

Building Resilience Against Human Security Threats and Risks: From Best Practices to Strategies

Frederic Labarre, Elena Mandalenakis, George Niculescu (Eds.)

Study Group Information





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It goes without saying that the current security environment is extremely dynamic. The editors and authors have strived to produce information that is up to date in the current supercharged security climate. It goes without saying that any oversight is the editors' responsibility alone.

Preface

George Niculescu

The end of the Cold War has led into a reconfiguration of the global and regional strategic landscapes and a worldwide redefinition of security concepts, strategies and policies. The security concerns of individual states and international organizations have expanded to embrace not only the preoccupation with territorial integrity and military security, but also issues ranging from socio-economic or state failure triggering regional instability to international terrorism and environmental degradation.

Globalization and the technological revolution of the last decades have essentially restructured the distribution of power within the global system, as well as the conditions for preserving peace and conducting wars in the contemporary world. Consequently, the role of the nation state as the fundamental political unit of the international relations system was challenged, and the security landscapes have changed at every level almost beyond recognition. Security no longer focused on military power. In the post-Cold war era, part of this transformation had been connected to the absence of a defining threat and a significant move from military and defence-related issues towards economic, developmental and societal ones. The concept of security had broadened to encompass political, social and economic stability, while violence and threats to physical security no longer concerned exclusively national and territorial defence. Security had ceased to mean simply defence. Defence policy had become merely one element of a comprehensive security policy, including a broad spectrum of other tasks and missions ranging from preventive diplomacy, peace keeping and peace enforcement to rebuilding post-conflict state and societal institutions. Differences between international and internal security had been eroded.

Moreover, the post-Cold War pursuit of democracy in many parts of the world didn't lead to the "End of History", as Francis Fukuyama had suggested in August 1989, in his most famous article. It resulted instead in the emergence of new security challenges posed by authoritarian alternatives to

democratic systems, by the growth of religious and ethnic fanaticism and the imperious need to find ways to cope with the destabilizing effects of globalization and the digital revolution.

Transnational security risks and threats, including terrorism, proliferation of WMD, organized crime, illegal immigration, ethnic and religious conflicts have multiplied, and the international community had to define ways and find means and resources to cope with them. New potential sources of conflict, like inequity and poverty generated by the growing economic and technological gap between rich and poor, access to scarce natural resources (water, food, energy, rare earths), the struggle to protect ethnic and religious identities had emerged.

Demographic imbalances between the developed and the developing world have grown, with the population growth concentrated overwhelmingly in those countries least able to support it. This trend has had an impact on the age structure of the world's population. In the developing world, an explosion of the work force numbers had been projected, and the respective countries were unlikely to absorb it. In the aftermath of the Cold War, international borders had become porous and relatively easier to penetrate, particularly in Europe. Deteriorating economic circumstances, as well as political turmoil and regional conflicts have created a significant trend of mass movements of people that resulted in the emergence of multi-ethnic societies. The need for a proper management of migration to ensure the differentiation among refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants has emerged. Migration has also had an impact on the societies of origin. Illegal immigration has come to the forefront as an important phenomenon. In addition to drugs and arms trafficking, cyber-crime and human trafficking have entered the portfolio of organized crime networks and terrorist organizations as high profit activities.

Terrorism and organized crime had been recognized in the post-Cold War environment as potential sources of risk and threat to the stability and security of nations, as well as a hindering force to the development of liberal, open and democratic societies governed by the rule of law. International terrorism has revealed new trends and dangers, which were tragically demonstrated by the unprecedented attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent Al-Qaeda- and ISIS-inspired attacks across the

world. Not only did this show the terrorists' ability and willingness to use new methods of killing and destruction but also that the nature of terrorism was changing in terms of organization and operational approach. A new global framework to combat terrorism in a wide-ranging scope, including suppression of the financing of terrorism, police and intelligence cooperation have been developed.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have also resulted into a new turning point in world politics. This was not only because the war against global terrorism has become a central theme for the international security debate, but since it reinforced the shift of focus of the global geostrategic game to Central Asia and the Middle East. This shift has dramatically reshaped the power relations between the US, Europe, Russia, China and India, given their common interest to fight against violent political Islam, it reinforced the anti-globalisation movement by displaying the vulnerability of US to asymmetric threats, fed by unrestrained individual freedoms and unfettered global financial and economic systems, and it created favourable conditions for strategic coercion to become an essential tool for reshaping the new world order.

The decline of the relevance of strategic nuclear weapons for coping with international security risks and threats combined with the rapid technological development in conventional weapons systems had led to the emergence of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). That allowed a steep increase in the precision of military strikes, the ability to better and more safely communicate, while denying the potential adversary the same ability, better intelligence through enhanced reconnaissance capabilities, as well as the capability to rapidly deploy and sustain forces in whatever place in the world. That, in turn, required new military structures and doctrines, as well as the transition to professional armies.

It is within this dynamic strategic context that the concept of human security has evolved over the past few decades, reflecting the shift in how security was understood and addressed at various levels. The emergence of human security marked a broader, individual-centred approach, recognizing that threats and risks to individuals' safety and well-being were multifaceted and arising from non-military sources such as poverty, disease, deprivation of rights and democratic freedoms, and environmental degradation.

The concept of **human security** was formally introduced in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) “Human Development Report”, which shifted the focus of security to the protection of individuals against human security threats and risks like hunger, disease, and repression, as well as natural disasters or physical violence. The Report identified seven dimensions of human security:

- Economic security (freedom from poverty)
- Food security (access to adequate food)
- Health security (protection from diseases)
- Environmental security (protection from environmental hazards)
- Personal security (protection from physical violence)
- Community security (protection of cultural and identity security)
- Political security (enjoyment of civil and political rights)¹

This shift was significant because it recognized that security should also address individuals’ survival, dignity, and livelihood. It formally called for a multidimensional approach to security, incorporating not only military, but also economic, social, and environmental threats and risks.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), introduced by the United Nations in 2000, and their successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launched in 2015, have also reflected key elements of human security, particularly in their focus on poverty eradication, health, and peace. Human security has continued to be a guiding principle in global development policies, disaster response, and conflict resolution, as seen in various peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions. However, the concept has faced criticism. Some argued it was too broad and vague, making it difficult to implement in concrete policies. Others believed it could undermine state sovereignty, as it called for external intervention under certain conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further emphasized the importance of human security. It demonstrated how global health crises, economic instability, and social inequalities could lead to widespread insecurity that affected individuals far beyond military threats. Renewed calls for international cooperation

¹ United Nations. *Human Development Report 1994*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1994).

to address new security threats, from pandemics to climate change, in the context of human security have emerged. Human security risks and threats have also been addressed by the Regional Stability in South Caucasus Study Group (RSSC SG) of the PfP Consortium. For example, in June 2020, in the very early stages of the COVID-19 pandemics, the Group organized a virtual roundtable aiming to address national and regional responses (including domestic crisis management) to the COVID-19 crisis by the countries of the South Caucasus region and developed policy recommendations aiming to reduce their vulnerabilities to its multifaceted consequences. One of the ensuing policy recommendations invited regional states to display solidarity vis-à-vis each other and strive to cooperate more extensively and better with each other. Previous workshops have also touched on various aspects of human security, such as “The Media is the Message – Shaping Compromise in the South Caucasus” in 2016, “Building an Energy Policy Management Institution for the South Caucasus” in 2017, or “Peace Building Through Economic and Infrastructure Integration in the South Caucasus” in 2022.

Resilience against human security risks and threats refers to the capacity of individuals, communities, and systems to anticipate, absorb, adapt, and recover from various related shocks and stressors that endanger their well-being. It aims at enhancing the ability of individuals, communities, and systems to cope with and recover from threats and to mitigate vulnerability to risks that go beyond traditional military threats, including economic instability, health crises, climate change, and social conflict. By building resilience societies would be better equipped to protect and promote the security and well-being of individual citizens in a rapidly changing world.

As many contributors to this Handbook have argued, resilience against human security threats and risks required strong governance and institutions. Good governance, rule of law, and effective institutions could reduce vulnerabilities by providing public services, protecting rights, and ensuring security. Resilient institutions might help manage risks through policies that prioritize human security, such as disaster preparedness, social protection, and conflict resolution.

A few contributors have also looked into how socio-economic resilience could provide security even in the face of economic shocks. For instance, having access to multiple income sources or resilient supply chains could

reduce vulnerability to global market fluctuations or local crises. Others explained how resilient infrastructure and technological systems (such as early warning systems, renewable energy, or resilient housing) might help protect against the physical impacts of natural disasters, conflicts, or other disruptions, while environmental sustainability would contribute to resilience by protecting natural resources that communities rely on, such as clean water and arable land. Last but not the least, a strong, accessible healthcare system would be essential for resilience against health-related risks like pandemics.

Several contributors have also argued that education fostered resilience by equipping people with the knowledge and skills to navigate risks and adapt to new challenges. Meanwhile, access to accurate and timely information would also play a crucial role in helping communities prepare for and respond to threats. In fact, this has been one of the key drivers of this Handbook project aiming to help educators, including those in defence and security institutions, explain and illustrate strategic approaches to building resilience against human security risks and threats.

One key message of this Handbook is stressing that **regional cooperation** is essential for building resilience against human security risks and threats, since effectively addressing many of them, including conflicts, environmental crises, pandemics, and transnational crime, require collective action that transcends national borders. By working together, countries can pool resources, share knowledge, and implement coordinated strategies that enhance their ability to respond to and recover from shocks. This is what enables states and communities to enhance their ability to anticipate, mitigate, and recover from human security threats and risks more effectively. Regional organizations and frameworks for cooperation could provide crucial platforms for addressing these shared challenges, fostering long-term stability, peace, and security across a region.

There are many ways to take advantage of regional cooperation in building resilience against human security risks and threats: for example, regional cooperation could be used to assist in post-conflict recovery by coordinating humanitarian assistance, reconstruction efforts, and peacebuilding programs. Regional cooperation could also enable the development of shared early warning systems that can predict and mitigate the impact of natural and man-made disasters. Regional countries could pool their resources, knowledge,

and technologies to address shared environmental challenges. They could also create regional bodies to coordinate large-scale infrastructure projects, such as transboundary water management or climate adaptation strategies, that individual countries might not be able to undertake alone. Regional cooperation could also help improve health infrastructure through joint investments in research, vaccine development, and the training of healthcare professionals. Economic resilience may be enhanced if regional countries collaborate on trade agreements, investment strategies, and financial support mechanisms. Regional organizations, such as the European Union (EU), promote regional integration, helping countries recover from economic crises by facilitating trade and investment. Regional development banks and financial institutions could also provide crucial support for economic recovery after shocks. Conflicts and environmental disasters often lead to mass displacement and refugee flows that affect entire regions. Regional cooperation could enable a more effective and humane response to these challenges by coordinating policies on refugee protection, resettlement, and humanitarian aid. Also, regional cooperation could help harmonize migration policies, making it easier for people to move safely and legally across borders. This can prevent irregular migration, human trafficking, and exploitation, all of which undermine human security.

Human security threats, such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime, are transnational in nature. Regional cooperation enhances resilience by fostering joint law enforcement, intelligence sharing, and coordinated security operations. Regional cooperation could also allow for capacity-building initiatives, where countries work together to improve their domestic institutions' ability to combat security threats. Promoting gender equality and social inclusion, as well as protecting vulnerable groups could be also facilitated by regional cooperation initiatives. Food security is often a regional issue, especially in areas prone to climate-induced food shortages. Regional cooperation can lead to the development of joint agricultural policies, food storage systems, and research on sustainable farming practices. Regional coordination might also help ensure that food supply chains remain resilient during crises, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic when border closures disrupted global trade. Regional trade agreements, logistical support, and policy harmonization could mitigate these disruptions and ensure the availability of food (and other vital goods) in times of need.

The Regional Stability in South Caucasus Study Group (RSSC SG) **Handbook on “Building Resilience Against Human Security Threats and Risks: From Best Practices to Strategies”** was built upon the recommendation of participants to the 23rd workshop, held in Naples (Italy), on 24–27 March 2022 to launch a new project tentatively focusing on building resilience across a broad range of human security threats. This recommendation was rooted in the proposals of Dr Tatoul Manassarian who argued in his piece² presented at that workshop that the South Caucasus should not remain merely a geographic term, but it should be turned into an EU-shaped union with an agreed understanding and evaluation of common threats, risks and ways to mitigate them. As a starting point, he wrote, regional experts should concentrate on commonalities, rather than differences and dividing lines. He further suggested an experts-level joint mechanism for scanning the region for risks and threats against food security, energy security, financial security, transportation security, information security, demographic security, health security, environmental security, poverty, hunger, and migration. Following up on those proposals, and using the power of the PFP Consortium network, the RSSC SG undertook this new Handbook project aiming to distillate current best practices on building resilience against common human security threats into effective strategies, policies, and concrete measures. A common vision for the future should be translated into a comprehensive list of common regional goals and objectives to be pursued over the next five to ten years. This, in turn, should lead to a deeper common security threats assessment. Contributors to this Handbook who have comparatively addressed the situation of human security in the South Caucasus countries looked at the competitive advantages of each country and recommended adjusting regional efforts on human security to their individual political and security agendas.

The first Editorial Workshop, held in Reichenau (Austria) on 03–05, November 2022, hashed out the foundations of this new project. The title of the Handbook, and the tentative structure of its content, including three parts: 1. Theoretical background; 2. From lessons learned and best practices to strategizing; 3. Case studies from the South Caucasus region and beyond,

² Tatoul Manassarian, “Silhouettes of Peace, Security and Cooperation” in *Peace Building Through Economic and Infrastructure Integration in the South Caucasus*, F. Labarre, G. Niculescu (Eds.), Band 13/2022, (Vienna: National Defence Academy, 2022), 159–169.

were then agreed. The contributors further agreed that the project should take a bottom-up approach aiming at developing a better future rather than imposing an external regional vision; it should be developed as an educational project, but its potential regional impact in support of building a new security architecture based on the EU's historical experience was equally deemed important; the content should be de-politicized and reflecting specialist experts' research. Like the first RSSC SG Handbook³ project "Understanding the Contemporary Information Landscape", its geographical scope and contributors' list should not be limited to the South Caucasus region but should be as inclusive as possible. On the same occasion, it was agreed the thematic scope of the Handbook including, but not limited to, environment and climate change, energy security and transition to green energy, transportation and free trade, water resources management, food security, health and medical security, demographic security, cyber security, information security. The potential target audiences of the Handbook have also been agreed: students, and teaching staff from civilian and defence education institutions, as well as policymakers from national and international institutions/organizations, interested businesses operating at local, national, regional, and global levels, and civil society.

In practice, the chapters of this Handbook addressed building resilience against human security risks and threats associated with climate change, demographic, food, water, medical and financial security, human trafficking, cyber security, hybrid threats, psychological manipulation, violence in the digital domain, ethnic violence in unresolved conflicts, economic fragmentation, and trade disruptions in the South Caucasus and beyond. There are obvious inter-connections among some of those risks and threats. For example, climate change-related disasters like floods, droughts, and storms may affect food security, water availability, and livelihoods. Building resilience involves creating infrastructure to withstand extreme weather, developing sustainable agricultural practices, and ensuring environmental protection. Likewise, pandemics and the lack of access to basic healthcare undermine human security, for deprived groups, such as female immigrants. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for resilient healthcare systems capable of preventing, detecting, and responding to health emergencies. Economic

³ Frederic Labarre and George Niculescu (Eds.), *Understanding the Contemporary Information Landscape*. Band 6/2022 (Vienna: National Defence Academy, 2022).

downturns, unemployment, and inequality have also created human insecurity. Resilience to economic shocks involved diversifying the economy, improving financial inclusion, and having social safety nets like unemployment benefits or cash transfers to buffer the impact on the most vulnerable. Political violence, conflicts, and human rights abuses are also significant threats to human security. Resilience involves strengthening democratic institutions, fostering inclusive governance, and promoting peacebuilding initiatives. Individual and community security can be jeopardized by conflict, terrorism, or organized crime. Resilience in these areas includes conflict prevention mechanisms, peace education, and programs to reintegrate displaced people and former combatants. Those topics are most relevant for the South Caucasus region and their various aspects have been discussed in this Handbook, and relevant policy recommendations put forward.

Given the content provided by the contributors and the regional focus of the academic research of the RSSC SG, the editors decided to slightly amend the structure of the table of contents agreed at the November 2022 Editorial Workshop to highlight, on the one hand, the South Caucasus regional perspectives, and, on the other hand, contributors' experiences shared in the shape of case studies from the region and beyond. Meanwhile, the initial "Theoretical Underpinnings" part was left unaltered in place.

Last, but not least, several contributors addressed gender issues in human security. While acknowledging the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, they argued it played a critical role in building resilience against human security risks by promoting women's participation in peace processes, protecting their rights, empowering them economically, and recognizing their role in climate adaptation and conflict prevention. They demonstrated why women's leadership, protection, and empowerment were essential to tackling complex and interconnected human security challenges, ranging from conflict and violence to human trafficking and health crises.

We hope that the production and distribution of this Handbook will bring a significant contribution not only to explaining and illustrating the main elements of strategies for building resilience against human security risks and threats, but also to helping create a South Caucasus *strategic persona* as a key tool for promoting peace, regional stability, human security, and a prosperous future for all.

PART I: Theoretical Underpinnings

Understanding Human Security and Resilience

Elena Mandalenakis

Introduction

Post-World War II Europe and its neighbouring regions experienced a prolonged period of peace and stability, facilitating reconstruction, development, and prosperity. Since then, the balance of power in the international system has transitioned from bipolarity to polycentrism with increasing unpredictability since the end of the Cold War, which has significantly impacted global peace and security. Ongoing wars, conflicts, and failed democratization efforts have intensified state fragility and regional instability.

Recent conflicts in the South Caucasus region, notably between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh; the war in Ukraine and the strained relations between the West and Russia, the Hamas-Israel crisis, and the collapse of Syria have redefined regional and global relations. The spill over of the Middle East conflict, involves both state and non-state actors, further destabilizing the region. Similar instability plagues other areas, such as West Africa, where government collapses have led to unrest, often without prospects of democratization. These examples illustrate that peace, and stability can no longer be taken for granted.

Global instability has heightened competition, necessitating military and humanitarian interventions worldwide. State and non-state actors, including multinational corporations, are competing for power, resources, and influence, with some extending their efforts into space to dominate technological development and prosperity. Entire societies and critical infrastructure are targeted by both lethal and non-lethal means, resulting in widespread casualties. Technological advancements and global communication have also enabled the use of disinformation to further conflict, expanding the battlefield beyond traditional military domains.

Global market interconnectivity and the reliance on advanced technology for operations have increased economic and state vulnerabilities. Hybrid strategies

that exploit societal weaknesses seek to destabilize nations by applying internal pressure, further complicating governments' efforts to respond to military, economic, social, and informational threats while safeguarding citizens and borders.

Despite efforts to reinforce traditional security measures, there is a growing need to prioritize individual, and societal human security. Individuals face a complexity of threats due to climate change, pandemics, natural disasters, and socio-economic inequalities, which jeopardize not only their well-being but their survival. Building resilience is essential as both a preventive and responsive measure, applicable across socio-economic and military spheres, to strengthen both resistance and adaptation in the face of these challenges.

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of human security and resilience as interconnected concepts by exploring the theoretical underpinnings of human security, its principles and goals along with an in-depth examination of resilience at the individual and systemic levels. It argues that effective policies on human security must integrate resilience-building strategies, enabling individuals and communities to not only survive, but also improve their capacity to withstand future challenges. It assesses how resilience and human security vary across different socio-political and cultural contexts, emphasizing the need for context-specific approaches that consider local vulnerabilities, capacities, and values.

It further concludes that a holistic approach to human security, integrated with a robust resilience framework, offers a significant potential for addressing complex regional security challenges, including in the South Caucasus. It suggests that strengthening resilience – whether individual, systemic, or state-based – can play a critical role in mitigating threats to human security and promoting long-term stability and ownership of well-being.

Understanding Human Security

Conceptual Framework

Concern about security – domestic, national, regional, and international – has always been in the centre of the political discourse. The discussion around

security is usually about the security of national borders, violent conflicts, and wars. This entails the existence of a threat and an enemy. As the concept of human security begs the question “security for whom?”¹ it questions the rightfulness of the “State” as the sole and principal entity deserving security. Although a variety of policies exist regarding economic and social development as well as the physical protection of the citizens, the concept of human security provides a comprehensive framework for individual security that promotes and requires that individuals bear the responsibility for their own security, independently from the state.

The concept of human security provides a different perspective of security, one from the angle of the individual. It takes the monopoly of “security” away from the state by shifting the attention away from institutional boundaries that design policies on a “one size-fits-all” basis, but without making the state obsolete. Thus, the aim is to humanize the concept of “security”, which has traditionally been associated with the protection of sovereignty and territory. Instead, it shifts the focus to safeguarding individuals based on specific needs, while relying on the state to assess and implement policies within its borders. This approach is more comprehensive and inclusive.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) Report of 1994, refers for the first time to the concept of human security as protecting “the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment”, an open-ended definition.² Since 1999, Canada has been a leader in the adoption of this concept in the political discourse by defining human security as “freedom from pervasive threats to people’s rights, their safety, or even their lives.”³ It does not only recognize the most vulnerable members of the society, but it aims at eliminating any obstacle towards their personal fulfilment. In the 2000 Millennium Summit, the UN Secretary-General called

¹ Andrea Carla, “Security and Minorities: Building a Human Security Index for Minority Issues.” *Security Dialogues* 14, no. 1 (2023): 7. <https://doi.org/10.47054/sd23141007c>.

² “Human Security Now.” Presses de Sciences Po, (2003): 6. <https://doi.org/10.3917/scpo.comsh.2003.0.1> Also see United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) (A/RES/217A). <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

³ “Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World,” (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), April 1999). <https://www.summit-americas.org/Canada/humansecurity-english.htm>.

for a world “free from want” and “free from fear.”⁴ In 2003 the Commission on Human Security (CHS) stated that:

Human security means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic military and cultural systems that together give people the building block of survival, livelihood and dignity.⁵

At the 2005 World Summit, the Heads of State and Government identified the core elements of human security and recognized that “all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential.”⁶

This was reinforced in 2012 by the unanimous adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 66/290. The Resolution recognizes “The right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair.” All individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential.⁷ The human security elements are at the core of the comprehensive and innovative nature of this concept which is the move from the basic individual needs for survival to the “freedom from fear” (i.e. protection from violence), and the “freedom from want” (i.e. protection beyond violence to existential threats).⁸ In reality, human security advocates for freedom of vulnerability and freedom of shame. To secure these, the concept of human security advances frameworks and agendas for human survival (i.e. peacebuilding), human development (i.e. social development), human sustainability and human dignity.

⁴ “About the Commission on Human Security Now”. *Human Security Now*, (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2003), 153–519. <https://doi.org/10.3917/scpo.comsh.2003.01.0153>.

⁵ “About the Commission on Human Security”, 4.

⁶ United Nations, United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/1, October 2005, para. 143. https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_60_1.pdf.

⁷ United Nations, “United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/290,” 10 Sept. 2012, (A/RES/66/290).

⁸ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *New Dimensions of Human Security*, (New York: United Nations Information Office) <https://doi.org/10.18356/213f0e70-en>.

With Agenda 2030, the international community has set itself 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable development.

Human security is often described through its inclusion of seven components that are broad enough to encompass a variety of sources of insecurity: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security.⁹

- *Economic Security* refers to the availability of sufficient income and resources to earn a decent living. This includes ensuring employment opportunities, social protection programs such as unemployment and pension benefits, a social net and hence support against persistent poverty. Economic security effects are directly related to food, housing, and health security.
- *Food security* refers to the availability of sufficient, safe, affordable, and nutritious food for all.
- *Health Security* refers to access to basic healthcare and protection from malnutrition, diseases, pandemics including psychological security.
- *Environmental Security* refers to the protection from environmental degradation, resource scarcity due to depletion as well as natural disasters.
- *Personal Security* refers to the protection from physical harm, abuse and violence.
- *Community security* is about living in a community that is protected from crime, conflict and violence.
- *Political Security* promotes the protection from political repression, and violence and the infringement of political and human rights due to the lack of rule of law and justice.

The respect of the fundamental human rights is imbedded in all these elements as they promote living with dignity and without any coercion to safeguard justice, freedom and peace.¹⁰

⁹ “Human Security: Seven Categories.” n.d. <https://gdrc.org/sustdev/husec/z-categories.html>.

¹⁰ United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Also, see UNDP. “Ensuring Rights for All in a Rapidly Changing World.” United Nations Development Programme,” 2003.

These elements are not exhaustive and are intended to serve as indicators of the domains in which human security issues may arise.¹¹ They apply both to the scope of the concept and to the determination of the level of human security, thus aiding in the evaluation of any progress. Although these elements are distinct, they are also interdependent and interconnected, often overlapping. Consequently, they not only reinforce one another but also, the absence of one weakens the others, thereby undermining the overall concept of human security.

Human Security Principles

Distinct qualities of the concept of human security are their universality as they refer and apply to all individuals cutting across boundaries and identities and its inclusivity of multiple and diverse stakeholders at various levels. Hence, it incorporates multiple and diverse actors such as states, civil society, NGOs, international actors, and individuals in the attainment of human security.

Human security broadens the concept of security by incorporating seven key dimensions, each representing different fields where sources of insecurity and vulnerability must be addressed. It aims to safeguard fundamental aspects of human life across political, social, economic, and environmental spheres, while ensuring access to food and healthcare. As noted by Andrea Carla, the concept of human security places people – along with their identity, culture, and well-being – at the heart of security, making them the core referent object that needs protection.¹²

Human security also brings attention to marginalized communities, such as indigenous peoples, migrants, minorities, and the LGBTQ2+ community members, highlighting their vulnerabilities and advocating for their reintegration into social and economic structures transitioning towards greater inclusivity.

By focusing on the challenges faced by individuals, rather than those of states, human security acknowledges the diverse capacities and unique chal-

<https://www.undp.org/stories/ensuring-rights-all-rapidly-changing-world>.

¹¹ Carla, “Security and Minorities...”, 17.

¹² Carla, “Security and Minorities...”, 8.

lenges of different populations, regardless of their location or circumstances. The degree of individual well-being and self-development depends on how successfully these challenges are mitigated, a notion also reflected in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a model for understanding the motivations for human behaviour.¹³ It schematically represents different motivations in a five-level pyramid, with each level representing a different human need. At the bottom are the physiological needs, followed by safety, love and belonging, esteem, up to self-actualization at the top. According to Maslow's theory, individuals must satisfy their basic or deficiency needs (physiological and safety) before they are motivated to meet their growth needs (love and belonging, esteem) and eventually their self-actualization.

Unlike Maslow's theory, human security is not a theory but rather a framework – or, according to some scholars¹⁴ a paradigm – designed to address the root causes of insecurity, particularly at the individual level. This framework emphasizes the significance of local communities and civil society organizations in developing and implementing solutions tailored to specific threats. As a result, scholars often refer to it as a paradigm in response to the limitations of traditional international relations theories, such as Realism, which focuses predominantly on state actors and prioritizes national security against external threats as the primary concern.

As the concept of human security is people-centred it aims at expanding the dominant traditional state-centric approach to security. It recognizes that the traditional approach to security, which emphasizes the protection of territory, state borders and institutions from military and external threats, is inadequate in addressing the full range of threats that individuals and communities face especially in light of non-traditional and transnational threats.

Human security, with its multi-dimensional and comprehensive nature, acknowledges that individuals face numerous, interconnected threats. The

¹³ Abraham Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, no.4 (July 1943): 370–396.

¹⁴ Carla, "Security and Minorities...", 7.

security of an individual or community cannot be achieved in isolation but requires integration within the broader societal framework to which they belong. As such, human security evolves into a shared security, characterized by collective responsibility among all stakeholders, including individuals, communities, state and non-state actors, international organizations, and civil society. This approach necessitates active participation and cooperation among these groups to ensure comprehensive and sustainable security solutions.

Human security seeks to establish a common security by promoting change, adaptability, and, ultimately resilience. Consequently, it is closely linked to the discourses of sustainable development and the protection and enforcement of human rights. It asserts that solutions to the challenges faced by individuals and communities cannot be imposed from above but must be developed in partnership with those directly affected, emphasizing a bottom-up approach while also acknowledging the importance of top-down strategies. Importantly, the state is explicitly recognized as a key stakeholder in the provision and attainment of human security. This complementarity between top-down and bottom-up approaches is clearly highlighted in the *Human Security Now* report.¹⁵

Human Security Strategies

Human security principles and their associated elements are not intended to remain purely theoretical; rather, they are designed to be applied and incorporated into policy-making processes. While the concept of human security has often been criticized for being overly theoretical, too broad, and open-ended – making it difficult to operationalize due to its lack of clear direction – its very flexibility can be seen as an asset. It enables the concept to be adapted to specific contexts and challenges.

This led to the establishment of the Commission on Human Security (CHS) with primary objectives to “promote public understanding, engagement, and support for human security and its underlying imperatives”; to develop “the concept of human security as an operational tool for policy formulation and

¹⁵ “About the Commission on Human Security Now”, 153–159.

implementation”; and to propose “a concrete programme of action to address critical and pervasive threats to human security.”¹⁶

Consequently, human security emphasizes the importance of prevention, protection, and empowerment in addressing threats to human security through *stakeholders’ inclusivity*.

- *Prevention* involves identifying and addressing the root causes of insecurity before they escalate into crises.
- *Protection* involves ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals and communities in the face of threats.
- *Empowerment* involves enabling individuals and communities to take control of their lives and overcome the challenges they face.

The key aspect of the concept of human security is that it places responsibility for its implementation on the stakeholders or actors who also benefit from policies enhancing human security. This means that communities are accountable for their own well-being by identifying and preventing potential threats while actively implementing measures to protect themselves. The recognition that insecurities are interconnected, emphasizes the importance of multi-level partnerships and collaboration through complex networks of stakeholders and experts from the public and the private sphere. Ultimately, by focusing on empowering these stakeholders to prevent future insecurities, human security aims to build resilience for individuals, communities, and even states. Accordingly, the human security concept allows for the development of frameworks that guarantee human survival, human development and above all human dignity.

Risk and threat assessments are crucial components of human security, as they help identify potential threats and vulnerabilities that may affect people’s safety and well-being. These tools are invaluable to policymakers and practitioners in developing comprehensive and effective strategies to promote human security, including measures to prevent or mitigate the impact of potential risks. Additionally, a key aspect of empowerment is the contin-

¹⁶ “About the Commission on Human Security Now”, 153–159.

uous re-evaluation of these strategies to ensure adaptability and resilience in the face of evolving human security challenges.

The concept of human security is increasingly integrated into national foreign policy.¹⁷ Its institutionalization reflects varying approaches taken by states, not because of the concept's open-ended nature, but rather due to political choices aligned with national interests. Human security manifests in different forms within foreign policies, such as humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping operations (Canada, Norway), development assistance and global health initiatives (Sweden, Germany), the promotion of human rights and good governance (UK, Australia), and multilateral engagement in global governance (the UN, EU through the Common Foreign and Security Policy in diplomacy, development, and humanitarian aid).

The EU's Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy emphasizes the importance of resilience, human rights, and addressing global challenges like migration and climate change as essential for maintaining international security. Canada and Scandinavian countries tend to focus on aspects of "freedom from fear," civil order, and crime prevention, often placing greater emphasis on the militarization of human security. In Asia, particularly Japan, the focus is on "freedom from want," addressing issues such as hunger and development. In China, human security is viewed as a collective concern, rather than one centred on individual security. In contrast, the United States adopts a more state-centric, and arguably narrower, interpretation of human security.¹⁸

Resilience

Resilience has become a key term in contemporary discourse, as individuals are increasingly expected to develop resilience in response to challenges such as climate change, socio-economic hardships, conflict, violence, and other crises. Both as individuals and as members of society, we are encouraged – if not

¹⁷ For more details, see Tobias Debiel, Tobias and Sascha Werthes, eds. *Human Security on Foreign Policy Agendas: Changes, Concepts and Cases*. INEF Report, 80/2006 (Duisburg: Institute for Development and Peace, University of Duisburg-Essen, 2006). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293651150_Human_Security_on_Foreign_Policy_Agendas_Introduction_into_Changes_Concepts_and_Cases.

¹⁸ Carla, "Security and Minorities...", 10–11.

required – to cultivate resilience. However, do we fully understand what it means to be resilient? While resilience is commonly invoked to denote the capacity to endure and adapt to unforeseen challenges, is this characterization entirely accurate? According to Webster’s Dictionary, the term “resilience” is derived from the Latin word *resilire*, meaning “to jump back” or “to recoil.”

Conceptual Framework

The concept of resilience is a fusion of ideas from various disciplines with application conditioned upon a contextualization that focuses on subjects, objects, interactions, relations, and objectives. It is essential across different fields of knowledge and practice to understand what or who is to be resilient, against which risks and threats, and how to build and sustain resilience.¹⁹

This conceptual framework underscores the absence of a universally applicable definition of resilience across different disciplines and postulates that its existence is contingent upon the presence of change, risk, or threat.

Various scientific disciplines approach resilience from distinct perspectives, owing to the differing nature of the subjects they study, and the unique characteristics involved. The reason is that the nature of the studied subjects is different and thus, possess a variety of characteristics. In physics and engineering, for example, resilience refers to the capacity of materials to resist deformation, bend without breaking, and even bounce back to their original form. This understanding emphasizes resistance rather than transformation.²⁰ The fields of ecology and geography, view resilience as the ability of an ecosystem to undergo transformation when subjected to extreme and unpredictable external pressures, while still maintaining its fundamental characteristics and functions.

Due to space constraints, the conceptualization of resilience will be limited to individual and systemic perspectives, rather than encompassing the broader interpretations found across all disciplines. The focus will primarily be on

¹⁹ Andrew Atkinson et al. *Resilience, Human Security, and the Protection of Civilians: A Critical Approach for Future Urban Conflict*, The Stimson Center, 2022, 6.

²⁰ For a detailed account of the conceptualization of resilience in Physics and its connection to Psychology see, Den Hartigh, J. R. Ruud and Y. Hill, 2022, “Conceptualizing and Measuring Psychological Resilience: What can we learn from Physics?” *New Ideas in Psychology* 66 (2022): 1–8.

fields that examine individuals or groups operating within social, economic, and political environments. This analysis aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of resilience as it relates to the broader concept of human security.

