. Despite these efforts, Russia continues to wage a hybrid war utilizing a wide range of tactics. In response, Moldova is strengthening its defense capabilities through a security and defense partnership with the European Union and focusing on economic development and energy independence.

Ukraine has been defending itself against Russian aggression for over two years, with significant destruction to residential areas across vast territories. Recently, Russia has escalated attacks on Ukraine's energy and civilian infrastructure. Ukraine urgently requires military support, including air defense systems, artillery ammunition, and long-range missiles, along with the confiscation of frozen Russian assets to aid in recovery and resilience.

Sanctions against Russia need to be enforced more stringently to prevent evasion and to further impact the Russian economy. Ukraine expressed gratitude to Romania for its support in defense capabilities and facilitating the transit of Ukrainian goods to ensure global food security.

Moldova, facing similar regional threats, is investing more in its defense and continuing cooperation with friendly states. Russia's hybrid actions in Ukraine and neighboring countries, including financing destabilizing activities and leveraging energy as a weapon, have been ongoing for two years. Russia has employed cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and attempts to organize paid protests.

Moldova has successfully established a connection with Western markets for gas supplies through Romania. Romania is also enhancing its connectivity with Moldova, focusing on energy infrastructure and bridge development. Future plans include expanding railway infrastructure to support Ukraine's logistical needs for transporting grain and agricultural products.

Efforts are underway to better connect Ukraine to the Western world through Romania, providing Ukrainian businesses with alternative export routes. These developments have been significantly supported by EU mechanisms, highlighting the importance of EU integration and regional cooperation in enhancing resilience against current challenges.

Panel II. European Integration of Ukraine and Republic of Moldova. How Do We Support this Process in the Current European Context?



Chair: [Ambassador Mihnea MOTOC](#), Deputy Head of the European Political Strategy Centre, Romania

[H.E. Nicolae CIUCĂ](#), President, Senate, Parliament of Romania

[H.E. Igor GROSU](#), President, Parliament of Republic of Moldova

[H.E. Ruslan STEFANCHUK](#), Speaker, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine
(video message)

Romania has been a steadfast supporter of Ukraine and Moldova in their European aspirations, offering its expertise and advocating for their EU integration. For successful integration, Ukraine and Moldova must demonstrate full political will, commitment to reforms, support for the European path, and substantial investments. The European Union stands to benefit significantly from the integration of these countries, provided clear action plans are established. Ukraine faces the additional challenge of defending itself and combating Russian disinformation.

Romania is the main foreign investor and commercial partner of Moldova, having supported its energy independence. While connectivity between Romania and Moldova exists, there is still potential for further development. EU membership is a national goal for Moldova, driving it to undertake necessary reforms aimed at providing peace, security, efficient governance, justice, and a strong, competitive economy capable of generating well-paid jobs.

With Romania's support, Ukraine has grown stronger and more independent, building bridges of friendship and infrastructure to enhance connectivity within Ukraine and with the rest of the world. Ukraine has signed a security and defense partnership with the EU and an agreement with the European Social Fund to facilitate the implementation of social policies.

The discussion highlighted the pressing issues of climate change, regional instability, and the food crisis, with a particular focus on Russia's unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine, now in its 821st day. Ukraine's resilience has dramatically evolved, steering the nation towards prosperity, security, economic development, and lasting democracy. Ukraine expressed gratitude to its partners and allies, especially Romania, for political support, military aid, and humanitarian assistance. Immediate military support is crucial for Ukraine to maintain pressure on Russia through sanctions.

The current war must not become the new norm in international relations, and Ukraine has proposed a peace formula to the world. Switzerland will host the first Global Peace Summit in mid-June 2024, aiming to gather numerous countries to formulate a plan for a just peace in Ukraine. The diverse group of states involved, some with a decade of negotiation experience, must align their efforts despite different paces compared to the Western Balkans, which require more discipline and honesty in their integration efforts.

Authoritarian regimes exploit the vulnerabilities of other states and the freedoms of democratic regimes. The funding mechanisms for institutions have been a significant vulnerability for Moldova. Each country must establish its own measures to contribute to the accession process, with the European Council meeting on June 25th marking a pivotal moment for initiating negotiations.

The successful cooperation so far and the anticipated future collaboration will facilitate Ukraine and Moldova's EU accession. Despite statements from Putin asserting that Ukraine and Georgia will never become EU or NATO members, the continued efforts and support from the EU and its member states remain crucial.



Panel IIIa. NATO and the US Policy in the Black Sea Region. From Short-Term Crisis Management to a Long-Term Vision



Chair: **General (Ret.) Daniel PETRESCU**, Member of International Leadership Council, Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), former Chief of Defence, Romania;

General (Ret.) Philip M. BREEDLOVE, former Supreme Allied Commander Europe, USA;

Dr. Wendin SMITH, Director, Security Policy Directorate, NATO Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, USA;

Titus CORLĂȚEAN, Chairman, Committee for Foreign Affairs, Senate, Parliament of Romania;

Dragomir ZAKOV, Director General for Bilateral Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, former Minister of Defence, Bulgaria

Dr. Wendin Smith emphasized that while the Black Sea is strategically significant, NATO's security perspective is global, encompassing a 360-degree approach. Russia is deemed the greatest strategic threat to NATO and Euro-Atlantic security, with its recent actions heightening concerns. NATO's strategy does not singularly focus on the Black Sea but integrates regional planning into its comprehensive security framework. Supporting Ukraine, particularly in the context of the upcoming Washington summit, is a current priority. NATO encourages individual allies to bolster Ukraine's self-defense capabilities and consider its long-term relationship with NATO and the EU.

General Philip M. Breedlove discussed the transition from short-term crisis management to a long-term vision, referencing the decade-long conflict that began with Crimea in 2014. He highlighted the necessity of establishing security in the region to attract investment, emphasizing that actions speak louder than plans. The importance of maintaining freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, both in the air and at sea, was underscored, with particular focus on coastal defense, cruise missiles, and air defense systems. Romania's efforts to restore grain flow from Ukraine and address the threat of Russian mines were praised. Cooperation with Turkey under the Montreux Convention was deemed crucial for ensuring a NATO naval presence in the Black Sea.

Titus Corlățean criticized the lack of strategic attention to the Black Sea region, citing Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea as proof of its importance. He emphasized Romania's long-term collaboration with the US and the necessity for NATO to bolster deterrence and defense postures in multiple domains. Corlățean called for increased NATO presence in the region and greater support for Ukraine until its ultimate victory. He also stressed the need for stronger regional partnerships to accelerate European and Euro-Atlantic integration, particularly through initiatives led by Romania and Bulgaria.

Dragomir Zakov pointed out Russia's breach of commitments and continued military presence in Georgia and Moldova as catalysts for NATO's enhanced deterrence and defense capabilities. He highlighted the collaborative potential of Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey in regional defense. Zakov underscored the importance of NATO's unity and resilience in the face of Russian attempts to undermine it. He acknowledged improvements in European defense readiness compared to previous years and outlined the EU's focus on connectivity and reconstruction efforts in Ukraine, emphasizing the complementary roles of NATO, the EU, and the US.

In the end, the unique structure of the US government and its role in foreign policy was discussed, with emphasis on the strong Romanian support for Ukraine against Russian aggression. The conversation highlighted the importance of demonstrating the benefits of EU and NATO membership through tangible improvements in local communities. The discussion also covered the need for sustained defense production and industrial capabilities for long-term interoperability. The influence of Russian hybrid tactics on public opinion and the necessity for Western nations to prioritize freedom of navigation were noted. The panel concluded with a commitment to a permanent NATO presence in the Black Sea region to ensure security, peace, and rule of law.



Panel IIIb. The Black Sea and the Potential for Regional Energy Cooperation



Chair: **Radu TUDOR**, Journalist, Antena 3 CNN, Romania

Sebastian BURDUJA, Minister of Energy, Romania;

Victor PARLICOV, Minister of Energy, Republic of Moldova;

Yordan BOZHILOV, President, Sofia Security Forum, Bulgaria;

Alexandru MAXIMESCU, Vice President, OMV Petrom, Romania.

Amb. Geoffrey PYATT, Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources, USA

The panel discussed the strategic importance of the Vertical Corridor, which aims to transport LNG from the U.S. and partner states through Greece, Romania, and Ukraine to Central Europe. This initiative is crucial for reducing dependence on Gazprom, but faces challenges due to the conditional investment in green hydrogen projects, which are still emerging and economically challenging. For the Republic of Moldova, the Vertical Corridor is particularly vital. By 2025, Gazprom is expected to redirect gas supplies to Transnistria via Turkey, making the Corridor essential for regional stability and preventing a humanitarian crisis. The Neptun Deep Project will significantly boost Romania's status as a leading gas producer in Europe by 2027, with plans to export gas through this corridor to Moldova, Ukraine, and Central Europe.

The Neptun Deep Project has made substantial progress, with nearly 90% of necessary contracts already secured or signed. Romgaz and OMV Petrom share equal stakes in this project. Top subcontractors such as Saipem, Transocean, and Halliburton are involved, and environmental permits are close to being finalized. Gas production is set to begin in 2027, with an expected output of 140,000 BOE/day and reserves projected at 100 billion cubic meters. The total investment for this project is approximately €4 billion. Emissions are notably low at 2.80 kg/BOE, far below the average of similar projects. OMV Petrom is also exploring innovative areas like green hydrogen, renewable energy with storage, CO2 capture, transport electrification, and biofuels, with annual investments in regional energy security reaching 8 billion RON from 2024-2026.

Security risks in the Black Sea region were a significant focus. Russian occupation of southern Ukraine could deny the country access to the Black Sea, posing a disaster for all coastal states. Russia's aggressive actions against coastal states, including NATO members, have been evident, such as the blockade of 30% of Bulgaria's Exclusive Economic Zone for seven months last year, which doubled insurance costs due to increased insecurity. Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey are collaborating to clear sea mines in the Black Sea, though resources are limited and Russia holds a significant military advantage. Disinformation campaigns have also targeted Bulgaria's wind turbine project in the Black Sea, underscoring the need to combat these efforts to enable project advancement.

The situation in Moldova and Transnistria was also addressed. Romania has intensified investments in interconnections to enhance Moldova's resilience, prioritizing the Suceava-Bălți electrical line and efforts on the Gutinaș-Strășeni line near Chișinău. The Transnistrian region operates with an artificial economy, using free gas to sell electricity to the right bank of the Dniester, controlled by Chișinău authorities. An abrupt end to this arrangement could lead to social and humanitarian collapse in the region.

Before the Ukraine war, Bulgaria imported 78% of its gas from Russia. Due to diversification and infrastructure interconnections, it no longer depends on Russian gas. Over the past year, Russian LNG constituted about 16% of the EU's total LNG supply, up 40% from 2021, indicating a shift from pipeline gas to LNG imports. The U.S. and Romania are collaborating to modernize the Cernavodă Nuclear Power Plant's Unit 1 and construct two more units, unit 3 and 4, aiming to double production capacity by 2031.



Chair: **Teodor Trașcă**, Deputy Rector (USAMV), Romania.

Taras KACHKA, Deputy Minister of Economy, Ukraine;

Jean VALVIS, President, Managing Director, Valvis Holding, Romania;

Svitlana KOVALCHUK, Executive Director, Yalta European Strategy, Ukraine;

Mihail TĂNĂȘESCU, Deputy General Director, HIDRO SALT, Romania.

The ongoing war in Ukraine has significantly jeopardized global food security, presenting logistical challenges and raising issues of international law, while prompting the development of new initiatives and strategies to ensure stability and economic growth. Since 2022, improving navigation systems and securing vital maritime routes have become priorities. These advancements have been crucial as maritime traffic increased and long-distance journeys became more frequent. The ongoing conflict has necessitated the development of more resilient maritime infrastructure and logistics, underscoring the importance of strategic collaborations and innovations to protect global food supply chains.

Bilateral cooperation between Romania and Ukraine has significantly enhanced regional stability and global food security. A key element of this cooperation is the strategic use of the Port of Constanța, emerging as a critical hub for maritime trade in the Black Sea region. This context highlights the crucial importance of strategic alliances between companies, governments, EU institutions, and NATO to address the complex challenges posed by the conflict, ensure the stability of global food supply chains, and strengthen the resilience of affected regions.