Individual Resilience

The American Psychological Association defines resilience as “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress.”²¹ Hence, the field of psychology studies the coping mechanisms individuals develop to withstand external or internal acute or chronic stressors or even traumatic events, while maintaining mental well-being.

Individuals who effectively manage stress, trauma, and challenges are considered resilient, as they promote their emotional well-being and demonstrate adaptive responses to adversity. Such individuals are acutely aware of their circumstances and their capacity to endure and overcome adversity through self-control and problem-solving skills. Additionally, support from family and the broader social environment is essential in enhancing both their resilience and overall human security.

Dr. Rachel Yehuda’s research highlights that resilient individuals may include those who have experienced traumatic events – such as war, natural disasters, the death of a loved one, or divorce – yet have succeeded in leading fulfilling lives. For example, people with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) often find themselves in a better place than they were prior to the traumatic experience. As a result, it is possible for someone to experience PTSD and still be resilient, as trauma does not always result in pathology.

Dr. Yehuda suggests that resilience in humans should be conceptualized as “a process of moving forward, and not returning back”,²² as opposed to

²¹ The American Psychological Association, *The Road to Resilience*. (Washington DC: The American Psychological Association, 2014), para. 4.

²² Steven M. Southwick, George A. Bonanno, Ann S. Masten, Catherine Panter-Brick, and Rachel Yehuda, “Resilience Definitions, Theory, and Challenges: Interdisciplinary Perspectives.” *European Journal of Psychotraumatology* 5, no. 1 (October 1, 2014). <https://doi.org/10.3402/ejpt.v5.25338>.

the definition of the resilience for inanimate objects. “Resilience involves an *active decision*... to keep moving forward.”²³

Systemic Resilience

Individuals are intrinsically interconnected with their environment, requiring them to navigate complex interactions and processes to address challenges and adversities. The concept of “systemic resilience” recognizes that life is organized through multiple interacting systems, including human systems, family systems, social systems, and beyond. However, this analysis will focus specifically on social and state systems, rather than examining resilience across all existing systems.

The concept of resilience applies to both human systems and structures. For example, the resilience of a public health system can be observed when it “can resist absorb, adapt to and recover efficiently and timely from a hazard while preserving and restoring essential services and functions through risk management”.²⁴ A resilient public health system demonstrates the ability to adjust rapidly to situations that threaten its proper functioning, without jeopardizing its long-term contribution to the well-being of the community.

Societal resilience is crucial for ensuring human security, as it enables communities to recover from disturbances through adaptation, preparedness, and coordinated efforts. Participation, engagement, and collective action based on shared values are essential tools for recovery and growth, simultaneously strengthening social bonds and ensuring the effectiveness of these efforts.

A key element of social resilience is the development of resilience-building initiatives, which reduce a community’s vulnerability to future crises. A powerful example of societal resilience was demonstrated in New York City following the 9/11 attacks. The city as a whole worked collectively to

²³ Southwick, et al. “Resilience Definitions, Theory, and Challenges...” Italics from the editors.

²⁴ Benjamin J. Ryan, et al. “Prioritizing Strategies for Building the Resilience of Public Health Systems to Disasters Across Multiple Communities and Countries,” *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science* 15, no. 1 (February 2024): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13753-024-00537-x>.

overcome the psychological trauma and physical devastation of the attacks, demonstrating resilience by surviving and ultimately growing stronger.

Ryan et al. analyse sub-state regional resilience by presenting two short-term and one long-term responses that clarify resilience in the context of adversity and adaptability.²⁵ Giannakis, refers to the “Regional Resilience” framework, developed by Martin (2012) and Martin and Sunley (2015), which includes three approaches: engineering, ecological, and evolutionary.²⁶ The engineering approach emphasizes a system’s ability to resist shocks and quickly “bounce back” to its pre-shock state, with resilience measured by the speed of recovery. The ecological approach focuses on the system’s capacity to shift to a new equilibrium when faced with disturbances. Both of these approaches address resilience in terms of enduring short-term adversity (i.e. recession affecting regional economies), either by returning to the original state or by adapting to a new, sustainable equilibrium without drastically altering the system. The evolutionary approach, in contrast, focuses on a system’s ability to “bounce forward” through adaptation and transformation, emphasizing long-term adaptability and development in response to changing external conditions.

As previously established, resilience represents an ongoing process rather than a singular outcome. A resilient state is able to maintain stability while facilitating change ensuring that governmental capabilities are aligned with societal needs. This dynamic between the state and society has been emphasized in state-building practices, as states are seen not as fixed entities but as evolving over time.²⁷

Resilient states possess the capacity to control their territory and protect citizens from both internal and external threats that may challenge their power and legitimacy. These states can anticipate, manage, and recover from shocks

²⁵ Benjamin J. Ryan, et al. “Prioritizing Strategies for Building the Resilience of Public Health Systems...”

²⁶ Elias Giannakis and Adriana Bruggeman. “Economic Crisis and Regional Resilience: Evidence from Greece.” *Papers in Regional Science* 96, no. 3 (August 2017): 451–477, section 2.1.

²⁷ Jan Pospisil and Florian P. Kühn, “The Resilient State: New Regulatory Modes in International Approaches to State Building?” *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 1–16.

and crises while maintaining stability and functionality, thereby preventing collapse. The role of cohesive social structures is crucial in enhancing state resilience, as the state does not exist in isolation. The relationship between state institutions and society is fundamental in building and demonstrating resilience. Consequently, state resilience encompasses both institutional and societal dimensions contributing to greater state legitimacy and security factors essential for sustainable development.

There are claims that the vagueness of resilience as a policy objective and practice facilitates the re-distribution of responsibility away from the state;²⁸ serves the strategic interests of non-traditional donor states (i.e. BRICS) without any benefits.²⁹ Furthermore, resilience could be interpreted as a process leading to and inducing security and thus, as protection against any change-inducing securitization. In such cases, the outcome is the opposite of resilience, incomplete state-building, fragile and unstable institutions and societies unable to grow.³⁰

State Resilience in the South Caucasus

In the South Caucasus region human security frameworks should; promote conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts; strengthen democratic institutions and processes; address economic disparities and promote inclusive development; address environmental challenges and strengthen regional cooperation.

In the South Caucasus, resilience plays a vital role in addressing sources of insecurity, such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. By enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to cope with and recover from crises, resilience initiatives should contribute to sustainable development and peace-building efforts in the region. For example, community-based disaster risk reduction programs in Armenia and Georgia

²⁸ Nathaniel O'Grady and Duncan Shaw, "Resilience, Responsibility and State Abandon: The Changing Role of the Government in Emergencies." *Political Geography* 100 (January 2023): 102796. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2022.102796>.

²⁹ Pospisil and Kühn, "The Resilient State...", 8.

³⁰ Philippe Bourbeau, "Resilience and International Politics: Premises, Debates, Agenda." *International Studies Review* 17, no. 3 (September 2015): 374–395.

help mitigate the impact of natural disasters and build local capacities to respond effectively to emergencies.

Resilience in the South Caucasus is shaped by several key factors, including social capital, economic resources, access to information and services, and strong institutions. Strengthening these factors through targeted policies and community-based initiatives is vital for enhancing resilience and promoting sustainable development in the region. For instance, initiatives that promote social cohesion and community involvement in disaster preparedness and response efforts contribute to building resilience at the local level. Consequently, resilience plays a critical role in enhancing human security in the South Caucasus by enabling individuals and communities to withstand, adapt, and recover from various challenges. By addressing sources of insecurity, promoting adaptive capacities, and strengthening community resilience, initiatives in the region should contribute to building a more secure and sustainable future for the populations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

Both Azerbaijan and Georgia have sought to diversify their economies to reduce dependencies that could undermine their resilience to external shocks. Azerbaijan has invested in agriculture and tourism to strengthen its economic base, while Georgia, following the 2008 war with Russia, has made efforts to diversify its economy and reduce reliance on a single trading partner. Armenia, in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, had focused on building social capital and involving communities in decision-making processes.

Discussion

The concept of resilience is very much referred to and utilised in multiple disciplines and environments. Despite nuanced differences in its definition, there are common approaches to its understanding and implementation of practices. The concept is developed as a response to a temporary change, violent or not, that disturbs the balance of an individual or system. Change may vary in degree (hardship, crisis or disaster) and can be viewed by the subject as positive or negative. Nevertheless, “resilience occurs in the context

of adversity”³¹ which could come in a variety of forms. The subject facing a shock or a disturbance is trying to interpret it and to cope with it. Any such change should not only be viewed as a negative stressor as this allows for long-term development and empowerment. Consequently, an event that exudes pressure on the subject may prove beneficial in the long run.

Resilience is most often understood as an outcome from dealing with a hardship, or as a trait acquired during the process of regaining a pre-shock equilibrium. According to Verma, resilience can be understood “as a trait, or an outcome or a process”³² depending on the subject and the context within which this operates. Hence, in the case of living subjects, resilience should be studied in context as each actor (individual, community, society or state) is operating into a specific environment. This would also determine the manner through which the actor or subject becomes resilient. Depending on the situation, resilience is identified differently. The term can describe a characteristic or a trait of a subject within a specific environment or situation, it may describe an outcome of an adaptation process or just the process itself. Hence, possible responses to the question often asked: “How does one become resilient?” could be: “Resilient vis-à-vis what?”, and “Does someone ever become resilient in all aspects of life?”

Resilience, “exists on a continuum”³³ in a variety of degrees and across multiple domains of life hence, we should not try to determine if resilience is present or absent. As individuals evolve and systems develop, resilience cannot remain stagnant. Consequently, the concept continues to evolve over time, to include a variety of actors and methods to become resilient as well to apply it into multiple frameworks and diverse environments.

Within the theoretical framework of individual resilience, it is important to recognize that words carry specific meanings and connotations, shaped by particular values, ideas, and cultural or historical contexts. In diverse environments, terms such as “resilience, coping, success, growth and well-be-

³¹ Shweta Verma, “Evolving Concept of Resilience: Implications for Research and Practice,” *Journal of Social Work Education, Research and Action (SWERA)* 1, no. 1 (2015): 50.

³² Verma, “Evolving Concept of Resilience...”, 51.

³³ Robert H. Pietrzak and Steven M. Southwick, “Psychological Resilience in OEF–OIF Veterans: Application of a Novel Classification Approach and Examination of Demographic and Psychosocial Correlates.” *Journal of Affective Disorders* 133, no. 3 (October 2011): 560–68.

ing”³⁴ may hold varying significance and interpretations, potentially leading to ambiguity. Therefore, these terms should be used with precision, taking into account the specific individual, their social context, cultural background, and the particular adversity they are facing. In an effort to reduce ambiguity, a Cultural Resilience Scale has been developed in order to identify how cultural factors relate to resilience.³⁵

The diverse definitions of resilience accentuate its multidimensional nature and its critical role in enhancing human security. Whether in urban conflict, psychological well-being, societal contexts, or other perspectives, the conceptualization of resilience, extends beyond identifying mechanisms that render an entity or actor flexible, adaptable, and ultimately enduring; it prescribes effective ways and facilitates the operationalization of effective strategies to respond to disruptions, risks, and threats and to foster growth during challenging situations. Hence, resilience serves as a foundational element in promoting adaptive capacities, coping mechanisms, and recovery strategies to safeguard individuals and communities from various threats and challenges. By fostering resilience at individual, societal, and systemic levels, human security can be strengthened, leading to more resilient and secure societies.

Policy- and decision-makers may find this study valuable for the institutionalization of responses that would guarantee the return to an equilibrium along with the development of a society in all its forms and relations. Programs that aim at advancing sustainable solutions and at restoring “people’s confidence in collective action, strengthening citizen security, improving the delivery of and access to basic social services, reinstating livelihoods and promoting community reconciliation” are human security in practice.³⁶

Conclusion

As societies confront increasingly volatile and uncertain environments, fostering resilience is essential not only for individual and community survival

³⁴ Verma, “Evolving Concept of Resilience...”, 52.

³⁵ Shaikh Arshi and Carol Kauppi, “Deconstructing Resilience: Myriad Conceptualizations and Interpretations.” *International Journal of Arts and Sciences* 3, no. 15, (2010): 164.

³⁶ The Human Security Unit, “Prevention and Resilience – The Human Security Unit,” May 31, 2018. <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/prevention-and-resilience/>.

but also for the stability and legitimacy of state institutions. A nuanced understanding and operationalization of resilience, applied across multiple levels of governance, can enhance both state effectiveness and societal well-being. This, in turn, contributes to more robust and adaptable governance structures that are responsive to the needs of their citizens. Addressing human security demands effective models for strengthening resilience at all levels with the goal of promoting long-term stability and well-being for individuals, communities, and society as a whole. The complementarity of human security and resilience is particularly crucial in conflict-stricken regions such as the South Caucasus.

Human Security in the Age of Climate Change: Challenges, Impacts and Action Strategies to Build Resilience

Andreas Hildenbrand

Introduction

Increasing global warming leading to climate change is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century and “the defining issue of our age.”¹ In this context, it is clear that climate change not only affects ecological systems but also has a significant impact on human rights and thus on human security.² As a multidimensional concept, human security encompasses not only the absence of war and conflict but also the protection from existential threats to food security, water supply, health and other fundamental aspects of human well-being.³ The aim is to analyse the complex links between human security and climate change. The focus will be on analysing how climate change affects the different dimensions of human security and the challenges it poses to societies worldwide. At the same time, it will identify possible strategies and solutions for building resilience to the impacts of climate change and ensuring human security.

Global warming has no geographical boundaries and affects people on a global scale. The last few years have been the hottest on record⁴ and we have

¹ Antonio Guterres, “Secretary-General’s remarks to High-Level opening of COP27,” United Nations Secretary-General, Nov 07, 2022, accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-11-07/secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-opening-of-cop27>.

² “Climate change the greatest threat the world has ever faced, UN expert warns,” UN OHCHR Press Release, Oct. 21, 2022, accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/10/climate-change-greatest-threat-world-has-ever-faced-un-expert-warns>.

³ “Friedenssicherung, Frieden und Entwicklung,” Deutsche Gesellschaft für die Vereinten Nationen e.V., accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://frieden-sichern.dgvn.de/friedenssicherung/frieden-entwicklung>.

⁴ “Weltweit wärmster Dezember und wärmstes Jahr,” MeteoSchweiz-Blog, Jan 15, 2024, accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://www.meteoschweiz.admin.ch/ueber-uns/meteoschweiz-blog/de/2024/01/copernicus-dezember-jahr-2023.html>.

seen more wildfires and floods than ever before.⁵ As the UN General Secretary has said, “These shocks not only damage the environment on which we depend, they also weaken our political, economic and social systems”.⁶ Understanding the link between climate change and human security is therefore crucial to developing effective responses to current and future challenges. The relationship between climate change and human security is complex and urgently requires coordinated action at local, national and international levels. It is essential to raise awareness of the urgency of the issue and to develop sustainable strategies to ensure human livelihoods and human security. In the face of these challenges, it is imperative to develop comprehensive strategies aimed at strengthening the resilience of communities and individuals, implementing preventive measures, and enhancing the capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change and thereby protecting human rights.

Human Security in the Context of Climate Change

Strategies for building resilience in human security are the focus of this paper. In the context of global climate change, it is crucial to define and analyse the different dimensions of human security. Human security encompasses various aspects of life, including economic security, health, the environment, human rights, personal safety, and community cohesion.

The definition of human security goes beyond protection from physical violence. It refers to the fulfilment of basic needs and the ability of individuals to live in dignity. Within this framework, several dimensions are identified that allow for a comprehensive view. These include economic security, food availability, access to water and clean energy, protection from disease, social justice and more.

⁵ “The 2023 Annual Climate Summary: Global Climate Highlights 2023,” Copernicus Climate Change Service, Jan 9, 2024, accessed Apr 20, 2024, <https://climate.copernicus.eu/global-climate-highlights-2023>.

⁶ “Climate Change ‘Biggest Threat Modern Humans Have Ever Faced’, World-Renowned Naturalist Tells Security Council, Calls for Greater Global Cooperation,” United Nations Security Council Press Release, SC 14445, Feb 23, 2021, accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2021/sc14445.doc.htm>.

The key elements that shape the concept of human security are:

- Freedom from fear refers to protecting people from violent conflict, terrorism, and other threats that may endanger their lives and safety.
- Freedom from want includes protection from economic insecurity, poverty, hunger, and disease. It aims to meet people's basic needs and secure their livelihoods.
- Human security emphasises the importance of respecting human rights, including individual freedoms and rights. This includes protection against discrimination, torture and other human rights abuses.
- Environmental security has a significant impact on people's security. Human security therefore includes environmental threats such as climate change, pollution and natural disasters.
- Community security is not limited to national borders, but emphasises the importance of international cooperation and solidarity to ensure the safety of people worldwide.⁷

Climate change affects the different dimensions of human security in a variety of ways. Rising temperatures, more extreme weather events, rising sea levels and changing precipitation patterns have a direct impact on the availability of resources such as water and agricultural land.⁸ This in turn, affects food security and the economic stability of communities.

The increase in heat waves and natural disasters also increases the health risks to populations, whether through direct effects such as heat stress⁹ or indirect effects such as the spread of diseases due to changes in the distribution areas of pathogens.¹⁰ Social structures can be affected by climate-

⁷ "Human Security Handbook," United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/h2.pdf>.

⁸ "Consequences of climate change," European Commission, Climate Action, accessed on Apr 20, 2024, https://climate.ec.europa.eu/climate-change/consequences-climate-change_en.

⁹ "Climate Change Indicators, Heat Waves," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-heat-waves>.

¹⁰ Anja Braun, "Mehr Infektionskrankheiten durch Klimawandel," SWR, Tageschau, Jun

induced migration, resource scarcity and conflict, threatening personal and collective security. It is important to consider regional differences in the impacts of climate change. Communities in arid,¹¹ mountainous¹² or coastal regions¹³ may be more affected than others. Similarly, certain population groups may be more vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to socio-economic factors, gender or ethnicity. Identifying these vulnerable groups and analysing regional differences is crucial for developing targeted measures to improve human security. This differentiated approach allows for a more effective allocation of resources and ensures that no one in our global society is left behind by the consequences of climate change.

The Impact of Climate Change on Different Aspects of Human Security

Climate change is manifesting itself in a wide range of impacts that pose direct and indirect threats to human security. These sections highlight specific areas where climate change is already having a tangible impact.

Food Security

Food security is at the centre of climate change impacts, as climate change directly affects agricultural production and food availability. Changing climatic conditions, including unpredictable rainfall, prolonged droughts and extreme weather events, pose significant challenges to agricultural systems worldwide.¹⁴ Rising average temperatures are affecting crop growth of plants and livestock

01, 2023, accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://www.tagesschau.de/wissen/gesundheit/klimawandel-gesundheit-104.html>.

¹¹ “Klima Zentralasien: Wüsten und Steppen rücken vor,” Scinexx.de das Wissensmagazin, Jul 20, 2022, accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://www.scinexx.de/news/geowissen/zentralasien-wuesten-und-steppen-ruecken-vor/>.

¹² Elisa Miebach, “Sturzflut im Himalya, Gletscherschmelze: Weltweite Gefahr steigt,” ZDF Heute, Oct. 09, 2023, accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/wissen/gefahr-gletscher-schmelze-weltweit-alpen-100.html>.

¹³ Sonja Butzengeiger, Britta Horstmann, “Sea Level Rise in Bangladesh and the Netherlands,” *Germanwatch*, Nov 1, 2004, <https://www.germanwatch.org/sites/default/files/publication/3642.pdf>.

¹⁴ P. R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte et al (eds.), *Special report on Climate Change and Land, Food Security*, (Geneva: IPCC 2019), accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/chapter-5/>.

development. In many regions, this is leading to crop failures and reduced yields, particularly for staple crops such as wheat, rice and maize. These changes in agricultural production have a direct impact on food availability and access, which in turn poses an existential threat to communities. Smallholder farmers, who often rely on traditional agricultural practices, are particularly vulnerable. Climate change increases the risk of crop failure, leading to loss of income and food shortages. This pressure on agricultural systems exacerbates existing inequalities and threatens the food security of millions of people.¹⁵

In addition, changing climatic conditions may make it impossible to grow certain crops in traditional areas. This requires adaptation strategies such as using new varieties or switching crops, which in turn poses challenges for farming communities. In urban areas, price fluctuations and food availability problems due to external climate events can threaten the food security of the urban populations. The interconnectedness of rural and urban food systems makes them both vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Addressing these challenges requires not only short-term measures to adapt agricultural practices but also long-term strategies to strengthen the resilience of the food system and ensure sustainable production. Only a holistic approach can ensure food security in a changing climate.

Water Supply Security

The impacts of climate change on water supply are multifaceted and threaten the basic needs of communities worldwide. Changes in climate patterns affect the water balance of rivers, lakes and groundwater resources, affecting the availability of water for different purposes, such as drinking water, agriculture and industry.¹⁶

The melting and retreat of glaciers in the Himalayas, Alps, Greater Caucasus,¹⁷ Andes, and other mountain regions due to rising temperatures leads to

¹⁵ C. A. Harvey et al., “Climate change impacts and adaptation among smallholder farmers in Central America,” *Agriculture and Food Security* 7, (2018): 57 accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40066-018-0209-x>.

¹⁶ Debra Javeline, Nives Dolšak, Aseem Prakash, “Adapting to water impacts of climate Change”, (Springer Nature B.V. 2019). Published online Jan. 9, 2019, accessed on Apr. 20, 2024, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-018-2349-1>.

¹⁷ L. G. Tielidze, G. A. Nosenko, T. E. Khromova, and F. Paul, “Strong acceleration of

changes in the water supply of river basins that depend on these glaciers.¹⁸ This has a direct impact on the seasonal water flows, leading to increased flooding in spring and water shortages in the dry season. At the same time, the irregular precipitation patterns are changing the overall availability of water, with extreme rainfall on the one hand leading to uncontrollable flooding and on the other hand, longer dry periods.

As climate change intensifies, the availability of freshwater resources is becoming one of the most challenging problems. Not only does it threaten drinking water supplies, it also poses significant challenges with far-reaching social and economic consequences. According to a World Bank report, agriculture accounts for 70% of global freshwater withdrawals¹⁹ and, according to the World Health Organization, more than 40% of the world's population is already affected by water scarcity.²⁰ Yet in agricultural countries and regions, agricultural production depends on the availability of sufficient quantities of water, the loss or reduction of which leads to crop failures and food shortages. In developed countries, industrial processes and energy production depend on sufficient water resources. In regions where water is already scarce, climate change is exacerbating these problems and increasing competition for limited water resources. This can lead to social conflict and migration as communities are forced to seek sustainable water sources.

Adapting to changing water conditions requires comprehensive and sustainable water management. This includes investing in water storage and distribution infrastructure, such as the USAID's South Caucasus Regional Water Management Programme,²¹ promoting efficient irrigation technologies in

glacier area loss in the Greater Caucasus between 2000 and 2020", *The Cryosphere* 16, 489–504, Published online Feb. 10, 2022, accessed on May 16, 2024.

¹⁸ Sarah C. Fell, Jonathan L. Carrivick, Lee E. Brown, "The Multitrophic Effects of Climate Change and Glacier Retreat in Mountain Rivers", *Bioscience*. Published online Sep 20, 2017, accessed on Apr 20, 2024, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5862337/>.

¹⁹ The World Bank, "Annual freshwater withdrawals, agriculture (% of total freshwater withdrawal)", accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ER.H2O.FWAG.ZS>.

²⁰ World Health Organization, "Health topics, Drought", accessed on May 16, 2024, https://www.who.int/health-topics/drought#tab=tab_1.

²¹ Hydrometereorology of Georgia, "USAID South Caucasus Regional Water Management Programme", accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://www.hydromet.ge/water-management-in-south-caucasus/>.

agriculture, and developing early warning systems for extreme weather events. International cooperation is essential to address transboundary water issues and find shared solutions. This requires technological innovation as well as social and political measures that consider the needs of all stakeholders and ensure an equitable distribution of water. Therefore, addressing water challenges requires a holistic approach, that considers environmental, social, and economic dimensions to ensure a sustainable water supplies for present and future generations. The UN Water Convention²² provides a framework for strengthening transboundary cooperation through joint bodies, data sharing, coordinated management plans, and public participation.

Health Security

Climate change has far-reaching implications on human health in the 21st century, ranging from direct physiological stress to indirect health risks. These changes not only affect the well-being of the population, but also pose a challenge to existing health systems.²³

One of the direct health impacts of climate change is heat stress, caused by more frequent and intense heat waves. High temperatures can lead to dehydration, especially in urban areas where heat islands develop. The elderly, children and people with pre-existing medical conditions are particularly vulnerable to heat-related illnesses such as heat stroke and circulatory problems. Urban areas experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas due to the urban heat island effect. Heat is absorbed and trapped by buildings, roads, and other infrastructure, leading to increased heat stress for city residents.²⁴

Climate change affects the spread of pathogens and vector-borne diseases, creating new public health challenges. Warmer climates may expand the range of diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, the Zika virus and Lyme

²² About the Water Convention, UNECE Environmental Policy, last updated Sep 21, 2023, accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://unece.org/environment-policy/water/about-the-convention/introduction>.

²³ World Health Organization, “Climate Change”, *Health Topics*, accessed on May 16, 2024, https://www.who.int/health-topics/climate-change#tab=tab_1.

²⁴ Health Canada, “Communicating the Health Risks of Extreme Heat Events”, accessed on May 16, 2024, https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/migration/hc-sc/ewh-semt/alt_formats/hecs-sesc/pdf/pubs/climat/heat-chaleur/heat-chaleur-eng.pdf.

disease.²⁵ This increases the risk of epidemic outbreaks and requires health systems to adapt to respond to these new threats.

The increase in natural disasters, including floods, storms and forest fires, has a direct impact on the mental health of affected populations. Loss of livelihoods, disruption of social structures and coping with traumatic events can lead to increased stress, anxiety and depression. The mental health consequences of climate change place an additional burden on health systems, which are often not adequately prepared.²⁶

The health effects of climate change pose new challenges for health systems. Adapting to increasing demands requires not only strengthening emergency response capacities, but also long-term strategies for coping with changing health risks. Preventive measures, community education and the integration of climate change adaptation strategies into health policies are essential to building resilience to the health impacts of climate change. Integrating climate change considerations into health policy is therefore not only a necessity to protect populations, but also an important step towards creating more resilient and sustainable health systems.²⁷

Social Security and Migration

Climate change has profound social impacts, ranging from the destabilisation of social structures to forced migration. These social changes are often the result of complex interactions between environmental changes, resource scarcity and local social dynamics.

Climate change exacerbates resource scarcity, especially in areas already affected by poverty. Water scarcity, infertile soils and declining fish stocks can

²⁵ J. Rocklöv and R. Dubrow, “Climate change: an enduring challenge for vector-borne disease prevention and control.”, *Nat Immunol* 21, (2020): 479–483 accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41590-020-0648-y>.

²⁶ “How Do Natural Disasters Affect Mental Health?”, *Public Health Degrees*, Sep. 3, 2020, accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://www.publichealthdegrees.org/resources/mental-health-natural-disasters/>.

²⁷ Shanoor Seervai, Lovisa Gustafsson, and Melinda K. Abrams, “The Impact of Climate Change on Our Health and Health Systems”, *Commonwealth Fund*, May 2022, accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.26099/49re-ky81>.

lead to economic pressure and social conflict. The distribution of limited resources becomes a source of tension within communities and between neighbouring regions.

The environmental impacts of climate change can force people to leave their homes in search of better living conditions. This leads to climate-induced migration either internally or externally, a phenomenon that is likely to increase in the coming years. People affected by natural disasters, coastal erosion, rising sea levels, or inhospitable environmental conditions are forced to leave their communities and seek refuge elsewhere.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, over 376 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced by natural disasters since 2008, with a record 32.6 million in 2022 alone. The Institute for Economics and Peace predicts that in the worst-case scenario, 1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050 due to natural disasters and other ecological threats.²⁸

The arrival of climate refugees is not only a challenge for the affected people themselves, but also for the host societies. They need to prepare for the integration of new populations while maintaining a social and economic equilibrium. This can lead to tensions and requires proactive planning and support from governments at the national and international levels.

Adaptation strategies are needed at different levels to address the social impacts of climate change. Local communities need to be empowered to adapt to changing environmental conditions and to pursue sustainable development strategies. At the international level, cooperation and support are needed to address the impacts of climate change equitably and to assist those most affected. Recognising the social impacts of climate change is not only a matter of justice, but also a crucial prerequisite for a sustainable and peaceful future. By developing adaptation strategies, societies can become more resilient to the social challenges of climate change while promoting equitable and inclusive development.

²⁸ European Parliament, “The concept of ‘climate refugee’: Towards a possible definition”, *Think Tank European Parliament*, Oct. 5, 2023, accessed on May 16, 2024, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI%282021%29698753.

Challenges and Risks Against Human Security Induced by Climate Change

As noted at the outset, the challenges associated with human security and climate change are complex and require comprehensive analysis in order to develop appropriate solutions. This section highlights some of the key challenges and risks that complicate the governance of this multifaceted issue.

Complexity and Interactions

The various impacts, from food insecurity to water scarcity and health risks, are highly interconnected and mutually reinforcing; for example, the increase in extreme weather events may not only pose a direct physical threat but also have indirect impacts on food security and water supply. The complexity of this system makes it difficult to develop one-size-fits-all solutions and requires an integrative understanding involving different sectors, disciplines and stakeholders. This could include, for example, collaboration between scientists, governments, NGOs and local communities to develop effective strategies.²⁹

Inequalities and Vulnerability

Inequalities in resources, socio-economic status and political influence increase the vulnerability of certain population groups. People in poor regions, indigenous communities and marginalised urban areas are often disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change. These groups were already more vulnerable to social and economic challenges before the impacts of climate change, which are likely to further reduce their capacity to cope and adapt. For example, indigenous communities and minority groups are often particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Their traditional knowledge of the environment and resources is threatened by changes in natural habitats. In addition, they may be less able to adapt to changing environmental conditions due to limited resources and political

²⁹ Mark Smith, “Collaboration for Resilience: How Collaboration among Business, Government and NGOs could be the Key to Living with Turbulence and Change in the 21st Century”, IUCN, (2016), accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2016-047.pdf>.

marginalisation. Overall, existing inequalities may be exacerbated by climate change, leading to unequal distribution of opportunities and resources.³⁰

Security Implications

Climate change also has security implications for both states and their citizens. The scarcity of vital resources such as water and land become a strategic challenge that could exacerbate potential tensions and possible conflicts. Securing vital resources such as water and arable land may become a strategic challenge. Nations may seek to protect and control their resources, which may lead to conflict. Water, especially in water-scarce regions, could become a decisive factor in political and military disputes.

As a first step, resource scarcity can lead to social unrest and internal conflicts between communities. As a second step, geopolitical tensions could arise as people are forced to leave their home countries, leading to global migration and refugee flows. Given these security implications, there is an urgent need for a holistic security policy. This means that climate change should be considered as a key factor in long-term security planning. This requires close cooperation between environmental experts, policy makers and security analysts to develop strategies that understand the complex relationships between environmental change and security.

Uncertainty and the Need for Scenarios for the Future

Our climate system is influenced by a wide range of factors, including atmospheric, oceanic, biological and geological processes. The interactions between these factors are complex and difficult to model fully. The inability to accurately capture all aspects of the climate system leads to uncertainties in the models. Climate models are limited in their spatial and temporal resolution; in particular, certain local phenomena or short-term changes can only be modelled with limited probability. Future trends in greenhouse gas emissions depend on many factors, including economic, technological and political developments. Climate models are based on assumptions about

³⁰ World Bank, “Understanding Poverty: Social Dimensions of Climate Change”, Apr. 1, 2023, accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-dimensions-of-climate-change>.

these emission scenarios, and the uncertainties in these assumptions lead to uncertainties in the model projections. Climate models include complex feedbacks and non-linear processes that affect our climate system. These effects can cause small changes in one part of the system to have large and unpredictable effects. Examples include melting ice in the Arctic, Antarctic and Greenland affecting the albedo effect, or the release of methane from permafrost.

Ultimately, although climate models can predict certain trends, the exact range and intensity of events remain uncertain. This uncertainty makes it difficult to develop precise strategies for action and requires flexible approaches that can respond to different scenarios.³¹ Nevertheless, the challenges posed by the nexus between human security and climate change call for comprehensive action strategies.

Strategies for Action to Enhance Human Security

Comprehensive existing and future strategies should aim to strengthen the resilience of communities, implement preventive measures, and enhance the capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Early Warning and Risk Reduction

The implementation of effective early warning systems for extreme weather events, such as storms, floods, and droughts, is essential to provide timely information to affected communities and allow for evacuation.³² These systems should make use of the latest technologies, such as satellite monitoring, specially designed sensors and AI-based developments. Prioritising these measures in the most vulnerable regions is necessary to reduce risks and protect lives. In this context, the development of disaster preparedness plans that integrate local knowledge into these processes is crucial.

³¹ F. Girogi, “Uncertainties in Climate Change Projections, from the Global to the Regional Scale”, *EDP Sciences*, (2010), accessed on May 16, https://www.epjconferences.org/articles/epjconf/pdf/2010/08/epjconf_erca2010_09009.pdf.

³² “Establishment of early warning systems”, *Climate ADAPT*, accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/metadata/adaptation-options/establishment-of-early-warning-systems>.

Adaptation and Diversification in Agriculture

Agriculture is particularly vulnerable to climate change. By promoting climate-smart agricultural practices, using drought- and salt-tolerant crop varieties, and diversifying cropping systems, communities can reduce their dependence on specific crops and improve their food security.³³

Water Management and Infrastructure Development

Investment in sustainable water management is essential to address water scarcity. This includes the development of efficient irrigation systems, the expansion of storage infrastructure and the protection of water quality. Developing resilient infrastructure, particularly in coastal areas, can also mitigate the effects of sea-level rise. For example, the 2023 “UN Water Conference generated more than 700 commitments aimed at driving transformation towards a water-secure world.”³⁴

Strengthening Health Systems

Health systems need to adapt to the new challenges posed by climate change. This includes developing early warning systems for health risks, promoting public health education, adapting to changing disease patterns and integrating climate considerations into health policies.³⁵

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

Measures to strengthen resilience should focus particularly on vulnerable groups. This requires socially equitable strategies that consider gender and socio-economic differences. Participation of affected communities in deci-

³³ “Climate Smart Agriculture: Practices and Their Adoption”, *EOS Data Analytics*, accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://eos.com/blog/climate-smart-agriculture/>.