Ukraine relies heavily on large agricultural enterprises managing thousands of hectares efficiently. These large-scale operations enable intensive mechanization and efficient resource use, leading to large-scale agricultural production. In contrast, Poland's agricultural system is mainly composed of small farms, each with only a few hectares. This model allows for more diversified and often more sustainable agriculture but may be less efficient in mass production. These differences between the two agricultural models have led to misunderstandings and difficulties in cooperation and adopting common agricultural policies. Ukraine, with its economy geared towards large-scale farming, needs to understand how these differences impact agricultural sector development both nationally and internationally. Understanding these differences can help Ukraine improve agricultural policies, adopt sustainable practices, and enhance international cooperation in agriculture.

The Ukrainian administration prioritizes international cooperation with other states. However, maritime mines pose a significant logistical problem, endangering food supply chains. Another focus is on launching long-term programs to increase transport capacity on European routes with major partner countries. Statistics indicate that 55-60% of Ukrainian grain has been exported through Romania, reflecting Romania's role as a friendly state contributing to infrastructure efforts via railways. Comprehensive emergency plans for infrastructure and logistics, along with robust national food security strategies, are needed. Involvement of construction companies in both the legal and operational implementation of these strategies is essential.

Mitigating the damage caused by the war to Ukraine's agricultural and food sectors requires a complex and comprehensive approach, focusing on rehabilitating infrastructure and supporting markets and institutions. All major Romanian construction companies should commit to supporting the agricultural sector in the region through infrastructure development and technological innovation. Finally, the importance of promoting responsible private sector development, ensuring balanced GDP growth between the private and public sectors, and addressing urgent environmental issues was emphasized.



Chair:

Antonia COLIBĂȘANU, Senior Associate Expert, New Strategy Center & Chief Operating Officer & Senior Geopolitical Analyst, Geopolitical Futures, Romania;

Mr. Nouriel ROUBINI, Professor Emeritus, Stern School of Business, New York University, USA;

In the panel moderated by Antonia Colibășanu, Nouriel Roubini discussed the current hyper-uncertain world, where economic, monetary, and financial risks interact with social, political, geopolitical, environmental, health, demographic, and technological threats. Today's threats differ significantly from those of four years ago. While concerns once centered on stagnation following the global financial crisis, today's focus is on secular stagflation, with higher inflation and lower growth. Interest rates have shifted from being worryingly low to high, causing concerns about a debt-laden world leading to a crisis.

Countries with high public and private debt face immediate repercussions for fiscal deviance in a world of rising short and long-term interest rates. Previously, globalization was hyper, but now protectionism and the fragmentation of global supply chains are prevalent. Commodity prices have surged over 100% since the end of COVID-19, fueling domestic inflation. The role of the dollar as a global reserve currency is now questioned, with discussions on de-dollarization.

Europe faces various risks, including low inflation, stagflation, high private debt, and potential debt defaults in both public and private sectors. The continent's dependency on Russian energy, as well as geopolitical risks such as the intensified conflict between Russia and Ukraine, represent significant challenges. Additionally, the conflict in the Middle East poses risks of increased prices and mass migration, impacting Europe. The potential escalation of U.S.-China tensions could place Europe in a precarious position.

Former President Trump's proposed tariffs and skeptical stance towards NATO and the EU pose further risks to Europe. Climate change remains a severe issue, with current technologies incapable of achieving net-zero emissions without negative economic growth. Optimism about the green transition is tempered by the ongoing need for fossil fuels and the slow growth of alternative energy sources.

Europe and other countries must support Ukraine economically, financially, and militarily to prevent a Russian victory, which could embolden China regarding Taiwan. Revisionist powers like China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran challenge the post-WWI order. While sanctions may not have been entirely effective, Russia's long-term growth potential remains bleak due to severed Western and European trade relations, high defense spending, and large fiscal deficits. Russia's increasing dependency on China could lead to economic stagnation.

In the Q&A session, Roubini projected China's potential growth at 3-3.4% and India's at 7% by the decade's end. Despite China's rapid growth over the past decades, India's growth, while faster now, still has a minimal global impact. India's closer alignment with the West, partly due to its rivalry with China, is notable. The destabilizing actions of Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran in the Middle East underscore the need for a unified, constructive approach to resolve regional issues, including a potential two-state solution between Israel and Palestine.

The discussion highlighted the complex interplay of economic and non-economic factors influencing global security and emphasized the need for short-term sacrifices for long-term communal, national, and global benefits.



Panel Va. Disruptive Technologies and the War in Ukraine. Lessons for the Future



Chair: **BG (Ret.) Hans DAMEN**, Member of the International Consultative Board of New Strategy Center, The Netherlands

General (Ret.) Philip M. BREEDLOVE, former Supreme Allied Commander Europe, USA

Mr. Jean-Marc RICKLI, Head of Global and Emerging Risks, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Switzerland

Mr. Mykhailo SAMUS, non-resident Senior Expert, New Strategy Center, Romania; Director, New Geopolitics Research Network, Ukraine

Colonel (ret) Mike "Rabbi" HARASIMOWICZ, Director for Artificial Intelligence Innovations, Lockheed Martin, USA

The panel on "Disruptive Technologies and the War in Ukraine: Lessons for the Future," moderated by BG (Ret.) Hans Damen, explored the impact and adaptation of modern technologies in the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia, drawing crucial lessons for future warfare.

Mykhailo Samus highlighted how, over two years since the 2022 invasion, Ukraine has adopted asymmetric tactics due to resource disparities with Russia. Ukraine's use of autonomous platforms, such as FPV drones, showcases the integration of new technologies in modern electronic warfare. Ukraine's naval capabilities have advanced with marine drones equipped with MLRS and air defense missiles. Initially, Russia relied on mass troops, while Ukraine employed advanced technology. However, Russia has adapted by copying Western and Ukrainian technologies, utilizing reconnaissance drone networks effectively. Russia's collaboration with North Korea and China to circumvent sanctions has introduced new challenges, necessitating that Ukraine and its allies enhance their technological and mass production capabilities to counter these threats. Scalable solutions, particularly in air defense and drones, are essential for Ukraine's continued defense.

Jean-Marc Rickli discussed the significant role of artificial intelligence (AI) as a force multiplier, analytic facilitator, and disruptor in modern warfare. In Ukraine, AI is mainly used for analytical purposes, with disruptive capabilities manifesting in disinformation campaigns. AI's role in making battlefields transparent and lethal underlines the need for agility. AI's disruptive potential is evident in increasingly sophisticated "deep fakes," which spread disinformation effectively. Emerging technologies that monitor brain activity to visual stimuli herald a new era of cognitive warfare. These technologies must be integrated into a comprehensive warfare doctrine that includes understanding the adversary and adapting quickly.

Colonel (ret.) Mike Harasimowicz emphasized Lockheed Martin's focus on achieving operational decision advantage through AI, enhancing clarity amidst uncertainty, and improving decision-making for operational commanders. Successful coalition operations require open, standards-based command and control functions, crucial for NATO and European partners. Lockheed Martin's investments in AI have led to cost-effective, production-ready capabilities already implemented by the U.S. Navy and demonstrated for the Army and Special Forces.

General (Ret.) Philip M. Breedlove pointed out that Russia and Ukraine might currently excel in electronic warfare due to their extensive battlefield experience. Effective operation in non-GPS environments and producing necessary technologies cheaply and in mass quantities are crucial. Instead of merely jamming drone signals, innovative electronic warfare should focus on taking control of enemy drones. Identifying and targeting the source of drone threats is more cost-effective and prevents future attacks. A multifaceted approach to drone defense, incorporating kinetic, electronic, and passive methods, is essential. A competent air force could significantly impact the battlefield, with the F-16s playing a vital role if integrated into a robust command and control network.

Overall, the panel underscored the importance of rapid technological adaptation, collaborative approaches, and comprehensive frameworks in modern warfare. The experiences and innovations in the Ukraine conflict provide valuable insights for future military strategies and capabilities.



Panel Vb. Reconstruction of Ukraine. Opportunities and Challenges



Chair: **Ms. Alexandra GĂTEJ**, Member of the Scientific Council of New Strategy Center, Romania

Andrei SPÎNU, Ministrul Infrastructurii și Dezvoltării Regionale, Republica Moldova

Yulia KLYMENKO, prim-adjunct al șefului Comitetului pentru transport și infrastructură la Verhovna Rada, Ucraina

Jean FROEHLY, șeful Grupului operativ Ukraine Recovery Conference 2024 (URC24), Ministerul Federal de Externe, Germania

Bart KOT, Director de Program, Forumul de Securitate din Varșovia, Polonia

Bogdan CERNESCU, Managing Director, Head of Corporate Banking, Banca Comerciala Romana – BCR, Romania

Cătălin PODARU, CEO, Leviatan Design, România

The panel discussion on the Reconstruction of Ukraine addressed various opportunities and challenges in rebuilding the country's infrastructure amidst ongoing conflict. Moderated by Ms. Alexandra Gătej from Romania, the panel included key speakers who provided insights from different perspectives.

Andrei Spînu highlighted the dual crises of energy and infrastructure that Europe has faced recently. While the energy crisis was largely resolved through a unified European response, the infrastructure crisis primarily impacts Ukraine and its neighboring countries such as Moldova, Romania, and Poland. Spînu emphasized the need for broader European Union involvement and criticized the lack of significant project implementation despite extensive discussions. He stressed the urgency of starting reconstruction efforts immediately, including building bridges and investing in railways, ports, roads, and highways that connect the region.

Bart Kot focused on Poland's strategy, which involves the active participation of businesses and local governments. Poland's approach aims to ensure legal frameworks, long-term investment stability, and political stability despite the ongoing war in Ukraine. Kot stressed the importance of immediate action to secure Ukraine's economic future, advocating for a modern, stable, and competitive economy integrated with the Euro-Atlantic community. He highlighted Poland's geographical significance for logistics support in Ukraine's reconstruction but noted the need for government cooperation to support small and medium-sized enterprises.

Jean Froehly discussed Ukraine's modernization and reform efforts despite the war. Germany emphasizes Ukraine's European dimension and its progress towards EU membership. Berlin's discussions will focus on Ukraine's reforms, its path to EU accession, and the mobilization of business and private capital for recovery. Froehly underscored the importance of considering Ukraine's social dimensions, including human capital and demographics, to ensure comprehensive economic recovery. He also highlighted the future of Ukraine's labor market and the integration of its defense industries with the European defense sector.

Cătălin Podaru outlined Romania's efforts to bolster security capabilities, crucial for Ukraine's reconstruction. Romania's investments in military and transportation infrastructure, such as highways, railways, and ports, are vital. Podaru noted the shift towards increased production capacity investments and the exploration of various funding sources, including private investment funds and banks. Romania's strategic position, energy resources, and partnerships, especially with Poland, position it as a key contributor to regional stability and economic growth.

Yulia Klymenko addressed the massive reconstruction costs, exacerbated by recent Russian attacks that damaged over 80% of Ukraine's energy infrastructure. She highlighted the need for substantial long-term investments to rebuild critical infrastructure such as the Kahovka Dam. Klymenko discussed plans to reform Ukraine's state railway company to attract private investment and the need to revamp the airport system to meet European standards. Legislative changes are planned to align with European directives, facilitating investments in logistics and transportation. However, these investments require stability, lower interest rates, and insurance against missile attacks.

Bogdan Cernescu emphasized Romania's goal to be a pillar of regional stability through improved cybersecurity and infrastructure, utilizing national resources and EU funds. Modernization is essential for regional stability and prosperity. Cernescu stressed the importance of attracting investments in relevant technology to bridge gaps and adapt the economy to global changes. Education is pivotal for democracy and prosperity, and investments in transport, logistics, and processing capacities are necessary to create a new commercial axis from the Black Sea to the Atlantic and from north to south. He also highlighted the need for human resource investment to retain talent in Eastern Europe, addressing the significant human capital loss over the past two decades.

In summary, the panel underscored the urgent need for immediate action in Ukraine's reconstruction, highlighting the importance of international cooperation, investment, and modernization efforts to ensure a stable and prosperous future for Ukraine and its neighboring regions.



Panel Via. Russia's Hybrid War in the Balkans. How Do We Enhance Societal Resilience?