³⁴ “Historic UN 2023 Water Conference generates transformative commitments”, *UN Water*, Mar. 27, 2023, accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://www.unwater.org/news/historic-un-2023-water-conference-generates-transformative-commitments>.

³⁵ A. M. Mosadeghrad, P. Isfahani, L. Eslambolchi, L. et al., “Strategies to strengthen a climate-resilient health system: a scoping review”, *Global Health* 19, (2023): 62 accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-023-00965-2>.

sion-making processes is essential to ensure that their needs and perspectives are adequately considered.

International Cooperation and Financing

Addressing the global challenges of human security and climate change requires enhanced international cooperation, as climate change does not respect national borders. International cooperation, agreements and financial support are essential to address human security challenges. The lack of global cooperation could lead to a vicious circle of insecurity and instability, which can only be overcome through joint efforts. The implementation of adaptation and resilience measures requires financial resources, technology transfer and the sharing of best practices between countries. International cooperation and agreements are therefore essential to respond collectively to the pressing challenges.

Implementing these action strategies requires a coordinated and inclusive approach involving governments, civil society organisations, the private sector and academia. Only by working together can we strengthen human security while addressing the challenges of climate change.

Requirements for Designing Effective Strategies

Ongoing research and innovative approaches are essential for developing effective strategies to enhance human security in the context of climate change. Research needs are multidisciplinary and should aim at a better understanding of causes, impacts and possible solutions.

Interdisciplinary Research

Linking climate science, social sciences, health research, agricultural sciences and other relevant disciplines are crucial to understanding the interactions between human security and climate change. The aim is not only to understand the scientific aspects of climate change, but also to analyse the social, economic and health impacts on communities and societies. Interdisciplinary research allows for a comprehensive understanding of the interactions and facilitates the development of integrated solutions. For example, an interdisciplinary research project might examine the impact of the melting Arctic sea ice on the

indigenous communities. Natural scientists would study the physical impact of the melting ice, while social scientists would analyse the impact on the indigenous communities. Medical researchers would analyse the potential risks of diseases in the Arctic. Interdisciplinary research will provide a more accurate picture of the changes and challenges faced, and would allow for the implementation of integrated solutions. In doing so, interdisciplinary research promotes holistic approaches to addressing the interacting challenges of climate change and human security.

Long-Term Impacts and Feedback Mechanisms

Long-term studies of the impacts of climate change on human security are needed to identify long-term trends and understand feedback mechanisms. This involves analysing evolving environmental conditions, social dynamics and the changing needs of communities over time. To increase the effectiveness of these studies, it is important to involve affected communities in the research process, to understand local perspectives, and to develop practical solutions that are accepted. They also enable the development of tailored strategies that take into account actual needs and capabilities.

Technological Innovations

Technological innovations can make an important contribution to addressing the challenges and finding solutions to mitigate the impact of climate change on human security. Promoting innovation in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and environmentally friendly technologies is essential for the transition to a carbon-neutral environment. International cooperation should facilitate technology transfer to help developing countries adapt to climate change while promoting sustainable development. This includes the development of early warning systems, resource-efficient agricultural technologies, climate-resilient building materials and sustainable energy systems. However, technological solutions should be socially acceptable, accessible and environmentally sound.

Data Collection and Analysis

The availability of accurate and up-to-date data is critical to the development of informed decisions and policies. Advances in data collection and analysis,

including remote sensing, satellite technology and geographic information systems, are helping to provide accurate information on environmental conditions, social indicators and vulnerabilities.

Education and Awareness Raising

Research should also aim at education and raising awareness to promote understanding of the links between human security and climate change at the global, national and local levels. Integrating climate change issues into education programmes and promoting environmental awareness will help inform people about the need for sustainable development and the urgency of action. This will strengthen the resilience of communities through informed decision-making.

Continued research and innovation are essential to address the changing challenges and develop effective strategies to ensure human security in the age of climate change. Through an ongoing dialogue between scientists, practitioners and communities, sustainable solutions can be found that lay the foundation for a resilient and secure future.

Implementing International Cooperation and Governance

Addressing the human security challenges associated with climate change requires enhanced international cooperation and effective governance at the global level. Such cooperation should ideally aim to set common, achievable targets, mobilise the necessary resources and develop mutually acceptable and equitable solutions for affected communities.

International climate agreements, such as the Paris Agreement (COP 21), play a key role in setting global goals for mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts. The Conference of the Parties (COP) plays a key role in the efforts to tackle climate change. However, implementing the Paris Agreement and the subsequent COP decisions requires not only political commitment, but also concrete action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide financial resources to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Each COP conference has set specific targets and commitments, but in very few cases these have been fully implemented.

The results of COP 28 in November 2023 are clearly moving in the right direction. An important step is to end the fossil carbon era, with emission reductions of around 43% by 2030 compared to the 2019 baseline. The agreement emphasises clear targets and increased ambition in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and implementing adaptation and sustainable development. Of particular importance is the provision of financial resources for the climate change programme and assistance to developing countries, as well as the promotion of equal participation of all states and communities in the climate process.³⁶

The mobilisation of financial resources for adaptation and resilience measures by the COP is crucial for further development, especially in developing countries. International financing mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund are a key element in the future financing of projects in developing countries to increase their resilience. Developed countries should increase their commitments to finance climate projects in poorer countries and develop innovative financing mechanisms to meet the financing needs of the most vulnerable communities. At COP 28, in 2023, there were encouraging developments in this area, such as the Green Climate Fund.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) received a boost to its second replenishment with six countries pledging new funding at COP28 with total pledges now standing at a record USD 12.8 billion from 31 countries, with further contributions expected.

Furthermore,

discussions continued on setting a ‘new collective quantified goal on climate finance’ in 2024, taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries. The new goal, which will start from a baseline of USD 100 billion per year, will be a building block for the design and subsequent implementation of national climate plans that need to be delivered by 2025.³⁷

Strengthening the capacities and capabilities of developing countries to cope with the impacts of climate change is essential. In particular, the aspect of sustainable development using sustainable technologies is a crucial factor. Technology transfer from developed countries to developing countries, supported

³⁶ United Nations Fund to Counter Climate Change (UNFCCC), “COP28 Agreement Signals ‘Beginning of the End’ of the Fossil Fuel Era”, Dec. 13, 2023, accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://unfccc.int/news/cop28-agreement-signals-beginning-of-the-end-of-the-fossil-fuel-era>.

³⁷ UNFCCC, “COP28 Agreement Signals ‘Beginning of the End’...”

by targeted training, therefore promotes sustainable development and contributes to adaptation to changing environmental conditions.

Developing countries need support to build their capacity to cope with the effects of climate change and to use sustainable technologies. The transfer of environmentally sound technologies from developed countries can accelerate this process. The Technology Mechanism was established at the 2010 climate change conference to facilitate technology transfer and help developing countries adapt and reduce emissions.³⁸

Efforts to enhance human security in the context of climate change should be based on the protection of human rights. These include the right to clean air and water, the right to food and adequate living conditions, and the right to participation and self-determination. Governance mechanisms should ensure that climate action is equitable and inclusive. For example, indigenous peoples are often adversely affected by climate change and development projects. Protecting their rights requires the recognition of their traditional lifestyles and property rights.³⁹

The increasing frequency and intensity of climatic extremes calls for improved coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance. International organisations, governments and NGOs should work together to ensure effective emergency response and to coordinate and facilitate recovery from natural disasters.⁴⁰

³⁸ “The Technology Mechanism under the UNFCCC: Ways Forward”, *Climate & Development Knowledge Network*, Policy Brief, Oct. 2012, accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://climatestrategies.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/policy-brief-the-technology-mechanism-under-the-unfccc-ways-forward.pdf>.

³⁹ German Institute for Human Rights, “Climate Change and Human Rights”, accessed on May 16, 2024, https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Publikationen/Weitere_Publikationen/Human_Rights_in_Practice_Climate_Change_and_Human_Rights.pdf.

⁴⁰ European Commission, “Humanitarian Aid Donors’ Declaration on Climate and Environment: Second reporting under the Declaration – 2024 Report”, accessed on May 16, 2024, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/document/download/aec8f889-9222-472c-914a-b037678edf96_en?filename=2024%20Donors%27%20Declaration.pdf.

The links between climate change, human security and conflict call for enhanced conflict prevention and peacebuilding.⁴¹ Identifying potential causes of conflict, addressing resource scarcity and promoting equitable distribution systems will contribute to the creation of more stable communities. Creating an effective international governance structure that deals with the above-mentioned issues requires not only political commitment, but also close co-operation between governments, international organisations, civil society and the private sector. Through coordinated efforts at the global level, innovative solutions can be found to ensure people's security in a changing world.

Conclusions

The strategies for strengthening human security in the context of climate change can be summarised as follows:

- The implementation of effective early warning systems for extreme weather events is crucial for the timely information of communities and would allow for effective evacuation measures. Preventive measures should also be taken to reduce risks, such as improving infrastructure to increase protection against floods, storms and other natural disasters.
- Promoting sustainable agricultural practices, climate-resilient crop varieties and crop diversification helps reduce dependence on fragile harvests. By investing in agricultural technologies, communities can become more resilient to the effects of climate change and improve their food security.
- Developing sustainable water management strategies is critical to meeting the challenges of water scarcity and changing rainfall patterns. Developing water storage infrastructure and promoting efficient irrigation technologies will help communities adapt to new environmental conditions.

⁴¹ Adam Day and Jessica Caus, "Conflict Prevention in an Era of Climate Change: Adapting the UN to Climate-Security Risks", (Tokyo: United Nations University, 2020), accessed on May 16, 2024, <https://unu.edu/cpr/project/conflict-prevention-era-climate-change-adapting-un-climate-security-risks>.

- Adapting health systems to the effects of climate change, including heat-related illnesses and changes in the spread of disease, is essential. Preventive measures, education and early warning systems will help to protect the health of the population and strengthen the capacity to adapt to climate-related health risks.
- Strategies to strengthen human security should pay particular attention to the needs of vulnerable populations. This requires socially equitable approaches that take into account gender and socio-economic differences, as well as the participation of affected communities in decision-making processes in order to adequately integrate their perspectives.
- Ongoing research and innovative approaches are essential to address changing challenges. This includes interdisciplinary research, the use of modern technologies, participatory research methods and awareness-raising campaigns to promote understanding of the links between human security and climate change.
- Addressing the global challenges of human security and climate change requires enhanced international cooperation. International climate agreements, adaptation finance, technology transfer and coordinated humanitarian assistance are key elements of an effective global governance structure.

These strategies form a holistic approach to enhancing human security in the face of climate change. Only by implementing comprehensive measures that address local needs and are coordinated at the global level we can strengthen the resilience of communities and ensure a sustainable and secure future.

Threats and Risks of Psycho-Social Manipulation

Tamás Kun

Introduction

The military application of manipulation can already be found in ancient times, citing as an example the Battle of Pelusium (525 BC), where the Persians, taking advantage of the Egyptians' **religious respect** for cats, threw animals in front of them, who were afraid of offending them.¹ The ancient warlord, Sun-Tzu's wisdom which has been published in numerous translations and titles (the most well-known version is "The Art of War") describes in Chapter XIII the relevance and use of spies, where he says that we must recognize the spies sent by the enemy and put them at our own service, by using tools such as creating advantageous situations for them, through which we will be able to **shape their actions** according to our own interests. He makes a distinction between the "life" and "death" spies, which determines the direction of their activities and what represent allied interests or antagonist forces. He also mentions the importance of timeliness and **informed decision-making**.² At the beginning of the 20th century, the American jurist Roscoe Pound, thought about law as a tool that serves policy makers to shape society in order to regulate its behaviour. This is where the "theory of social engineering" formulated, which term appears in other places as social planning,³ in the sociology of Karl Popper appears as step-by-step social improvement which also occurs as a theory. The essence of the above-mentioned concepts is an attempt to influence the development of society and future regulations through centralized planning, as well as an attempt to influence society's response to them, which mostly requires the use of legal, political, economic often military means to achieve success. We are living in an era, where knowledge is not so based on common principle, and **masses**

¹ J. J. Mark, *The Battle of Pelusium: A Victory Decided by Cats*, June 13, 2013, world history.org: <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/43/the-battle-of-pelusium-a-victory-decided-by-cats>.

² Sun Tzu. (n.d.), *The Art of War*, Translated by Lionel Giles, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), <https://classics.mit.edu/Tzu/artwar.html>.

³ Y.-C. Chiang, *Social Engineering and the Social Sciences in China, 1919–1949*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 259.

of people are not interested in any way to know things work. The basic keen towards learning is in downfall, technology slowly but surely taking advantage of society. Most people believe that they are using tech, however, the rapid growth of the social media and the decrease in quality of personal connections shows, that in a short period of time dramatic changes will happen at least in the way of standard human interactions. Recent years events, especially the pandemic, significantly **changed the way how, or if we interact** with each other at the first place. The general sense of security surely has been transformed. The goal of the chapter is, to present how Social Engineering (the strategic use of psychological manipulation) can affect public discourse.

Theory of Social Engineering

When we talk about social engineering, we generally think about some kind of IT-related fraud technique that (through psychological manipulation) encouraging the victim to release sensitive information, which in the end result enables the attacker to gain upper hand over resources where they do not have legitimate access by default. “The success of these attacks relies on exploiting human emotions such as fear, curiosity, trust, and greed.”⁴ All these activities today in the cybersecurity aspect are more likely done by state-level actors rather than individuals who seek financial gain or simply an intellectual challenge. Attacks against physical structures via the cyberspace are more and more common because the identity of the attacker can be glossed over much easier than before and additional confusion can be made if the identity remains unknown.

The protection of IT systems is a popular topic in psychological manipulation research, but less is said about the protection of the human psyche in general. Members of society are exposed to the dangers of manipulation during the performance of various activities, not only during their work, but also in their private lives, which also affects them in the case of their everyday problems. If we widen our scope of targets and examine the effects of psychological manipulation on higher levels, it becomes apparent that it is actually an intervention in the human decision-making mechanism,

⁴ R. A. Ribeiro, N. Mateus-Coelho, N., & H. S. Mamede, “Improving Social Engineering Resilience in Enterprises”, *Advanced Research on Information Systems Security*, (2023): 36–37.

and these levels differ only in the goal of the strategy. So, it can be said that social engineering is a set of psychological manipulation tactics designed to compromise the way of thinking (or perceptions) from the level of the individual to the masses. In other words, it is an intervention in the human decision-making algorithm.

In the terms of social structures, there are similarities between democracies and autocratic systems. The key differences are resting in the use of legitimate physical force ensuring the appliance of the rule of law. In **democratic systems** there is a relatively small group of decision-makers (leaders such as government) which have been elected by the population and there is an agreement in society in the terms of leadership. In contrast, in **autocratic systems** (in other words person culture-oriented systems) mostly the leader's personality is the guarantee to enforce order, which is often carried out by means of raw power. Autocratic leaders do not operate the whole system solely of course, they also have a small group of confidants, who assist the leader to maintain rule over the society. During the Cold War in the bipolar world by ideology there were two giant superpowers: the democracy based United States and the autocratic system based Soviet Union. Their rivalry resulted in mistakenly making the world think that one system is better than the other. Societies have different historical and cultural backgrounds, so different approaches are needed to maintain control. However, there are similar patterns that can be found in all societies. If we look at the map, while the West has mainly democracies, in Asia and Islamic countries often portrait autocratic systems as default of balance of power and control.

In Pound's theory of social engineering,⁵ lawmakers play a kind of an engineer's role in society, where they are the ones who plans methodically the rules which upon society works. In his jurisprudence, he defined six elements what he calls **social interests**⁶ to which have common principles with the recently mentioned human security. Due to this connection, it could be seen as the forerunner of human rights.

⁵ McManaman, "The Legal Philosophy of Roscoe Pound", *The Catholic Lawyer*, (1967): 110.

⁶ McManaman, "The Legal Philosophy of Roscoe Pound", 110.

The six elements are the interest in:

- general security,
- security of social institutions,
- general morals,
- conservation of social resources,
- general progress,
- the individual life.

In the case of social interests, it mostly does not distinguish between public and individual interests, because they generally overlap. In the section entitled *The End of Law*, he also states that, compared to the physical sciences, the study of the functioning of society is not concerned with the observation of “what is” but rather than the study of “what ought to be”, i.e. it seeks to research the methodology of an ideal social functioning.⁷

General security: This means that social life must be secure against actions and courses of conduct which threatens the very existence of society.

Security of social institutions: That is a claim for the security of fundamental institutions that required in social life, such as domestic institutions, religious institutions, political institutions, and economic institutions.

General morals: This means that offensive behaviour against the moral sentiments should not be tolerated, this includes policies against activities such as dishonesty, corruption, gambling, and things of immoral tendency.

Conservation of social resources: This is a claim for the management of common resources, which are not in the property of the individual, therefore it shall be protected from abuses and waste.

General progress: This is a demand that human power and human control over nature supports the development of economic, political, and cultural progress.

The individual life: This is a claim that each individual to be able to live a human life in a civilized society under the standards of that society.

⁷ L. J. McManaman, “Social Engineering: The Legal Philosophy of Roscoe Pound”, *St. John's Law Review*, (1958): 19–25.

The early years of the 20th century was a progressive period in many ways for the United States. At this time a whole generation of Americans tried to make the world a more democratic place. In domestic terms, that meant to right to vote expanding for women, furthermore the recall, referendum and the direct election of Senators. In the foreign policy, they were interested in making the world safe for democratic systems. Pound's views about society are an aspect of an economically and industrially developed country's one.

A New Era in Information Dissemination

These efforts for progress were not in vain over the passing decades and on the dawn of the next century it went a step further. In the mass media communication, **a new genre appeared** on the horizon which was the **social media**. Facebook started advertising on its platform back in 2006, which is only natural if we are browsing on the domain today. Twitter allowed advertising in 2010 and due to its casual policies, many extremist groups found opportunity to advertise themselves. When the social media user base grew into the hundreds of millions, business applications for Facebook, Twitter and other social platforms began to take shape. Through time LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, and TikTok have attempted to monetize their services through various forms of sponsored advertising. When Apple's first touchscreen phone the famous iPhone appeared in 2007, it was a real game changer which helped to shift the focus from online community building to mobile devices. Things changed forever from this point. The advances in technology, such as the high-end cameras that built into phones, turned direction of mobile apps to video and images. In addition to written messages, users from now could also broadcast in real time. Instagram has become the app of choice for social media users interested in travel, entertainment, fashion, and other visually oriented topics. Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok and other social networks were thriving in the mobile app market, and they still do to present day. Social media companies have access to the most extensive tracked user data that has ever existed.⁸

⁸ S. Shah, "The history of social networking", *Digitaltrends.com*, May 14, 2016, <https://www.digitaltrends.com/computing/the-history-of-social-networking/>.

Users don't just log in and browse, they tell platforms their names, where they live, what they like and who they know, painting the most vivid picture currently possible for marketers who want to target specific consumers.⁹

This is even more fascinating with the extension of IoT devices, which can monitor human activity such as sleeping hours, screen times and gathering of information related to health. With this knowledge, cybercriminals can exploit weaknesses of regular activities such as mental health status and build up social engineering campaigns on them starting on the individual level, not excluded larger group of targets.

Another problem can be that social media companies admittedly tracking content and targeting individuals with precise manner with advertisements.¹⁰ Since companies interested in profit, they in most cases not interested in where's the money comes from. This creates opportunities for actors with malicious intentions who also can pay for advertisement, creating fake websites with disinformation or with the intent of stealing information. The daily news consumption habits after a decade of the first smartphone appeared changed drastically. This catalyst as mentioned above had a bullwhip effect, which gave birth to industrial sectors which not existed before namely the mobile app industry. These applications became so popular in a short time and the nature of marketing strategies and the method of spreading information changed. With this newfound opportunity business and political actors quickly appeared in this media space, where they started growing their activities.

These technologies have fundamentally changed the everyday routine, the phenomenon of **scrolling** has become a common action, which means that the user continuously browses the content found on social media without giving any further instructions, essentially unhindered. Another important factor is that these applications are able to communicate with users in real time (with available internet connection) through so-called **push messages** that send notifications to the user. These are done using tiny LED lights built into phones and **notification sounds** that encourage the user to interact with the device.

⁹ IAS team, "The evolution of social media advertising" *Integralads.com*, Dec. 19, 2017, <https://integralads.com/insider/evolution-of-social-ads/>.

¹⁰ C. Newberry, C., & S. McLachlan, "Social Media Advertising 101: How to Get the Most Out of Your Ad Budget", Aug. 12, 2022, *blog.hootsuite.com*: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-advertising>.

The **artificial impulses** which were invented to encourage action are a unique feature of social media applications that previous mass communication tools were not capable of. Thanks to these, habits are in many cases also **addictions**, as they were built on neurobiological foundations and also serve as sources of dopamine. It follows that manipulative pressure on emotional reactions is of prime importance in the use of these applications, as well as in the investigation of their indirect effects, such as the **reaction to different narratives**. These emotional hardships can awake fear in society simply because how it has been shown and how it had reached its target audience. The novelty of the matter lies in the fact that, while in the former popular media the content producer had to face serious regulations in many places, in the case of social media, due to the weak nature of the regulation, contents can reach certain target audiences that were never seen before. Such a case was, for example, the spread of propaganda videos published by the Islamic State terrorist organization, where one or two videos containing public beheadings¹¹ appeared on the Internet in such a way that minors could easily encounter them, as well as instilling fear in the public.

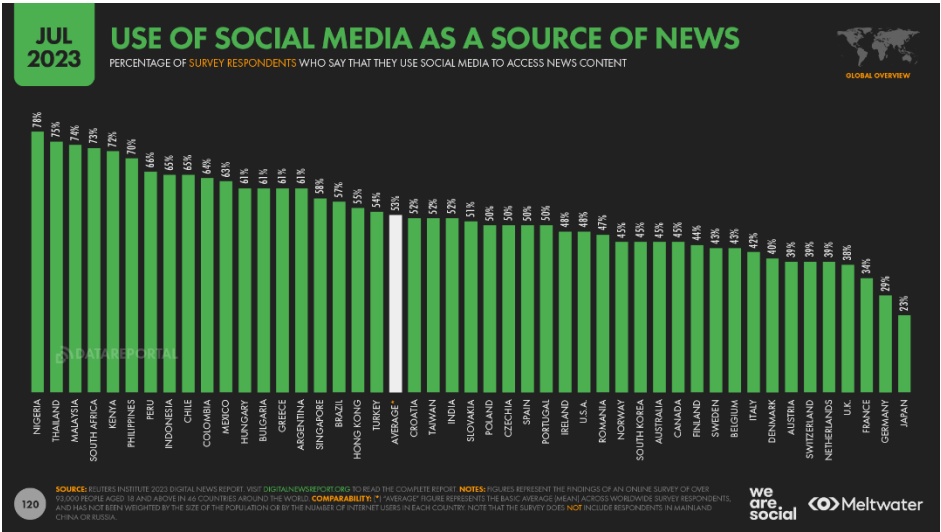


Figure 1 Social media as gateway to news content Source: datareportal.com

¹¹ L. Jacinto, “Brutal IS beheading video sparks social media pushback”, Aug. 20, 2014, france24.com: <https://www.france24.com/en/20140820-iraq-syria-video-beheading-journalist-twitter-social-media>.

It can be said that social media, as a reference point in news consumption, now has a significant presence, which is coupled with a decisive responsibility (see Fig. 1). The companies operating the applications and the legislative mechanisms of their country of origin must go hand in hand. What was already a prominent argument in the case of Section 230, these interfaces represent one of the social spaces of our time, which in earlier periods of history were mostly located in the so-called offline space, today they take place in the information or cyberspace¹² and the appropriate regulatory frameworks are still to be established they are in need. Unfortunately, these interfaces have not only supported traditional contact opportunities in recent years but have also played the role of recruiting platforms for extremist organizations and terrorist groups. The regulations of these platforms are in motion in fields such as child abuse and sexual exploitation.¹³ Policy makers questioned social media companies' ability to govern properly their platforms content. On the Senate hearings the CEOs of Meta, Snap, TikTok, Discord and X were present.

Most popular news feed-based social media platforms

- Facebook (United States)
- X (formerly Twitter) (United States)
- LinkedIn (United States)
- Threads (United States)
- Tumblr (United States)
- Reddit (United States)
- Sina Weibo (China)
- Ask.fm (Latvia)

¹² House of Representatives. (May 28, 2020). 47 USC 230: Protection for private blocking and screening of offensive material Ex. Ord. No. 13925, May 28, 2020, 85 F.R. 34079 *Preventing Online Censorship*. [https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:47%20section:230%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:47%20section:230%20edition:prelim)).

¹³ U.S. Senate Committee of Judiciary. *Protecting Children Online*. Jan. 31, 2024, <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/committee-activity/hearings/big-tech-and-the-online-child-sexual-exploitation-crisis>.

Most popular image or video based social media platforms

- Instagram (United States)
- Snap (formerly Snapchat) (United States)
- TikTok (China)
- Pinterest (United States)
- Flickr (United States)
- Tinder (United States)

Most popular social media related chat applications

- Facebook Messenger (United States)
- Telegram Messenger (Russia)
- WhatsApp Messenger (United States)

Other social networking applications

- Discord (United States)
- Rakuten Viber Messenger (formerly Viber) (Japan)¹⁴

Human Security and Resilience

Human security is a UN concept, a proven analytical and planning framework that supports the development of more inclusive and proactive cross-sector, context-sensitive solutions, and partnerships to build a world free from fear, deprivation, and humiliation. For many people, today's world is an unstable place, full of threats on many fronts. Protracted crises, violent conflicts, natural disasters, persistent poverty, epidemics, and economic downturns pose challenges and undermine prospects for peace, stability, and sustainable development. Such crises are complex and involve many forms of uncertainty in human activity. When they are growing beyond control, they can grow exponentially, invade every aspect of people's lives, destroy entire communities, and cross-national borders.¹⁵ As the General Assembly

¹⁴ Note: The nations in brackets referring to the country of origin of the company or the developer of the application/platform.

¹⁵ United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS). *What is Human Security?*

Resolution 66/290¹⁶ states “human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people.” This requires people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific, and preventive measures that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people.

Resilience means that we can response to threats and actions that affect us in a reasonable manner. To be resilient, we must be aware of how the contemporary communication space is working.¹⁷ The evolve of the mass media communication has brought a new form of communication where societies interact both with individuals in the inside and towards their public institutions in a more active way than it was done decades before. Which means that more actors are present on the scene, where illegitimate purposes are common either. When reading the news there is a possibility that the events which presented are a part of a bigger narrative. We are living in an era, where many forms of attacks in the cyberspace against the general functioning are not unique anymore, and information systems security are crucial such as the defence of other critical infrastructures. The ways of wielding modern warfare also shaped in the recent years, and communication channels are targeted much frequently nowadays. Social media for instance is a viable tool to present ideas, exchange information with the public (shaping opinion also an opportunity, what was with the case with appearance of the newspaper centuries before) and managing the process necessary for the implementation of policies. However, these are often made difficult due to conflicts of interest.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the world faced a situation never seen before. Lockdowns were not new in combatting against epidemics but supported with the communication channels that are available in this era, that is the main difference. On general, people are naturally afraid of their own health and the health of their loved ones, and under the lockdown, they did not have the opportunity to check it personally. Trust in social institutions

Oct. 25, 2012. <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security/>.

¹⁶ United Nations General Assembly. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 10 September 2012.

¹⁷ Frederic Labarre and George Niculescu, *Understanding the Contemporary Information Landscape: A Handbook*. Band 6/2022, (Vienna: National Defence Academy, 2022).

were on trial either. Science and academia battled against disinformation on the internet and struggled with the epidemic management of the treatment of patients in hospitals, while decision-makers tried to assure their citizens that they are in control of the events. In parallel, due to the widespread uncertainty, it gave opportunity for cyberattacks which were grew like mushrooms in the cyberspace themed mostly with recommendations for COVID-19. These were usually malicious files which often posed as pdf files, attackers spread them via email, which was self-evident from the reduced personal interactions due to the epidemic situation. Ransomware attacks against healthcare facilities and critical infrastructure jumped up. One all-time classic in the conspiracy theories about the coronavirus spread is the case of the 5G tower theory.

In a video which featured a man claiming to be a former executive at a UK mobile network, it was stated that the coronavirus tests meant to spread the virus, and the pandemic was created to hide deaths due to mobile technology.¹⁸ In reality, these conspiracy theories led to actual life events, which caused the demolition of cellular towers in the UK in several areas.¹⁹ The pandemic showed that fear and uncertainty can break even such societies that being held on strict rules either. The civil unrest in China is a unique phenomenon, where the zero-Covid policy turned against the Chinese Communist Party. Sina Weibo, critics on the Chinese version of Twitter, met with a significant ban wave, with 12,854 violations, where 1,120 accounts have been suspended or banned permanently.

Users have criticized the Chinese government actions, the months-long lockdowns, and the mass testing, where the CCP was forced to pull back from the policy.²⁰ It can be said that China is a classic example of autocratic systems, where real power is in the hand of the few. However, even in this

¹⁸ A. Hern, "YouTube moves to limit spread of false coronavirus 5G theory", *The Guardian* Apr. 5, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/05/youtube-to-suppress-content-spreading-coronavirus-5g-conspiracy-theory>.

¹⁹ A. Satariano, & D. Alba, "Burning Cell Towers, Out of Baseless Fear They Spread the Virus", *The New York Times* (Online) Apr. 10, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/10/technology/coronavirus-5g-uk.html>.

²⁰ S. Savage, "Beijing clamps down on social media critics of COVID policies", *Politico.eu* Jan. 7, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/china-zero-covid-policy-coronavirus-social-media-critics-sina-weibo/>.

country, under the strictest social control supported with the most modern technological toolset and manpower, it was not enough to hold off widespread dissatisfaction. When people feel on their own skin the changed circumstances caused by the regulations, especially when it is not justified by rational reasons, they are certainly moved.

Combatting Fake Stories and Narratives

In the online environment lies are not unique since the internet had become a battlefield of information warfare. There are many actors on it, and it is irrelevant if it's a state-level actor or just an individual, we can encounter with a fabricated story in a couple of minutes while we are browsing for news. Firstly, this is due to the change of the internet itself. In the beginning there was a standard called Web 1.0, where webpages and content on the web mostly produced by a relatively small number of people. The flow of information was static. While this activity grown further, the web transformed, too. The Web 2.0, often called "social internet", brought a new form of interaction. This structure encouraged users to generate content, form opinions, and make reactions to the content available on the internet. This eventually paved the way for the creation of social media either. When these new platforms of communication appeared, next to the fair use, malicious actors also appeared on the field. These channels can provide just as much harm as benefit for societies. Misleading and disinformation can spread like mushrooms due to the basic curiosity of people.

To be resilient against manipulation on these platforms, there are certain steps what can we make. First, we should ask ourselves, that what kind of information we are actually looking for if we search. Disinformation for instance by default tends to play on the emotional feedback. So, if we read a headline, that emotionally troubles us more (or even order of magnitude) than usual, we can suspect that the content we are looking at or reading is part of a bigger concept, in other word a **narrative**. A standard human response to an unknown situation is that we are reacting with fear. It makes us uncomfortable because the future shrouded in fog. There are certain settings on these sites where we can personalize our **news feed**, which gives us control over the content that appears to us what we are browsing daily. Awareness is key in building resilience. This enables us to respond to the uncertainties and challenges in a desirable way, because we will **feel in**

ourselves that we are in control. More often than not, the manipulator tries to mount us on an emotional rollercoaster, where the process of decision-making is hard for practice. However, if the environment is calm, and information is available to assess, the probability that deceiving tactics will fail are much higher.

Conclusion

Available information and data are key elements in any kind of decision-making process, where society can be manipulated to take actions in desired manner. Fear is a catalyst in these processes and the uncertainties drive people to take actions, in order to combat stress, they are usually taking opportunities given by the fastest and easiest way. However, a good strategy can be in this continuously evolving environment is simply to wait, to see how things are turning out. Often the trick is to lure our adversary into hasty decisions. There is a high probability that a new security paradigm will emerge in the coming years, the signs of which can already be seen, and the “Big Tech” companies will play a crucial role in it. The interactions between civilizations have been changed in the interconnected world and a digital order is just about to form in the near future.

Women's Agency and Leadership: Envisioning a More Comprehensive and Inclusive Human Security Approach¹

Nadya Khalife

Introduction

The concept of Human Security was coined more than two decades ago to promote a more inclusive approach to security that places the individual at the center of security interventions. Its application was further enforced after the adoption of UN General Assembly resolution 66/290 in 2012. The Resolution recognized human security as an approach to support States in identifying and addressing cross-cutting challenges to livelihood, survival and dignity of their people through a comprehensive, people-centered, context-specific approach that protects and empowers all people.²

The Human Security paradigm includes seven interconnected dimensions: economic, food, security, health, environmental, personal, community, and finally, political security.³ These dimensions, when appropriately linked and sufficiently addressed, can have a profound impact on people's lives and the communities they live in. For such linkages to take form and become reinforced, the participation of diverse groups of people who have a stake in improving their security related conditions must become a central component of the human security paradigm.

In spite of the potential ambitions the Human Security model aims to achieve through its individual-centric approach, it has been largely criticized for maintaining a top-down process, falling short of empowering individuals to make a more significant impact on their day-to-day lives.⁴ The

¹ The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

² United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/290.

³ See in this volume the text by Elena Mandalenakis.

⁴ Christina Churucca Mugaraza, "Human Security as a policy framework: Critics and Challenges", *Anuario de Accion Humanitaria y Derechos Humanos* (Bilbao: University of Deustos, 2007).

top-down approach typically includes governments or international organizations' policies and mechanisms, which are implemented on the ground to support communities.⁵ A bottom-up approach focuses on the varied concerns, experiences and needs of individuals and empowers them to become involved in addressing their specific security concerns by actively participating in decision-making processes.⁶ The top-down approach has often overlooked the security needs of specific groups of people including more than half of the world's population – women.⁷

This chapter seeks to illustrate the importance of a gendered approach to human security that emphasizes and promotes women's agency and leadership. It unpacks the critical elements required for agency and decision-making and exemplifies this through women's contributions to conflict prevention and gender mainstreaming in security sector reforms to achieve better outcomes at the national and community levels. This chapter presents several security sector reform efforts from a number of countries in the southern Mediterranean region. It posits that gendered approaches to peacebuilding, emphasizing a community-level led process, and security sector reforms that primarily focus on the national level and trickle down to the community, are both critical elements that can have an enormous impact on the realization of human security in the region.