Chair: **Mr. Robert LUPITU**, editor-in-chief, Calea Europeană, Romania

Mr. Gordan AKRAP, President, Hybrid Warfare Research Institute, Croatia

General (Ret.) Sir James EVERARD, Honorary Chairman of International Consultative Board of New Strategy Center, former DSACEUR, UK

Mr. Yordan BOZHILOV, President, Sofia Security Forum, Bulgaria

Mr. Srđan CVIJIĆ, President of the International Advisory Committee, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, Serbia

The strategic importance of the Western Balkans has made it a focal point for Russian influence, particularly through its impact on Montenegro and strong ties with Serbia. Both nations face significant security, political, economic, and energy challenges. A notable issue is the attempt by some Serbian leaders to emulate the concept of "Russkiy mir" (Russian world) by promoting a "Serbian world," supported by Serbian institutions and Russian intelligence services.

Despite Serbia's alliance with Moscow, it suffers from Russian hybrid tactics. President Vučić's efforts to balance multiple alliances have proved detrimental, notably conceding control over Serbia's energy system to Russia. Serbian media, heavily influenced by Russian publications and Vučić, undermine free media, spreading disinformation beyond Serbia to neighboring Slavic countries.

Russia and Serbia promote a narrative of pan-Slavic and Orthodox unity, which is misleading as most Slavic countries are NATO and EU members or aspirants, unlike Serbia and Belarus. The Orthodox Church, particularly its Russian and Serbian branches, plays a critical political role. Civil society organizations like Wagner also contribute by recruiting fighters and spreading Russian influence.

North Macedonia's political landscape has been notably affected, with unmet EU integration promises making it susceptible to Russian disinformation. Historically, Russian strategies of subversion, corruption, espionage, sabotage, and assassination have evolved to include modern disinformation techniques. Russia engages in hybrid activities not only in the Western Balkans but throughout the Euro-Atlantic region. Although NATO has approved basic resilience objectives, these measures are considered insufficiently robust.

A significant obstacle is the reluctance of some nations to adequately educate their populations about these threats. There is a recognized need to accelerate the development of resilience strategies to effectively counter emerging Russian hybrid tactics. The risk of being reactive rather than proactive to Russian actions is a growing concern, necessitating coordinated efforts at national, EU, and NATO levels.

Establishing specialized structures for better coordination and understanding of hybrid threats is essential. The issue extends to the evolving media landscape in the Balkans, where deficits in press freedom, journalism quality, and investigative reporting are prevalent. The media literacy index, assessing education levels, press freedom, societal trust, and civic engagement, places Balkan nations at the bottom.

Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts beyond short-term projects, starting at the educational level to promote critical thinking and media literacy. However, sporadic project-based interventions hinder progress. Strategic communication is crucial but remains underdeveloped in many Black Sea countries. Regulatory measures are essential to reduce disinformation and counter Russian propaganda effectively.

In the Western Balkans, disinformation primarily originates from the Serbian regime and controlled media rather than directly from Russia. This arrangement benefits Russia by maintaining influence without active involvement, allowing it to focus on issues like Ukraine. Serbia's political position is complex, not officially aligned with Western sanctions against Russia while paradoxically exporting ammunition to Ukraine.

The Serbian regime's dual foreign policy involves publicly engaging in pro-Russian rhetoric while privately pleasing Western interests, a strategy that Western partners tolerate. Since coming to power in 2012, the Serbian government has fostered anti-Western propaganda on major television channels. Despite the presence of Russian media outlets like RT and Sputnik, Serbian government-controlled media significantly shape public opinion with anti-Western narratives.

Serbia stands out for its strong pro-Russian sentiment, with over 60% of Serbs blaming the West for the war in Ukraine, influenced by regime propaganda. Support for EU membership has drastically declined from a majority in 2009 to 43%, with 36% opposing it. This shift has placed Vučić's regime in a dilemma: despite creating a pro-Russian atmosphere, pivoting to the West risks alienating a voter base that favors Russia and China.



Chair: **Mr. Marcel FOCA**, Senior Expert, New Strategy Center, Romania

Andrei BOIAN, Deputy Director, Communications Security and Information Technology Services, Special Telecommunications Service, Romania

Stelian CRISTEA, Deputy Director, National Cyber Security Directorate, Romania

Daniel IONIȚĂ, Cyber Security Manager, Cymed/Infoworld, Romania,

Sergiu RUSSU, Country Leader, Oracle Romania

Andrei Boian addressed the ambitions of states to enhance digital services through disruptive technologies, aiming for competitive advantages, increased convenience, and time savings for citizens. This transition presents two significant challenges: understanding the context for optimal decision-making in digital service delivery and recognizing new risks linked to heightened dependence on cyberspace. The Special Telecommunications Service (STS) oversees critical communication infrastructures, primarily for military and governmental use. STS provides services ranging from communications to application development, working on projects to bolster the resilience of both public and private communication systems, modernize data centers, and upgrade IT infrastructures. These initiatives support Romanian entities in offering superior services via new data centers and a private government cloud, with STS focusing on security and resilience, managing the entire incident response lifecycle to ensure swift action.

In today's geopolitical climate, enhancing security and resilience in public services is vital. Significant risks include misconfigurations due to rapid technological changes and staff overload, alongside threats like denial-of-service (DoS) attacks. Cyberattacks have become accessible and attractive to those seeking to undermine authorities, adversely affecting digital service provision and citizen satisfaction. Risks also arise from compromised email accounts, with numerous breaches aimed at information gathering and phishing. Spear phishing targeting IT administrators and supply chain attacks remain critical concerns. Other issues involve reliance on the power grid, rising hardware costs, the semiconductor crisis, and GPS jamming impacting IT system synchronization. To bolster security, Boian suggested three measures: prompt exchange of essential information nationally, within the EU, NATO, and among partners; adopting a "secure by design and secure by default" mindset for all products and systems; and developing secure, modern, resilient communication frameworks.

Stelian Cristea emphasized the growing complexity of communication infrastructures amid digitalization. Technology now underpins essential processes in our lives. Ensuring the security and functionality of these infrastructures is critical, requiring collaboration across sectors. The private sector should prioritize security in solution development, while the public sector must establish supportive policies and regulatory frameworks. Academia should adapt educational programs to keep pace with technological progress. Effective cybersecurity and defense hinge on collaboration across civil, military, and cross-border sectors, as the interconnectedness of cyberspace necessitates joint efforts. Preparedness is key, requiring trained personnel adept in technology and crisis management to respond to incidents swiftly.

Daniel Ioniță highlighted the urgent need for enhanced cybersecurity, especially in healthcare settings where many hospitals lack basic protections like firewalls. The pandemic led to an influx of new, often unmaintained devices within hospital networks, complicating security. Issues like the "bring your own device" (BYOD) trend and the integration of IoT devices challenge credential management and network security. Most hospitals lack dedicated cybersecurity experts, making effective implementation of BYOD policies difficult. The financial burden of cybersecurity measures often falls on hospitals, with many operating under tight budgets. Thus, adapting IT services to align with hospital finances is essential, particularly in enhancing communication technology integration. Military structures can leverage civil sector resources to improve cyber defense, emphasizing the need for better budget allocation and strategic resource distribution. Cloud solutions may provide more robust security compared to on-premise options, underscoring the necessity of endpoint protection and the challenges faced by smaller hospitals in achieving adequate cybersecurity. Coordination against cyberattacks and influence operations remains a pressing concern, particularly in the context of Romania's healthcare infrastructure.



Panel VIIa. What Kind of Security Guarantees Should Ukraine Receive? How Fast Will Ukraine's NATO Integration Process Happen?



Chair: **Robert E. HAMILTON**, Head of Eurasia Research, Foreign Policy Research Institute, US Army War College, USA;

Olga REZNIKOVA, Researcher, National Institute for Strategic Studies, Ukraine;
Simona COJOCARU, State Secretary, Ministry of National Defence, Romania;
Alice RUFO, Director General for International Relations and Strategy, Ministry of the Armed Forces, France;
Lieutenant General (ret.) Ben HODGES, Chair, Future Security & Defence Council – GLOBSEC, Member of the International Advisory Board of the New Strategy Center, former Commander of US Army Europe, USA;
General (Ret.) Sir James EVERARD, Honorary Chairman of International Consultative Board of New Strategy Center, former DSACEUR, UK;
Maia OTARASHVILI, Eurasia Program Director, Foreign Policy Research Institute, USA
François HEISBOURG, Special Advisor, Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS), France;

Olga Reznikova emphasized that the war in Ukraine has fundamentally altered the European geopolitical landscape, with the outcome determining the future global order. The current conflict tests the West's ability to defend democratic values and resist totalitarian regimes that undermine European rule-based order. If Ukraine loses, Russia will border the EU directly. She also argued that Ukraine should be part of the conversation, citing the failure of the Budapest Memorandum and the Minsk Agreements. She stressed the need for strong security guarantees and recognition of Russia as a major threat to Europe, advocating for Ukraine's inclusion in a post-war deterrence strategy.

Simona Cojocaru highlighted Romania's strategic interest in supporting Ukraine, as Ukraine's security is crucial for Romania's and Europe's security. A just and lasting peace in Ukraine is essential for a secure Euro-Atlantic community. Romania is particularly concerned about Russia's actions in Ukraine and, as a frontline state, would suffer first if Russia achieves its objectives. Thus, Ukraine's security, stability, and victory are vital. Moreover, she reiterated Romania's support for Ukraine's full EU and NATO membership, noting that the upcoming NATO summit in Washington would reaffirm U.S. commitment. She highlighted the importance of international unity in protecting Ukraine against aggression and emphasized that real security guarantees involve continuous support and solidarity.

Alice Rufo noted the significance of the war for the West, citing Russia's aggression against a sovereign state under nuclear rhetoric. The war's clear objective is to deny Ukraine's sovereignty and existence. The narrative framing the war suggested it was merely a conflict between two nations, advocating for a quick solution due to the negative impact of sanctions.

François Heisbourg outlined the war's three phases: 2014, December 2021, and February 2022. He criticized the Western approach, calling for a more serious stance rather than self-deterrence, as practiced by the Biden-Sullivan school and Germany's Chancellor Scholz. He emphasized that Russia continuously tests the West, necessitating a firmer response. Additionally, he called for clarity regarding NATO's decisions, particularly from Berlin and Washington, and stressed that Europe cannot replace U.S. military support for Ukraine. He noted that it would take time for Europe to compensate for the American deficit.

Ben Hodges described the war as a demonstration of failed deterrence. The Kremlin perceived Western chaos and French President Macron's statement about NATO's "brain death" as opportunities to advance in Ukraine. Hodges argued that Ukraine's stability impacts global economies, affecting food and fuel prices. He warned that Ukraine's failure would lead to direct conflict between NATO countries and Russia, stressing the importance of defeating Russia to send a message to China about the West's resolve and capabilities. Likewise, he suggested that security guarantees should focus on deterring Russia, proposing a Black Sea strategy to counter Russian aggression. He emphasized the importance of sending military support to Ukraine to help it restore its borders.

James Everard highlighted the war's importance for the West, as it affirms the commitment to a world where sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights, and international law are respected. He stressed the necessity for Ukraine to choose its path without aggression or subversion.

Maia Otarashvili underscored Ukraine's significance, emphasizing human rights and the global right to a normal life. The war forces the West to confront its flawed post-Cold War policy towards Russia. She warned that without a Ukrainian victory, the result would be another unsustainable "frozen conflict." Otarashvili also cautioned against destabilizing Russia from within, as it could lead to dangerous outcomes, including the misappropriation of nuclear weapons.

Robert E. Hamilton inquired about security guarantees for Ukraine before NATO membership. The discussion concluded with a consensus on the importance of Ukraine's victory for regional and global security. It was agreed that Ukraine's integration into NATO and the EU should be pursued as quickly as possible to eliminate the Russian threat. A strong, free, and independent Ukraine was deemed vital for Europe's security and prosperity.



Panel VIIb. Energy and Technology. The Impact of New Technologies on the Development of Energy Projects in the Black Sea and Balkans Region



Chair: [Corneliu Bodea](#), President of the Romanian Energy Center;

[Lóránt Antal](#), President of the Energy Committee of the Romanian Senate;
[George Niculescu](#), President of the National Energy Regulatory Authority (ANRE) of Romania;

[Mihai Brana](#), Managing Director of Honeywell Romania;

[Radu Brasoveanu](#), Digital Solutions Director of PPC Group Romania;

[Ondrej Safar](#), Country Manager of EVRYO Group, Romania;

The panel "Energy and Technology: The Impact of New Technologies on the Development of Energy Projects in the Black Sea and Balkans Region" brought together leading experts to explore how technological advancements are shaping the energy landscape in this strategically important area. The panelists discussed the intersection of energy security, environmental sustainability, and economic accessibility - equilibrium often referred to as the "Energy Trilemma." They emphasized the importance of strategic investments, regulatory support, and technological advancements in ensuring a secure, efficient, and sustainable energy future for the Black Sea and Balkans region.

Bodea opened the discussion by highlighting the impact of the Ukraine conflict on the energy sector, noting that Russia's destruction of Ukrainian infrastructure has significantly reduced its thermal power capacity to just 10%. He emphasized the "Energy Trilemma," which involves balancing energy security, environmental sustainability, and economic accessibility—three interconnected and often conflicting goals in energy policy development.

Niculescu praised Romania's support for Moldova during energy crises, highlighting Romania's prepared energy system that has enabled aid to neighboring countries. He discussed Romania's leadership in offshore wind energy in the Black Sea, marked by recent legislation that positions the country at the forefront of regional energy initiatives. Strategic investments are crucial for an efficient, sustainable, and secure energy system, enhancing both production capacity and infrastructure for transport and distribution.

Antal emphasized that energy security encompasses production, distribution, and the protection of critical infrastructure. He noted the slow pace of energy transition in Romania, with limited new capacity coming online in recent years. Antal stressed the importance of substantial investment, estimating a need for €13 billion, to enhance transport infrastructure and meet future energy demands. He also highlighted the importance of consumer education in driving energy efficiency and sustainability.

Safar discussed the inevitability of increased electricity consumption as production grows and the move towards carbon neutrality by 2050. He stressed the need to balance the energy system with renewables like batteries and hydrogen. Safar provided examples of European strategies, such as the Czech Republic's commitment to nuclear energy and Germany's aggressive renewable energy policies. He underscored the importance of creating attractive investment conditions and adopting cost-effective solutions to support the energy transition.

Braşoveanu spoke about the importance of regional energy corridors, such as the one being developed between Greece and Romania by the PPC Group, to diversify production capacities and ensure robust energy independence. He highlighted the crucial role of digitalization in the energy transition, emphasizing that substantial investments in AI, data management, and machine learning are essential to harness the benefits of vast data generated by digitalized energy networks. Proper regulatory frameworks and skilled human resources are critical to enabling large-scale investments.

Brana focused on energy security from two perspectives: the sustainability of the energy industry and technological sustainability across the supply chain. He emphasized the importance of diversifying energy sources and improving energy efficiency to ensure sustainable and low-carbon production. Brana highlighted the significance of physical, electronic, and cybersecurity measures to protect energy infrastructure. He noted that in Romania, the largest facility for manufacturing electronic security and automation equipment is located in Lugoj, underscoring the importance of local production capabilities.

The panel concluded that technological advancements play a pivotal role in developing energy projects in the Black Sea and Balkans region. Strategic investments, regulatory support, and digitalization are key to achieving a balanced, efficient, and secure energy system. The discussions underscored the need for collaboration between governments, industry, and academia to drive the energy transition and enhance regional energy security.



Panel VIII. Environmental Diplomacy - A Tool for Cross-Border Ecological Security and Peace



Chair: [Wajiha Haris](#), President, Scheherazade Foundation;

[Marcel MINDRESCU](#), University of Suceava, Romania;

[Dariia KHOLIIVCHUK](#), Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Ukraine;

[Raluca NICOLAE](#), Agent Green, Romania;

[Carl BRUCH](#), Director of International Programs, Environmental Law Institute (ELI), USA (via VTC);

[William KEETON](#), University of Vermont, USA (via VTC);

[Shahmar HAJIVEV](#), Senior Advisor at the Center for Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center), Azerbaijan;

Marcel Mindrescu discussed the Bucovina Peace Park initiative as a prime example of cross-border cooperation between Romania and Ukraine. This initiative leverages the shared geographical features of the two nations, including the Black Sea coast, the Danube River, and the Carpathian Mountains, to promote sustainable development and peaceful relations. Bucovina's rich cultural heritage and stunning landscapes serve as a symbolic bridge between the two countries, aiming to revitalize the historically significant region through economic development and cultural exchange. Environmental diplomacy emerges as a potent tool for fostering cooperation, with the proposed transboundary national park serving as a platform for dialogue and collaboration.

Dariia Kholiavchuk highlighted the severe environmental damage caused by the conflict in Ukraine, with significant portions of forests and protected areas affected. Nearly 30% of protected areas are in active combat zones or occupied territories, posing grave threats to their ecological integrity. Approximately 1.3 million hectares are contaminated due to military activities, necessitating extensive demining and environmental remediation efforts. The war introduces unprecedented environmental challenges, requiring innovative and concerted efforts for protection and restoration. Part of the broader peace formula includes prioritizing ecological security, with proposals for an environmental compact to address the war's impact and promote sustainable peace-building efforts.

Raluca Nicolae from Agent Green emphasized the critical role of environmental organizations in protecting primary and ancient forests in Romania and preserving the broader environment. The National Park Initiative is vital for both Ukraine and Romania, underscoring the importance of conservation and cross-border cooperation.

Carl Bruch provided insights into environmental diplomacy in Latin America, citing the Cordillera del Condor Peace Park between Peru and Ecuador as a successful model. This park symbolizes reconciliation after years of border disputes, showing how environmental conservation can build trust and cooperation between nations. Similarly, the Esquipulas II agreements and the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) have integrated environmental concerns into broader peace and stability efforts, promoting sustainable development and regional cooperation.

William Keeton discussed the Carpathian Convention's Forest Protocol, focusing on sustainable forest management practices in the Carpathians. He highlighted the significant carbon storage capacity of Ukrainian and Romanian forests, presenting opportunities for international funding through carbon markets to support forest conservation and restoration. Keeton emphasized the multiple benefits of forest conservation, including climate change mitigation, biodiversity preservation, and socio-economic development for forest-dependent communities.

Shahmar Hajivev outlined Azerbaijan's strategic energy transition, emphasizing a shift towards the Caspian region for energy security. With substantial oil reserves, Azerbaijan plays a crucial role in global energy dynamics. The Black Sea submarine energy cable project, signed by Azerbaijan, Georgia, Hungary, and Romania with EU support, aims to export renewable energy and enhance energy interconnections. This project, starting with 3-4 GW of green energy, will provide significant economic benefits and energy security for involved regions. Additionally, Azerbaijan's potential in hydroelectric power from regions like Karabakh contributes to sustainable energy goals, aligning with broader environmental and development objectives.

The panel concluded that environmental diplomacy is a powerful tool for promoting cross-border ecological security and peace. Initiatives like the Bucovina Peace Park and international cooperation frameworks highlight the potential for environmental projects to foster dialogue, cooperation, and sustainable development, contributing to regional stability and peace.



Chair: **Mr. Tudor CURTIFAN**, editor-in-chief, Defense Romania, Romania;
Alina BÂRGĂOANU, Senior Associate Expert of New Strategy Center, Dean of the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations, SNSPA, Romania;
Jakub GODZIMIRSKI, Research Professor, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Poland;
Svitlana KOVALCHUK, Executive Director, Yalta European Strategy, Ukraine;
Sabin ORCAN, Editorial Director, Newsweek Romania;
Nicolas BAROTTE, Journalist, Le Figaro, France;

The panel commenced with a focus on the multifaceted nature of Russian hybrid warfare, which employs a blend of disinformation, cyber-attacks, and traditional military tactics to achieve its geopolitical objectives. Alina Bârgăoanu detailed how false announcements are disseminated through platforms like Google and Meta Advertiser, using compromised Facebook pages, fake photos and videos, and fabricated news sites. This strategy, known as "narrative laundering," hides the original source of a story, making it appear credible once it circulates in the Western public domain.

The discussion highlighted the use of influencers to amplify these false narratives. These influencers, once they gain traction in the American, British, or Romanian public spaces, are protected by laws like the First Amendment and EU regulations, giving legitimacy to the misinformation they spread. One notable example involved a false story about President Zelensky allegedly purchasing a villa once owned by King Carol, which was laundered through seemingly impartial sites and then shared widely on social media.

The speakers emphasized the historical roots of these techniques, tracing back to Soviet-era disinformation strategies. He argued that Russia aims to achieve its goals without resorting to overt military conflict, using a spectrum of tools, including diplomacy, economics, and information warfare. Godzimirski noted the December 2021 ultimatum from Russia to NATO and the US as an example of a diplomatic shock tactic designed to undermine opposition without direct military engagement.

They likewise stressed the urgent need for systematic debunking and pre-bunking efforts to counter misinformation. She advocated for strategic government communication and public education to enhance resilience against disinformation. Kovalchuk also pointed out the significant environmental damage caused by the conflict in Ukraine, with large areas of forest and protected lands affected, requiring comprehensive environmental remediation and long-term conservation strategies.

Additionally, it was addressed the role of media in combating Russian hybrid warfare, highlighting the importance of independent journalism and fact-checking. He noted the challenges posed by anonymous online sources and the spread of propaganda through platforms like Russia Today and Sputnik, which continue to operate despite sanctions and blocks. Orcan emphasized the need for a coordinated international response to strengthen democratic resilience and counter disinformation effectively.

Moreover, insights were provided into how Russia exploits technological advancements to distort reality and influence public opinion. He stressed the importance of preparing for technological changes that enhance the capacity of malicious actors to conduct hybrid operations. Barotte underscored the significance of maintaining robust defenses across military, economic, cultural, and informational fronts to counteract Russian aggression.

The panel concluded with a consensus on the need for heightened vigilance and proactive measures to address the evolving threats posed by Russian hybrid warfare. The speakers called for international cooperation within the frameworks of the EU and NATO to implement effective strategies and increase the resilience of democratic systems. The discussion underscored that the battle against disinformation and hybrid threats requires a comprehensive approach, integrating technological, diplomatic, and military efforts to safeguard global security.



Panel VIIIb. Conservative America and Its Foreign and Security Policy. How Will Transatlantic Link Evolve?



Chair: **Mr. Silviu NATE**, Director, Global Studies Center of Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania

James CARAFANO, Senior Counselor to the President and E.W. Richardson Fellow at The Heritage Foundation, USA

Kiron K. SKINNER, Visiting Fellow, Davis Institute and Presidential Advisor, The Heritage Foundation, USA

Thomas DANS, Visiting Fellow at the Allison Center for Foreign Policy, The Heritage Foundation, USA

Kiron Skinner initiated the discussion by emphasizing that a conservative administration's foreign policy would differ significantly from previous ones, such as the Bush administration. The Trump administration, for example, focused on withdrawing from the Global War on Terror and addressing the rise of ISIS. Trump's foreign policy was often seen as tumultuous because the foreign policy community struggled to understand his intentions. Notably, the Trump administration withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership due to a lack of strict reciprocity. Key pillars of a future Trump administration would include a significant focus on burden-sharing, defense spending exceeding 2% of GDP, and a commitment to ending perpetual wars, complicating discussions on Ukraine, the Middle East, and Taiwan.

Thomas Dans discussed the complexity of NATO and the hopeful continuity of a Trump-led conservative administration. He highlighted the importance of border security, economic stability, inflation, and energy as decisive factors for the upcoming US and European elections. A re-elected Trump administration would focus on implementing its agenda, with an emphasis on substantial planning for executable future policies.

James Carafano addressed concerns about the impact of the upcoming US elections on foreign policy, particularly regarding China, Russia, and misinformation. He asserted that domestic issues like inflation, immigration, border security, and energy prices would dominate the electoral landscape. Carafano emphasized that Trump's previous term saw significant support for NATO, including approving the membership of Finland and Sweden and substantial financial support for Ukraine. He underscored that a conservative administration would adopt a tougher stance on China, Iran, and Russia, focusing on energy policies that ensure reliable and affordable energy while restricting flows from adversarial nations.

Silviu Nate reflected on the ups and downs of transatlantic relations during Trump's first term, noting that conservatives would likely resist continued financial support for Ukraine. He suggested that European elites must recognize the changing demographics and evolving foreign policy landscape, necessitating new alliances and partnerships.