Engendering the Human Security Approach

Women, their lived realities and experiences, are essential players and contributors to human security. However, they are often sidelined in human security approaches that focus heavily on top to bottom processes.⁸ This is because women's issues including those related to health and reproductive health, personal safety, economic and political participation are treated as social matters and not as issues directly related to security in the traditional

⁵ Gunhilde Hoogensen and Kirsti Stuvoy, "Gender, Resistance, and Human Security", *Security Dialogue* 37, no. 2 (June 2006): 202–228.

⁶ Mugaraza, "Human Security as a policy framework: Critics and Challenges".

⁷ Mugaraza, "Human Security as a policy framework: Critics and Challenges", 5. See also: Hoogensen and Stuvoy, "Gender, Resistance, and Human Security".

⁸ Heidi Hudson, "Doing' Security As Though Humans Matter: A Feminist Perspective on Gender and the Politics of Human Security", *Security Dialogue* 36, no. 2 (June 2005): 155–174.

sense.⁹ In her book, *Women, Peace and Security*, Joan Johnson-Freese notes that it is commonly assumed that women's issues and concerns are private matters, relegated to the domestic and cultural spheres. In contrast, men's concerns and interests are generally associated with public and political life where security and military issues are overtly addressed. In fact, substantial security decisions including the decision to go to war, which negatively impacts all segments of society, is almost always left to men's judgment and decisiveness.¹⁰

In many parts of the world still, violence against women is recognized as a personal subject that occurs in the household between family members rather than a broader security issue that impacts the well-being of societies as a whole.¹¹ It was not until the early 1990s that researchers and activists acknowledged domestic violence a public health issue that impacts the health, security, and economic sectors. The United Nations Declaration on Violence against Women, adopted in 1993, recognized violence against women as a form of gender-based violence occurring in public and private life.¹² According to the World Health Organization, it is estimated that 30 percent of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime.¹³

Similarly, women's health is frequently viewed from a personal standpoint that is detached from broader security perspectives. This outlook does not properly consider women's gendered roles as caregivers and the importance of their well-being that could affect security outcomes for families, communities, and societies. A recent case in point is the global COVID-19 pandemic, which placed entire communities' health and economic security at great risk. Women, who are globally overrepresented in the health and social sectors, played important roles as first responders in

⁹ Joan Johnson-Freese, *Women, Peace and Security: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2023), 21.

¹⁰ R. Brian Ferguson, "Masculinity and War", *Current Anthropology* 62, no. S23 (2021): 108–120.

¹¹ Desiree Lewis, "Rethinking Human Security: The Implications of Gender Mainstreaming", n. pub. (2006).

¹² G. Krantz, "Violence against Women: A Global Public Health Issue!" *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 56, no. 4 (Apr. 2002): 242–243.

¹³ Krantz, "Violence against Women: A Global Public Health Issue!" 242–243.

caring for patients and placing their lives at risk. They also bore the brunt of unpaid care work and were the first to lose their jobs amid global economic turmoil. Women's strengths and their contributions were clearly exemplified during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, threats to their health, economic and personal securities also reinforced women's significance in their roles and contributions in maintaining community resilience and preserving human security.

These two brief examples demonstrate that women and the so-called women's issues are closely linked to human security matters. Women in most parts of the world are still largely responsible for agriculture and food production. They are also primarily responsible for taking care of their children and families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Studies show that women who are economically empowered reinvest 90 percent of their earnings in their children's education and health compared to only 35 percent of men's earnings.¹⁴ Women are also critical players in breaking the cycles of poverty and promoting the financial well-being of families, which has compounding benefits for communities.¹⁵ Thus, women's health and safety, their participation in economic and political life cannot be disconnected from the broader human security discourse.

During the 2010s researchers and practitioners began to acknowledge that the top-down approach in implementing the human security model has been largely ineffectual and have appealed for a more gendered approach to human security.¹⁶ This new comprehension acknowledges the necessary application of a gender analysis in human security approaches to ensure that the differentiated needs of diverse populations including men, women, girls and boys are sufficiently explored and addressed. This approach also extends to marginalized groups such as ethnic or religious minorities, indigenous groups and other vulnerable populations.

¹⁴ Clinton Global Initiative, "Empowering Girls and Women", n.d. <https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/phlntrpy/notes/clinton.pdf>.

¹⁵ Equinet Taskforce on Women in Poverty, "Women in Poverty: Breaking the Cycle (Discussion Paper)", (Brussels: Equinet, 2020), 1–33.

¹⁶ Laura J. Shepherd, "Gendering Security" in *The Routledge Handbook of New Security Studies*, J. P. Burgess, ed. (London: Routledge, 2010).

No matter which topic is addressed, a guiding principle of the human security approach is that it requires understanding the particular threats experienced by particular groups of people, as well as the participation of those people in the analysis process.¹⁷

Johnson-Freese ties this conception to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, which came as a result of the adoption of the landmark United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1325 in the year 2000.¹⁸ UNSC 1325 recognizes women's differential needs during wartime and post-conflict and places women's decision-making at the center of peacebuilding and conflict prevention processes. The resolution is implemented through a framework that focuses on four main pillars of participation, prevention, protection and relief and recovery where women's participation is at the core of all dimensions.¹⁹

Today, the WPS Agenda is comprised of a set of ten UN Security Council Resolutions that focus on women's participation in decision-making processes across all levels and address and respond to sexual violence in conflict.²⁰ This Agenda is complementary to the human security model and is based on an inclusive and participatory process that hinges on women's agency and empowerment.

Women's Agency as Key Element for a Gendered Approach to Human Security

"Human security efforts, including women's empowerment, are preventive medicine."²¹

Women's agency is directly linked to women's empowerment and women's human rights. For a person to have agency, this means that he or she has the fundamental capacity to make important choices to chart his or her course in life. Therefore, women's agency involves women's abilities to make deci-

¹⁷ Oscar A. Gomez and Des Gasper, *Human Security: A Thematic Guide Note for Regional and National Human Development Report Teams*, (New York: UNDP UN Human Development Report Office, n. d.), 2.

¹⁸ Joan Johnson Freese, *Women, Peace and Security...*, 189–190.

¹⁹ <https://peacemaker.un.org/wps/normative-frameworks/un-security-council-resolutions>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Joan Johnson Freese, *Women, Peace and Security...*, 19.

sions about specific aspects of their personal and public life freely without any constraints. Indian economist and Nobel prize laureate, Amartya Sen, contends that for people to claim their human rights, they must expand their capabilities, which empowers them and grants them the agency to employ their social, cultural, political, and economic rights.²²

While there are numerous definitions that outline key dimensions of women's agency, terms are further expanded into essential elements that reinforce one another and include autonomy, empowerment, equal opportunities, voice and representation, legal and policy frameworks, and freedom from violence. Together, these elements strengthen women's agency, uphold women's rights and promote gender equality.

Women's autonomy or independence refers to women's abilities to make decisions about their lives. This includes making important choices about their education and field of education, whether they wish to pursue a career, or to work outside the home. Autonomy also extends to private matters including making choices about whether they wish to marry, choosing a spouse, and having a family including when to start a family and the spacing between their children.²³ Women's empowerment involves access to resources and opportunities, including employment prospects, and any support needed to enhance their abilities to control their lives through independent decision-making.²⁴

For women to gain agency and empower themselves, they must also have equal opportunities on par with men in all areas of life including in education and employment to be able to reach their full potential. However, women in many parts of the world still face discriminatory social and cultural practices that deny them their social, economic and political rights. The World Economic Forum's 2023 Global Gender Gap index, which measures gender equality across four main dimensions, shows that no country has achieved gender parity. The world has made some progress and closed 96 percent of

²² Pamela Abott, "Gender Equality and Mena Women's Empowerment in the Aftermath of the 2011 Arab Uprisings".

²³ Douglas A. Hicks, "Gender, Discrimination, and Capability: Insights from Amartya Sen", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 137–154.

²⁴ Naila Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment", *Development and Change* 30, no. 7 (1999): 435–464.

the gender gap on the health and survival subindex and 95.2 percent of the gap on the educational attainment component. The gender gap related to economic empowerment, however, remains wide, closing only 60 percent of the gap and only 22 percent of the gap related to women's political participation.²⁵ Therefore, a large component of women's agency and empowerment requires legislative and policy reforms to end discrimination against women in law and practice and to provide equal opportunities to women and men.

Women's agency also requires that all women have a voice in decision-making processes at all levels including at the individual level in the family, at the community and national levels. To illustrate, women's voices, their perspectives and aspirations in the private realm are critical to negotiate and influence key aspects of their private lives as previously mentioned. Similarly, legal and policy reforms require women's voices to reach policy making circles to influence how decisions will be made impacting women's and men's lives. This is only possible through women's representation and participation at the highest levels of policy making across different sectors.²⁶

Lastly, a key aspect of women's human rights is to live a life free from violence and exploitation. For women to have agency and become empowered, they must be free from all types of violence, be it physical, sexual, emotional, economic or political to exercise their rights freely without being exposed to fear, harm or intimidation.²⁷ There is widespread knowledge about domestic violence and sexual violence and how to address and prevent these acts. However, other types of violence such as economic and political violence against women have only recently gained traction and continue to be explored as major inhibitors to women's participation in public life. These types of harms should be further analyzed from a human security perspective as they drastically disempower women and jeopardize their well-being, safety, and security.

²⁵ World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report*, (Davos: WEF, 2023).

²⁶ European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Enhancing Women's Voice, Agency and Participation in the Economy: Studies in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey*, (Brussels, April 2015).

²⁷ Radhika Coomaraswamy, "Human Security and Gender Violence", *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 44/45 (Oct. 29–Nov. 4, 2005): 4729–4737. See also: Christina Churucca Mugaraza, "Human Security as a policy framework: Critics and Challenges", *Anuario de Accion Humanitaria y Derechos Humanos* (Bilbao: University of Deustos, 2007), 30.

Women's Agency and Leadership Is Critical to Inclusive Human Security

Women's agency is not only essential for the promotion of gender equality, it is a crucial component in the creation of inclusive societies where women and men, on an equal footing, possess the capacity to make vital choices on multidimensional matters of human security. Therefore, gender equality and inclusive human security are interconnected concepts that underscore the importance of empowering women to promote women's safety, health and economic well-being.

Women's agency contributes to human security in a myriad of ways and fosters greater stability and resilience for communities and societies at large. As previously mentioned, women's agency is essential for women to live free from all types of violence and exploitation including domestic violence, sexual harassment and assault and trafficking in persons. When women are empowered, they are better positioned to protect themselves from such harms, are better equipped in preventing violence and if violence should occur, they have proper knowledge on accessing police and justice mechanisms. Women also play important roles through community mobilization and participation in women's organizations and government institutions to address, respond, and prevent violence against women.²⁸

Women's economic empowerment is a key aspect of human security. Women's equal access to education, skills, financial resources and services, and decent work opportunities significantly reduces their vulnerability to economic instability and poverty. Through economic empowerment, women gain control over their household incomes and improve their social status and decision-making power in their families and communities.²⁹ A 2015 study showed that women's entrepreneurship can significantly unlock women's potential and this alone is likely to contribute as much as 26 percent to the annual global gross domestic product (GDP).³⁰

²⁸ Valerie M. Hudson, Mary Caprioli, et al. "The Heart of the Matter: The Security of Women and the Security of States", *International Security* 33, no. 3 (Winter 2008/2009): 7–45.

²⁹ Hudson, Caprioli, et al. "The Heart of the Matter...", 7–45.

³⁰ Jonathan Woetzel et al., *The power of parity: how advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth* (McKinsey and Company, 2015), 5.

Women's participation in political life also enhances human security because it contributes to inclusive governance whereby women and men are both actively engaged in decision-making, which helps to maintain political and social stability. Women's engagement in political decision-making at the local or community levels is just as important as women's leadership at the national levels. Women's agency is critical for building community resilience against social threats and shocks, and in promoting greater engagement of community members with the security sector to enhance security outcomes. This may entail, for example, carrying out a gender analysis of security risks and devising appropriate responses to reduce security threats together with security sector personnel. Women who are empowered promote and prevent conflict and they are natural leaders in rebuilding the social fabric of communities after conflict.³¹

Women's agency is a multifaceted and integral component of human security. Women's empowerment in varied aspects of their lives and well-being contributes to their individual sense of safety and also to their community's stability, resilience, and security. A gendered approach to security links one's attainment of security to their empowerment and contends that a person's victimization, or in other words, their oppression, discrimination or ill-treatment should be holistically addressed.³²

The following sections look specifically at women's wider participation and contributions to human security through conflict prevention at the community level and security sector participation and engagement. The section on women in conflict prevention presents my first-hand experience and observation during the implementation of a mediation pilot project in Lebanese and Palestinian communities in Lebanon. The final section presents another dimension of human security focusing on women's leadership and empowerment in security sector reforms with examples from countries in the southern Mediterranean region.

³¹ Hudson, Caprioli, et al. "The Heart of the Matter...", 7–45.

³² Hoogensen and Stuvoy, "Gender, Resistance, and Human Security", 202–228.

Women Play Exceptional Roles in Conflict Resolution and Prevention

Preventing and managing conflicts are essential components for the attainment of human security. Without peace and stability, additional security elements are compromised and threatened. Take for example, a country or a specific region within a country that is experiencing security threats, be it from internal or external actors. Securing food and basic necessities are threatened when people in these communities are unable to work their fields, harvest their crops or secure food rations. Security threats place limitations on peoples' mobility and portend their personhood as they experience heightened risks of being wounded or killed. In many parts of the world, it is women who are responsible for growing food and fetching water and they have a vested interest in managing security risks and resolving conflicts.

The Middle East, which encompasses countries geographically situated in the southern Mediterranean,³³ is by far one of the most conflict prone regions in the world due to its straggling economic, social and political development. This is largely known as Middle East 'exceptionalism' and defined as a resistance to democracy and to socio-economic and political progress that ignites conflicts and enables them to persist.³⁴ These conflicts can be broken down into occupation as in the case of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the United States invasion of Iraq, civil wars or internal civil strife as in the case of Lebanon, which is further complicated by geopolitical issues and intra-state conflicts between two nation-states as in the Saudi-Yemen war. Adding to this list is the so-called Arab Spring domino effect that began in 2011. Many of these events, largely characterized as citizens' grievances and reactions to decades of widespread social and political dissatisfaction and a backlash against ruling elites in the region, quickly plunged the region into disarray and ignited large-scale wars in Iraq, Syria and Libya and destabilized entire countries including Egypt and Tunisia.

³³ The southern Mediterranean region includes the countries geographically located in North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia) as well as the countries of Lebanon and the State of Palestine. Reference to the Middle East and North Africa includes more inland countries such as Iraq, Jordan and Syria, the Gulf region and Yemen.

³⁴ Mirjam E. Sørli, Nils Petter Gleditsch, and Håvard Strand. "Why Is There So Much Conflict in the Middle East?", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 1 (February 2005).

In every country, women make up at least half of the population, but they are, to a large extent, traditionally sidelined from crossing traditional borders of peacemaking and reconciling differences. Studies suggest that women bear the brunt of conflicts and wars and in many cases, they bear the responsibility for maintaining the social fabric of communities. Yet, they have no active role in preventing and resolving conflicts between people to sustain healthy social connections and help rebuild broken bridges and foster value-oriented communities.³⁵ According to Thornton and Whitman, “women’s leadership role is most visible in their communities; it is here that they organize to end conflict and build the skills necessary for peacebuilding and reconstruction.”³⁶

The Elders, a non-governmental organization founded by the late Nelson Mandela in 2007, recently urged leaders in this region to invest more resources in mediation and peacemaking. The Elders recognize that the region has long-standing conflicts with no formal mediation processes taking place. They assert that there are too many examples of male leaders who do not recognize the value of dialogue. They urge leaders to invest in women and youth peacemakers to ensure a more inclusive approach to peacemaking and peacebuilding. The Elders note that “this is not being asked as a favour to women. This is for the benefit of their countries, and for their own benefit; involving women is a matter of enlightened self-interest.”³⁷

The Elders suggest that women’s desires to be involved in peacemaking is not a matter of sitting at the same negotiation table as men, but more of a deep connection to their societies and their willingness and ability to help their communities’ overcome divisions. They stress that priorities should be placed on finding local solutions to local problems by building linkages across borders, sharing experiences and establishing networks.

³⁵ This definition is referenced by Mark Kleiman as communities that are characterized as stable, safe, just and tolerant and respect diversity. See: Mark Kleiman, “Value-centered Mediation: The Centrality and Use of Meaning and Values”, in *The Mediation Handbook: Research, Theory and Practice*, Alexia Georgakopoulos ed. (London: Routledge, 2017), 48–59.

³⁶ Evelyn Thornton and Tobie Whitman, “Gender and Peacebuilding,” in *Integrated Peacebuilding: Innovative Approaches to Transforming Conflict*, Craig Zelizer ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 103–125.

³⁷ The Elders, “Women in Mediation in the Arab World: Increasing the Chances of Peace”, <https://theelders.org/news/women-mediation-arab-world-increasing-chances-peace>.

But despite the many calls and expressions for women's increased participation in conflict resolution, the participation of women in such processes has only gradually increased. According to Rehn and Sirleaf, authors of *Women, War and Peace*, there is still a great need to acknowledge women's lived experiences in conflict and to recognize their contributions to peace processes. They further acknowledge that there is an inclination to view women in conflict as "victims" because they take on varied roles as breadwinners during the absence of men, and in many parts of the world, more women than men experience varied forms of gender-based violence including sexual violence.³⁸ But women are also survivors, leaders and peacebuilders who have agency and the capacity to identify, prevent and resolve conflicts in their communities.

As important as women's participation in peacemaking at the national level is, equally important is the firm grounding of women who can play effective roles in decreasing tensions and preventing conflicts in their communities. This is because in many cases, it is those conflicts at the local level that spiral into larger, uncontained conflicts with devastating effects on all segments of the population; men, women, girls, and boys.

In 2018, a UN Women pilot project in Lebanon established women's mediation networks in the southern part of the country as part of its localization efforts of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. This was after the government of Lebanon adopted their first National Action Plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325. Around two dozen women from two nearby towns undertook a series of mediation trainings to support their local communities in diffusing and managing local conflicts. Some of the participants were already active in their local communities and had special relations with municipal council members. Despite this, their views and perspectives were rarely taken into consideration on issues that mattered the most—their safety and security and that of their communities.

Participants in these networks learned to conduct conflict analysis to determine the root causes of conflicts. They learned non-violent communications, mediation and negotiation skills and the practical implementation of these

³⁸ Elizabeth Rehn, Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, *Women, War and Peace*, (New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2002).

skills through case studies and role play. These networks were formed so that women have a safe space in speaking about contentious issues in their communities, are supported by their peers, and collectively address best approaches to tackle difficult issues. Most importantly, as an empowerment strategy, women were reassured and reminded that they owned these processes without any outside interference and were more knowledgeable about their community and the security threats they face.

In many of the sessions, women brought up a mixture of traditional and non-traditional subject matters. A group of women who were educators brought up security issues they wished to address in schools. They felt that in their community, children and parents require greater awareness about problem solving, dialogue, acceptance, and non-violence. Another group of women looked at land disputes as a security issue, especially that such clashes over land ownership has led to violence between families in their community and nearby towns. Another group identified waste management as a trigger for violence between communities requiring urgent attention. They prepared intervention plans that ranged from awareness-raising sessions, group discussions for children and youth, and group mediation. Women community mediators also organized an event for community leaders and UN peacekeepers to showcase their skills. Women and men worked alongside and discussed security risks to their community and brainstormed potential solutions to overcome these challenges.

These actions helped to empower women and leverage their leadership roles in the communities so that they become an essential part of community decision-making processes. Local councilmen began to acknowledge women's potential and their contributions to fostering security in their communities. The women were listened to more, their views and perspectives were better respected, and they were called on to support their municipalities and local communities to decrease tensions whenever they arose. In one community, the municipal council requested that women mediators establish a mediation unit in the municipality to open doors to community members to voice their concerns and grievances.

A similar network was formed in one of Lebanon's eleven Palestinian refugee camps to support women to engage in decreasing tensions and managing

conflicts. Similar to the previous networks, women identified their own security risks including violence against women, child marriage, poverty, and conflict between rival armed factions in the camp. Women told stories about young girls who were forcibly married, violence perpetrated against women by household members. They also discussed the necessity for women to become economically empowered as Palestinians are denied from working in many professions in Lebanon.

Another major focus for Palestinian women was decreasing armed violence between warring factions who often take their grievances to the streets and disrupt community life for days, weeks, and even months. A prominent woman working in the Palestinian security apparatus recollected that years ago when fighting broke out between two political factions, women lined up chairs and sat in the middle of the street as a buffer between the armed groups to silence their guns. These remarkable stories of women's authority, fearlessness, resilience and tenacity are rarely heard outside the camps and do not reach international circles. Because they occur at the grassroots level, they are not considered worthy or deserving of any attention, even though such acts may have contributed to the prevention of a larger armed clash and impeded the senseless loss of many Palestinian lives.

Women's interventions to conflict prevention and resolution at the local level reinforces the importance of women's agency and empowerment for building resilient communities and maintaining stability. These bottom-up human security approaches should be widely supported and promoted to engage women in decision-making processes where they have the authority to address their human insecurities from within their own communities.

Women's Roles in Building Community Resilience through Security Sector Reform

Countries have varied security risks, threats and concerns, often co-existing at the same time. For many countries in the Southern Mediterranean region, these can range from increased political tensions, armed conflicts, economic and social instability, transnational criminal networks, illegal migration, forced displacement, terrorist activities and violent extremism. These multifaceted complexities require the application of good governance through the

provision, management and oversight of security through the coherent engagement of a wide range of actors across the security sector including army and police, ministries, civil society organizations and the civilian population.³⁹

Security sector reform (SSR) is defined as “a transformative process that ensures that security sector institutions meet community security needs through efficiency, consistency and transparency while ensuring respect for human rights and non-discrimination.”⁴⁰ Gender-responsive security is a reform process that takes into consideration the gender roles that different socio-cultural contexts apply to men, women, boys and girls. This approach contributes to the promotion of women’s agency, empowerment and gender equality⁴¹ by ensuring the security needs, experiences and perspectives of different groups and populations.⁴² In this respect, gender responsive SSR is a top to bottom human security approach, which also responds to the many objectives of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

The consolidation of SSR with human security allows for the merging of roles that women and men can play in the security sector to reform institutions into more gender responsive ones that can better respond to community needs.⁴³ This reform process extends beyond the equal participation and representation of men and women in the security sector and may be an exemplary starting point for many countries in the Southern Mediterranean region. In their book, *NATO, Gender and the Military: Women Organizing from*

³⁹ Marta Ghitonni, Léa Lehouck and Megan Bastick, “A Security Sector Governance Approach to Women, Peace and Security”, *Policy Brief* (Geneva: DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, 2019), 1–8.

⁴⁰ Security sector institutions include the State’s armed and security forces, oversight bodies including the ministries of interior and defense, independent oversight bodies such as civil society organizations-media, think tanks, and professional organizations-and justice and rule of law institutions in addition to private and military security companies. See: Megan Bastick and Tobie Whitman, “A Women’s Guide to Security Sector Reform”, (Geneva: DCAF, n.d.).

⁴¹ Gender equality is the state by which women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society and when the behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured.

⁴² Frida Gabrielsson Kjäll, “Gender-Responsive SSR: What Does it Mean and What are the Challenges for its Implementation?” *SSR Brief*, (Stockholm: Folke Bernadotte Academy, 2016).

⁴³ Kjäll, “Gender-Responsive SSR...”

Within, Wright, Hurley, and Gil-Ruiz point to two dimensions of reforms; informal day-to-day interactions and engagements, and a formal element that deals with human resource policies and procedures. Evidence shows that such developments and improvements can contribute to a more efficient and accountable security sector that responds to the differentiated needs of all members of a community.⁴⁴

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda,⁴⁵ highlights the importance of integrating gender perspectives for sustainable peace and security including the promotion of gender sensitive and gender responsive institutions. UNSC resolution 2151, adopted in 2014 underscores the importance of women's equal and effective participation and full involvement in all stages of the security sector reform process, given their vital role in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding, and in strengthening civilian protection measures in security services, including the provision of adequate training for security personnel, [and] the inclusion of more women in the security sector.⁴⁶

Studies show that the application of gender perspectives in the security sector and specifically the inclusion of female officers in the police force and in peacekeeping operations are effective in countering violent extremism.⁴⁷ Research also shows that police operations are particularly more effective in protecting civilians and maintaining order when fighting extremist groups than a military force. There is also growing evidence that female officers are better able to build trust in communities and de-escalate tensions and violence. In fact, women who experience Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) are also more likely to report cases of sexual and gender-based violence to female police officers than male officers.⁴⁸ Wright, Hurley and Gil Ruiz note that

⁴⁴ Katharine Wright, Matthew Hurley, Jesus Ignacio Gil Ruiz, *NATO, Gender and the Military: Women Organizing from within*, (London: Routledge, 2020).

⁴⁵ The ten resolutions that make up the WPS Agenda are: 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019). See: <http://www.peacewomen.org/why-WPS/solutions/resolutions>.

⁴⁶ United Nations, Security Council Resolution 2151, S/RES/2151 (2014), para.19.

⁴⁷ Anne Speckhard and Adrian Shajkovci, "Drivers of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kosovo: Women's Roles in Supporting, Preventing & Fighting Violent Extremism", (Washington DC: International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism, 2017).

⁴⁸ Sahana Dharmapuri, "UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and Countering Violent

women are “critical assets and an added value” to security institutions and contend that female troops and mixed gender units are critical to carrying out house searches and establishing and maintaining ties with local populations.⁴⁹

It can be argued that gender responsive security sector reforms are necessary in every part of the world and while this is true and valid, the security context of the Southern Mediterranean region warrants an urgent need for the transformation of these sectors to effectively respond to ongoing and emerging security threats as previously outlined. Over the past decades, countries across the Southern Mediterranean have at different rates integrated women into security sector institutions namely in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. However, such reform efforts have fallen short in utilizing women’s qualifications and attributes in a way that strengthens and promotes gender sensitive institutions and women’s leadership continues to be overlooked in the human security approach.

Women in Algeria took part in their country’s struggle for independence between 1954 and 1962. Their roles, like women’s roles across the world at the time, were relegated to support functions. In 1978, Algerian president Houari Boumediene formally allowed women to join the People’s National Army (PNA) as commissioned and non-commissioned officers (NCOs). Women’s recruitment into the PNA was suspended in 1986 and it was not until 2002 that the recruitment of women was opened again. In 2006, the PNA established a framework for equal opportunity in the armed forces to encourage women’s participation. Since then, women have joined the School of Cadets of the Nation, the National Gendarmerie Academy, the

Extremism: Using a Gender Perspective to Enhance Operational Effectiveness,” in *A Man’s World? Exploring the Roles of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism*, Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Sara Zeiger, Rafia Bhulai, eds. (Washington DC: Georgetown University Center for Women Peace and Security, 2016): 44–46. Sahana Dharmapuri, “UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and Countering Violent Extremism: Soft Power Solutions to a Hard Security Issue”, *Constructive Pathways: Stimulating and Safeguarding Components of WPS* (2015): 143–158. Charles Hunt, “Specialized Police Teams in UN Peace Operations: A Survey of Progress and Challenges,” (Vienna: International Peace Institute, March 2024), 1–34, and International Alert, “Gender, Security and SSR in Lebanon”, (November 2014), https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Lebanon_SSRGenderSecurity_EN_2014.pdf.

⁴⁹ Wright et al, *NATO, Gender and the Military...*, 112.

National Academy of Military Health and the Naval Academy. In 2013, the Naval Academy welcomed 29 female officers for the first time, representing 31.5 percent of the total number of officers.⁵⁰ Despite their participation and the rise of several women to the ranks of generals, women's roles are relegated to administrative functions, and communications and social services sectors. Moreover, female military personnel typically support positions as aides to their male counterparts.⁵¹

Egypt's armed forces, like many countries in the region, accepts women as civil servants or specialized officers, but not for combat missions. Women who hold medical or communications degrees can serve as medical or media officers. However, a campaign underway since 2011 urges Egypt's government to allow women to join combat units. Jihad el Komy, founder of the campaign Moganada Masriya (Female Egyptian Conscript) says "we reiterated our calls for [including] young women in the armed forces in February 2018, concurrently with the comprehensive armed forces operation in the Sinai Peninsula against terrorism,"⁵² but all efforts have fallen on deaf ears and stifled by hardline religious authorities in Egypt. Komy notes that more than 20,000 females are ready to join Egypt's army.

Egyptian women first joined the Egyptian Police College in 1984, but recruitments stopped six years later as the Police College found low interest among women to join. There was also a general perception that women were not suitable to conduct police work. However, in 1990, the Police College opened its doors to women again and especially to those in the fields of medicine and social work. The interior ministry formed a special women's directorate to ensure girls' safety in schools and to maintain security in Cairo's streets considering the high rate of sexual harassment in public.⁵³

⁵⁰ Marcela Donadio, "Women, Security Forces and Peacekeeping in the MENA region", Latin America Security and Defense Network (RESDAL), Policy Brief, (February 2019).

⁵¹ Dalia Ghanem-Yazbeck, "Women in the Men's House: The Road to Equality in the Algerian Military", Carnegie Middle East Center (Civil Military Relations in Arab States), (November 2015), 1–14.

⁵² Ghanem-Yazbeck, "Women in the Men's House...", 1–14. In 2018 women made up ten percent of the country's 188,000 police force.

⁵³ Asmaa Mustafa, "The History of Egypt's Women's Policing: 'Azza' is the First Major General in the Interior", *Egypt Independent* (Feb 2, 2018), <https://egyptindependent.com/first-female-firefighters-in-egypts-history-join-civil-protection-authority/>.

In 2018 Egypt's interior ministry deployed the largest number of female police officers that it has ever dispatched to improve security and curb sexual harassment during Eid al Fitr holidays. In March 2020 on World Civil Defense Day, an all-female firefighting squad showed off their skills in putting out fires as part of the interior ministry's strategy to improve security and emergency response services. The female firefighting squad is the first in Egypt's history.⁵⁴

Women in Lebanon first joined the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in 1989. In 2018, over 1600 women were recruited into LAF; 150 women joined the Republican Guard Brigade increasing women's participation in the armed forces to around five percent. Women receive training in military combat but do not engage in armed warfare.⁵⁵

Women's participation in the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MOIM) does not exceed three percent and many jobs held by women are in administrative fields.⁵⁶ The Internal Security Forces, which oversees administrative and judicial policing, guarding public institutions, diplomatic missions, and prisons, did not begin recruiting women until 2001. Today, it is estimated that only 900 women are part of the 30,000-security force or less than 3 percent.⁵⁷ The MOIM also recently began recruiting women into the municipal police force. Some women direct traffic around parts of Beirut and anecdotal evidence from Tripoli, Lebanon's second largest city, found that community members preferred dealing with women as they treated citizens in a more respectful way and de-escalated tensions within communities. By contrast, the General Security (GS) has a larger percentage of women as several women have become

⁵⁴ Al Masry Al Youm, "First Female Firefighters in Egypt's History Join Civil Protection," *Egypt Independent*, (March 2, 2020), <https://egyptindependent.com/first-female-firefighters-in-egypts-history-join-civil-protection-authority/>.

⁵⁵ Dalia Ghanem and Dina Arakji, *Women in Arab Armed Forces*, Arab Institute for Women and Carnegie Mellon Middle East Centre, (2020), 14–16.

⁵⁶ The rate of women's participation in the Internal Security Forces is estimated at three percent. Other institutions within the Ministry of Interior may have higher or lower rates.

⁵⁷ United Nations Development Programme, *Women Municipal Police in Lebanon*, (June 2020), <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/lb/UNDP-Gender-Report-English.pdf>.

generals. While the GS may appear to be more advanced on gender, personnel receive little or no gender sensitivity training.⁵⁸

Libya's former leader, Muammar Qaddafi, established a women's military academy and encouraged women's participation in the country's security and intelligence agencies. Libya's uprising in 2011 resulted in the killing of Qaddafi and an armed conflict has ensued ever since. In 2018, the Libyan National Conference was held to find consensus around the country's fragmented political landscape and on key issues that would determine the future fate of Libya. Discussions around the unification of Libya's military ensured that women should be integrated into the military as a means to improve the institutions' effectiveness.⁵⁹

In 2019, the European Union's Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya supported the establishment of the Office of Women's Affairs of the interior ministry to increase women's participation in policing. EUBAM Libya has supported women's participation in the security sector from border management to policing and believes that women's engagement yields to more sustainable and long-term results. Through these initiatives, EUBAM has focused with various stakeholders on the importance of women's participation in the security sector and has encouraged the interior ministry to recruit and train female officers through the joint UNDP-UNSMIL Pilot Model Police Station project.⁶⁰

Prior to 1999, military service for Moroccan women was prohibited and while it was compulsory for men between the ages of 18 and 39, women who wished to enlist in the military did so on a voluntary basis. In 2014, women made up 3 percent of the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces. In 2015, the general inspector of the Armed Forces, Bochaib Arroub, noted that the institu-

⁵⁸ International Alert, "Gender, Security and SSR in Lebanon".

⁵⁹ Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, *National Conference Process Final Report*, (Tripoli, November 2018), available at: https://hdcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Libyan-NCP-Report_English_web.pdf.

⁶⁰ European Border Assistance Mission in Libya, "Safety and security for all, including women – a priority and a challenge for EUBAM Libya", (7 October 2019), https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eubam-libya/safety-and-security-all-including-women-%E2%80%93-priority-and-challenge-eubam-libya_en?s=327.

tion is garnering efforts to promote gender equality and that the Royal Navy has accepted women as officers in naval engineering.⁶¹

Compulsory military service in Morocco was abolished in 2006 and reinstated in 2018 for those between the ages of 18 and 25 including for women on a voluntary basis.⁶² The number of persons who filled in the census for military service was 133,820; female volunteers numbered 13,614 or approximately ten percent.⁶³ In 2020, the first class of female officers prepared to join the police force (*Gendarmerie Royale*) tasked with ensuring public safety, maintaining order and enforcing the law. Also, in the same year, Moroccan commissioned and non-commissioned female officers headed to the Social Services Trainings Centre (CISS) of the Royal Armed Forces to prepare for their careers as social workers. These tasks, while still traditional, include deployments to field hospitals to provide necessary assistance to communities in remote areas, or assistance to communities during natural disasters to support vulnerable populations.⁶⁴

Also in Morocco, in 2004 the Ministry of Interior began to accept women as police officers. Today, they make up ten percent of all personnel in the ministry and the communities have become accustomed to women directing traffic and partaking in tasks historically delegated to men. In a positive effort to advance gender parity in law enforcement, in 2014, 21 Moroccan female officers joined their male colleagues from the motorcycle unit to patrol the cities of Casablanca, Rabat, Fez and Marrakech to curb crime and maintain

⁶¹ “Moroccan Army Seeks to Increase Presence of Women in Its Ranks,” *Morocco World News*, (22 April 2015), available at: <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/04/156804/moroccan-army-seeks-increase-presence-women-ranks/>.

⁶² Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration, *Morocco Military Service Country of Origin Brief*, (Copenhagen, July 2019), https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2016126/brief+COI+report_military+service+in+Morocco_July+2019_final.pdf.

⁶³ Safra Kasraoui, “Record Numbers of Moroccan Women Sign-Up for Military Service”, *Morocco World News*, (11 June 2019), <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/06/275574/record-numbers-moroccan-women-military-service/>.

⁶⁴ Simo Hadioui, “Women in the Military: A New Mark in the History of Moroccan Military Service”, *Morocco Jewish Times*, (7 March 2020), <http://www.moroccojewishtimes.com/en/2020/03/07/women-in-the-military-a-new-mark-in-the-history-of-moroccan-military-service/>.

safety and security.⁶⁵ A field study published in 2017 found that Moroccans have respect and trust for female police officers because, in their view, women officers deal with citizens in a positive manner and do not resort to negative behaviours such as being rude or acting in a condescending manner. The study also found that responders praised female officers for their professionalism and dedication to their work and especially in dealing more compassionately with citizens.⁶⁶

Women in Tunisia serve in the army, navy, and air force.⁶⁷ With an active army of more than 35,000 officers and soldiers in addition to 22,000 conscripts, women in the armed forces account for five percent and they engage in support services and as command officers. Around 40 women are fighter pilots and 40 are navy officers. Tunisia's defense ministry is considering a new law to draft women as conscripted soldiers equal to men and for women to contribute to combating terrorism. Tunisia participates in peacekeeping missions and deploys army and police personnel to missions in Africa and Haiti; women make up a small percentage of all those deployed.⁶⁸

Global evidence suggests that women's leadership and participation in the security sector enhances the levels of trust between community members and security sector personnel. Information and observations from the region show that meaningful support is needed to include more women in the security sector, but more importantly to retain them in a way that boosts their leadership skills, abilities, knowledge and experiences. Changes towards greater gender sensitivity including in day-to-day interactions and through policies will support security sector reforms in becoming more gender sensitive and more responsive and accountable to the civilian population.

⁶⁵ "Morocco: Female Police Officers Join Motorcycle Units" *Morocco World News*, (12 November 2014), <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2014/11/143892/morocco-female-police-officers-join-motorcycle-unit/>.

⁶⁶ "Egypt women fight for right to army combat posts" *Al-Monitor*, (29 March 2018), <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2018/03/egypt-women-join-army-controversy-recruitment-sharia-law.html>.

⁶⁷ Dalia Ghanem, "Women at War", *Diwan Blog*, Carnegie Middle East Center, (13 December 2018), <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/77852>.

⁶⁸ Donadio, "Women, Security Forces and Peacekeeping in the MENA region."

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the limitations of human security approaches in their integration of people's varied concerns, experiences, and needs in the delivery of multidimensional securities. It focused primarily on the disconnect between human security and gender equality and illustrated how women's issues including their health and well-being, economic and political participation and violence perpetrated against them due to their gender should be part of the broader human security discourse. This chapter emphasized the importance of women's agency and empowerment to human security and gender equality, which are mutual and compatible, and strengthen one another. The necessary application of the bottom-up human security approach was firmly demonstrated through women's contributions to conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding at the local level relying on secondary sources and field evidence from Lebanon. Gender responsive security sector reform was also utilized to illustrate the essential roles that uniformed female personnel play in the security sector to respond to needs of all populations with concrete examples from the southern Mediterranean region. This chapter makes clear that complex and competing human security threats in the region require both top-down and bottom-up security approaches that should ensure the integration of women's voices, representation, participation and decision-making through their agency and empowerment. Such human security approaches are more comprehensive and inclusive and will deliver security to all segments of society, including women.

PART II: South Caucasus Regional Perspectives

Building Clean Energy Eco-Systems in the South Caucasus: Towards Green Transformation

Artur Avetisyan, Nika Chitadze, Razi Nurullayev, Marat Terterov¹

The Energy Transition in the South Caucasus Is Well Underway

The energy eco-systems of the countries of the South Caucasus are undergoing transformation. As is presently the case with many other parts of the world, the three countries of the South Caucasus region – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – are embarking along the policy pathways of an energy transition in an effort to diversify their energy economies and become less reliant on conventional fossil fuels. Frequent referral to the South Caucasus by experts and policy makers as “a region” may perpetuate the impression that the three countries are moving along the path of transition in unison. However, it should be stated from the outset that Armenia, Azerbaijan as well as Georgia are each travelling on their own individual energy transition journeys, where each country faces a swath of individual challenges in order to become more ‘green’ and more sustainable. The fact that each of the South Caucasus countries journeys along the energy transition in its particular manner reflects the uniqueness of the energy systems of each of the three.

The transition towards cleaner energy systems is well underway in all three countries of the region. It is being driven by both domestic factors as well as due to widening international momentum in support of reducing emissions, which lead to climate change by causing a rise in temperature levels. A core policy objective of all three countries in this context is to produce “greener” electricity – to generate power from non-carbon emitting and renewable clean energy sources such as solar, wind, hydro as well as other non-fossil-based sources of primary energy supply. Producing electricity from renewable energy sources instead of from fossil fuels is widely seen as one the core methods of reducing emissions and preventing climate change, both at the global level and in the South Caucasus.

¹ Country case studies authored by Razi Nurullayev, Artur Avetisyan, and Nika Chitadze; with introduction and conclusions by Marat Terterov.

All three countries are putting electricity production from renewable energy sources, as opposed to fossil-based energy supply (such as oil, gas, coal) at the forefront of their respective energy policies. All three have ambitious national targets to increase the share of renewable energy supply in their electricity production and seek to attract large scale investment in order to realise these policy objectives. All three countries have introduced (or are introducing) incentive schemes to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), including the introduction of market liberalisation in their electricity sectors, intended to make their power sectors more attractive for renewable energy developers.

While each of the three South Caucasus states regularly announce new power generation projects based on clean energy sources, the depth and pace of the energy transition is highly divergent in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia respectively. This is due to both the fact that the energy systems of each of the three countries are quite distinct from one another, as well as a result of the differing stage of liberal market reform in which each country finds itself. Armenia and Georgia already produce much of their electricity from clean energy sources, mostly hydro, which is particularly abundant in Georgia, while Armenia also has substantial nuclear power production capacity. Both Armenia and Georgia have limited fossil fuel reserves, and both are dependent on imported sources of oil and gas, most of which is employed in the transport sector, as well as in cooling and heating.

Both countries commenced reform of their power markets relatively early, driven by the policy doctrine that foreign investors are attracted to liberal markets, where state intervention is kept to a minimal. Both announced privatisation programs in their respective power sectors as early as the 1990s, which indeed brought FDI, although the initial aim was to modernise the electricity market and ensure security of (the power) supply. Climate change related questions were far from the minds of policy makers in Armenia and Georgia during their initial efforts to reform and attract FDI into their power sectors. Both countries faced far more urgent energy policy priorities at the time, such as preventing recurring power black outs. However, both would become well placed to attract renewable energy investment at a later stage, hence making substantive progress in the area of green energy transformation, since they reformed early and contained relatively abundant clean energy sources.

Azerbaijan's journey along the energy transition towards a green energy future has been quite different to those of Armenia and Georgia, for reasons understandable to experts, policy makers as well as energy historians. In fact, there is no shortage of debate within the latter community as to whether the world's first ever oil well was drilled in Baku, in the Russian Empire during the 19th Century. By the mid-20th Century, Baku's oil production was of such economic significance to the Soviet Union that it was targeted by Nazi Germany as a strategic objective at the time of the battle of Stalingrad, in latter 1942.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly independent Azerbaijan quickly developed into an oil (and later gas) producer of international significance, comparable to, for example, the Gulf State of Oman. The country's oil and gas industry, which accounts for the overriding bulk of the government's budget revenue, remains under the direct control of the state. Around 90% of electricity is produced by gas-fired power stations, with the power sector (like the oil and gas sector) being a vertically integrated state monopoly.

That said, although Azerbaijan has largely developed an international image as a 'petrostate' during the three decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union, this does not mean that Baku is not taking the concept of its own energy transition and green transformation seriously. While Azerbaijan has only recently started to liberalise its power market, the country has established a renewable energy agency and has announced a number of large-scale renewable energy investments featuring leading international clean energy companies, particularly from the Gulf.

The government has set ambitious targets to increase power generation based on renewable energy sources, aiming to lessen reliance on gas-generated power and increase the level of generation produced by wind and solar. Azerbaijan is also expanding its energy partnership with the EU, particularly in wind energy, which already accounts for a small proportion of the country's electricity generation. Azerbaijan's energy transition is well underway, although it resembles the transitions of the Gulf States, rather than the countries of the South Caucasus: Baku hosted COP29 at the end of 2024, having succeeded Dubai's largely successful staging of COP28 in December 2023.

Challenges and Prospects for an Energy Transition in the South Caucasus

How will the energy eco-systems of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia look in one generation from now? Will the energy transitions of these countries take them towards carbon neutrality, along the aspirations of the world's states that have adopted net zero as the overriding policy objective of their energy future? Or will fossil fuels continue to play an important role in their economies in the decades to come? Are the energy transitions of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia set to remain individual transitions, independent from their neighbouring South Caucasus states, or are they set to converge into a more integrated, regional transition in the future?

In the ensuing sections, we will analyze the transition towards sustainable energy of the three South Caucasus countries, and assess the further evolution of their energy ecosystems in light of existing challenges and potential obstacles standing in the way. The energy transition, it should be noted from the outset, is not solely about renewable electricity. While the power sector is representative of the one of the largest sources of global emissions and hence contributors to climate change, it is far from being the only one. Decarbonisation of the transport sector remains a major challenge currently being addressed by many governments around the world.

Thus, while Armenia already produces most of its electricity from non-fossil energy sources, its transport sector remains highly reliant on imported fossil fuels – mostly natural gas from Russia, as well as additional supplies from Iran. Whether Yerevan can wean itself away from Russian gas imports is likely to remain an open question for some time and would be driven just as much by geopolitics as by climate frameworks such as the Paris Agreement. This, together with other challenges in modernisation of aging energy infrastructure, will have a substantial impact on Armenia's aspirations to become a climate neutral society.

Similarly, Georgia's state budget is highly dependent on income that it receives from transit tariffs from Azerbaijan, for transiting Azeri oil and gas to international markets across its territory. Large scale oil and gas pipeline projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline were conceived in the 1990s and brought online during the

2000s, while the TANAP gas pipeline running from the Caspian Sea in Azerbaijan across Georgia and Turkey to Europe was added later. These large-scale fossil fuel infrastructure projects have become a mainstay of the Georgian economy and has resulted in the country's substantial dependence on Azeri hydrocarbons across the entire societal-industrial supply chain. Decarbonising the Georgian economy along the pathway to carbon neutrality, despite the country's well documented abundance of hydro energy for power generation, will remain a formidable challenge for years to come.

This will also likely be the case in Azerbaijan, where highly ambitious state programs to promote renewable energy, increase green electricity generation capacity, decarbonise industry and transport, and introduce a swath of energy efficiency measures are juxtaposed to the state's acute dependence on income from the sale of hydrocarbons, particularly natural gas. This is one of the reasons why Azerbaijan has recently introduced a new law on liberalisation of the electricity sector, through which it hopes to attract foreign investment flows into the country's energy sector and to eventually reduce the state's reliance on income generated from the sale of hydrocarbons.

Azerbaijan is also seeking to exploit the wind energy capacity of the Caspian Sea, about which there has been much recent hype within the context of its strategic energy partnership with the EU.

Energy Transition in the South Caucasus: Country Case Studies

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan has recently made important steps in the sphere of green energy transformation. Baku has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the EU² in the energy sphere, which focused on gas supply but also includes renewables. It is expected that alongside expansion of gas exports from Azerbaijan to the EU, Baku will start exporting green energy to the EU as well. The country's top decision makers, including President Ilham Aliyev assert that Azerbaijan's potential for energy generation from wind and solar is close

² Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic Partnership between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Field of Energy. Nov. 7, 2006, Brussels.

to 200 gigawatts (GW).³ Azerbaijan's president is adamant that the country will soon start to export green electricity as well as natural gas to the EU, reinforcing that the wind energy potential of the Caspian Sea alone is equal to 157 GW as a recent press conference with European leaders. Azerbaijan's government is also busy showcasing its recently liberated territories of Karabakh, as well as Eastern Zangezur, designating them as "green energy zones."

The EU, for its part, has also been busy pushing for renewable energy cooperation with Baku, announcing support of up to EUR 2.3 billion to build the Black Sea Strategic Submarine Electricity Cable. This project will allow transmitting energy from Azerbaijan to Central Europe through Georgia and Romania. The funding for the Black Sea cable is part of a larger program worth EUR billion euros for the countries of the Eastern Partnership, which includes multiple transport and communication projects. The program is also part of the EU's Global Gateway initiative, which is aimed at developing new infrastructure across Eurasia.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that Azerbaijan has been actively investing in renewable energy for quite some time. The country aims to generate 30% of its total energy from renewable sources by 2030 and has already implemented several significant projects, with ongoing work in progress. According to the information provided by the Azerbaijan Renewable Energy Agency,⁴ the country currently operates 10 hydropower, 20 small hydropower, 7 wind, 10 solar, and 2 bioenergy power stations. The Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan informs that renewables currently account for 17.3% of the total energy capacity of the country. The potential of renewable energy sources, which are economically viable and technically feasible, is estimated at 27,000 megawatts (MW), including 3,000 MW of wind energy, 23,000 MW of solar energy, 380 MW of bioenergy potential and 520 MW of mountain rivers.⁵

³ "President Aliyev met with the Heads of Leading German Companies", *Office of the President of Azerbaijan* (March 30, 2023), <https://president.az/en/articles/view/59166>.

⁴ Azerbaijan Renewable Energy Agency, "Renewable Energy Stations in Azerbaijan", *Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan*, n. d. <https://area.gov.az/en/page/layiheler/berpa-olunan-enerji-stansiyalari/boem>.

⁵ Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "The Use of Renewable Energy in Azerbaijan", (March 6, 2023), <https://minenergy.gov.az/en/alternativ-ve-berpa-olunan-enerji/azerbaycanda-berpa-olunan-enerji-menbelerinden-istifade>.

To fully utilize this potential, Azerbaijan is actively cooperating with foreign partners. For example, in February 2021, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Energy and British Petroleum (BP), the country's largest foreign investor, signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on assessing the potential for large-scale de-carbonization and the conditions required for integrated energy and transport systems. This collaboration includes evaluating renewable energy projects in various regions and cities throughout Azerbaijan.

It is important to mention that there is great potential to use solar energy in the liberated regions Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur. Zangilan, Jabrayil, Gubadli and Fuzuli are among the best areas in Azerbaijan for solar energy projects based on their climate. The total solar energy potential in these areas is estimated to be over 7,200 MW according to government sources. Research on wind energy in these regions helped to establish that the mountainous parts of Lachin and Kalbajar have excellent wind potential estimated to be around 2,000 MW, according to government sources.

Azerbaijani scientists have also studied the possibility of using geothermal energy in these regions, which can be used for electricity generation, heat supply, and tourism purposes. Recent studies have shown that geothermal sources in the mountainous parts of the Lesser Caucasus can produce up to 4,000–5,000 cubic meters of water per day with temperatures between 30–74°C, enabling heat supply and helping to develop tourism in the regions.

Worth mentioning also are the following noteworthy renewable energy projects currently being developed in Azerbaijan:

Absheron-Khizi Wind Farm

The implementation of this project will result in an additional wind generation capacity of 240MW being integrated into Azerbaijan's power system. It is estimated that this project will supply around 3.7% of the electricity in Azerbaijan's grid capacity, powering 300,000 households and offsetting 400,000 tons of carbon. The project involves US\$ 300 million investment and is expected to be the first privately owned utility scale wind power project in Azerbaijan. The project is being implemented by the Saudi Arabian company, ACWA Power and is expected to play an important role in Azerbaijan's energy diversification plan.

Garadagh Solar Power Plant

According to preliminary estimates, this solar power station will annually generate 500 million kilowatt-hours of electricity. This will allow for savings of 110 million cubic meters of natural gas per year, prevent 200,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions, in addition to supplying 110,000 homes with electricity. The total cost of the project is approximately US\$200 million and is expected to be fully funded by foreign investment (by Masdar, of the UAE).

“Shafag” Solar Power Plant

This is a 240MW solar power plant which is expected to produce approximately 500 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year. It will be located in Zangilan/Jabrail districts of Azerbaijan. The project was already being developed during 2023 and was expected to come on line at the time of writing during 2024, according to the Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan.⁶

This suggests that the government of Azerbaijani is demonstrating a strong commitment towards the development of renewable energy in the country. One of the key objectives appears to be reducing domestic reliance on natural gas in order to increase the volume available for export. Nevertheless, regardless of the underlying motivations, this shift towards green energy is expected to have a positive impact on the country’s ecological landscape and could potentially improve conditions throughout the wider region. With continued investment and dedication, Azerbaijan has the potential to establish itself as a regional leader in the field of renewable energy, providing a good example and motivation for neighbouring countries.

Armenia

The energy system of Armenia is comprised of a set of power plants, electric, heat and gas supply networks, which are interconnected in a continuous process of production, transformation, transmission and distribution of electric and thermal energy. The system is governed by a common regime and a unified management system. Despite the near absence of its own fossil energy sources, Armenia can produce its own electricity on the basis of domestic energy production: Armenian Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), hydropower

⁶ “BP’s *Shafag* SPP in Jabrayil to be put into use in 2024”, *Report News Agency*, (Oct. 20, 2022), <https://report.az/en/energy/bp-s-shafag-spp-in-jabrayil-to-be-put-into-use-in-2024/>.

plants (HPPs) and other renewable energy resources, which cover 30% of its energy needs.

At present, the total installed capacity of electricity production in Armenia is about 3,325 MW, including renewable plants of about 1,564 MW (47%), of which about 966 MW are large HPPs, 389 MW small hydropower plants (small HPPs /up to 30 MW/), 205 MW solar power plants (SPPs) and 4 MW – wind power plants (WPPs). The capacity of the Armenian NPP is about 407 MW (12%) whilst the total capacity of Thermal Power Plants is about 1354 MW (41%).⁷

The electricity produced fully meets domestic demand. It is also exported to neighbouring Georgia and Iran. In recent years (2016–2021), on average, about 7.5 billion kWh per year of electricity was produced in Armenia, of which about 5.3 billion kWh per year was used for domestic consumption, and about 1.3 billion kWh per year was exported. In 2022, electricity production increased by more than 16% (8.91 billion kWh), compared to 2021, while export volumes remained at almost the same level.⁸

Hydro resources are the most widely used among the renewable energy resources. Utilization of the whole hydro potential is achieved by using the existing two major HPPs cascades (Sevan-Hrazdan HPPs Cascade /560 MW total installed capacity and 2.32 billion kWh annual design generation of electricity; consists of 7 HPPs/ and Vorotan HPPs Cascade /404 MW total installed capacity and 1.16 billion kWh annual design generation of electricity; consists of 3 HPPs), construction of three new middle size HPPs and utilization of small HPPs potential.⁹

⁷ Ministry of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources of the Republic of Armenia, *Companies of the System*, n. d. <http://www.minenergy.am/en/page/411>; *Armenia Renewable Resources and Energy Efficiency Fund*, n. d. <https://old.r2e2.am/en/about-r2e2-2/>.

⁸ Strategic Program for the Development of the Energy Sector of the Republic of Armenia (until 2040). Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, No.48-L, 14 January (2021); International Energy Agency, *Armenia Energy Profile* (Paris: International Energy Agency, December 2021); “In 2022, Armenia exported more electricity to Georgia than in the previous 10 years”, *Sputnik News (in Armenian)* (Nov. 1, 2023), <https://arm.sputniknews.ru/20230111/2022-in-hajastany-vrastan-aveli-shat-elektraenergiya-artahanel-qan-nakhvord-10-tarum-53697306.html>.

⁹ Ministry of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources of the Republic of Armenia, *Vorotan HPPs Cascade*, n. d. <http://www.minenergy.am/en/page/533>; *Sevan-Hrazdan*

Small hydropower has become widespread in Armenia. Construction of small HPPs in Armenia is a leading course of action towards development of the renewable energy sector and effort aimed at securing Armenia's energy independence. The majority of small HPPs in Armenia which are designed, under construction or operation are derivational stations on natural water flows. About 13–15% of Armenia's electricity is produced in small HPPs. The purchase of electricity produced at these plants is mandatory in the country.¹⁰ As of October 1, 2023, electricity was generated by 188 small HPPs, with about total 389 MW installed capacity.¹¹ Substantive attention to the development of renewable energy was also granted in the former Nagorno-Karabakh. Before September 2023, the entire energy demand of former Nagorno-Karabakh was covered by about one hundred small HPPs, with 187,5 MW of total power. The per-unit installed power of these HPPs typically vary in the range of 3–50 MW.¹²

Due to the implementation of numerous World Bank and other IFI's supported projects in Armenia during the 2010s, preferential wind, solar and small hydro electricity tariffs were introduced. Necessary changes to the Renewable Energy Law were subsequently made to ensure obligatory purchasing of wind, solar and small hydro electricity from private producers. Furthermore, information, technical and commercial platforms were created in order to support the access of private business to cheap "green" financing. All these projects and efforts covered not only Armenia proper but also the former Nagorno-Karabakh region. As a result of these efforts during the 2010s and early 2020s, installed power of small HPP's in Armenia increased threefold, while installed power of solar PV stations increased by fivefold.

Armenian business remains strongly committed to utilizing natural renewable energy sources. "Green" and renewable energy is a priority for Armenian

Cascade, n. d. <http://www.minenergy.am/en/page/534>.

¹⁰ Energy Law of The Republic of Armenia (21.03.2001 LA-148).

¹¹ Public Services Regulatory Commission of the Republic of Armenia, *Electric Energy. Licensed Companies*, n. d. https://www.psrc.am/contents/fields/electric_energy/el_energy_licensed_companies. (in Armenian language); *Armenia Renewable Resources and Energy Efficiency Fund*, <http://www.minenergy.am/en/page/544>.

¹² Gevorg Petrosyan, Khachik Sahakyan, "The Main Problems of Energy Independence and Security of Armenia, the Ways and Possibilities of Improvement", *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, Yerevan (2021).

business and banking. Furthermore, Armenia has great potential for the development of solar energy. Armenia has also the necessary natural and climatic conditions for the development of wind energy, which was confirmed years ago by a wind energy project implemented jointly with the Netherlands. The windy areas of Armenia are mainly the mountain passes, in particular the Bichanak pass on the border of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, the Sotk pass, the Pushkin pass of the Bazum mountain range and the Karakhach pass northwest of Gyumri.

Until recently, electricity in Armenia was mainly produced from three types of energy supply sources: nuclear, hydro and thermal plants, of which about 35–40% were produced from the NPP and the remaining 55–60% almost equally from hydro and thermal plants. The share of all other plants in the power system was quite low; just 1%. However, in the last 7–8 years and particularly from 2021 onwards, the picture has changed significantly in favour of green energy due to a more active policy aimed at the development of renewable energy in the country. In particular, according to the Statistical Committee of Armenia, 536 million kWh of electricity were produced in SPPs in January–August 2023, which is 9% of the electricity (5.9 billion kWh) produced in Armenia in 8 months of 2023. For comparison, in 2022 the figure was 2.7%.¹³ Armenia has committed itself to reducing greenhouse gas emissions into the environment as well as to increasing energy production from renewable sources.

Within the framework of the Paris Agreement, Armenia's new mitigation target envisages 40% reduction in emissions as compared to 1990 levels and is to be achieved by 2030.¹⁴ Calculations of the target emission indicator for the period up to 2030 are based on the data of the greenhouse gas inventory for 1990–2017, the basic provisions of the Strategic Program for the Development of the Energy Sector of the Republic of Armenia (until 2040), which provides for a more ambitious development of renewable energy sources. For this purpose, around 1,000 MW of SPPs will be built, including autonomous power generation installations, while also introducing market mechanisms to

¹³ Statistics Office of the Republic of Armenia, n. d. <https://www.armstat.am/en/>.

¹⁴ On Approval of the Nationally Determined Contribution 2021–2030 of the Republic of Armenia to Paris Agreement – Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, №610–L, 22 April (2021).

promote the construction of storage plants. Between 2030 and 2040, 500 MW of solar plants will be built, combining them with storage plants as needed.

As for wind farms, the Armenian government will be consistent in the development of these technologies as well and plans, to build small and systemic wind farms with a total capacity of up to 500 MW in the years 2025–2040. In total, by 2040, the capacity of solar and wind plants is planned to be increased to at least 2,000 MW. As a result, the share of electric energy produced using renewable energy resources in the gross final consumption of electric energy in 2030, including large HPPs, will reach about 50% and about 60% by 2040.¹⁵

Armenia is the only country operating a NPP in the South Caucasus. Armenia has the experience not only of operating an NPP in the region, but also of successfully restarting it. Extending the period of operation of the Armenian NPP is one of the main priorities of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, and the construction of a new NPP after the end of that period is the main goal.¹⁶ The construction of a new NPP is also important from the point of view of reducing the level of greenhouse gas emissions, which has been recorded by the European Commission in 2022. The European Commission has determined that nuclear power meets the requirements of the Taxonomy, that is “environmentally sustainable” to meet the objectives of the EU Taxonomy Regulation.¹⁷ The EU taxonomic marking (classification) system has been presented, the purpose of which is to help private investors orient themselves in the direction of sustainable investments in the energy sector.¹⁸

¹⁵ Regarding Changes and Additions to Decision №48-L of January 14, 2021 of The Government of The Republic of Armenia. Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, №1827-L, (Oct. 26 2023).

¹⁶ Strategic Program for the Development of the Energy Sector of the Republic of Armenia (until 2040). Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, №48-L, (Jan. 14, 2021).

¹⁷ Paul Mertenskötter, W. Andrew Jack, et al, “Gas and Nuclear Activities in the EU Taxonomy Regulations: Under What Conditions does the Commission deem them Environmentally Sustainable?” *Covington Inside Energy and Environment*, (Feb. 7, 2022), <https://www.insideenergyandenvironment.com/2022/02/gas-and-nuclear-activities-in-the-eu-taxonomy-regulation-under-what-conditions-does-the-commission-deem-them-environmentally-sustainable/>.

¹⁸ “EU Taxonomy for Sustainable Activities”, n. d. https://finance.ec.europa.eu/sustainable-finance/tools-and-standards/eu-taxonomy-sustainable-activities_en.

It should be also added that the World Bank supports Armenia in the development of a Green Taxonomy in the country. This is an initial step towards the identification, selection and financing of green and sustainable development projects and activities. It is envisaged that one of the biggest areas of this important document will be the section dedicated to the energy sector. Further to Armenia's efforts to journey along the energy transition and transform its energy eco-system, the following major renewable energy projects have been implemented or are currently being planned for implementation in the country:

- Networked wind power plant (the first networked WPP with a total capacity of 2.64 MW was put into operation in Armenia in 2005);
- Solar photovoltaic (PV) power plants construction investment projects, the largest of which is the Ayg-1 PV SPP (installed capacity – 200 MW). The largest project of this kind implemented in Armenia;
- Program for the Promotion of Renewable Energies: German-Armenian Renewable Energy Fund (GAF-RE) Phase IV-V, the Armenia Renewable Energy Development Project is being implemented, one of the objectives of which is to make loans available to private enterprises for the construction of PV SPPs with a capacity of up to 500 kW;
- Armenia Energy Storage Program;
- First Hydrogen Power Plant. There are currently plans to build the first demonstration hydrogen power plant in the country. The project also offers the development, construction, commissioning, and operation of an innovative “smart network” project to produce alternative energy;
- WPPs construction investment project implemented with the support of the Asian Development Bank. According to the results of the studies, it is recommended to deploy WPPs with a capacity of up to 500 MW.¹⁹

From a policy and institutional level, it should be added that Armenia is involved in the formation of the common energy market of the Eurasian Eco-

¹⁹ Ministry of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources of the Republic of Armenia, *Interactive Map of Renewables*, n.d. <https://r2e2.am/map?type=renewable&view=List>.

conomic Union, led by Russia. Nevertheless, Armenia signed a new partnership agreement with the EU in 2017, which also provides opportunities for broad energy cooperation and envisages the gradual implementation of EU energy directives in Armenia (including those related to the development of green energy). The legal basis of this partnership is the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which entered into force on 1 March, 2021.²⁰

Armenia may also join the energy supply project from the South Caucasus through the Black Sea to EU countries, the agreement on the implementation of which was signed on 17 December 2022. This is part of the Global Gateway Initiative.²¹ Further to that, Armenia is actively working on the gradual liberalization of the electricity market, which will likely open up new opportunities and creates favourable conditions for interstate electricity trade. Multiple policy steps are thus currently being taken to allow Armenia to become a fully-fledged platform for mutually beneficial cooperation across all tiers of the energy trade and investment cycle, with a particular focus on transition towards sustainable, clean energy pathways.

Armenia is *de jure* part of the EU Global Gateway program. Based on the results of the meeting in Granada on 5 October 2023, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen adopted a joint statement according to which the European Commission would support Armenia's participation in regional projects such as the Black Sea Electricity Cable.²²

Since independence, the cooperation between Armenia and Georgia has been constantly developing, and on 26 January 2024, a new level of strate-

²⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, *Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the European Union, and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States on the one part, and the Republic of Armenia on the other Part*, n. d. https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/eu/CEPA_ENG_1.pdf.

²¹ European Commission, *The Global Gateway*, n. d. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en.

²² "European Commission to support Armenia's participation in regional projects such as the Black Sea Electricity Cable", *ArmRadio* (Oct. 5, 2023), <https://en.armradio.am/2023/10/05/european-commission-to-support-armenias-participation-in-regional-projects-such-as-the-black-sea-electricity-cable/>.

gic partnership was recorded. The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili signed the declaration “On the Establishment of Strategic Partnership between the Republic of Armenia and Georgia.” This strategic document includes cooperation in infrastructure development and operation.²³ In this context, it is worthwhile reflecting on an excerpt from a recent speech by Armenia’s Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, at the Third Eurasian Congress:

Armenia’s green energy policy is primarily aimed at decarbonizing and limiting greenhouse gas emissions, developing the use of renewable and alternative sources for energy production, stimulating the introduction of energy-efficient and resource-saving technologies, introducing innovative science-intensive technologies, as well as fulfilling the international obligations of countries on the global climate agenda. In this context, I consider the development and maximum use of the potential of renewable energy to be an interesting topic for discussion. Renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and hydropower have enormous potential to drive economic growth and promote sustainable development in the region. By investing in renewable energy, one can contribute to the global efforts to combat climate change. In addition to the development of renewable energy sources, it is also necessary to pay attention to nuclear energy, which is a clean, decarbonized energy. The development of nuclear energy is also important from the point of view of ensuring energy security and independence of the Union countries. To this end, we continue taking steps towards the prospective use of nuclear energy, extending the design life of the 2nd unit of the Armenian NPP and carrying out work on the construction of a new power unit.²⁴

Thus, it can be concluded that Armenia’s energy system is quite diversified. It is also fundamentally important to continue working towards achieving carbon neutrality and moving forward with the energy transition. Building a green economy is an alternative to the dominant economic model, which causes scarcity of resources and poses threats to the environment. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that these topics are firmly included not only in Armenia’s environmental policy context but also in its prevailing economic development agenda. A brief outlook for the further development of renewable energy sources in Armenia is presented in Table 1 below:

²³ “Nikol Pashinyan and Irakli Garibashvili sign Declaration of Establishment of Strategic Partnership between Armenia and Georgia”, *Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia*, Press release, (Jan. 26, 2024), <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2024/01/26/Nikol-Pashinyan-Signing-Documents/>.

²⁴ “Nikol Pashinyan and Irakli Garibashvili sign Declaration...”

Projects	Total Capacity (MW)	Target Date
Small and systemic wind farms construction (combining them with storage plants)	up to 500 MW	2025–2040
Solar and wind plants	2000 MW	2040
The share of electric energy produced using renewable energy sources (<i>in the gross final consumption of electric energy</i>)	Production (%)	
	2030	2040
	50%	60%

Table 1: Expected development of renewable energy sources in Armenia²⁵

Georgia

Green energy and the energy transition is becoming a fundamental part of Georgia's outlook on energy security. While security of supply has always been a key public policy prerequisite in the country, variety of energy sources (in the energy mix) is no less a priority. In fact the two are very closely inter-linked. Georgia has increasingly been embracing efforts to expand the introduction of green energy into its energy balances. The development and implementation of the energy policy is an important prerequisite for achieving the strategic goals set in the field of economic development and energy. The formation of a unified, long-term state vision on the development of the energy sector will become the basis for the development of short, medium and long-term strategies and the ensuing energy programs, and the refinement of the regulatory legal framework.

Overview of the Green Energy Sector

With regard to clean (renewable) or 'green' (sustainable) energy, according to experts' assessment, Georgia has the following energy resources, both actual and potential;

²⁵ Regarding Changes and Additions to Decision №48-L of January 14, 2021 of The Government of The Republic of Armenia. Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, №1827-L, (Oct. 26, 2023).