Kiron Skinner and James Carafano discussed the broader strategic interests, emphasizing that conservative policies would likely prioritize bilateral relationships before moving to multinational levels. Carafano noted the importance of strategic stability, particularly in nuclear deterrence and missile defense, stressing the need for significant investments in military capabilities.

Thomas Dans highlighted the importance of direct engagement and bilateral relations, citing recent interactions in Uzbekistan and significant US investments in Kazakhstan. He suggested that Romania could play a key role as Europe's primary energy producer under a Trump administration, enhancing the strategic partnership between the US and Romania.

The panel concluded with a consensus that the US approach to the European Union would shift under a conservative administration, focusing on bilateral partnerships and pragmatic engagement. The discussion underscored the need for comprehensive strategies to address global challenges, with a particular emphasis on maintaining stability and fostering robust international alliances. The speakers agreed that while the US remains committed to NATO, the nature of the transatlantic relationship would depend on European willingness to collaborate with a future conservative administration.



Panel IX. Western Sanctions and Social Economic Effects on the Russian Federation. How Effective Have Sanctions Been so far?



Chair: **Ms. Antonia COLIBĂȘANU**, Senior Associate Expert, New Strategy Center & Chief Operating Officer & Senior Geopolitical Analyst, Geopolitical Futures, Romania

Mr. Andrei ILLARIONOV, senior fellow at the Center for Security Policy in Washington DC, and former economic adviser to President Vladimir Putin (2000-2005)

Mr. Igor BURAKOVSKY, Head of Board, The Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting, Ukraine

From a Western viewpoint, the sanctions imposed on Russia are perceived as a "spectacular failure," failing to achieve their intended outcomes. Conversely, the Russian government, under President Putin, considers these sanctions largely ineffective. The sanctions range from macroeconomic measures aimed at broadly impacting the economy to sectoral sanctions targeting specific industries and personal sanctions against individuals within the elite. The primary goal was to pressure Russia into changing its regime or policies, yet skepticism remains about the feasibility of such a regime change.

Excluding Russia from international economic relations poses significant challenges due to its role as a major resource supplier and consumer market. The sanctions have incurred substantial costs not only for Russia but also for the sanctioning nations, including trade disruptions and increased resource prices. Support for these sanctions is limited to a core group of allied countries, which undermines their effectiveness and complicates diplomatic efforts. To bolster sanctions, secondary measures targeting entities that collaborate with Russia are necessary, as well as restricting access to dual-use technologies and military equipment. However, key companies like Rosatom remain largely unaffected, highlighting gaps in sanction coverage.

Despite predictions of a severe recession, Russia's economy demonstrated resilience, with a GDP decline of only 1.2% in 2022 and a growth of 3.6% in 2023. The Russian ruble became the best-performing currency globally, and Russia recovered its foreign currency reserves rapidly, supported by a positive balance of payments. Key indicators of living standards also improved, with rising retail turnover and real wages, alongside a historic low unemployment rate.

The initial exodus of oligarchs and business figures in 2022 due to opposition to the war has largely reversed, with many returning and supporting the regime, leading to a consolidation of resources. Instead of weakening Russia, the sanctions may have inadvertently strengthened its financial position, granting it substantial profits.

While Western aid to Ukraine totaled around \$130 billion over three years, this is significantly less than Russia's financial gains. The Russian government has developed effective strategies to mitigate the impact of sanctions, acknowledging them as a challenge but finding ways to adapt.

Future sanctions should focus on key Russian exports rather than imports to create genuine economic pressure. Potential strategies include implementing an embargo on Russian exports or taxing energy exports to support Ukraine's reconstruction efforts. Additionally, labor shortages pose challenges for Russia's military and economic operations, with reports suggesting that the actual labor force issues may be more severe than official statistics indicate. Despite ideological assertions, Russia relies on monetary incentives to attract military personnel, demonstrating a pragmatic approach to sustaining its military engagement.

Panel X. The Black Sea Area and Possible Security Developments for Short and Medium Term – in partnership with Institute for European Policies and Reforms, Republic of Moldova



Chair: [George SCUTARU](#), CEO, New Strategy Center, Romania;
[Iulian GROZA](#), Executive Director, Institute for European Policies and Reforms, Republic of Moldova.

[E.S. Angel TÎLVĂR](#), Minister of National Defense, Romania;
[E.S. Anatolie NOSATÎI](#), Minister of Defense, Republic of Moldova

The Black Sea holds significant strategic importance, acting as a critical intersection between the Mediterranean and Caspian Seas, and historically serving as a bridge between East and West. This region continues to be vital for connecting Europe with Eurasia through the Central Corridor, a crucial trade route.

The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 dramatically escalated tensions in the Black Sea region. With control over the Sevastopol military base and additional deployments in Crimea, Russia has significantly strengthened its military presence. Russia's tactics in the Black Sea now extend beyond traditional military methods to include unconventional approaches such as information manipulation and intelligence operations.

The 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid highlighted the Black Sea's crucial role in the Alliance's security framework. Allied forces, particularly the French-led battlegroup in Romania, supported by U.S. troops, play a vital role in deterring potential threats and defending the Eastern Flank.

Integrating Ukraine and Moldova into NATO and the EU would substantially enhance regional security. For Romania, a Ukrainian defeat would mean sharing a direct border with Russia, creating severe security challenges for Eastern Europe and posing an even greater threat to Moldova. Moldova's authorities emphasized that the country is experiencing a new type of warfare, where Russia employs both traditional military forces and non-military methods. Romania currently holds the presidency of the South-Eastern Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) meeting. With partner support, Moldova has become a permanent SEDM member. Notably, Moldova is the first country to sign a security and defense partnership with the EU. This cooperation agreement was signed by EU High Representative Josep Borrell and Moldovan Prime Minister Dorin Recean in Brussels.

Romania has consistently supported Moldova across various domains, providing extensive assistance. Moldova has significantly increased its defense budget, tripling it, and the NATO Partnership for Peace program has been crucial in this effort. The NATO Summit in Vilnius underscored the importance NATO allies place on Romania's contributions to Black Sea security, such as the newly established F-16 pilot training center in Romania, developed with Lockheed Martin and the Dutch government's support.

Romania advocates for a comprehensive approach at the Washington Summit, including the Western Balkans, where 400 Romanian soldiers are stationed in Pristina. The Moldovan Ministry of Defense is drafting a new National Defense Strategy and expanding collaboration with NATO beyond military aspects to areas like strategic communication, cybersecurity, and critical infrastructure protection to counter hybrid warfare threats.

The EU provides substantial support to Moldova in overcoming internal crises and enhancing peacekeeping capacities. Moldova actively participates in international peacekeeping missions in Kosovo, Lebanon, and potentially Bosnia and Herzegovina, with Romania's support, enhancing interoperability and modernizing its defense structures.

Moldova's security is closely tied to that of the Black Sea, influencing global connectivity, energy security, and food security. Moldova will continue to support Ukraine alongside its NATO and EU allies, aiming for a strong and independent Ukraine between Moldova and Russia.



Panel XIa. Current Challenges for Europe in the Context of Elections for EU Parliament. What Will the EU Look Like in the Next Four Years?



Chair: **Ambassador Gheorghe MAGHERU**, member of the Scientific Council of New Strategy Center, Romania

Charles POWELL, Director of the Elcano Royal Institute, Spain;

Leonard ORBAN, Member of the Scientific Council of New Strategy Center, former Presidential Advisor on European Affairs, former EU Commissioner, Romania;

François HEISBOURG, Special Advisor, Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS), France;

Carsten OVENS, CEO, European Leadership Network (ELNET), Germany;

The panelists explored the potential impacts of rising populism, technological innovation, strategic autonomy, and the importance of transatlantic relationships, offering a comprehensive analysis of the complex dynamics at play in the evolving European landscape.

Charles Powell emphasized the interconnectedness of economic vitality and democratic engagement within the EU, highlighting the critical importance of Ukraine's victory against Russia for the stability of the Union. He pointed out that Europe's technological lag is a pressing issue, necessitating innovation across key sectors such as energy, banking, finance, and telecommunications. Powell also noted that the EU must strive for greater transparency and sincerity in its democratic processes, emphasizing the need for increased societal involvement to avoid significant disruptions during the integration of candidate states.

Leonard Orban warned that the 2024 European elections, along with elections in nine member states, could see anti-European and populist parties winning in several countries, including Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Hungary, and the Netherlands. This shift could affect EU decision-making and the implementation of various legislative acts. He stressed the ongoing importance of US involvement in European security and the potential dramatic consequences for the EU if Russia were to succeed in Ukraine.

François Heisbourg discussed the historical context of European integration, shaped by the aftermath of two world wars and the Cold War. He projected that the US would increasingly focus on the Indo-Pacific, limiting its strategic engagement in Europe. Heisbourg suggested that the EU would need to become more self-reliant in defense, highlighting the necessity for the EU to achieve economies of scale in military production and asserting that NATO would become more European-centric. He also noted the permanence of the Franco-German relationship as a determinant in the EU's future trajectory.

Carsten Ovens presented findings from the European Leadership Network, revealing a strong European interest in deepening relations with Israel and other Middle Eastern partners. He argued that the EU needs to pursue a common foreign policy, particularly concerning its immediate neighborhood, including Ukraine and Israel. Ovens highlighted a widespread agreement among European parliamentarians on the importance of the Abraham Accords and the need for closer NATO-Israel cooperation.

During the Q&A session, participants expressed concerns about the rise of populism and the potential impacts of upcoming elections on EU unity. They noted the importance of internal EU cohesion, particularly in light of potential leadership changes and the strategic realignment of global powers. The panelists underscored the need for the EU to enhance its strategic autonomy and military capabilities while maintaining strong transatlantic ties.

The discussion concluded with a consensus on the necessity for the EU to address internal challenges, such as migration and economic disparities, to bolster public trust and prevent the rise of populism. The panelists agreed that Europe's ability to manage its relationships with major global powers, like the US and China, would be crucial for its future stability and security.



Chair: **Amb. Doru COSTEA**, member of the Scientific Council of the New Strategy Center, former ambassador of Romania to Kuwait, Oman and Egypt, Romania

Mr. Yossi MANN, Head of Israel and the Arab Gulf Program, Abba Eban Institute, Israel

Mr. Symeon TSOMOKOS, Founder and President of Delphi Economic Forum, Greece

Amb. Şafak GÖKTÜRK, Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), Türkiye

Mr. Mohamed el ORABI, President of the Egyptian Council on Foreign Affairs (ECFA), former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Egypt

The panel highlighted the complexities of the Middle East, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its broader implications. The current Israeli political climate, exacerbated by the trauma of recent violent events, has rendered discussions about a two-state solution impractical. Despite peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, Israel often receives a "cold peace," marred by ongoing incitement.

The Abraham Accords were discussed as a potential model for future Israeli-Palestinian relations, with trade between Israel and the UAE reaching over \$3 billion, surpassing that with Egypt despite a 40-year-old peace treaty. Israel anticipates maintaining its presence in Gaza for at least another year to dismantle terrorist bases, hoping for eventual international intervention, possibly including cooperation with Arab states and Turkey.

Iran's influence in conflicts involving Ukraine and Israel was a key topic. To prevent Gaza from becoming an Iranian proxy, isolating Iran is essential. There is a consensus among Israelis against supporting a Palestinian state without addressing radicalization in Gaza first. There are fears that a Palestinian state might mirror the instability seen in Libya, Sudan, or Jordan.

The discussion noted the disturbing impact of the Middle Eastern conflict on global trade routes, refugee flows, and the rise of extremist ideologies. The US and Western nations are seen as engaged in a proxy conflict with Russia in Ukraine, which, along with Iran, extends its influence in Iraq, Syria, Gaza, and the Red Sea. The rise of antisemitism and large-scale pro-Palestinian demonstrations worldwide were also highlighted.

The geopolitical dynamics are further complicated by the looming US elections, particularly the potential re-election of President Trump, who might shift focus to resolving the Middle Eastern and Ukrainian crisis to concentrate on China. The security and stability of the Black Sea and Balkans are impacted by the ongoing Middle Eastern conflict, which could escalate refugee flows, arms smuggling, and terrorist activities in neighboring regions. Without a two-state solution, the Gaza conflict risks igniting global terrorism.

The October 7 attacks underscored the shifting dynamics in the Middle East, revealing the unsustainable status quo and the inadequacy of Israel's two-decade strategy of unilateral control and addressing the Palestinian issue as merely a security concern linked to Hamas extremism. Radicalism thrives without a viable solution, and the Arab public has grown more aware and empathetic towards Palestinians, focusing on dignity and human rights.

Russia's territorial ambitions in Ukraine are partly driven by its view of Ukraine as part of its national sphere, with a democratic Ukraine posing a direct threat to the Russian regime. Russia's long-term presence in Syria and strategic positioning in North Africa and the Mediterranean were noted.

The panel concluded that the current conflict dynamics require Israel to seek external support from allies like the US and the UK, as unilateral defense is no longer sufficient. Ignoring the Palestinian issue could plunge the Middle East into further cycles of violence. The necessity for a realistic approach and recognizing that peace is more sustainable and less costly than ongoing conflict was emphasized. Israel's focus should shift from normalization to establishing a genuine Palestinian state for lasting peace and stability in the region.



Chair: **Ion IONIȚĂ**, Senior editor Adevărul, Editor in chief, Historia, Romania;

Matthew BOYSE, Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute, former Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for Central Europe at the State Department, USA;
Admiral (Ret.) Ihor KABANENKO, former Deputy Minister of Defence, Ukraine;

Vice Admiral Mihai PANAIT, Chief of Naval Forces, Romania;

Rear Admiral Georgios Floros, Chief of the Hellenic Navy General Staff, Greece;

Captain (Navy) Petr DIMITROV, Deputy Chief for Operations of Naval Forces, Bulgaria;

James BERGERON, Political Advisor, NATO MARCOM, USA;

Alexander SHAMRAY, Sales Director, Damen Naval Romania

The Black Sea has historically been a crossroads of civilizations and a crucial strategic waterway for international trade and energy transportation. Since the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia and the ongoing war in Ukraine, the region has seen heightened tensions. Russia has disrupted maritime communication lines and employed extensive capabilities such as GPS jamming, spoofing, electronic interference, and cyber warfare.

Freedom of navigation in the Black Sea is fundamental to global stability and prosperity. Disruptions here could escalate tensions globally, cause economic instability, and even spark conflicts. To maintain this freedom, there is a need to strengthen security architecture in the Black Sea, uphold international law, and enhance communication among naval forces to prevent misunderstandings and miscalculations.

The primary threats in the Black Sea region include drifting mines, unmanned systems, and Russian attacks on Ukrainian ports. The importance of adhering to navigational norms to protect freedom of navigation was emphasized, given the daily transit of 300 ships through the area of responsibility. Modernization of naval forces and the integration of advanced maritime drone systems are seen as crucial steps forward.

Ukraine's maritime strategy involves using small, remote-controlled marine drones to cost-effectively protect its sea lines by disrupting Russia's ability to mobilize manpower, ammunition, and goods via the sea. The reopening of Ukraine's grain corridor in 2023, which facilitated the transport of 40 million tons of cargo and significantly increased goods flow through Danube ports, underscores the evolving maritime threats and the need for a common Black Sea naval strategy to ensure navigation freedom.

NATO's adapted forward presence in the Black Sea, established in 2016, aims to enhance deterrence capabilities. Since 2021, non-regional warships have been absent from the Black Sea, and the issue of navigation freedom here differs markedly from regions plagued by piracy. Ukrainian forces have successfully pushed the Russian Black Sea Fleet eastward, significantly reducing its operational capacity.

The ongoing war in Ukraine impacts Black Sea navigation, highlighting the region's geopolitical stakes. The viability of Ukraine as a sovereign state and the region's energy resources are vital to European security. The Black Sea is integral to global trade, and the U.S. Department of State's strategy for the region, though belated, provides a necessary framework for addressing these challenges.

The panel discussed the importance of implementing a strategic program to ensure freedom of navigation, highlighting initiatives such as building fleets for non-NATO countries and developing multifunctional support vessels. Despite these efforts, threats remain, and unconventional thinking is required to counter unconventional threats.

The current command and control (C2) structure in the Black Sea involves NATO under MARCOM, national assets under operational control, and coordination at the maritime operational center. NATO recognizes that, in a conflict with Russia, it must mobilize and energize the majority of its national resources, including ensuring energy security in strategic seas like the Black Sea. However, a severe Russian attack necessitating an Article 5 response is considered unlikely.

Q&A sessions revealed practical challenges, such as dealing with Russian oil tankers engaged in illegal activities and enforcing international maritime laws. Innovative strategies, including creating exclusion zones, were discussed as necessary measures to ensure maritime security in this critical region.



Panel XIIb. Russian Hybrid Warfare in the Context of the 2024 Electoral Year in the EU and the US – in partnership with Delphi Economic Forum, Greece



Chair: [Symeon TSOMOKOS](#), Founder and President, Delphi Economic Forum, Greece

[Greg Miller](#), Foreign Investigations Correspondent, The Washington Post, USA

[Alina Bârgăoanu](#), Senior Associate Expert, New Strategy Center, Dean of the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations, SNSPA, Romania

[Didier Lauras](#), Journalist, Agence France-Presse (AFP), France

[Attila Somfalvi](#), Researcher, Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, Israel

The panel examined the multifaceted strategies employed by Russia to influence electoral outcomes and destabilize democratic institutions. Topics included the evolution of Russian interference tactics since the 2016 US elections, the role of social media and technological advancements in countering disinformation, and the broader implications of hybrid warfare on public trust and political stability.

Greg Miller reflected on his investigative work on Russian interference in the 2016 US elections and projected a diminished impact for the 2024 elections. Despite high-level warnings from US intelligence about ongoing Russian threats, the political landscape has evolved, with social media platforms better equipped to detect foreign campaigns and the US government more proactive in exposing disinformation. While Russian tactics, such as deepfakes and AI, aim to undermine trust in democratic institutions, Miller noted a shift in the electorate towards greater skepticism of online content, making manipulation more challenging. The absence of high-profile hacks targeting Democratic communications, a hallmark of the 2016 interference, also marks a change.

Alina Bârgăoanu discussed the broader context of hybrid warfare, emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary approaches to effectively counter electoral interference. She highlighted European initiatives like the EU's disinformation task forces and regulatory measures, such as the Digital Services Act, aimed at combating hate speech and foreign interference. Bârgăoanu underscored the importance of technological evidence in attribution and the need for ongoing efforts to protect electoral infrastructure from cyberattacks, advocating for enhanced cross-border collaboration and media literacy campaigns.

Didier Lauras pointed out Russia's strategic goals to create chaos in public discourse, weaken European states, and destabilize the EU. He cited examples from the 2017 Macron campaign interference and ongoing disinformation related to the Ukraine war, which feeds into debates over financial aid and military involvement. Lauras highlighted how misleading content, amplified by Russian troll farms and media, aims to sow discord, exemplified by false narratives about French military recruitment for Ukraine. The manipulation of events like the Gaza conflict to incite internal tensions within France was also discussed, illustrating the opportunistic and adaptive nature of Russian disinformation. Attila Somfalvi shared insights from Israel, where influence operations from Iran, Russia, and other actors target public opinion. These efforts, including widespread disinformation on platforms like Telegram, aim to exploit societal divisions and distract from broader geopolitical issues. Somfalvi noted the robust response from Taiwan to Chinese disinformation as a model for liberal democracies, emphasizing the need for prompt and transparent countermeasures to restore public trust.

During the Q&A, the panel addressed the pervasive nature of influence operations and the challenges in detecting and countering them. They discussed the role of social media platforms and the need for significant financial investment to combat disinformation effectively. The panel also touched on the implications for upcoming elections in Moldova and the broader impact of hybrid warfare on democratic processes, underscoring the continuous and covert nature of such operations despite technological advancements and preventive efforts.



Panel XIc. The China-Russia's 'Friendship Without Limits' and the Implications for Europe's Security



Chair: **Viktorija STARYCH-SAMUOLIENÉ**, Co-Founder and Director of Strategy at the UK Geostrategy Council

Rt Hon Sir Michael FALLON, former UK defense secretary;

Andrei ILLARIONOV, former economic advisor to President Vladimir Putin (2000-2005) and member of the research team at the Center for Security Policy in Washington DC, USA;

Tomoyuki YOSHIDA, Senior Executive Director at the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), Japan (VTC);

Amb. Doru COSTEA, member of the Scientific Council of the Center for New Strategies and former Ambassador of Romania to Beijing, Romania

The panel brought together experts to discuss the growing alliance between China and Russia and its potential consequences for European security.

Starych-Samuoliené opened the panel by highlighting the growing trade between China and Russia, which now exceeds \$240 billion, and the increasing aggression from China in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in the South China Sea. She emphasized the significance of global initiatives such as international security and infrastructure development in this context.

Sir Michael Fallon discussed the United States' firm support for the freedom of navigation in strategic areas like the Black Sea and South China Sea, working closely with allies such as Japan and Romania to maintain international order. He criticized China's imperialist ambitions in the South China Sea and its involvement in the Ukraine conflict by supplying weapons to Russia. Fallon stressed the importance of not repeating past mistakes with Russia in dealing with China, highlighting the need for clear consequences for China's aggressive actions and strengthening NATO's defenses beyond the current 2% GDP target. He also pointed out the necessity for Europe to prepare for economic sanctions against violators of international rules.

Andrei Illarionov analyzed the so-called "marriage of convenience" between China and Russia, emphasizing that despite their proclaimed "friendship without limits," there are boundaries and limitations within their partnership. He pointed out that Putin's anti-Western stance and search for strategic partners, especially in China, have shaped Russia's foreign policy. Illarionov highlighted Putin's shift towards economic warfare in response to sanctions and called for NATO members to provide military aid to Ukraine equivalent to at least 1% of their GDP.

Tomoyuki Yoshida discussed the alignment of Chinese and Russian interests, which, despite their differences, often coincide. He noted the challenges posed by geopolitical changes to nuclear regulation strategies, particularly in Japan, and emphasized the interconnected security of Europe and the Pacific region. Yoshida suggested that China's stance might shift if Russia's power wanes and called for a reevaluation of priorities among democracies in Europe and Asia to address these challenges.

Ambassador Doru Costea highlighted the difficulties in translating Chinese political language accurately, pointing out the differences in meaning and interpretation of concepts like the rule of law. He discussed the potential unintended consequences of the China-Russia partnership and noted that the Belt and Road Initiative had once included Ukraine as a significant partner, a relationship that has since deteriorated.

During the Q&A session, the panelists discussed the analogy of Russia as a hurricane and China as climate change, emphasizing the distinct but coordinated nature of their anti-Western positions. They also examined the transatlantic unity in defense compared to economic policies and the impact of anti-Western strategies by China and Russia on the Russian economy. The panel concluded that, while both China and Russia exploit Western economic principles, there is a need for adaptive policies in the West to address these challenges effectively.



Panel XIIIa. The Strategic Importance of the Black Sea. Why Do We Need a Free and Open Black Sea?



Chair: **Ambassador Sorin DUCARU**, Honorary Chairman of the Scientific Council, New Strategy Center; Director, European Union Satellite Centre, Romania

H.E. Luminița ODOBESCU, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Romania

H.E. Mihai POPȘOI, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Republic of Moldova

The Black Sea is critical for the security of the littoral states, Europe, and the Euro-Atlantic region, particularly highlighted by Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine and its hybrid attacks in the region. These conflicts emphasize the importance of the Black Sea for energy and food security. Ensuring freedom of navigation in the Black Sea is vital for trade and regional stability, making it essential for the sea to remain secure and open.

The current tension is exacerbated by Russia's long standing strategy of fostering internal conflicts and turning them into frozen conflicts, such as in Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. The restoration of peace in Ukraine is a clear goal but should be achieved under Ukraine's terms to avoid another frozen conflict. Romania is focused on supporting its vulnerable neighbors like Moldova, which faces hybrid attacks and disinformation aimed at disrupting its European integration. Supporting Georgia's aspirations for EU membership is also a priority.