- Potential hydro resources amounting to 135.8 billion kWh/year, technical potential 81 of billion kWh/year, and economically viable potential of 32 billion kWh/year.²⁶
- Solar radiation equivalent to 108 megawatts of power reaches the territory of Georgia every year.²⁷
- Technical potential of wind energy of 4.5 billion kWh/year;²⁸
- The projected reserve of geothermal waters is 250 million m³.
- 510 MW power can be obtained by biomass processing.²⁹

Table 2, below, shows the composition of different clean energy typologies in the Georgian supply and generation of electricity.

Production (%)	Hydro	Wind	Geothermal	Solar
	75,6%	0,6%	4,88%	1,06%

Table 2: Shared of different types of green energy in Georgia, 2022³⁰

Note: The remaining 17,86% is the share of fuel energy

Hydropower in Georgia

Georgia's hydropower potential is among the best in the world when measured against the total area of the country. In line with the available energy resources, the development of hydropower, including small hydropower, is a priority for Georgia.

There are 26,060 rivers on the territory of Georgia, the total length of which is about 60,000 km. The total fresh water supply of Georgia, which consists of water supplies of glaciers, lakes, and reservoirs, amounts to 96.5 km.³¹ From the total number of rivers, about 300 rivers are distinguished by their energy

²⁶ Environmental Information and Education Centre, *Energy Efficiency, Sector Overview*, (2023), <https://eiec.gov.ge/En/Topics/OverView/11/>.

²⁷ Z. Davitashvili, N. Beruchashvili, N. Elizbarashvili, *Geography of Georgia*, (Tbilisi: Meridiani, 2014).

²⁸ Davitashvili et al, *Geography of Georgia*.

²⁹ Davitashvili et al, *Geography of Georgia*.

³⁰ National Office of Statistics of Georgia, *Energy Balance of Georgia*, (2023), <https://Sakstat.ge>.

³¹ Davitashvili et al, *Geography of Georgia*.

value, whose annual total potential power is equivalent to 15 thousand megawatts, and the average annual energy is equivalent to 50 billion kWh.³² Due to the specificity of Georgian rivers, which are characterized by pronounced seasonality, the distribution of these resources in an annual or multi-year aspect is possible only through the construction of power plants with regulating reservoirs. However, from an ecological point of view, the construction of such power plants is complicated. Therefore, the main emphasis is placed on the construction of hydroelectric plants with small reservoirs.

Growing demand for electricity has forced Georgia to commission new capacities every year. The optimal result until 2030 would be an increase in installed capacity by 5–6% per year. Otherwise, the country will have to compensate for the deficit through imports. If electricity production in 2021 was 12.645 billion kWh, that means an average of 500 megawatts of capacity would need to be added to domestic electricity production each year.³³

In 2022, electricity production was some 14,2 billion kWh. This seems strange since, in 2013–2020 alone, 38 new hydroelectric power stations were put into operation, with an installed capacity of 665 MW. This inconsistency is explained by the fact that the reservoirs of the hydroelectric power station reservoirs were clogged with debris, reducing the hydroelectric power plants capacity by 40–50% of their designed output.³⁴

Most hydroelectric power stations are privately owned and the private owner has no obligation to clean the reservoir from inert material. This was done only at the state-owned Inguri hydroelectric power station. Legislation must address the issue of clogged reservoirs and outdated machinery.

Solar Energy Resources

The sun is an inexhaustible source of energy made available on earth. Nowadays, the increasing pace of development of techniques and technologies

³² Davitashvili et al, *Geography of Georgia*.

³³ Nika Chitadze, “Black Sea Energy Submarine Cable – New Transit Role of Georgia and Sustainability of the Middle Corridor”, *Azerbaijan Today*, (Oct. 2, 2023), <https://azerbaijantoday.az/2023/02/10/black-sea-energy-submarine-cable-new-transit-role-of-georgia-and-sustainability-of-the-middle-corridor/?fbclid=IwAR28bCBtFt0fX M1Njbq4VCrCX4cOJNstH8P2JqGIHCKZyqZpnRhWMhrcGXk>.

³⁴ Chitadze, “Black Sea Energy Submarine Cable...”

allows us to use these energies more efficiently than it was possible in previous years. By using solar energy plants, it is possible to convert solar energy into thermal or electrical energy. Therefore, there is a difference between solar thermal plants and solar photovoltaic cells (solar panels). The heat and electricity obtained from these devices can be used for both domestic and industrial purposes. The efficiency of the device depends on solar radiation (the angle and amount of rays falling on the working surface) and the efficiency of the device.

The use of solar energy is advantageous and economically justified for Georgia. This is due to the geographical location of the country, which makes solar radiation high. In most parts of the country there are 250–280 sunny days (or about 6,000–6,780 sunny hours) per year. During the year, solar energy, direct radiation on a surface of 1 sqm perpendicular to the sun's rays is in the range of 1,300–2,500 kWh, which exceeds the European average of 1,000 kWh/m² per year. The maximum radiation is in the high mountain zone, in the central part of the Great Caucasus.³⁵

The development of solar plants in Georgia is currently in the pipeline, but their roll out would require quite large land masses: a one megawatt solar plant needs two hectares of land. Georgia has unique climatic conditions, where it is possible to grow expensive crops, and quality lands must remain for agricultural purposes. Solar stations should be built in regions where the atmosphere's resistance to sunlight is less due to the drying of the air, and therefore the solar panels will generate more energy. The practice of different countries showed that solar plants installed in high mountains produce 10–20% more energy.

It would also be pragmatic to install solar panels on the roofs of multi-apartment residential buildings and administrative buildings. There are more than 20,000 such buildings in Tbilisi alone, with a total roof area of about 20 million square meters. Using this area for solar power plants would create 1,000 megawatts of power. It is possible to create 1,500 megawatts of power throughout Georgia. Here we do not count the roof area of industrial and

³⁵ M. Devidze, *Solar Energy of Georgia: Problems, Challenges and Necessary Arrangements*, (Berlin: Heinrich Boell Foundation, 2020).

warehouse buildings, on which solar plants are slowly being installed with private investments. The state can develop a specific program, where the state (municipality) and the population will cooperate in co-financing solar projects.³⁶

Wind Energy Resources

Georgia has significant potential for wind energy as the average annual production of electricity is approximately 4 billion kWh and the installed capacity is estimated at 1,500 MW. According to the natural energy potential of the wind, the territory of Georgia is divided into high, medium, and low-speed zones, where the wind speed varies from 2.5 m/s to 9.0 m/s per year, the duration of working time is 4,000–5,000 hours per year. Seven years ago, the Kartli wind power plant located near the city of Gori was put into operation, and its generated energy is enough to supply nearly 25,000 families.³⁷ The project was implemented with the help of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the EU. The investment cost of the project was 26.4 million euros.³⁸

Despite the great potential and advantages of wind power plants, there are still negative circumstances and difficulties surrounding their deployment. For example, it is impossible to build such types of power stations in any desirable location and necessary to conduct thorough research with regards to location suitability in advance. Further, there are frequent cases when it becomes necessary to cut down the forest massif in the vicinity of the station to increase the efficiency of the station.

Accordingly, the best places for the location of wind power plants should be selected throughout Georgia and the experience of the Gori wind power plant should be considered as much as possible for building new wind power plants in the country. In this regard it should be underlined that the Gori wind power station was commissioned on December 20, 2016, and consists of 6 wind turbines, each of which has a capacity of 3.45 MW. In total, the installed capacity of the power plant is 20.7 megawatts. 84.1 million kWh of electricity can be produced per year.³⁹

³⁶ Devidze, *Solar Energy of Georgia*...

³⁷ Devidze, *Solar Energy of Georgia*...

³⁸ Environmental Information and Education Centre, *Energy Efficiency, Sector Overview*.

³⁹ N. Amiranashvili, *Gori wind power plant – renewable energy source in Georgia*, Fund of the Energy Development of Georgia, (2018).

Overall, it can be said that Georgia largely depends on imported energy resources. In terms of natural gas and oil products, dependence on imports is more than 95%. However, if the supply of petroleum products is more or less equally diversified, in the case of natural gas, Azerbaijan is the dominant supplier with a share of about 80%.⁴⁰ Therefore, it should be noted that with the maximum use of hydro, solar, and wind resources, Georgia can become fully autonomous in terms of meeting its own needs with electricity. Moreover, if hydro resources, “liquid coal” technology, and other renewable energy sources are utilized in a planned manner, it will also become a major exporter of electricity. This task can be solved today not only through the construction of new capacities but also by cleaning the bottom of the existing water-reservoir hydroelectric power plants.

Optimistic grounds for the development of the green energy sector in Georgia are provided by the fact that 64 power plants with a total installed capacity of 1209 MW and an investment of 1.896 billion have been put into operation in Georgia over the last 10–12 years.⁴¹

Georgia-EU Energy Cooperation

The primary mechanisms for the establishment of Georgia-EU energy relations have their origins in the 1990s. The first legal form of the relationship between the parties was the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) signed in 1996, Article 56 of which dealt with energy cooperation.⁴² Leaving aside the initial forms of the relationship, currently the EU-Georgia energy cooperation framework combines several main platforms and includes the following instruments: the European Neighbourhood Policy document of 2004; the Eastern Partnership Initiative approved in 2009; the Association Agreement signed in 2014; and Georgia’s membership of the Energy Community Treaty (2004), signed in 2016.

⁴⁰ N. Chitadze, *World Geography: Political, Economic and Demographic Dimensions*, (Tbilisi: Scholars Press, 2017).

⁴¹ Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, “Romeo Mikautadze Congratulated Energy Sector Employees on Professional Day”, (2023), <https://www.economy.ge/?page=news&nw=2333&lang=en>.

⁴² Tamar Bukmanian, “The backbone of this country’s economy is energy and it should have a separate ministry – Maia Melikize”, *Business Press News* (in Georgian) (Sept. 11, 2023), <https://www.bpn.ge/article/113712-am-kveqnis-ekonomikis-xerxemali-energetikaa-damas-unda-hkondes-calke-saministro-maia-melikize> (in Georgian).

It is significant that one of the three main thematic platforms of the Eastern Partnership is directly related to energy (more precisely, energy security) and calls for cooperation of the parties in the fields of electric power, natural gas, oil, renewables and green energy, and energy efficiency.⁴³

Electric Cable Project

Electricity generation is starting to gain more and more significance in Georgia as a result of increasing momentum in the sphere of international and regional cooperation. This includes initiatives such as the Georgia and EU 2022 announcement referring to the laying of a 1,000 MW power cable along the bottom of the Black Sea, which intends to connect the power systems of the South Caucasus with Europe. As it stands at the moment, a large part of the natural gas received from Azerbaijan through the TANAP and TAP gas pipelines is used by EU recipient countries to generate electricity by thermal power plants. The Black Sea electric cable would create an opportunity to export electricity directly from the South Caucasus, since the existing gas pipeline systems cannot meet the increased demand for gas, and its modernization in terms of increasing capacity requires a lot of investment and would take several years.

The high-voltage transmission line along the bottom of the Black Sea might be the next mega-project that Georgia will implement together with the EU. The project involves a powerful power transmission line that should connect the electrical systems of Georgia and Romania, that is, the South Caucasus and the EU. It is widely understood that electricity purchase prices in the EU are much higher than in the Caucasus region, so the implementation of this project would give a serious push to the development of the electricity industry in the entire Caucasus. This push is already visible, as the Georgian government has already announced its readiness to support 1,500 MW of new electricity generation projects already agreed with investors, which will be financed by the European Bank for Development and Reconstruction on favourable credit terms.

The first auction ended on March 27, 2023 and 24 companies won. Investors have committed to the construction of 300 megawatts of renewable energy generating facilities, in which more than US\$2 billion are expected to be in-

⁴³ I. Samkharadze, *Europeanization of renewable energy legislation In Georgia: Challenges and Opportunities*, (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University, 2019).

vested. Of these, 150 MW will be hydroelectric plants, 70 MW will be wind plants, 70 MW will be solar plants, and 10 MW will be plants working on other renewable energy sources. It should be noted that for the 300-megawatt construction capacity presented by the government, a total of 900-megawatt applications were received, which means that the 1,500-megawatt power plants planned under this project will be fully utilized.⁴⁴

Direct access to the European market is strategically very important for Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Azerbaijan and Armenia both have a surplus of electricity generation and can use the Georgian grid to export electricity to Europe. Theoretically, it is also possible to build a trans-Caspian power transmission line from Central Asia, which will also participate in electricity trade with the EU via the South Caucasus. Currently, the technical and economic study of the project is being conducted under the patronage of the World Bank.

Conclusion

We have demonstrated in some level of detail in this paper that the countries of the South Caucasus region – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – are well on the way along their pathways of the energy transition. The summary case studies of the three countries shows a plethora of renewable energy projects which have either long been implemented or are currently in the pipeline of new energy generation projects being brought online. Most of these (projects currently in the development pipeline) are supported by foreign investors and international financial agencies, or the donor community more broadly. Policy momentum in all three countries favors renewable energy, as international donors tend to increasingly support renewables at the expenses of fossil fuels. Donors tend to work more closely with Armenia and Georgia than Azerbaijan, although all three countries are further brought in line with international momentum in favor of clean energy transformations because of regional cooperation initiatives and global pacts such as the Paris Agreement on Climate.

⁴⁴ “24 companies won in the first auction of electricity production capacity”, *Georgian Business (sic) Consulting*, (Apr. 28, 2023), <https://gbc.ge/index.php/news/economics/elenergiis-tsarmoebis-simdzlavrish-pirvel-auqtionshi-24-ma-kompaniam-gaimarjva>.

However, although the countries of the South Caucasus are embracing the transition towards cleaner and more sustainable energy ecosystems, we have also tried to emphasize in this paper that the transition underway is specific to each country. This is largely due to the diversity of the energy systems of each of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – both in terms of the structure of their energy systems as well as the evolution of their domestic reform programs. In this context, Armenia and Georgia share many similarities. Both countries already produce much of their electricity from clean energy sources (hydro in the case of Georgia; hydro and nuclear in the case of Armenia) which has been in evidence for much of their independent statehood following the disbandment of the Soviet Union.

Both countries reformed (liberalized) their economies quite early on, retrenching state control of key energy assets, opening their markets to foreign investment and working closely with donors and international financial institutions. However, both remain highly dependent on fossil fuels – Armenia in the case of imported Russian gas to operate its transport sector while Georgia is equally dependent on imported Azeri oil and gas for its vehicle fleets. Moreover, Tbilisi remains even more dependent on revenues paid into the state budget for transiting large volumes Azeri oil and gas through its territory to international markets. These structural features of the Armenian and Georgian economies will need to change dramatically if these countries are to become carbon neutral, whilst also continuing to secure their energy supplies.

Azerbaijan, for its part, has only started to liberalize its energy sector, with a new law on electricity coming into force on 1 January 2024 aiming to break up the country's state owned, vertically integrated power sector monopoly and introducing new market rules empowering competition. The new law envisages that Azerbaijan's electricity market will become liberalized (and hence open to competition) over three phases between 2024–28. The government hopes that this will lead to an influx of foreign investment, leading to more power generated from renewables, whilst also reducing the share of gas in electricity generation. The government also hopes that liberalization of the power market and more foreign investment coming into the country will reduce the Azeri state's dependence on oil revenues, whilst at the same time freeing up more gas for export. While this is arguably the right strategy from a fiscal finance perspective, it is likely to evolve over time and to be

implemented gradually. Azerbaijan's energy transition, drawing no shortage of inspiration from the experience of the Gulf States, is likely to be a marathon and not a sprint.

As regards to market integration at the regional, South Caucasus level, it is worth noting that Azerbaijan and Georgia already have experience of collaborating on different energy projects, including the Southern Gas Corridor and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. By jointly undertaking renewable energy ventures, these countries can further reinforce their energy ties. The challenge for the region now is how to integrate Armenia into a wider, regional-level cooperation framework into both the renewable and conventional energy sphere, given that a peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan is yet to be reached. Although a peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan is likely to take time, there are no shortage of proponents of the idea that Armenia and Azerbaijan could already consider some joint, pilot energy projects as confidence building measures, particularly in the Karabakh region, over which Azerbaijan has recently restored its sovereignty. There is no shortage of further projects – in energy, transport and renewables – that the countries could start to consider developing jointly, bringing Georgia into the fray as well. The Energy Charter Treaty, despite the chaotic withdrawal from the structure by the European Union, remains in force in the South Caucasus and is available to provide investor guarantees.

There are already some positive signals of dialogue and contact between Baku and Yerevan on cooperation in the sphere of energy. External actors should aid – rather than hinder – these processes. The region is no stranger to a geopolitical divide, and it is high time for energy to work as a force for peace and economic development rather than rivalry and persistent antagonism. The South Caucasus region has the potential to become a leader in renewable energy production and therefore provide a cleaner and more sustainable future for ensuing generations. Such an opportunity should not be missed.

Demographic Challenges and Remedies in the South Caucasus

Tatoul Manasserial

Introduction

A long and stable security architecture guaranteeing human resilience in the South Caucasus will not be achieved without a careful analysis of risks, challenges and threats related more specifically to demographic security. All three nations in this region face relatively similar demographic security challenges. For the purposes of our analysis, we have identified demographic security as an essential part of economic security that deals with the reduction and elimination of threats related to the changes in human population. More specifically, it deals with overpopulation, aging, urbanization, migration, brain drain, and declining birth rates, to name a few.

In this paper we examine the main challenges faced by the Republic of Armenia, and we shall draw parallels with the challenges faced by neighbouring Azerbaijan and Georgia to propose strategies that could be implemented jointly to tackle their common threats. Given the common nature of challenges, common efforts are required from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to design solutions to eliminate these challenges.

We have examined various approaches and projects of governments, professional societies of our nations, as well as reports, concepts, and indices of international organizations to better understand the current trends that challenge positive growth. Scholarly arguments and methods are carefully considered during the review of expert papers and other literature sources to justify the points highlighted in this study. Some policy recommendations are formulated to support the expected joint efforts of decision-makers in the South Caucasus.

Trends and Challenges

The global human population has been replicated six times over on Earth since the year 1800.¹ It began to multiply fast at some stage during the Industrial Revolution. In 1650 the absolute number of people in the world was around 500 million, and within two centuries it had doubled. By 1930, the population increased to 2 billion, in 1950 around to 2.5 billion people.² Thus, in less than 40 years the global population came close to 4 billion. By adding more than 215,000 people to the world's population daily according to Bleier³ and 95 million annually according to Irvine,⁴ or 800 million people in a decade, it results to more than 8.5 billion people in 2025.⁵ This rapid population growth puts a significant burden on the land, as space becomes scarce not only for humans but for fauna as well. Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan are no exceptions to this trend. Furthermore, there are socio-economic consequences to population growth. Each year it becomes harder to create new jobs, to provide social benefits and to improve living conditions, particularly in developing countries. Unfortunately, the population growth and population ageing will become the norm for the coming years. Population ageing is only one of the South Caucasus trends that turned into a global concern. Population ageing has become a major threat to demographic security. Moreover, many regional problems like growing nationalism, racism, ethnic and religious conflicts, increasing military spending, environmental degradation, polarization of society, as well as global social and political problems are being presented as direct consequences of uncontrolled human fertility. According to A.J. Aitken:

As societies become more prosperous, there are impacts on fertility from all sides: social, economic, environmental, and biological. Skilled labour shortages and crippled aged care sectors are just the beginning. Managing the social, political, and

¹ Ronald Bleier, "Full House? Is lower population growth due to misery?" <http://desip.igc.org/Monster.html>.

² Bleier, "Full House?".

³ Bleier, "Full House?".

⁴ Sandy Irvine, "The Cornucopia Scam: Contradictions of Sustainable Development, Part 2: Misconceptions About Fundamental Causes", *Wild Earth*, (Winter 1994/95): 72–82.

⁵ Population Reference Bureau, *World Population Data Sheet*, (Washington DC, 2018), https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2018_World-Population-data-sheet.pdf.

economic ramifications of uncontrolled population decline as well as the concomitant shift in age structure will be extremely challenging.⁶

Methodology and Literature Review

This study uses methods developed by the science of demography including the cohort method, the cross-sectional analysis method, the standardization method for demographic coefficients, the demographic modelling method, the cartographic method, the demographic grid method, and the demographic forecast method. Demographic events can be of two types; non-recurring, which can occur once in an individual's life, and repetitive that can occur multiple times. Demographic processes are those excluding individuals from the original number of cohorts' (death, divorce) processes, and not excluded individuals from the initial size of the cohort (marriage, birth rate). Longitudinal and transverse methods make it possible to compare the reproduction of several generations. This is important both for historical demography and for demographic and social forecasting to adjust the social policy design. The method of standardization of demographic coefficients allows, when comparing demographic coefficients, to determine the influence of structural features for comparing demographic communities. This method uses the data of a particular year. Demographic coefficients are calculated and taken as a standard and an index is developed in relation to the standard and by multiplying this index by the indicators of the standard. Thus, standardized demographic coefficients are obtained, which are used to compare demographic aggregates (to determine the mortality rate by social groups, birth rate). The method of demographic modelling is the most common method for predicting reproductive processes. This method replaces the experimental method, whenever it is not applicable. The demographic modelling method is used to study demographic processes and reproduction. The cartographic method is also widely used. Maps of settlements, population density, age composition, population movement are used. It allows to compare demographic conditions and processes across territories, in our study – in all three Caucasian nations. This study uses demographic forecasting based on the analysis of current trends and developments, considering population

⁶ Robert J. Aitken, "What is driving the global decline of human fertility? Need for a multidisciplinary approach to the underlying mechanisms – Review Article", *Frontiers of Reproductive Health* 6, (April 24, 2024), <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frph.2024.1364352/full>.

ageing, fertility and mortality rates, as well as urbanization and migration. This method allows us to predict and assess certain components of population change, comparing their impact on the size and structure of the population in the future.

Several complex studies have been instrumental in determining and defining the issues revolving around demographic security in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Such works are from V. Tovmasyan, R. Yeganyan, A. Hovhannisyan, S. Tivodar, M. Khmaladze, N. Chitadze (in this volume), A. Samadov, N. Verdiyeva, S. Nagiyev and others. The plurality of interpretations regarding the concept of sovereignty and security in international law and the theory of international relations are expressed in the work of B. Ronald, F. Hiatt, and G. Musikhin, among others, who propose a solution to demographic problem both in line with legal and regulatory considerations, and from the standpoint of an interdisciplinary approach to the theoretical justifications of this concept.

Diagnosis of Challenges

Wars, Refugees, Diseases

As mentioned by Alex Marshall,

armies and civil societies are not guaranteed a new outbreak of attacks with intensive use of weapons of different generations and origin. Therefore, it is hard to underestimate the role of wars in decelerating the world population growth. According to some calculations in 1950–1962 around ten wars erupted worldwide with one thousand and more deaths. During the next twenty years this number of deaths had almost doubled, then mushroomed fast in 1983 up to thirty and did not decrease since then, including fifty and more countries particularly in 1990–1994.⁷

The new millennium did not indicate any progress in the reduction of wars. The populations of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, suffered a lot after gaining independence in the early 1990s and continue to face deaths, and generate high numbers of refugees. The number of refugees residing in Armenia has grown since 1990 and exceeded one million before the 2000s. This trend is still present even in 2020–2023 due to the third Karabakh war that began on September 27th, 2023.

⁷ Alex Marshall, *The Caucasus under Soviet Rule*, (London: Routledge, 2010).

One of the most recent developments is that a number of refugees and migrants from Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan have become victims of conflicts and wars in other countries. Particularly, the war in Ukraine resulted in the loss of life not only among combatants from the involved nations, but also among many Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijani soldiers. The number of Armenians killed in Ukraine since the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022 is estimated to be around 50,⁸ 37 Georgians⁹ and 25 to 125 Azerbaijanis.¹⁰

One of the detrimental outcomes of political and economic changes in neighbouring countries are the economic refugees which are extremely hard to measure while it is estimated that more than 100 million people globally have been compelled to migrate in search for a better life.¹¹ Moreover, the most qualified skilled laborers decided to leave their homeland seeking a better life with higher incomes. Hence, the most common threat to demographic security in the South Caucasus is the “brain drain”, with negative consequences to human development and economic growth. The deceleration of global population growth is also caused by infectious diseases (COVID-19, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, etc.) that increase the mortality rates and diminishing birth rates in Armenia and Georgia.

All South Caucasian countries have dealt with demographic security threats caused by COVID-19. According to the WHO, from January 2020 to July, 2023 in Armenia there were 449,263 cases of confirmed COVID-19 infections, with 8,751 resulting in fatalities. Similarly, in Georgia there were 1,845,538 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 17,101 resulting in death, while in Azerbaijan 831,983 cases were confirmed, with 10,288 deaths.¹²

⁸ Kristina Marabyan, “How many Armenians were killed during one year of war in Ukraine”, *JNews*, (March 1, 2023), <https://jnews.ge/?p=106084>; <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/31789073.html> (date of access: 14 July 2024).

⁹ “Another Georgian fighter killed in Ukraine”, *Civil.ge*, (July 28, 2023), <https://civil.ge/archives/553583>.

¹⁰ “How many Azerbaijani soldiers were killed since the beginning of war in Ukraine”, *Media.az*, <https://media.az/society/1067917867/skolko-azerbaydzhancev-pogiblo-v-ukraine-s-nachala-voyny-video/>; <https://report.az/en/incident/number-of-azerbaijanis-killed-or-went-missing-during-ukraine-war-revealed/> (date of access: 14 July 2024).

¹¹ Hal Kane, *The Hour of Departure: Forces that Create Refugees and Migrants*, (Washington: Worldwatch Institute, 1995).

¹² World Health Organization, “Number of Cases reported to WHO: Azerbaijan” <https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/az>.

Armenia

All three countries of South Caucasus face the challenge of mass migration, particularly, after the break-up of the Soviet Empire. Following the declaration of independence in 1990, Armenia was confronted with several demographic challenges, including mass migration and a continuous brain drain despite several initiatives designed to reverse these trends.¹³ Nevertheless, these issues remain unresolved and continue to challenge the current and future governments. According to a study from the Caucasus Research Resource Centre-Armenia Foundation (CRRC-Armenia), insecurity and unemployment are among the key drivers to mass migration. It is also important to note that many of those who left the country chose to do so *temporarily*, with only one third of them indicating that they would remain abroad for an extended period of time or permanently.¹⁴

A comprehensive study conducted by the European Training Foundation analyzed the reasons for migration as well as the reasons for return, as revealed by those who returned to Armenia and Georgia. These reasons were: have no job/cannot find job in home country, unsatisfactory wage and career prospects in home country/better prospects abroad, to get education or training, to accompany/follow spouse and/or parents abroad or get married, to improve standard of living, to repay debts, to join relatives or friends abroad, to finance children's education or training, inadequate social security system in home country, fear of war/civil conflict/persecution, other primarily negative reason related to home country (push factor), other primarily positive reason related to destination (pull factor).¹⁵

¹³ The “2014–2025 Strategic Plan for Perspective Development of the RA” suggests that Armenia’s scientific community has particularly suffered since the fall of the Soviet Union. Recent studies find employment is a major driver for people leaving the country. Another study by the International Organization for Migration recommended several steps to reduce migration, including improved education, greater employment opportunities, efforts to address inequality, and cooperation with the diaspora.

¹⁴ Caucasus Research Resource Center-Armenia Foundation (CRRC-Armenia) “Capturing migration in Armenian and regional contexts”, June 23, 2022, <https://www.crrc.am/publications/capturing-migration-in-the-armenian-and-regional-contexts/> (date accessed: July 13, 2024).

¹⁵ European Training Foundation, “Migration and skills in Armenia and Georgia comparative report”, (2013), 24–27.

The human flight and brain drain index considers the economic impact of human displacement and the consequences this may have on a country's development. The higher the index, the greater the human displacement.¹⁶ The average value for Armenia in the period from 2007 to 2023 was 6.45 index points, with a minimum of 5.7 index points in 2014 and a maximum of 7.2 index points in 2023.¹⁷

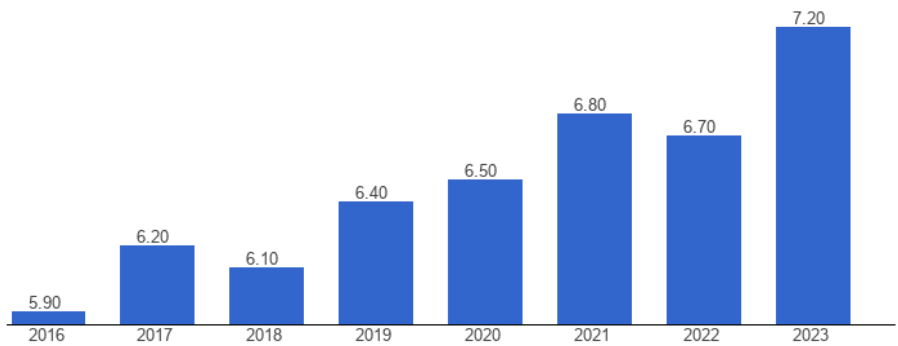


Chart 1. Armenia's values chart¹⁸

As illustrated in the chart, human displacement was relatively low in 2016, whereas the last few years are characterized with a higher index which is obviously the consequence of Azerbaijan's attacks and abandonment of Nagorno Karabakh in 2019–2023 as 120,000 people were forced to leave their homes. As reported by the Global Economy,

the average value for Armenia during that period was 6.41 index points with a minimum of 5.7 index points in 2014 and a maximum of 7 index points in 2010. The latest value from 2022 is 6.7 index points. For comparison, the world average in 2022, based on 177 countries, is 5.21 index points.¹⁹

¹⁶ The Global Economy, *Armenia: Human flight and brain drain*, n. d. https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Armenia/human_flight_brain_drain_index/.

¹⁷ For comparison, the world average in 2023 based on 177 countries is 5.17 index points. See the global rankings for that indicator at: <https://www.theglobaleconomy.com> (date accessed: July 13, 2024).

¹⁸ *Armenia: Human flight and brain drain*.

¹⁹ *Armenia: Human flight and brain drain*.

Georgia

According to Global Voices, Georgia faces problems similar to Armenia mainly due to incomplete reforms in education and motivating environment in local labour market.²⁰ Despite the skills and knowledge they have, some young people are unable to find proper jobs in their home country. Some seek job opportunities in neighbouring countries or even outside the region. This is a common problem both for young men and women as currently the

country's employment market is limited in scope. There are fields where employment is practically impossible to find or it is impossible to get a decent salary, therefore, specialists who find themselves in other countries and see their own professional success there, in the long term, obviously, are leaving their homeland.²¹

Among other factors, Georgia's education system also seems to be less suitable in terms of skill-building infrastructure that compels youth to adapt themselves in a foreign environment as "Georgia is not characterized by a lot of technological infrastructure, which creates the most relevant 'pull factors' in the process of brain drain."²² The latest value from 2022 is 5.8 index points slightly above the global average of 5.21 index points.

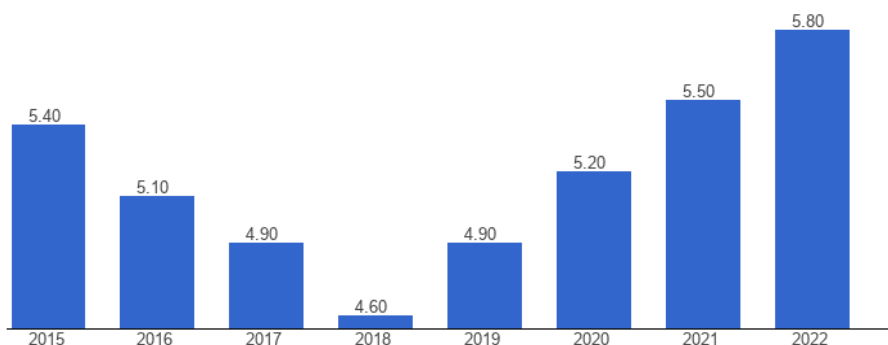


Chart 2. Georgia's recent values chart²³

²⁰ Arzu Gubellayeva, "The Southern Caucasus has a brain drain problem", *Global Voices*, (Jan. 19, 2023), <https://globalvoices.org/2023/01/19/the-southern-caucasus-has-a-brain-drain-problem/>.

²¹ Gubellayeva, "The Southern Caucasus has a brain drain problem."

²² Gubellayeva, "The Southern Caucasus has a brain drain problem."

²³ The Global Economy, *Georgia Human Flight, Brain Drain Index*, n. d. https://www.the-globaleconomy.com/Georgia/human_flight_brain_drain_index/.

As can be seen from the chart, 2018 was a relatively stable period in terms of the mentioned index. However, human displacement in Georgia went up to 5.80 and is still high with a slight trend to stabilize after 2021.

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan is also experiencing brain drain. It implements support programs that ensure that the most knowledgeable and skilled people will remain in the country. Such programs include, but are not limited to, state subsidies and scholarships for students from the most vulnerable demographic groups, as well as the encouragement and involvement of a significant number of young people in international exchanges. Additionally, more talented students may also be eligible for state support contingent upon their return to Azerbaijan after the completion of their studies abroad. This, in turn, allows many of these individuals to utilize their expertise not only in the most competitive branches of the economy and in the private sector, but also to pursue their career in the public sector. A special program has been developed with sufficient funding for the education of

up to 400 students a year who have been accepted to select bachelor's and master's programs abroad. To date, out of 673 applicants, only 80 were selected for a bachelor's degree program and 149 for a master's degree. Similar to previous government-sponsored scholarship programs, students are expected to return to Azerbaijan and work for a five-year period upon the completion of their studies. However, education and migration specialists have warned that this initiative falls short of addressing the myriad reasons causing brain drain. Chief among the reasons for this is the lack of *employment opportunities* for recent graduates as well as the lack of quality education provided at home.²⁴

No precise data exists regarding the emigration and the brain drain from Azerbaijan. However, it is not uncommon that stakeholders in the above-mentioned program to be unwilling to return to their homeland when they compare the prospects for growth and the anticipated income in their country with the possibilities that are opened up for them abroad. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, there is a 4% unemployment rate among the young people between the ages of 20 and 25. As Ulkar, one of the beneficiaries mentioned

²⁴ Gubellayeva, "The Southern Caucasus has a brain drain problem."