The Black Sea region holds significant energy reserves, and cooperation among littoral states is crucial for ensuring energy security. Securing the Black Sea involves efforts such as the demining program with Turkey to remove mines. The Black Sea is a crucial transit region for hydrocarbons from the Caspian Sea to the littoral states, underscoring the need for security and peace in the area. The Black Sea also plays a vital role in global food security.

Moldova has played a significant role in facilitating grain exports, with over a billion tons exported to Africa. To support Ukraine and needy countries, Moldova is investing in its rail and road infrastructure. Additionally, Moldova is enhancing its security and resilience against Russian attacks and hybrid threats through measures like establishing a cybersecurity agency and cooperating with the EU partnership mission.

Despite not reaching the 2% GDP defense budget target, Moldova has significantly increased its defense budget, demonstrating its commitment to Black Sea security. Although vulnerable due to past underinvestment in security and corruption, Moldova aims to strengthen its defense. The energy crisis and inflation triggered by Russian aggression have exacerbated these challenges. Moldova enjoys strong relations with Romania and, despite recent challenges, is now stronger thanks to support from global allies. Energy security is ensured through a partnership with Romania.

Romania plans to support Ukraine and Moldova in their accession talks in Brussels directly, offering advice, expertise, and support to their Moldovan counterparts. Moldova has signed a significant partnership agreement with the EU and France aimed at improving military capacity and other security aspects. This agreement will strengthen the Moldovan army logistically and enable joint exercises with France, preparing the army for international missions. The EU partnership framework includes various ongoing projects and programs, including cooperation in cybersecurity capacity, paving the way for future opportunities to strengthen Moldova's security institutions.

A critical aspect of these partnerships is combating disinformation and illegal financing that threaten Moldova's peace and stability. Efforts are underway to counter Russia's attempts to fund protests and corruption through cash, cryptocurrencies, and bank cards, which is crucial, especially with the upcoming referendum on October 20, where Moldova expects significant interference from Russia. The political alignment between Romania and Moldova has facilitated crucial support for Ukraine, including the export of Ukrainian grain and other products. Romania has become a vital hub for Ukraine's reconstruction, working in partnership with Moldova.

Cooperation between Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine aims to enhance interconnectivity by opening new border points and improving cross-border infrastructure, ensuring the efficient transit of Ukrainian grain and other goods.

Panel XIVa. Middle Corridor and Three Seas Initiative. Strategic Connectivity in the Current Challenging Times – in partnership with Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), Türkiye



Chair: **BG (Ret.) Hans DAMEN**, membru al Consiliului consultativ internațional, New Strategy Center, Țările de Jos.

James CARAFANO, consilier principal al președintelui și E.W. Richardson Fellow la The Heritage Foundation, SUA;

Ambasadorul Tacan ILDEM, Președinte, Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), Türkiye;

Kaush ARHA, Senior Fellow nerezident, Centrul Scowcroft pentru Strategie și Securitate, Atlantic Council, fost consilier principal pe probleme de angajament strategic, Agenția Statelor Unite pentru Dezvoltare Internațională, SUA;

Sorin CHINDE, vicepreședinte al diviziei Transport, Grampet Group, România;

Małgorzata SAMOJEDNY, fondator, The Opportunity Institute for Foreign Affairs Foundation, Polonia.

The panel emphasized the critical role of the Black Sea in ensuring the security of littoral states, Europe, and the Euro-Atlantic region. The discussion highlighted the aggressive actions of Russia in Ukraine and its hybrid attacks, which underscore the significance of the Black Sea for energy and food security. Ensuring freedom of navigation in the Black Sea is essential for trade and regional stability, making it crucial to maintain a secure and open sea.

The panel pointed out that the situation in the Black Sea is tense due to Russia's longstanding strategy of fostering internal conflicts and turning them into frozen conflicts, as seen in Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. The restoration of peace in Ukraine was identified as a clear goal, but it must be achieved under Ukraine's terms to avoid another frozen conflict. Romania's focus on supporting its vulnerable neighbors, such as Moldova, which faces hybrid attacks and disinformation aimed at disrupting its European integration, was also discussed. Supporting Georgia's aspirations for EU membership is a priority.

The Black Sea region holds significant energy reserves, and cooperation among littoral states is crucial for ensuring energy security. Efforts to secure the Black Sea involve programs such as demining operations with Turkey to remove mines. The Black Sea is a vital transit region for hydrocarbons from the Caspian Sea to the littoral states, emphasizing the need for security and peace in the area. Additionally, the Black Sea plays a significant role in global food security.

Moldova's contribution to facilitating grain exports, with over a billion tons exported to Africa, was highlighted. To support Ukraine and other needy countries, Moldova is investing in its rail and road infrastructure. Moreover, Moldova is enhancing its security and resilience against Russian attacks and hybrid threats through measures like establishing a cybersecurity agency and cooperating with the EU partnership mission.

Despite not yet reaching the 2% GDP defense budget target, Moldova has significantly increased its defense budget, demonstrating its commitment to Black Sea security. Although vulnerable due to past underinvestment in security and corruption, Moldova aims to strengthen its defense. The energy crisis and inflation triggered by Russian aggression have exacerbated these challenges. Moldova enjoys strong relations with Romania and, despite recent challenges, is now stronger thanks to support from global allies. Energy security is ensured through a partnership with Romania.

Romania plans to support Ukraine and Moldova in their accession talks in Brussels directly, offering advice, expertise, and support to their Moldovan counterparts. Moldova has signed a significant partnership agreement with the EU and France aimed at improving military capacity and other security aspects. This agreement will strengthen the Moldovan army logistically and enable joint exercises with France, preparing the army for international missions. The EU partnership framework includes various ongoing projects and programs, including cooperation in cybersecurity capacity, paving the way for future opportunities to strengthen Moldova's security institutions.

A critical aspect of these partnerships is combating disinformation and illegal financing that threaten Moldova's peace and stability. Efforts are underway to counter Russia's attempts to fund protests and corruption through cash, cryptocurrencies, and bank cards, which is crucial, especially with the upcoming referendum on October 20, where Moldova expects significant interference from Russia. The political alignment between Romania and Moldova has facilitated crucial support for Ukraine, including the export of Ukrainian grain and other products. Romania has become a vital hub for Ukraine's reconstruction, working in partnership with Moldova.

Cooperation between Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine aims to enhance interconnectivity by opening new border points and improving cross-border infrastructure, ensuring the efficient transit of Ukrainian grain and other goods.



Chair: **Emmanuel DUPUY**, President, Institute for European Perspective and Security, Franta.

Chris ALDEN, Director, LSE Ideas, Marea Britanie;

Natalia TELLIDOU, Research Fellow, ELIAMEP - Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy, Grecia;

Charles POWELL, Director of the Elcano Royal Institute, Spania;

Murat ASLAN, Researcher, Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA), Türkiye.

The panel delved into the varying responses and sentiments of countries in Latin America and Africa toward the conflict in Ukraine. The discussion, moderated by Emmanuel Dupuy, highlighted a prevailing sense of indignation in the West towards the perceived hostile attitude and lack of involvement from certain states in these regions. The core issue lies in the perception within these countries that the current global order has been forcibly imposed by Western states, leading to deep-seated frustrations and resentments.

Russia has been capitalizing on this sentiment, using entities like the Wagner Group to extend its influence beyond the military sphere, impacting local political and social domains by manipulating public opinion. Russia frames its invasion of Ukraine as a battle against the Western-dominated world order, seeking to garner support from these nations to counter Western global influence. Strategically, Russia aims to establish a naval base in the Red Sea and access valuable natural resources in Africa, such as gold, potentially to finance its war efforts in Ukraine.

In Latin America, Russia's economic footprint is minor, constituting only 1% of foreign direct investment, which limits its influence in the region. Countries in the Global South are navigating international relations through a strategy of active non-alignment, maintaining strategic autonomy amid global competitive pressures. Although Latin American states condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine, none have imposed sanctions against Russia. The region's stance includes a small pro-Russian bloc (Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua) and a pro-Ukrainian stance represented by Argentine President Javier Milei. Notably, President Zelensky has only visited Argentina, with other Latin American parliaments rejecting his visits.

The Global South is actively contributing to the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world order, advocating for a scenario where multiple states, including those from the Global South, play influential roles. Despite recognizing the benefits of international norms, many states in Latin America and Africa feel disillusioned with the performance of global institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank.

Latin America views itself as a victim of the Cold War, where its states were merely pawns in the conflict between the US and the USSR. This historical context explains their reluctance to engage in a conflict dominated by US-China rivalry, preferring a strategy of active non-alignment. United Nations research from 2003-2023 shows that Latin American countries aligned with the European Union in 80% of votes on human rights and democracy issues, compared to 30% for African countries and 40% for Asian countries, highlighting a significant divergence in perceptions and actions within the Global South.

In Latin America, there is a perception of Western double standards regarding the Gaza-Israel conflict. Many consider it hypocritical to condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine while tolerating Israel's actions against Palestinians. Sanctions against Russia are not imposed by the UN; if they were, countries in the Global South would adhere to them. Instead, these sanctions are seen as driven by US and EU interests.

Countries like Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali have abandoned Western partnerships in favor of Russian support. The Global South supports actions that bring local prosperity, even if it involves backing Russia against sanctions.



Panel XV. How Can the US Manage Multiple Security Crises? A Discussion about War Fatigue, Transatlantic Link and the Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Area



Ambassador Sorin DUCARU,

Honorary Chairman of the Scientific Council, New Strategy Center;
Director, European Union Satellite Centre, Romania,

in dialogue with

General (Ret.) David H. PETRAEUS,

former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency & former Commander of
the U.S. Forces – Afghanistan (USFOR-A), USA

American leadership globally is crucial, exemplified by the recent bipartisan approval of \$61 billion in security assistance for Ukraine, driven by national interests in promoting freedom, democracy, and capitalism. The geopolitical landscape has shifted significantly over the past decade, with the U.S. spending more on defense than all NATO allies combined, while many European nations fail to meet the 2% GDP defense spending target.

Current threats are more pronounced than since the Cold War's end, notably in U.S.-China relations and an increasingly aggressive Russia. There's also a need to monitor Islamist extremist groups, which could re-emerge if neglected. U.S. leadership is essential to maintain international alliances that help address these challenges.

The U.S. military strategy is evolving, especially in the Indo-Pacific, where bases are being fortified and unmanned systems are prioritized. Meanwhile, the American public must understand that foreign engagement is vital for national security.

The outcome of the Ukraine war hinges on timely U.S. assistance and Ukraine's ability to generate military forces. Delays in aid have left Ukraine vulnerable against a much larger Russian economy and population. Despite impressive U.S. support, slow decisions meant Ukrainian forces lacked necessary capabilities during crucial counteroffensives last summer. Russia has effectively utilized drones and missiles, severely impacting Ukrainian naval operations in the Black Sea, which is strategically significant beyond Ukraine.

In the Middle East, instability and extremism often spill over into Europe, underscoring the region's volatility. Russia's naval challenges are exacerbated by international conventions limiting its maritime movements. NATO's strategic framework has evolved, responding to new challenges, with the Ukraine conflict revitalizing the alliance.

Putin's actions have inadvertently strengthened NATO, prompting historically neutral countries to seek membership and reinforcing defense capabilities. The future of transatlantic relations will depend on European nations meeting defense spending commitments and whether U.S. alliances enhance its strength in the Pacific.

Concerns about China's economic practices have led to rising protectionism in Europe and a reevaluation of national security policies. A unified approach based on shared values will strengthen U.S.-European relations. However, reliance on U.S. military capabilities means Europe cannot undertake significant missions independently, and NATO's critics leverage discrepancies in defense spending among member states.

In addition to supporting Ukraine, efforts are ongoing to assist Moldova against Russian influence, which highlights a broader commitment to maintaining pro-Western governments in Eastern Europe. Ukraine's military continues to demonstrate resilience, especially in urban defense, while regional dynamics remain complex, with historical ties drawing some nations back toward Russia.