I would love to work in Azerbaijan if I could actually make a difference... one of the reasons I wanted to leave Azerbaijan in the first place was because there was so much injustice and unfairness when it comes to so many things. It is so demotivating, and I don't want that [injustice] to happen to me... I don't want to be stuck there looking for a job.²⁵

The latest value for Azerbaijan is 4.4 index points, far below the world average during 2022, but has suffered an important increase since 2018.²⁶

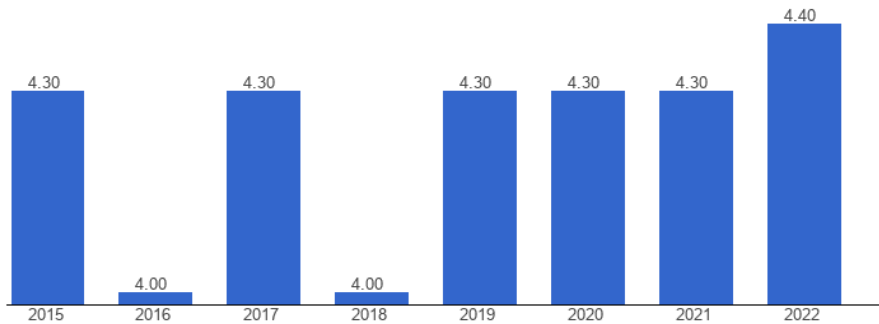


Chart 3. Azerbaijan's recent values chart.²⁷

Population Ageing in the South Caucasus

Another threat to demographic security in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia is the ageing of the population. This, however, can be viewed as part of a wider global trend. According to UN data, the world's population of elderly is growing at the fastest rate in history. The number of individuals aged 65 and older had reached approximately 761 million as of 2021. This figure is expected to exceed 1.6 billion by 2050, according to the UN's World Social Report 2023.²⁸ Nevertheless, small and developing nations as Armenia,

²⁵ Gubellayeva, "The Southern Caucasus has a brain drain problem."

²⁶ The Global Economy, *Azerbaijan human flight and brain drain index*, n. d. https://www.the-globaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/human_flight_brain_drain_index/ (date accessed: July 14, 2024).

²⁷ *Azerbaijan human flight and brain drain index*.

²⁸ United Nations, *World Social Report 2023*, (New York: UN Press Office, 2023), <https://www.un.org/development/ent/desa/dspd/2023/01/world-social-report-2023/> (date accessed: July 14, 2024).

Georgia and Azerbaijan are perceived to be more vulnerable to population ageing than others.

The average number of years of life expectancy in Armenia is 76.2 years.²⁹ According to Ms. Anna Hovhannisyan, coordinator of demographic programs at UN Population Fund Armenia (UNPFA), Armenia is among the countries with a rapidly aging population. According to the UN scale, if the share of elderly people in the overall number of country's population exceeds 7%, that country is considered to be ageing. In Armenia, this proportion is about 14 percent, indicating that Armenia is among the countries with ageing population. Such a phenomenon is inherent in all those countries where the total fertility index is low and tends to decrease. "According to UN Population Fund projections, by 2050, the proportion of the elderly population will reach 22–24%. This means that one in four or five in Armenia will be a pensioner."³⁰ According to the same source, "the decrease in the annual growth rate of Armenia is expected to continue in the coming years, beginning to see a decrease in numbers as soon as the year 2024."³¹

By the year 2050 the net migration will be at least 5,000 annually, while the birth rate will remain below the worldwide average, at close to 1.51. These figures are not conducive to growth. If these factors remain as expected, the annual growth rate will decline to -0.47% by 2050, and the projected population of Armenia will be roughly 2,907,463 in 2030, 2,818,399 in 2040 and 2,600,184 by 2050.³²

The population of Georgia is rapidly ageing as the share of older people is growing, life expectancy is rising, and both of these trends are projected to continue throughout this century. Life expectancy in Georgia is estimated to be 72.43 years.³³ These trends lead to economic, social, health care, and environmental challenges. An important challenge for policymakers in the

²⁹ "Armenia is among countries with rapidly aging population", *ARKA News Agency*, (April 20, 2024), https://arka.am/en/news/society/armenia_is_among_countries_with_rapidly_aging_population/ (date accessed: July 14, 2024).

³⁰ "Armenia is among countries with rapidly aging population."

³¹ "Armenia is among countries with rapidly aging population."

³² "Armenia is among countries with rapidly aging population."

³³ Worldometer, *Georgia Population (Live)*, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/georgia-population/>.

country is to enable labour markets to respond to the economic and social consequences of an ageing population. According to official statistics, 15% of the economically active population is unemployed, and a significant number of unemployed individuals are thought to be hidden in the self-employed category. Economic growth strategies pursued by the government must create paid employment, while focusing on generating new and diversified opportunities for all workers, including those of older age. According to official statistics, in 2012, around 42% of the population aged 65 and over was economically active. Most of these people live in rural areas, with 84 percent of those aged 65 and over self-employed and working as subsistence farmers. These people, given the low productivity of the agricultural sector, often do not have sufficient resources to meet their needs. Government programs should therefore help older people to become more productive in their agricultural activities, thereby increasing overall production.

Age discrimination is a problem in the Georgian labour market, where those in their late forties and above are seen as lacking dynamism, efficiency, and skills.³⁴ Those approaching retirement age who are unemployed have no income since they do not enjoy social benefits. They may accumulate debt and have no possibility to save for later when they may no longer be able to work. The number of pensioners per thousand population can be used to detect regional differences in ageing in Georgia. Lechkumi is the region with the highest share of pensioners, with 232 pensioners for every 1,000 people. This is followed by Guria and Imereti with 183 and 172 pensioners for every 1,000 people.³⁵ The most recent available census data are from late 2014; 86.8% of residents – 3.22 million people – described themselves as Georgians, followed by Azerbaijani – 233,000 people (6.3%); Armenian – 168,100 (4.5%); Russian – 26,500 (0.7%); Ossetian – 14,400 (0.4%).³⁶

In 2012 net migration was strongly negative, at -21.5, while in the three previous years, the rate was positive: 20.2 (2011) 18.1 (2010) 34.2 (2009).

³⁴ United Nations Economic Cooperation in Europe (UNECE), *Road Map for Mainstreaming Ageing in Georgia*, (2015), https://unece.org/sites/default/files/datastore/fileadmin/DAM/pau/ggp/publications/Roadmap-Georgia/Executive_summary.pdf.

³⁵ UNECE, *Road Map for Mainstreaming Ageing in Georgia*.

³⁶ “Sakstat Releases Final Results of 2014 Census”, *Civil.ge*, n. d. <https://civil.ge/archives/124561> (date accessed: July 13, 2024).

Population, 2010	4,389 000
Population, 2030	3,953 000
Population >65 years old, 2010	14.2%
Population >65 years old, 2030	21.1%
Population >80 years old, 2010	3.2%
Population >80 years old, 2030	4.2%

Table 1: Georgian population projections³⁷

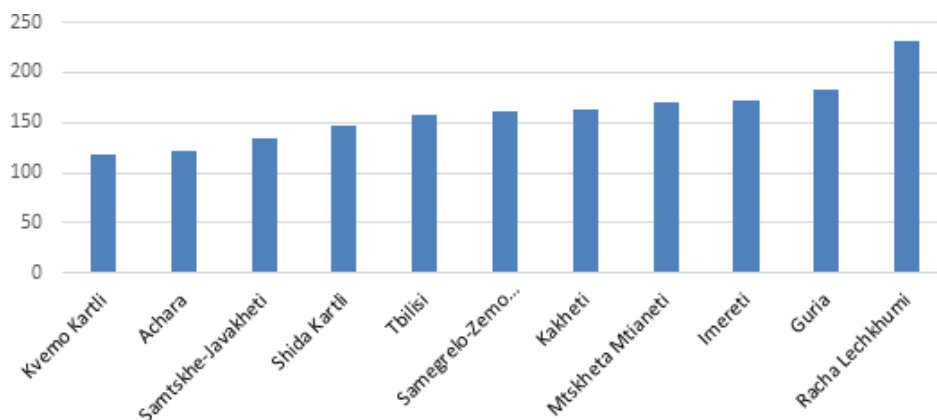


Chart 4: Population projections for Georgia, 2010–2050³⁸

In Azerbaijan life expectancy is 73.62 years. “It is clear from recent studies that the country will soon have a significant number of people of retirement age compared to the young population.”³⁹ In 30 years, the number of economically active people in Azerbaijan will be the same as the number of citizens aged 65 and over. Population ageing can become a serious challenge, despite the improvement in the physical and mental condition of the elderly in the republic. Sputnik Azerbaijan reports that the data from the State Statistics Committee

³⁷ United Nations, *World Population Projections*, n.d. <http://esa.un.org/wpp/Documentation/publications.htm>.

³⁸ United Nations, *World Population Projections*.

³⁹ “Azerbaijan will face ageing”, *Sputnik News* (in Russian), (March 28, 2023), <https://az.sputniknews.ru/20230628/azerbaydzhanu-predrekayut-cydzhing-456268557.html> (date accessed: July 13, 2024).

of the Azerbaijan Republic shows that the country faces a significant prevalence of people of retirement age over the young population.⁴⁰

Conclusions and Recommendations to the Governments and International Organizations

Despite the differences in politics, culture and priorities of economic growth, many demographic challenges are common for the countries in South Caucasus. Given that demographic challenges faced by the South Caucasus countries are a region-wide phenomenon, national efforts towards demographic security are not adequate. Moreover, some of them are among global demographic challenges. Therefore, it is worth to consider current realities regionally and internationally and learn from success stories to design more efficient common policies to reduce and fight demographic threats.

As can be seen from the contemporary trends, the reduction and even elimination of many demographic threats may not be feasible as the measures taken by the local governments may not be sufficient. Demographic security largely depends on coordinated regional efforts and actions in cooperation with international organizations. Some of them were formulated in the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, and further developed into the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Others are examined and recommended by the experts within the framework of Copenhagen consensus format.⁴¹ In addition to the mentioned goals that may serve as a solid ground for regional cooperation we suggest a more specific agenda aimed at a more realistic diagnosis of existing challenges, as well as designing coordinated actions for three neighbouring countries.

Careful assessment of growing tensions in the Caucasus and the surrounding region leaves no alternative to the search of non-standard, innovative ways to build enduring security. In turn, any acceptable solution requires firm commitment and political will to implement it accurately and timely. Partic-

⁴⁰ "Azerbaijan will face ageing."

⁴¹ The Copenhagen Consensus Centre is a think tank that researches the smartest solutions for the world's biggest problems, advising policy-makers and philanthropists how to spend their money most effectively. For more details about the activities of this Center please consider to visit: <https://copenhagenconsensus.com/>.

ularly, we recommend the design and implementation of common action plans by the national governments in collaboration with experts, and the civil societies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. States are expected to express firm intention to, first, stop the armed conflicts and hostilities and second to express readiness to take steps to eliminate common demographic and other threats. These efforts should be motivated and supported by the expert and technical expertise of such international organizations as the United Nations specialized agencies (UN Population Fund, UNDP, others), the European Union, and the OSCE, to name a few.

Joint actions are required to ensure free movement of people across all three countries by opening up all internal and external communications. On the other hand, commitment to reducing the arms race would greatly contribute to the increase of funds aiming at providing solutions on demographic issues and social welfare. Expert societies of all neighbouring states may contribute by organizing regional conferences on common demographic threats, as well as by designing regional strategies and common policies against mass migration and “brain drain,” population ageing, and other demographic challenges. Finally, coordinated actions among three states are needed to implement priorities aimed at migration flows, equal opportunities to access labor markets, protecting children and families, improving maternal health, social welfare, etc.

All of the above recommendations aim at establishing peace and security in the South Caucasus. Consequently, these might positively impact human security and resilience. These will stop mass migration, the “brain drain” and will utilize the cooperative advantages of all three nations. However, less focus is paid to the growing dependence of human security and resilience from the angle of demographic security. Our study serves as a first attempt to disclose the common character of some demographic threats in the turbulent region of South Caucasus. Demographic security is a vital part of human security and resilience. Ignoring the threats described in this paper may seriously harm the efforts of local governments to sustain an adequate level of human security and resilience. Political tensions, armed conflicts and wars, force people to leave their homeland and become refugees. Initial coordination of efforts and attempts to design common policies to reduce common threats could include a possible cooperation between expert societies in the three states aiming at the gradual eradication of existing hostilities.

A Gender-Based Approach to Preventing Human Trafficking in the South Caucasus – Efforts at Resilience-Building

Niliifer Narli

Introduction: Emerging Trends in Human Trafficking, Vulnerabilities and Crisis

This study examines the interconnected concepts of human trafficking and modern slavery, a threat to human security, focusing on the South Caucasus region through a feminist lens. The objective is to propose tangible strategies for prevention and bolstering resilience in affected populations. Embracing a broader notion of security, the study moves beyond traditional state-centric views to encompass the security of vulnerable individuals and communities. Human trafficking, which is proliferating both regionally and globally, poses a significant security concern. It embodies a complex manifestation of transnational crime, resembling modern-day slavery and standing as a threat to principles of social justice and sustainable development. Combatting trafficking is a paramount priority on the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, recognized as an urgent concern for human rights and human security. The prevention of human trafficking is specifically addressed by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015, with the global community pledging to eradicate modern slavery among children by 2025 and universally by 2030. However, the process of meeting these targets will not be free of challenges. In countries where the shadow economy or informal economy is larger, corruption is widespread and crime control mechanisms are insufficient, organized crime can prosper and traffickers can find “safe havens” in which to operate.¹

This paper moves from the idea that challenges are diverse, and hence combating human trafficking and modern slavery, and fortifying resilience necessitate a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach involving:

¹ T. Sanders, “Selling sex in the shadow economy”, *International Journal of Social Economics*, (2008); M. Edelbacher, P. C. Kratcoski & B. Dobovsek, eds., *Corruption, fraud, organized crime, and the shadow economy* 26, (CRC Press, 2015).

- Understanding the diverse forms and *modus operandi* of human trafficking;
- Addressing the economic, social, cultural, and legal factors that contribute to the vulnerability of victims and facilitate exploitation;
- Understanding deepening disparities, such as the gender gap, digital divide, skills gap, and other inequalities that create opportunities for traffickers;
- Evaluating the deficiencies in current anti-human trafficking policies in the region. This requires providing a context for the South Caucasus region, emphasizing the presence of conflicts, small wars, and post-COVID-19 economic difficulties, which create conditions conducive to human trafficking, and;
- Recognizing crises that intensify vulnerabilities.

Crime capitalizes on various crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the emergence of irregular and “hybrid wars”, armed conflicts, climate change, climate-related natural disasters, and food insecurity. These crises elevate the risk of trafficking and modern slavery worldwide.² The impact of COVID-19 has been observed in three main areas. The first entails interruptions in trafficking for sexual exploitation during the pandemic due to lockdowns and closed borders that limited trafficking opportunities and potentially pushed it further underground.³ The second refers to the deepening of inequalities during the pandemic and hence the multiplication of opportunities to exploit the vulnerable in low- and middle-income countries and conflict zones.⁴ The COVID-19 crisis provided new breeding grounds for forced and unsafe migration, heightening the risk of all forms of human trafficking as

² US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, July 2022), <https://www.hsdl.org/c/abstract/?docid=869769> Retrieved on February 27, 2023; UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022* (UN Publication No: E.23.IV.1), (New York: UN Press Office, 2022).

³ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*.

⁴ E. Beaunoyer, S. Dupéré & M. J. Guittton, “COVID-19 and digital inequalities: Reciprocal impacts and mitigation strategies”, *Computers in human behavior* 111, (2020). A. N. Fisher & M. K. Ryan, “Gender inequalities during COVID-19”, *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 24, no. 2 (2021), 237–245. M. Igra, N. Kenworthy, C. Luchsinger, & J. K. Jung, “Crowdfunding as a response to COVID-19: Increasing inequities at a time of crisis”, *Social Science & Medicine* 282, (2021).

well as the risk of child, early and forced marriage.⁵ The third refers to a set of disruptions in the implementation of human trafficking legislation as the COVID-19 pandemic impeded efforts to counter human trafficking and apply anti-trafficking policies as part of its broader impact on essentially every aspect of life, with border closures, lockdowns, and quarantine measures. It interfered with response networks for human trafficking ranging from basic social services to more complex policing mechanisms.⁶

Studying the gendered dimensions of human trafficking holds significance for several key reasons, as follows:

- Vulnerability of women and girls: Women and girls are disproportionately affected by human trafficking and violence, particularly during times of crisis and instability. The exploitation of women and girls thrives amid conflicts and crises, contributing to epidemic levels of violence against women and femicide.⁷
- Impact of COVID-19: The pandemic has worsened systemic gender-based discrimination, leading to a surge in gender-based violence, often termed the “shadow pandemic.”⁸ Additionally, there

⁵ M. McCauliffe and A. Triandafyllidou, eds., “*World Migration Report 2022*”, (Geneva: International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2021); World Economic Forum (WEF), *The Global Risks Report 2021* (16th Ed.), (Davos: WEF, 2021), and *The Global Risks Report 2021* (17th Ed.), (Davos: WEF, 2022).

⁶ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*.

⁷ D. Bakhos Doueihy, “Gender Based Exploitation of Children During Conflict”, *Gender Based Exploitation of Children During Conflict* (May 1, 2022); See also Girls Not Brides, *Girls’ sexuality and child, early, and forced marriages and unions: A conceptual framework*, (March 2022), https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/1780/Girls_sexuality_and_CEFMU_Conceptual_framework.pdf.

⁸ International Labour Organization (ILO), Walk Free & International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage* (Geneva, 2022); UN Women, “Covid-19 and ending violence against women and girls”, Issue Brief (New York: UN Women HQ, 2020) and UN Women, “Measuring the shadow pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19”, Issue Brief (New York: UN Women HQ, 2021) have confirmed a worsening trend in violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic. UN Women’s Executive Director, Sima Bahous, elucidated the concept of the “shadow pandemic” stating: “The COVID-19 pandemic, with its necessity for isolation and social distancing, has enabled a second, shadow pandemic

has been an increase in child, early (under the age of 18), and forced marriages, further exacerbating the vulnerability of women and girls.

- Gender disparities in violence: Women face greater risks of violence during trafficking compared to men, with girls and women being three times more likely to experience explicit or extreme violence. Threats against family members are also more frequently directed towards women.⁹
- Forced and early marriage: Gender-specific trends such as forced and early marriage heighten the vulnerability of women to human trafficking. Conflict zones, disaster contexts, and climate change-driven crises often increase the risk of forced marriage and trafficking for marriage purposes.¹⁰
- Feminization of poverty: The feminization of poverty serves as a root cause of trafficking, highlighting the intersectionality of gender and economic disparities. While the focus on women and girls is crucial, it is essential to recognize that human trafficking extends beyond female sexual exploitation. Over the past 15 years, there has been an increase in male victims, particularly in cases of forced labour. This shift is evidenced by data indicating a rise in the targeting of boys and adult males for exploitation.¹¹

By addressing these interconnected issues through a gender-sensitive approach, interventions can be better tailored to protect vulnerable populations and mitigate the factors driving human trafficking. This is urgent because, human trafficking is the fastest-growing international illegal activity. Every

of violence against women and girls, trapping many in lockdown with their abusers. Our latest data underscores the critical need for concerted efforts to bring this to an end.”

⁹ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*; ILO, Walk Free & IOM, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery*.

¹⁰ ILO, Walk Free & IOM, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery*; UN Human Rights Council, “Child, early and forced marriage in times of crisis, including the COVID-19 pandemic”, A/HRC/48/L.7/Rev.1, (2021). Bakhos Doueihy, “Gender Based Exploitation of Children During Conflict.”; Girls Not Brides, *Girls’ sexuality and child, early, and forced marriages and unions...*

¹¹ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*.

30 seconds a person becomes a victim of human trafficking across the globe.¹² These victims are used for the profit of their captors as the industry averages \$150 billion a year and continues to grow.¹³

Statistical data provided by the Walk Free Foundation and the International Labor Organization (ILO), which allied their forces in 2017 to produce the inaugural Global Estimate of Modern Slavery, shed light on the global trends in human trafficking. This statistical endeavour aims to set a foundational benchmark for SDG Target 8.7. The 2021 Global Estimates show that 49.6 million people are in modern slavery on any given day, either forced to work against their will or in a marriage that they were forced into. Forced labor accounts for 27.6 million of those in modern slavery and forced marriage for 22 million. Modern slavery increased by 10 million, reaching 50 million, compared to the global estimates of 40.3 million people in 2016.¹⁴ By 2021, as the global population increased from 7,513,474,238 in 2016 to 7,909,295,151, the prevalence of modern slavery had seen a slight increase, with an estimated 50 million individuals affected. There is also an increase in the number and prevalence of forced labor from 2016 to 2021.¹⁵

More detailed estimates of forced labour reveal the vulnerability of females and children. In 2021, a total of 11.8 million individuals in forced labor were women and girls. The number of children in forced labour was 3.3 million and more than half of them were subjected to commercial sexual exploitation.¹⁶ A UNICEF report also documents sexual abuse of children by showing that approximately two million children are exploited by the “sex industry” each year.¹⁷ There are more than one million images of 10,000 to 20,000 abused children posted on the internet in the form of child sexual abuse

¹² President’s Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (April, 2013). Building partnerships to eradicate modern-day slavery. Retrieved on February 23, 2023, from <https://www.govinfo.gov/>.

¹³ Nordstrom, B. M. (2022). Multidisciplinary human trafficking education: inpatient and outpatient healthcare settings. *Journal of human trafficking*, 8(2), 184–194.

¹⁴ ILO, Walk Free & IOM, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery*, 21, Figure 2.

¹⁵ ILO, Walk Free & IOM, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery*, 3.

¹⁶ ILO, Walk Free & IOM, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery*, 2.

¹⁷ UNICEF (2005). “Childhood under threat”, Retrieved February 23, 2023 from, <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-of-worlds-children>.

material (CSAM).¹⁸ State-imposed forced labour, which occurs when national or local authorities compel individuals to work against their will, without their voluntary consent, is also on the rise according to global estimates for 2021; “3.9 million people are in state-imposed forced labour at any point in time. Males make up more than three of every four of those in forced labour imposed by state authorities, while 8% of those are children.”¹⁹

The documented evidence illustrates changing trends in human trafficking, particularly in the types of victims identified. A notable shift in victim demographics occurred in 2018, with the percentage of adult women among victims *decreasing* from over 70% to below 50%, while the proportion of adult men *nearly doubled*, rising from around 10% to 20%.²⁰ Moreover, there has been a notable rise in the detection of child victims, escalating from approximately 10% to over 30%. Additionally, there has been a surge in the number of victims trafficked for criminal activities.²¹ Recent research continues to underscore the growing prevalence of male trafficking victims. For instance, since 2015, 50% of the trafficking victims identified in Ukraine have been men and boys.²²

¹⁸ CSAM refers to materials depicting acts of sexual abuse and/or focusing on the genitalia of a child. It includes, but is not limited to, “any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes”. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, General Assembly Res. 54/263, Annex II, U.N. Doc. A/54/49, Vol. III, art. 2, para. c, entered into force 18 January 2002, available at <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/resource/optional-protocol-to-the-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child-on-the-sale-of-children-child-prostitution-and-child-pornography/> CSAM also includes other “forms of material representing child sex abuse and exploitation, such as audio files, written story lines, or other potential forms of recording”. Retrieved on March 20, 2023, from <https://cdn.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CSAM-Model-Law-9th-Ed-FINAL-12-3-18-1.pdf>.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 4.

²⁰ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*, 19–20.

²¹ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*, 19–20.

²² A. L. Dean, “True number of trafficked Ukrainian refugees unknown”, *Washington Post*, (July 32, 2023).

New *Modus Operandi* of Human Trafficking and the Use of New Technologies

Understanding the primary *modus operandi* of traffickers and how it evolves with new technologies is significant for prevention and using new technologies against traffickers. Traffickers operate via telephone chat lines, chat rooms, the dark web clubs, as well as on the streets, in homes, on social media, at shopping malls, on dates, in schools and outside programs.²³ The common *modus operandi* of traffickers can be divided into the four stages of recruitment, transportation, use of force and exploitation. They look for people who will be easy targets because of economic destitution or an unstable local economy; political instability; civil strife, conflicts and wars; natural disasters; health epidemics and pandemics; corruption at the executive, legislative or judiciary levels; lack of a social safety net; high demand for services; and psychological or emotional vulnerability.²⁴

The *modus operandi* of traffickers continues to evolve with new online technologies that are used in every step of human trafficking activities.²⁵ Traffickers use the internet for both selling and recruiting. The pandemic increased the use of digital tools by traffickers, who have advanced their utilization of online platforms to reach and recruit victims. In Georgia, traffickers have reportedly altered their methods of recruitment and advertising to

²³ J. Reid & B. Fox, "Human trafficking and the darknet: Technology, innovation, and evolving criminal justice strategies", *Science Informed Policing*, (2020): 77–96; K. Rosenblatt, *Determining the vulnerability factors, lures and recruitment methods used to entrap American children into sex trafficking*, (Nova Southeastern University, 2014); A. J. Rockinson-Szapkiw, L. S. Spaulding, J. M. S. Justice & D. Owens, "Identify, Intervene, and Advocate: Human Services Workers' Role in Youth Sex Trafficking" *Journal of Human Services* 37, no. 1, (2017), and E. M. Donovan, "Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act and Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act: A Shield for Jane Doe", *Connecticut Law Review* 52, (2020), 85 for the places where sex traffickers operate.

²⁴ F. N. Yousaf, "Forced migration, human trafficking, and human security", *Current sociology* 66 no. 2 (2018): 209–225; M. Mawere, "Bound together in the digital era: Poverty, migration and human trafficking", *Mobile Africa: Human Trafficking and the Digital Divide* 63 (2019); Peterman, A., Potts, A., et al, *Pandemics and violence against women and children*, (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2020): 1–45.

²⁵ For a discussion of the increased use of digital tools by traffickers, see "Technological challenges and solutions in combating trafficking of women and girls in overlapping emergencies", *UN Web TV* (2023), <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1t/k1tatwa9gr>.

include online platforms, such as communicating through chats and creating websites and ads for escort services.²⁶ Cyber-trafficking in people has emerged as a new crime and cyberspace has become a new medium for the trafficking of human activities. Cybersex trafficking, a unique development in the history of sexual violence, involves the pornographic exploitation of children and human trafficking. It has grown as online technology has made it easier to access and exploit the vulnerable. One study reported 2,600 incidents of cybersex trafficking every month involving Americans alone in the Philippines.²⁷ From the victim profile of that study, it was seen that “40% of the victims have family members involved in cybersex trafficking or are at least aware of the child’s exploitation.”²⁸

Sunshine de Leon highlights the challenge of identifying cybersex traffickers who operate across borders, as their illegal activities are harder to trace.²⁹ Cybersex abuse is not only observed in low-income countries like the Philippines. In Norway, a recent police report and a journal article revealed that victimized children were selling sexualized videos and pictures of themselves.³⁰ Contact between the victim and the perpetrator is established on various digital platforms, such as Snapchat, Omegle, and Yubo. In addition, contact is established on websites that market themselves as “online sugar dating networks.” Child victims are often trapped into this exchange as they share more and more material, either because the perpetrator’s actions are ongoing or because the victim wants to make more money. In other cases, the victims face a form of sexual blackmail, with the perpetrator threatening the victim if they wish to withdraw and stop sending more material.³¹ However, online exploitation of children does not always remain an online world;

²⁶ US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*.

²⁷ J. Carback, “Cybersex Trafficking: Toward a More Effective Prosecutorial Response”, *Criminal Law Bulletin* 54, no. 1 (2018).

²⁸ Carback, “Cybersex Trafficking...”, 29.

²⁹ Sunshine De Leon, “Cyber-sex trafficking: A 21st century scourge”, CNN (July 18, 2013) <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/17/world/asia/philippines-cybersex-trafficking/index.html>.

³⁰ Kripos (The National Criminal Investigation Service). *En beskrivelse av fenomenet og omfanget Barn som selger egenprodusert overgrepsmateriale*, (Feb. 2021), <https://www.barnevakten.no/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2021-02-17-O-KRIPOS-Offentlig-rapport-Barn-som-selger-egenprodusert-overgrepsmateriale-1.pdf> and Øystein Tronsli Drabløs, “Politet Kripos Barn som selger egenprodusertovergrepsmateriale”, *Aftenposten* (June 20, 2021).

³¹ Kripos, *En beskrivelse av fenomenet og omfanget Barn som selger egenprodusert overgrepsmateriale*.

it often leads to offline abuse and street prostitution. To avoid the exploitation of children by sex perpetrators emphasis should be given to education programs at the school level. Education will make children aware of sex trafficking aims and methods in an era where technology permits people of all ages to easily establish contacts and initiate all types of transactions via online platforms.

Although digital technologies facilitate and provide new vehicles for trafficking, they can also be part of the solution. For example, digital tools have been used in combatting trafficking, and particularly that of women and girls. Big data and artificial intelligence technologies are useful in detecting, intercepting, and pursuing perpetrators of cyber-trafficking as well as in assisting victims.³² These digital solutions to date include mobile apps that help identify victims of sex trafficking; satellite imagery that tracks down fishing vessels carrying victims of forced labor; and web scraping tools that aggregate child abuse images to help law enforcement track down children in need of help. Legislation can benefit from technology for crime prevention and detection. Several studies have offered digital solutions in the context of crime prevention, investigation, or prosecution; yet they are not effectively integrated into anti-trafficking policies and measures globally.³³ Even though these technologies have greatly facilitated combating the cyber-trafficking of persons, there are still challenges due to regulations regarding privacy and data protection.³⁴

The use of social marketing campaigns and tools is another effective tool. Social marketing is defined as the effort to develop and integrate “marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviours that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good.”³⁵ Such marketing tools

³² L. Tekişalp, C. Formisano, T. Hannegan and K. Metcalf, “Tech Against Trafficking: Leveraging Innovation to Tackle Modern Slavery”, *BSR*, (October 13, 2022), <https://www.bsr.org/en/blog/tech-against-trafficking-leverage-innovation-tackle-modern-slavery>.

³³ F. Gerry, J. Muraszewicz & N. Vavoula, “The Role of Technology in the Fight against Human Trafficking: Reflections on privacy and data protection concerns”, *Computer Law and Security Review* 32 no. 2, (2016): 205–217.

³⁴ S. S. Alsemairi, “The Role of Digital Technologies in Combating Cyber-Trafficking in Persons Crimes”, *Computer and Information Science* 16 no. 1, (2023): 1–49.

³⁵ S. M. Berger, “No end in sight: Why the ‘End Demand’ movement is the wrong focus

and techniques are now commonly used in anti-human trafficking campaigns.³⁶ They are operative in increasing public understanding and they educate the public on the issue while at the same time they strengthen and increase the influence of anti-trafficking stakeholders.

Human Trafficking and Anti-Trafficking Legislation in the South Caucasus

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, human trafficking became a topic of public concern in the 1990s, notably due to the proliferation of transnational criminal organizations functioning on a global scale. The South Caucasus became a source region for the trafficking of women and illegal immigrants due to economic instability, and disruption of livelihoods.³⁷ This allowed for the rise of illegal migration because of insufficient or ineffective border controls and made many people more and more vulnerable to trafficking due to their precarious living conditions and lack of protection. The socio-economic disruptions of the 1990s in the South Caucasus and the wider region, further exacerbated inequalities and vulnerabilities including poverty, illiteracy, unstable/abusive family life, unemployment, governmental corruption, economic instability, violent conflicts and wars, health epidemics and the lack of rights. These and other structural inequalities and vulnerabilities were exploited by perpetrators who were able to operate in this region due to weak institutions with limited power of authority rendering them unable to implement effective anti-trafficking policies and measures. In the early 2000s, the ILO identified Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia as source countries of labour migration and human trafficking and made efforts to address the forced labour problem through promotional means and technical cooperation within the framework of an EU funded anti-trafficking project.³⁸ International agencies and

for efforts to eliminate human trafficking”, *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender* 35, (2012): 523–570; N. Szablewska, & K. Kubacki, “Anti-human trafficking campaigns: A systematic literature review”, *Social marketing quarterly* 24 no. 2, (2018): 106.

³⁶ A. Fuhrel-Forbis, P. G. Nadaroff & L. B. Snyder, “Analysis of public service announcements on national television, 2001–2006”, *Social Marketing Quarterly* 15, (2009): 49–69.

³⁷ C. M. Traughber, “Terror-Crime Nexus? Terrorism and Arms, Drug and Human Trafficking in Georgia”, *The Quarterly Journal of The Partnership for Peace Consortium* (2009).

³⁸ International Labour Organization (ILO), *Development of a comprehensive anti-trafficking re-*

organizations also began their own efforts to implement anti-trafficking policies in the South Caucasus.

In the early 2000s, the countries of the South Caucasus made changes in their legislation to prevent human trafficking. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan signed the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2003. Georgia signed the Protocol in 2006. A recent UNODC report documents legislative efforts in these three South Caucasus countries. The current Armenian legislation on trafficking persons, as outlined in Article 132 of the Criminal Code, “covers all forms of trafficking indicated in the Protocol.”³⁹ Similarly, in Azerbaijan, the current legislation on trafficking persons, as detailed in Articles 137, 144-1, 144-2 and 151 of the 1999 Criminal Code, “covers all forms of trafficking indicated in the Protocol.”⁴⁰

Since the early 2000s, international efforts have been underway to progressively reduce trafficking in human beings in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. These efforts primarily focus on capacity-building and providing protection and assistance to victims. For instance, the ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative of 2014 played a significant role in developing a comprehensive anti-trafficking response in these countries, spanning through its first and second phases.⁴¹ Additionally, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has undertaken numerous counter-trafficking actions in Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan as highlighted in a 2016 report. These efforts have emphasized the importance of implementing effective policies and actions to identify and expose human trafficking networks both domestically and internationally. Collaborations with law enforcement agencies have been instrumental in efforts to locate, disrupt, and dismantle the practice of human trafficking. Notably, the governments of all three South Caucasus countries have

sponse in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (2006–2009), (Geneva: ILO, n.d.) and International Labour Organization (ILO), *Development of a comprehensive anti-trafficking response in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – 2nd Phase (2010–2011)*, (Geneva: ILO, n.d.).

³⁹ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022: Country profiles Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, (New York: UN Press Office, 2021), 2.

⁴⁰ UNODC, *Country profiles Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, 3.