Chair: **Ms. Cristina CILEACU**, Journalist, DIGI 24 TV Station, Romania

Ms. Ana TINCA, State Secretary for Strategic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romania

Mr. Basat ÖZTÜRK, Director General for International Security Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Türkiye

Mrs. Yulia KLYMENKO, First Deputy Head of Transport & Infrastructure Committee at Verhovna Rada, Ukraine

Mr. Michaël ROUX, Ambassador for the Eastern Partnership and Black Sea, France

Mr. Stefan MEISTER, Head, Center for Order and Governance in Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia, German Council on Foreign Relations, Germany

Mr. Wilfried JILGE, Senior Adviser Ukraine and wider Black Sea, Stabilisation Platform, Germany

Final Remarks: **Ms. Katja PLATE**, Head of the KAS Offices Romania, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Germany

Ana Tinca said that during the Cold War, the Black Sea was a closed issue, but since the '90s, Romania has attempted to focus on regional initiatives and cooperation, which unfortunately fell apart. Since 2022, Romania has concentrated on military thinking and defense capabilities. The Black Sea situation reflects forces shaping global developments, and NATO must continue supporting Ukraine and deter attacks on NATO member states. Romania, aware of its responsibilities under the Washington Treaty, sees a significant role for the EU in the Black Sea region, working on connectivity programs and reinforcing infrastructure to support Ukraine.

Basat Ozturk highlighted that the Black Sea is crucial for Turkey and its coastal states, who care about the prosperity, stability, safety, and security of their neighbors. The EU should adopt a more strategic approach and include Turkey. The "Mine Countermeasures Black Sea" initiative enhances navigation safety between Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria. Helping Ukraine honestly is essential.

Yulia Klimenko mentioned that the Black Sea is vital for Ukraine, Europe, and the world. For Ukraine, it is crucial for exporting grains, metals, chemicals, etc. Ukraine is fighting for freedom of navigation with significant innovations like maritime drones, destroying a substantial portion of the Russian fleet. The region's security is critical, with mines and drones posing threats to neighboring countries. Ensuring Ukraine's stability is crucial for global food security.

Stefan Meister said that Germany sees the Black Sea region as central to European security, requiring realistic discussions and ambitious projects. The EU and NATO need to strengthen military capabilities and support Ukraine against Russian aggression. The militarization of Crimea and control over the Black Sea are concerns. Supporting Ukraine is vital for regional stability and European interests.

Michael Roux stated that Moscow poses a significant threat to Black Sea and European security, never fully accepting the 1991 borders. France has participated in diplomatic efforts to stop violence but believes in European military procurement preferences. Building constructive relations with Turkey and ensuring peace in the South Caucasus is essential for better security and efficiency in the Middle Corridor.

Katja Plate emphasized that the Black Sea region is critical for the EU's safety, security, and prosperity. The EU should develop a comprehensive strategy for the Black Sea.



Chair: [Lieutenant General \(ret.\) Viorel PANĂ](#), Senior associate expert, New Strategy Center, former Chief of Air Forces, Romania

[Lieutenant General Dragoş IACOB](#), Deputy Chief of Defence, Romania
[Mr. Andriy SIRKO-GALOUCHENKO](#), expert on UAV development for military applications, founder of the Ukranina UAV Forum, Ukraine
[Admiral \(ret.\) Eric T. OLSON](#), Board Member, Ocean Aero, USA

In the past two years, Ukraine has successfully implemented an asymmetric warfare strategy by leveraging affordable drones across its military branches. This approach has significantly shortened the timeline for developing and deploying new military technologies, with notable examples like the rapid creation of maritime drones, which were operational within just 12 months.

Traditionally, aerial assets have been used for surveillance and troop movement coordination. Ukraine's drone integration has emerged from a grassroots effort, empowering smaller units to undertake complex missions while minimizing risks to personnel. In contrast to authoritarian regimes like Russia, which rely on large-scale attacks for limited territorial gains, Ukraine emphasizes the protection of human life.

Drones are now operational in various domains, including aerial, surface, and underwater, with ground drones expected to soon influence battlefield dynamics. To maximize the effectiveness of these technologies, a coordination center is essential for ensuring seamless transitions between different operational environments. Drones facilitate faster decision-making by providing real-time intelligence, playing a critical role in maritime operations by allowing precise maneuvers usually carried out by larger vessels. This technology has streamlined the sensor-to-shooter cycle and enhanced damage assessments. The intelligence gathered boosts troop morale by demonstrating ongoing support through aerial operations, offering the added advantage of allowing for target surveillance and informed strike decisions.

Despite their impressive capabilities, success in warfare ultimately relies on human involvement. While drone warfare is advancing quickly, it will complement rather than replace human operators, with future conflicts likely seeing drones enhanced by artificial intelligence. These systems will have a permanent presence, capable of operating under various conditions.

The rapid development of countermeasures against drones highlights the complexities of modern warfare. Maintaining a strategic advantage requires constant adaptation of tactics. Initially, both Russian and Ukrainian forces utilized the Chinese Aeroscope drone, but Russia capitalized on its access to Chinese manufacturing to create its own systems, like the Orlan drone, which has a range of 1,000 kilometers and sophisticated night vision. This was complemented by the quieter Zala drone, used to guide the lethal Lanset drone equipped with explosives. Ukrainian forces have begun efforts to replicate such capabilities.

Despite Russia's vast resources, Ukraine has innovated with low-cost drones designed for targeted missions. They developed FPV (First-Person View) drones, which have expanded their operational range to over 1,200 kilometers, with expectations for drones reaching 3,000 kilometers in the future.

As the situation remains fluid, the devastation in Ukrainian towns after Russian occupation underscores the brutality of the conflict. While Ukraine has the capability to inflict significant damage on Russian cities, it remains judicious in its target selection, emphasizing the importance of ethical warfare.

To counter Russia's centralized power and extensive resources, Ukraine is fostering horizontal connections within society, enhancing local weapon production and facilitating experience sharing. This grassroots approach positions Ukraine for potential success while reminding Western allies of the need for support that prevents total depletion of resources, as such outcomes could have serious implications for neighboring regions and beyond.



Chair: **Mr. Cristian DAVID**, President, Institute for Liberty and Democracy, Romania

Mr. Raed ARAFAT, State Secretary, Head of Emergency Situations Department, Ministry of Interior, Romania

Mr. Jeroen DOBBER, Head of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation Global Security Hub, The Netherlands

Mr. Oleksiy GONCHARENKO, President of the PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine

Mr. Thomas HACKER, Member of the German Bundestag, Committee on the Affairs of the European Union, Germany (via VTC)

Mr. Mircea MOCANU, Head of Bucharest office, UN International Organization for Migration, Romania

Mr. Piotr OLINSKI, Legal analyst, The Civic Development Forum Foundation (FOR), Poland

Oleksey Goncharenko said that the migration challenges caused by the war in Ukraine represent a severe humanitarian crisis, involving 14 million displaced people. Neighboring countries, which have borne the brunt of this influx, now need to develop comprehensive policies addressing both immediate humanitarian needs and the long-term integration of refugees. These policies should include provisions for housing, healthcare, education, and employment to help refugees rebuild their lives and contribute to the economies of host countries.

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation is a global organization promoting liberal values, democracy, and human rights. It operates in approximately 60 countries worldwide, focusing on issues such as globalization, human rights, innovation, and security. Key centers include Washington (globalization), Geneva (human rights), Taipei (innovation), and Brazil (security).

Current EU solidarity mechanisms are criticized as ineffective and insufficient due to bureaucratic obstacles and member states' reluctance to accept more migrants. Reception facilities in member states are strained due to the influx of refugees from the war in Ukraine, highlighting the need for a real legal framework for solidarity.

The effects of climate change on migratory flows warrant the attention of researchers and policymakers, requiring better dialogue and equal access to legal mobility. Strengthening migration dialogue between Mediterranean shores and ensuring equal access to legal mobility are essential steps before adopting a new migration pact.

Recognizing the distinction between countries directly neighboring conflict zones and those serving as transit points for migrants is crucial. Neighboring countries often face immediate emergencies due to their proximity to conflict zones, while transit countries may have different challenges related to migration management.

During border conflicts, emergencies can escalate rapidly, catching governments off guard. Immediate legislative changes may be necessary to address the flow of displaced persons, especially in sectors such as healthcare, where resources and additional support are urgently needed.

An effective response to such emergencies often requires collaboration with humanitarian organizations like the Red Cross and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). These organizations can provide essential aid and support services to affected populations, helping to mitigate immediate humanitarian crises.

Legal issues concerning various groups, such as students or people temporarily residing in the country, may arise during such emergencies. Governments must navigate these legal complexities to ensure the protection and rights of all individuals affected by the crisis, including facilitating access to necessary services and support.

Poland's legal framework for migration is characterized by complexity and diversity. It includes different regulations tailored to various groups, including EU citizens, Ukrainians, Armenians, Belarusians, Georgians, Moldovans, and other immigrants. Each group may be subject to specific laws and regulations governing their entry, stay, and rights in Poland.

Key laws governing migration in Poland include the Law on Foreigners and the Law on the Promotion of Employment and Labor Market Institutions. These laws outline the rights and obligations of foreigners living and working in Poland, as well as procedures for obtaining work permits and residence permits.

In response to the armed conflict in Ukraine, Poland has implemented specific legislation to assist Ukrainian citizens affected by the conflict. The Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of that Country outlines support measures for Ukrainian citizens seeking refuge or assistance in Poland.

Employing migrants in Poland involves complying with various legal requirements and procedures. Employers must adhere to labor laws and regulations, including those related to work permits, employment contracts, and labor rights. Additionally, specific regulations may apply depending on the migrant's country of origin and legal status in Poland.



Panel XVII. Si Vis Pacem, Para Bellum! NATO's Defence Policy on the Eastern Flank.



Chair: [Lieutenant General \(Ret.\) Vasile TOADER](#), Member of Scientific Council of New Strategy Center, former Deputy Chief of Defence, Romania

[Mr. Angus LAPSLEY](#), NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defence Policy and Planning, UK (video message)

[Lieutenant General Dragoş IACOB](#), Deputy Chief of Defence, Romania
[General Dimitrios CHOUPIS](#), Chief of National Defence General Staff, Greece

[Major General John MEAD](#), Deputy Chief of Staff Plans, Joint Force Command (JFC) Naples, UK

[Mr. Stephen COVINGTON](#), Strategic and International Affairs Advisor to the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, USA

The Washington Summit is a critical moment to address current challenges, with a key focus on supporting Ukraine as it resists Russia's brutal aggression. The summit will discuss how to achieve this support and ensure that our training and financial aid are effective.

Another significant challenge is ensuring robust defense and deterrence. We are implementing a much stronger architecture for defense and deterrence in the Euro-Atlantic area, including a plan for defending Southeastern Europe, including the Balkans. This plan is managed and developed by the Joint Forces Headquarters in Naples, under Admiral Munch's command.

Greece has proactively contributed to emergency reorganization, emphasizing the importance of national commitment and resource allocation.

Addressing Russia's influence in Syria, Libya, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel region is crucial. Monitoring Russian tactics in these areas is essential for forming strategic partnerships and preventing crises.

Since the Russian Federation began its war of aggression in Ukraine, NATO has entered a new era of collective defense. The alliance is implementing the concept of deterrence and defense of the Euro-Atlantic area, leveraging a deliberate pace of military activity across all geographical areas of the alliance.

Allies are in the final phase of increasing the execution capacity of new defense plans, which will gradually change the armies. These new plans are led by regional plans, which are living documents that can be updated as needed.

The situation at Romania's borders demonstrates NATO's commitment, along with Allied Nations and most NATO partners, to ensuring peace and stability in a volatile security environment. Romania is focusing on implementing forward presence solutions, increasing the military budget to 2.5% of GDP. This has strengthened the multinational C2 headquarters and invested in multi-domain operations, including F-16s, long-range fires, air defense with ballistic capabilities, and armored and naval capabilities.

The "NATO by Design" approach is a crucial accelerator of NATO's capacity to synchronize at peace, operate en masse, serve as a combat headquarters, and build trust among people, procedures, and acquisitions.

Romania must intensify collaboration with the defense industry, being part of a coalition of countries with advanced capabilities. Last year, the government adopted legislation requiring every military procurement program to have significant impact, including economic and technological benefits.

The war against Ukraine was meant to destroy Ukraine, end its pursuit of integration into the Western security system, and undermine the Euro-Atlantic security system. Russia's challenge is a complex strategic issue that requires our unity.

Victory in Ukraine is linked to our security and position, so we must maintain close ties with the Ukrainian Joint Forces Command, understand the situation there, and learn necessary lessons. We need to mobilize, equip, and significantly accelerate efforts in this area.

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