⁴¹ For Phase 1, see https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/WCMS_082035/lang-en/index.htm; for Phase 2, see https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/WCMS_142157/lang-en/index.htm.

taken concrete actions to meet the minimum standards required to combat trafficking effectively, as illustrated by the data in Table 1.

CITIZENSHIP	GENDER	TYPE	COUNTRY
AZERBAIJAN <i>Ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2003</i>	77% Female 23% Male 0% Transgender Total Number: 97	26% Labor 7% Other 67% Sexual Total Number: 97	55% Türkiye 19% Russian Federation 27% Other (UAE and Qatar)⁴² Total Number: 97
ARMENIA <i>Ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2003</i>	80% Female 20% Male 0% Transgender Total Number: 16	10% Labour 0% Other 90% Sexual Total Number: 16	100% Other Total Number: 16
GEORGIA <i>Ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2006</i>	89% Female 11% Male 0% Transgender Total Number: 47	17% Labour 6% Other 78% Sexual Total Number: 47	36% Türkiye 64% Other Total Number: 47

Table 1: Country profiles

This table shows the tier rankings for the countries of the South Caucasus in implementing anti-human trafficking policies, victim profiles, types, and location of exploitation of the trafficked people.⁴³ Taken from “the victims

⁴² US State Department, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2020*, 20th Ed., 88.

⁴³ In order to assess to what extent governments comply with the anti-human trafficking treaties they have signed and to evaluate their concrete actions to meet the minimum standards to combat trafficking in a particular year, a tier ranking is assigned to each country according to a 3-tier scale (US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*

of trafficking data”, the data in Table 1 shows how and where victims from the three South Caucasus countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) are exploited by traffickers.⁴⁴

Variations are observed in human trafficking patterns in the South Caucasus in terms of the purposes of exploitation, the victim profiles, and the countries in which the traffickers exploit these victims. Georgia is the only country in the wider region of the South Caucasus to have fully met the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and the government maintains prevention efforts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, as disruptions in such efforts occurred, the Georgian Inter-Agency Council on Combatting Trafficking in Persons (TIP Council), composed of representatives from various ministries, the international community and civil society, continued working vigorously, met virtually and monitored the implementation of the 2021–2022 National Action Plan.⁴⁵ The Georgian criminal code has criminalized “abuse of services of a victim of human trafficking,” an important measure in reducing the service demands.⁴⁶ Armenia and Azerbaijan remained categorized as Tier 2 in 2020 and 2022.⁴⁷

2022). Tier 1: Countries whose governments fully meet the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). Tier 2: Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA’s minimum standards but are making significant efforts to meet those standards. Tier 2 Watchlist: “Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA’s minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to meet those standards, and for which: the estimated number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing and the country is not taking proportional concrete actions; or there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year, including increased investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of trafficking crimes, increased assistance to victims, and decreasing evidence of complicity in severe forms of trafficking by government officials” (US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*, 55). Tier 3: Countries whose governments do not fully meet the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.

⁴⁴ The author constructed Table 1 by gathering and compiling data from Global Dataset hosted on the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC). Data on Gender of Victims, Type of Exploitation and Country of Exploitation was collected from this source. Available at <https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/maps>. The final update of the data was in February 2024. The author last accessed the victim data on April 8, 2024.

⁴⁵ US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*, 244.

⁴⁶ US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*, 243.

⁴⁷ US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*.

Data outlining five-year trends in human trafficking in Azerbaijan revealed a disturbing pattern: traffickers predominantly targeted women and children from Azerbaijan for sex trafficking, both within the country and abroad, including in Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Türkiye, and the UAE. Meanwhile, men and boys were subjected to forced labour within Azerbaijan and in Qatar, Russia, Türkiye, and the UAE in 2020.⁴⁸ These trends persisted through 2021–2022. Notably, Azerbaijani citizens faced exploitation overseas, while traffickers also victimized individuals from the People’s Republic of China, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, subjecting them to both sex trafficking and forced labour within Azerbaijan.⁴⁹ Within the nation, some children were coerced into forced begging and labour. Previously, Azerbaijan served as a transit point for victims of sex and labour trafficking from Central Asia to Iran, Türkiye, and the UAE.⁵⁰

In the case of Armenia, certain Armenian migrants who sought work in Russia, the UAE, and Turkey found themselves ensnared in forced labor. Additionally, Armenian women and children fell victim to sex trafficking in the UAE and Turkey, while children were particularly susceptible to labor trafficking in 2020.⁵¹ These same victim profiles and exploitation trends persisted through 2022.⁵² Furthermore, Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian women employed as dancers in nightclubs in Armenia faced heightened vulnerability to sex trafficking within the country. Additionally, Iranian, and Indian migrants who sought employment in the informal sector willingly were reported to be at risk of exploitation in forced labor in Armenia.⁵³

Georgian trafficking trends underscore how traffickers exploit individuals for sex trafficking and forced labour. Georgian women and girls are particularly vulnerable, facing exploitation both within the country and in destinations such as Turkey and the UAE. Similarly, Georgian men and women endure forced labour within Georgia and abroad, including in Cyprus, Egypt, Türkiye, and the UAE. Georgian children are also victims, subjected to

⁴⁸ US State Department, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2020*, 20th Ed., (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2020).

⁴⁹ US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*, 102.

⁵⁰ US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*, 102.

⁵¹ US State Department, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2020*, 20th Ed., 80.

⁵² US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*, 93.

⁵³ US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*, 93.

forced begging and potential coercion into criminal activities within Georgia. Additionally, Georgia serves as a transit country for women from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan who are later exploited in Türkiye. Disturbingly, this exploitation persisted through 2021 and 2022, with women and girls from Georgia continuing to be trafficked for sex both domestically and internationally.⁵⁴

However, due to the Russia-occupied regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remaining beyond the control of the Georgian government, there is a lack of data on the efforts of the *de facto* Abkhaz and South Ossetian authorities in combating trafficking.

Reports from NGOs highlight the vulnerability of internationally displaced persons from these occupied territories to trafficking.⁵⁵ Women from these regions are trafficked and exploited within Georgia. Additionally, traffickers exploit women from Azerbaijan and Central Asia in sex trafficking, particularly in tourist areas like the Adjara region and major cities such as Tbilisi and Batumi, even in public establishments like saunas, brothels, bars, strip clubs, casinos, and hotels.⁵⁶

The data in Table 1 has limitations to compare the efficiency of anti-trafficking policies because it is based on the trafficking victims, yet it gives ideas about how and where these victims are exploited. Among the wider region countries, Russia, classified as a tier 3 country with a poor anti-trafficking policy, emerges as a zone of the exploitation and trafficking of individuals, both within the country and across borders. Türkiye, classified as a tier 2 country according to the US State Department, also serves as a site of exploitation for numerous victims. Its geographical proximity to conflict zones in the South Caucasus and the wider region could contribute to the existence of trafficking routes connecting victims and traffickers. However, the US State Department's 2022 Türkiye report noted a couple of anti-trafficking policy shortages, including inadequate capacity to accommodate and provide

⁵⁴ US State Department, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2020*, 20th Ed., 217–218 and 245.

⁵⁵ US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*, 245.

⁵⁶ US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*.

specialized support to all victims, as well as lack of domestic civil society stakeholder engagement in anti-trafficking efforts.⁵⁷

Looking at Dean's study is helpful for analyzing the data in Table 1, as it provides valuable insights into understanding these trafficking trends and the efficacy of anti-trafficking policies in South Caucasus and the wider region. Dean developed the Human Trafficking Policy Index,⁵⁸ which evaluates 15 Eurasian countries, including those in the South Caucasus, to analyze the development and effectiveness of anti-trafficking policies and institutions. This allows for the identification of strengths, weaknesses, and best practices in human trafficking policies across Eurasia. These countries are studied as both source and transit countries, with several also serving as destinations. Dean's index categorizes these 15 countries into three groups (low, medium, and high), revealing significant variation in human trafficking policies. Moldova and Georgia stand out as leaders in the region for the scope of their anti-trafficking policies, while others like Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan lag with low scores. This analysis suggests that countries with more authoritarian political stances tend to have weaker anti-trafficking efforts, with Russia being the worst performer in terms of human trafficking policy in Eurasia.⁵⁹

In Eurasia, Dean's study highlights the pivotal role of internal factors, such as law enforcement strategies and the influence of interest groups, in shaping policy implementation efforts. Particularly, interest groups play a significant role not only in offering feedback and evaluating policies but also in guiding their implementation, especially in instances where governmental efforts are lacking. Establishing the five major anti-trafficking institutions – national coordinators, working groups, specialized police units, victim shelters, and victim certification processes – is crucial for effectively combating trafficking. However, bureaucracy and corruption stand out as major obstacles hindering successful policy implementation.

⁵⁷ US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022*.

⁵⁸ L. A. Dean, *Diffusing Human Trafficking Policy in Eurasia*, (London: Polity Press, 2020).

⁵⁹ Dean, *Diffusing Human Trafficking Policy in Eurasia*.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations: Designing Action Plans to Combat Human Trafficking in the South Caucasus

The paper concludes that the international community recognizes the urgency of addressing human trafficking. Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 calls for eradication of modern slavery and human trafficking by 2030. Achieving this goal necessitates a multifaceted approach encompassing research, education, policy implementation, and advocacy. Central to this effort is addressing the underlying issue of disempowerment among vulnerable populations, particularly women and girls, alongside a lack of education and awareness. Achieving success in policy implementation necessitates striking a balance between a top-down approach and grassroots bottom-up processes facilitated by relevant working groups and the strength of interest groups within each country. The paper focuses on the top-down approach and state policies; yet it concludes that bottom-up approach, hardly cherished and functions in authoritarian states, is very significant for the implementation of comprehensive anti-trafficking strategies. This includes countering sexist narratives on social media, raising awareness among youth, and supporting activism against gender-based violence.

Effective cross-border cooperation is essential in combating the trafficking of women, recognizing it as a significant security threat. Beyond traditional approaches, the paper emphasizes the potential of digital technologies to provide innovative solutions in the fight against human trafficking. Additionally, building resilience at national, state, and regional levels is crucial. This entails engaging various stakeholders such as academia, businesses, NGOs, and youth to bolster resilience efforts. Developing multi-level resilience is crucial because modern security policy, as delineated in this handbook, is scarcely conceivable without integrating the concept of resilience.

The action plan and strategies to end human trafficking and build multi-level resilience should prioritize the following key issues:

- 1) Assist the respective governments to provide human trafficking education to law enforcement investigators, crime analysts and prosecutors to enable them to identify victims, rescue victims and successfully prosecute the traffickers.

- 2) Provide human trafficking education to community activists.
- 3) Empower youth leaders of the anti-trafficking movement at the annual conferences.
- 4) Assist the respective Governments to implement the Fair Recruitment Initiative (FRI) launched in 2014 as part of the ILO Director General's call for a Fair Migration Agenda
- 5) Utilize new technologies to prevent crime, identify potential and actual victims and punish traffickers.
- 6) Use social marketing campaigns and tools to change the behavior of stakeholders.
- 7) Adopt a victim-centered approach, which is just as important as the criminalization of human trafficking and the punishment of traffickers.
- 8) Recognize that trafficking is a transnational operation requiring transnational cooperation and common regional policies.
- 9) Implement both bottom-up and top-down approaches.

The Financial Dimensions of Resilience-Building against Human Security Threats and Risks in the South Caucasus

Nairi Sargsyan, Tatoul Manasserialian

Introduction

It is worth mentioning that almost all natural and techno-gene disasters, armed conflicts, fast spread communicable diseases, economic recessions and financial crises, extreme poverty and starvation strongly impact on security, peace, and development by draining massive financial resources from the states and international structures. Mentioned threats are somehow connected to each other. Many of them are spread from one country to another, sometimes having a cross-border effect. It is true that in case of overlapping threats, their negative spillover effects would cover nearly all areas of people's lives while destroying entire communities and crossing national borders, therefore, most of those "challenges arise from multiple factors that are interconnected and mutually reinforcing."¹ Long term financial downturns and failures often jeopardize social stability and human security as well. The scarcity of financial resources for social needs, mass unemployment and growing poverty harms the overall process of economic growth and human development, leaving less means to support sustainable birth rates. Therefore, a comprehensive study of preconditions to maintain a proper level of financial security is a fundamental factor to be included in local and regional strategies of economic development and cooperation. Consequently, particular attention should be paid to the challenges of financial security examined at the micro-economic, macro-economic and regional levels.

Methodology

The methods used in our analysis should make the statements and conclusions measurable and justified. A systems method has been used to structure the paper and identify the following financial risks in all three South Caucasus nations:

¹ Human Security Unit, *Human Security Handbook* (New York: UN Publications, 2016), 5–25.

- the long-lasting negative impact of the global financial crisis, reflected in the financial markets and the banking sector;
- the devaluations of national currencies in double digits (i.e. Georgian lari and Azerbaijani manat);
- the mass capital outflow;
- the high level of foreign public debt;
- the indirect impact of sanctions on foreign trade partners;
- the reduced government subsidies to agriculture and growing food insecurity;
- the consumer price index (CPI) growth rates;
- the growing stagflation;
- the predominance of raw materials and semi-finished goods in exports;
- the dependence on imports of many essential products, including food.

Also, the method of comparative analysis has been used, as well as methods of building statistic lanes, methods of generating, collecting and analysis of quantitative and qualitative indicators, method of synthesis and combining different indicators and facts to better articulate existing risks and threats to financial security and prove their common nature for all three countries. In addition, measures, norms, and standards used by local government structures and international organizations, statistic reports and handbooks were utilized in our study. Finally, the financial security approach is another method that complements human resilience and helps the governments to reduce and eliminate the threats and improve the state of security for a better wealth of nations. The methodological and practical issues of income differentiation, polarization and poverty were also considered.

Novel Scientific and Empirical Aspects

This study is the first attempt to assess the financial trends in all three countries of the South Caucasus region from the point of view of possible threats to peace, stability, and human resilience.

A clear link is established between the level of financial stability, the purchasing power of people, efficient financial management, on the one hand, and sustainable economic growth, social welfare, economic security, and human

resilience, on the other hand. Moreover, the impact of the financial risks and threats on human security has been assessed. Through a comparative analysis of trends in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia the common risks of urbanization, population aging, brain drain, and other socio-economic threats have been identified as being the outcome of insufficient financial resources allocated by the states. Based on a multilayer analysis certain policy recommendations were designed to improve the state of financial security and human resilience in the South Caucasus. Some of our expert assessments led to the assumption that many feasible solutions related to financial security and human resilience could be found within the framework of trilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Analysis

The careful study of different approaches to financial security led to its description as the ability of the state or a local administration to ensure the appropriate level of financial stability ensured by the allocation of sufficient financial resources, increasing the purchasing power of people and applying efficient financial management aimed at sustainable economic growth and social welfare.

The focus is on the social component of financial security and its role to build resilience against human security risks and threats in the South Caucasus. Therefore, one of the main objectives of the research was to reveal the impact of the financial risks and threats on human security, study the current state of human resilience in South Caucasus, as well as to work on policy recommendations to improve it.

Undoubtedly, human security strongly depends on the availability of the necessary resources to support it. Moreover, the entire economic and social immunity system of each nation from the South Caucasus strongly depends upon the viability of the financial sector. The financial sectors have acquired a sort of “independence,” formulating their own rules and regulations and progressively growing detached from the overall economy, thus conceiving a sort of “virtual economy.” It is not the financial sector that should sustain the economy: instead, the economy should support the growth of the financial and banking sectors.

The scarcity of financial resources and a high level of unemployment in rural communities compelled many people to leave their towns and look for employment opportunities elsewhere, mostly in big cities. This, in turn, accelerated the *urbanization* trend, abandoning villages and creating risks for human resilience.

In Armenia and in neighbouring Azerbaijan and Georgia, urbanization was often transformed into *mass emigration* from the country. This, in turn, could be considered as another threat to human resilience. The lack of financing for projects related to innovations created a complicated environment where the knowledge of university graduates, educated and skilled workforce became less demanded in all three countries. As possible alternatives, the skilled workforce in those countries looked for labor-intensive jobs, stayed unemployed, became taxi drivers, or left their homeland. This might also turn into a threat to human resilience, particularly, when it would come to *massive “brain drain.”*

As a result, the share of young people decreased and the share of elderly went up, thus leading to unfavorable conditions for social and economic development when the financial burden of paying the same or an increasing amount of taxes laid on the shoulders of a limited number of young people. The state, accordingly, had to either increase the taxes or raise the legal age for retirement. This is also known as a “*population aging*” risk.

While most developed nations have managed to improve the social welfare and the quality of life of their citizens after the 2008 global financial crisis, mostly due to the increased level of regional and global integration, all three countries of the South Caucasus were still struggling with many threats related to human security and economic growth.

Another difference between the developed and developing nations is that the industrialized nations have the power to manage the financial and social risks either unilaterally or in close cooperation with other OECD nations, while the nations from the South Caucasus largely depended on Western countries. They have made no efforts so far to coordinate their policies at the regional level, thus leading to their isolation from each other and making them more vulnerable in terms of human resilience. Consequently, the growing dependence on external shocks makes these countries more vulnerable

in terms of human security and resilience. This makes inevitable the study of the external financial threats to human resilience in the region and beyond.

Although the Maslow's pyramid² would suggest that financial security along with personal, social, health security belonged to the second level, one might assume it was the main priority since the acquisition of all basic needs strictly depended on a predictable state of financial security. Thus, only the latter might allow satisfying the basic needs of people in food, drinking water, housing, rest and other. In other words, only after gaining a minimum financial stability, other needs related to social affairs, like family, community, friendship, career development might be considered as top needs. On the other hand, as some surveys and studies revealed, financial problems and money were primary reasons for divorce.³

As in other parts of the world, the threats to financial security in the South Caucasus impacted negatively on the average consumption through decreasing the income of people, sharpening the socio-economic polarization, and increasing poverty. More people from Armenia and Azerbaijan were not sure of their future, particularly on their daily income which inevitably effected human security and the quality of life. Continuous war between these two countries reduced the size of lands available and acceptable for agriculture. As a result, less food has been produced locally thus creating dependence on imports. On the other hand, people ate less because of financial hardships and some of them even starved. Political tensions increased the imbalances between financial resources and the growing needs of people which led to a greater social vulnerability. This, in turn, reflected on the quality of education, health care and on the overall well-being of the people.

In this study, various problems, and threats to financial security of all three South Caucasus states were thoroughly considered. This showed how a high level of financial danger for each country was created not only by significant deviations in the parameters of the functioning of the financial system from calculated, normative values in the form of local "spikes". As could be seen

² Abraham Maslow, "Conflict, frustration, and the theory of threat", *Journal of Social Psychology* 38, (1943), 81–86.

³ Sharon Feiereisen, "The 12 biggest money-related reasons people get divorced", *Business Insider*, Jul. 7, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/divorce-money-issues-financial-relationship-couple-2019-7>.

from experience, even large surges or dips in exchange rates and securities' prices could be extinguished if they didn't become protracted. At the same time, a very long-term effect of threats that were not so large in magnitude could undermine security due to the "accumulation" effect.

The new financial downturns, as well as the crisis which broke out in light of the events around Karabakh exacerbated or created new threats against financial stability:

- purchasing power of people declined;
- growth of corporate foreign debt;
- settlements on internal debt;
- insufficient reserves from the government, territorial and nearby budgets to fulfil acknowledged government commitments;
- low level of investment in production, innovation, and infrastructure;
- price instability.

Nowadays, two fundamental groups of financial security threats could be categorized as local and external. Among the local threats one might consider:

- the extended nature of the financial crisis, the slow recovery from it, the presence of prerequisites for further surges within the advancement of the crisis;
- limited resources within the monetary system to overcome the financial crisis and effectively carry out advance changes;
- insufficient level of social protection of people and the economy, falling purchasing power of the population;
- mismanagement of economic relations, growth of financial, including tax and other crime, corruption.

External threats included, but were not limited to:

- loss of countries' foreign economic position due to being squeezed out of foreign markets by foreign competitors;
- unequal participation of each nation in international structures of credit and financial regulation;
- an increase in local and foreign financial debt, and as a result, an increase in its dependence on foreign loans;

- dependence of the national currency exchange rate on energy prices in Azerbaijan, etc.

The global financial crisis of 2008 has resulted in a ‘savage sorting of winners and losers at the international level.’⁴ Further financial threats displaced people from their homeland. Needless to mention that this has made people insecure and has affected human resilience. Only because of the global financial crisis all three countries of South Caucasus faced numerous threats to human security, particularly, increased poverty, food insecurity, high urbanization, low purchasing power of population, to name a few. Building peace and security for all people from this region is an urgent task and a major point of interest for many international experts. Some of them believed that the financial crisis started in industrialized states, however, it led to a decrease of the FDI and to the decline of demand for labour-intensive goods in developing countries (including the nations in South Caucasus). Others suggested that a significant increase of protectionism and budget deficits in developed countries would threaten to block much of global savings and worsen the situation in developing countries.⁵ Moreover, financial insecurity and financial disintegration made Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia highly dependent on nations outside the region and created new challenges to reach sustainable development goals clearly formulated in 2015.⁶ Currently almost three-fourths of these countries’ exports go to the relatively advanced countries with a major share of raw materials and semi-finished goods.

New attempts to assist the countries from South Caucasus, particularly, Armenia and Azerbaijan were also detected aimed at the establishment of direct contacts, at conducting constructive analysis of existing environment of disintegration, as well as at intermediating studies aiming to initiate simple steps for collaboration. Expert opinions and unbiased studies strongly supported this process. It is noteworthy to consider that FDI flows to both countries were jeopardized since their independence in early 1990s along

⁴ Saskia Sassen, “A Savage Sorting of Winners and Losers: Contemporary Versions of Primitive Accumulation”, *Globalizations* 7, No. 1–2, (2010): 23–50.

⁵ Marcello de Paiva Abreu, Manmohan Agarwal, et al. “The Effect of the World Financial Crisis on Developing Countries: An Initial Assessment”, *The Centre for International Governance Innovation*, (2009), 2–3.

⁶ United Nations, “UN Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030”, A/RES/70/1 (2015), 17–30.

with the limited opportunities to develop the financial markets. The “Crossroads of Peace”⁷ project initiated by the Armenian government in late 2023, among others, has been largely discussed by the international community. Some international experts believed that one of the goals of the project – reopening of the borders with neighbouring Azerbaijan and Turkey and step by step development of transportation infrastructure might lead to a multiple-effect gain for all parties. Anticipated higher FDI stock would lift the GDP by 3.4% to 6.0%, depending on the assumed size of the overall domestic capital stock.⁸

Besides improving bilateral relations, it might also have a major impact on trade and cooperation in the South Caucasus and result in fast and inexpensive trade, as well as improve transportation and lines of communication. Such a scenario would have a significant positive influence on reducing current high investor risk and in the future, with a more sustainable security architecture in the region, it might increase financial flows to both countries, with foreign investors applying a much lower discount rate to potential projects. Experts believed “among other things, this could assist with helping Azerbaijan diversify its economy into non-energy sectors. Higher FDI rates would also raise the GDP of both countries.”⁹ Thus, strengthening regional cooperation through the “Crossroads of Peace” project might have a positive impact on building resilience against financial risks and threats.

Inflation and Consumer Prices

One of the major financial threats to human security is the hyperinflation and sharp devaluation of national currencies all countries of the South Caucasus are experiencing sharp devaluations of their national currencies. To this must be added external economic shocks that gravely impact domestic industry. These stresses have consequences on family purchasing power.

⁷ Government of the Republic of Armenia, “The ‘Crossroads of Peace’ Initiative is aimed at increasing regional interconnectivity: Airaik Harutunyan”, n. d. <https://www.gov.am/en/news/item/10520/>.

⁸ David Saha et al., “The Economic Effect of a Resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict on Armenia and Azerbaijan”, *Berlin Economics*, (2018).

⁹ Armen M. Ktoyan, Albert A. Hayrapetyan, Vasif Huseynov, Rusif Huseynov et al., “The Economic Benefits of Peace in the South Caucasus”, *GCSP Strategic Security Analysis* 31, Sept. 2023, 8–9.

Given this, it is critical to look at the changes in consumer prices and consumer price indexes in all three states.

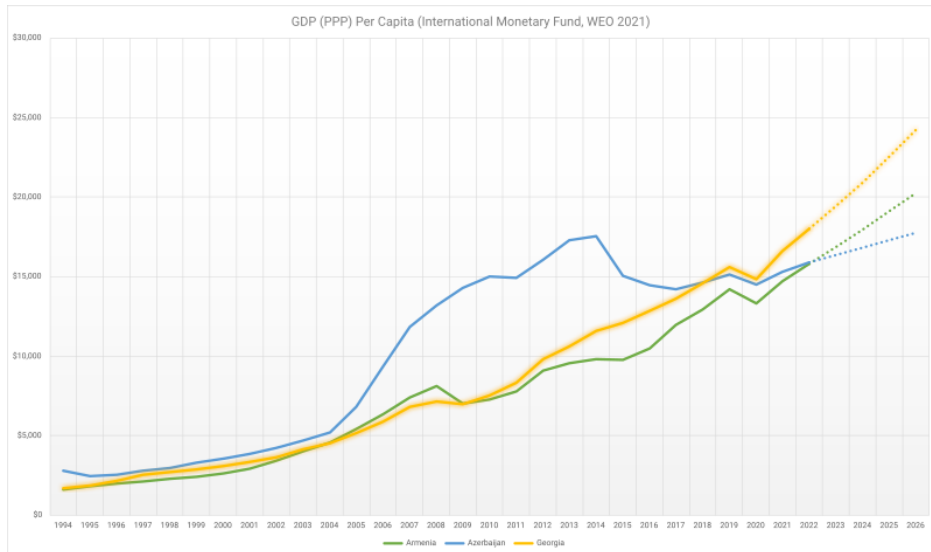


Figure 1: GDP per capita growth rates in South Caucasus¹⁰

The above graph clearly demonstrates the interconnectivity of all three states consumer markets, GDP per capita, considering the purchasing power parity except for some periods in Azerbaijan in 2006–2014 when the global oil and gas prices reflected the CPI in this country.

According to the official statistics, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in Armenia increased to 154.40 points in November 2023 from 153.66 points in October of 2023. The CPI in Armenia generally averaged 91.10 points from 1993 until 2023, reaching a record high level of 159.24 points in February of 2023 from a lowest 0.03 points in January of 1993.¹¹ In neighbouring Azerbaijan, the CPI increased to 212.40 points in November from 211.60 points in September of 2023. In this country the CPI averaged 144.89 points from

¹⁰ International Monetary Fund, “Evolution of GDP PPP per capita of Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan”, 2023, https://imf.org/Evolution_of_GDP_PPP_per_capita_of_Georgia_Armenia_%26_Azerbaijan.svg.

¹¹ Trading Economics, *Armenia Consumer Price Index (CPI)*, 2023, <https://tradingeconomics.com/armenia/consumer-price-index-cpi#:~:text=Consumer%20Price%20Index%20CPI%20in,points%20in%20January%20of%201993>.

2011 until 2023, reaching a record high level of 215.90 points in April of 2023 and the lowest 105.30 points in January of 2011.¹² In Georgia the CPI increased to 177.60 points in December from 177.50 points in November of 2023. In Georgia it averaged 104.21 points from 2000 until 2023, reaching the record high – 178.20 points in January of 2023 and the lowest 51.80 points in July of 2000.¹³

As a result, the impact of financial instability has led to a sharp decline in the purchasing power of local people, despite a projected increase in GDP per capita. The threat caused to the middle class by low currency value and hyperinflation stresses human resilience and economic development. Added to this phenomenon is the massive inflow of hard currency caused by Russian draft- and sanctions-dodgers, which has relieved slumping currency values momentarily.

The next financial threat with a tangible impact on human resilience is the **mass capital outflow** from the region. More specifically, the outflow of capital from Armenia to other countries increased by 2.2 times or by \$1.7 billion, amounting to a total of over 2.6 billion USD. In total, 5.2 billion USD were transferred from Armenia in 2022.¹⁴ In 2022, the outflow of capital from Azerbaijan abroad amounted to 12,485.2 million US dollars.¹⁵ Finally, 4.37 billion US dollars left Georgia in 2022.¹⁶ These amounts could have been used in local economies to improve the economic and social wellbeing of people whereas the growing digits of state budget deficits in Armenia,

¹² Trading Economics, *Azerbaijan Consumer Price Index (CPI)*, 2023, <https://tradingeconomics.com/azerbaijan/consumer-price-index-cpi#:~:text=Consumer%20Price%20Index%20CPI%20in,points%20in%20January%20of%202011>.

¹³ Trading Economics, *Georgia Consumer Price Index (CPI)*, 2023, 2023, <https://tradingeconomics.com/georgia/consumer-price-index-cpi>; National Statistics Office of Georgia.

¹⁴ “Economist: The outflow of money to Russia and China from Armenia is also associated with the growth of e-commerce”, *ArmInfo*, March 9, 2023, https://finport.am/full_news.php?id=47817&lang=2.

¹⁵ “Capital outflow from Azerbaijan rose by 3 times”, *Turan*, April 4, 2023, <https://turaz.az/ru/finansy/ottok-kapitala-iz-azerbaidzana-uvelicilsia-v-3-raza-764480>; “Money continues to rapidly flow out of Armenia through transfers, while growth of inflow stopped sharply”, *ArmInfo*, Dec. 15, 2023, https://finport.am/full_news.php?id=49475&lang=3.

¹⁶ “Economics of Georgia, Results of 2022”, *NewsCaucasus*, Feb. 5, 2023, <https://newcaucasus.com/economy/21901-ekonomika-gruzii-itogi-2022-goda.html>.

Azerbaijan and Georgia reflect the growing social needs to be covered mostly through external borrowings. It can be said that capital outflow is a function of a lack of societal resilience; investors do not trust the society in which they invest, and have a tendency to exit the market.

High level of foreign public debt is another burden the states face to overcome in South Caucasus. Armenia's Government debt was recently assessed for 47.5% compared to the country's nominal GDP in June 2023. This ratio was a bit higher – 48.1% in the previous quarter.

As in the case of other nations, Armenia's government debt to GDP ratio data is being updated on a quarterly basis and is available since December 2013 to June 2023. This financial indicator reached a record high level of 74.0% in March 2021 and the lowest of 38.5% in September 2014.¹⁷ Coming to the key information about Azerbaijan's Government Debt, it accounted for 16.8% of the country's nominal GDP in December 2021, compared with the same ratio of 22.2% in the previous year. The Azerbaijan government debt to GDP ratio data is updated only annually and is available since December 2008 to December 2021. The data mentioned reached a record high level of 22.2% in December 2020 and the lowest 4.6% in December 2008. Today this country reports 18.19% for 2023 debt to GDP ratio.¹⁸ Finally, Georgia recorded a Government Debt to GDP of 39.80% in 2023. Government Debt to GDP in Georgia averaged 39.84 percent of GDP from 2004 until 2023, reaching a record high level of 62.40% of GDP in 2020 and the lowest of 21.55% of GDP in 2007.¹⁹

The **predominance of raw materials and semi-finished goods in exports** makes the nation more dependent on finished goods and technology, thus compelling to import them from abroad and, as a result, gradually loose

¹⁷ "Armenia Government Debt: % of GDP, 2013–2023", *CEIC Data*, (2023) <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/armenia/government-debt--of-nominal-gdp>.

¹⁸ "Azerbaijan: National debt in relation to gross domestic product (GDP) from 2018 to 2028", *Statista*, n.d. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/457545/national-debt-of-azerbaijan-in-relation-to-gross-domestic-product-gdp/>.

¹⁹ "Georgia Government Debt to GDP", *Trading Economics*, n.d. <https://tradingeconomics.com/georgia/government-debt-to-gdp>.

economic and social independence.²⁰ This, in turn, has a damaging impact on human resilience. The tables below describe the current state of each country's strength and ability to produce finished goods.²¹

Exports structure from Azerbaijan in 2022 represented by the following main commodity groups:
92% (35 billion US\$): Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; minerals
1.17% (448 million US\$): Edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons
1.01% (386 million US\$): Plastics and articles thereof
0.573% (218 million US\$): Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers
0.57% (217 million US\$): Aluminum and articles thereof
0.56% (213 million US\$): Cotton
0.552% (210 million US\$): Fertilizers
0.498% (189 million US\$): Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, jewelry
0.362% (138 million US\$): Organic chemicals
0.236% (90 million US\$): Iron and steel

Table 1: Export structure of Azerbaijan

Imports structure to Azerbaijan in 2022 represented by the following main commodity groups:
12.2% (1.77 billion US\$): Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof
9.4% (1.36 billion US\$): Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof
8.88% (1.29 billion US\$): Mineral fuels, mineral oils and related products; bituminous substances; mineral waxes
7.69% (1.11 billion US\$): Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers

²⁰ International Monetary Fund, "Azerbaijan Staff Concluding Statement of the 2023 Article IV Mission", Dec. 11, 2023, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/12/11/mcs121123-azerbaijan-staff-concluding-statement-of-the-2023-article-iv-mission>.

²¹ "Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia: Exports, Imports", *Trend Economy*, n.d. <https://trendeconomy.com/data/h2/Armenia,Azerbaijan,Georgia>.

4.49% (652 million US\$): Pharmaceutical products
4.06% (591 million US\$): Articles of iron or steel
3.55% (516 million US\$): Cereals
3.34% (486 million US\$): Plastics and articles thereof
3.08% (448 million US\$): Iron and steel
2.64% (384 million US\$): Wood and articles of wood; wood charcoal

Table 2: Import structure of Azerbaijan

Exports structure from Armenia in 2022 represented by the following main commodity groups:
18.6% (989 million US\$): Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, jewellery
17.3% (922 million US\$): Ores, slag and ash
9.55% (507 million US\$): Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers
6.78% (360 million US\$): Beverages, spirits and vinegar
6.48% (344 million US\$): Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes
5.84% (310 million US\$): Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof
4.98% (264 million US\$): Iron and steel
3.54% (188 million US\$): Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof
2.75% (146 million US\$): Aluminum and articles thereof
2.58% (137 million US\$): Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, not knitted or crocheted

Table 3: Export structure of Armenia

Imports structure to Armenia in 2022 represented by the following main commodity groups:
13.4% (1.16 billion US\$): Mineral fuels, mineral oils and related products; bituminous substances; mineral waxes
10% (864 million US\$): Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers

9.86% (851 million US\$): Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof
9.49% (819 million US\$): Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof
7.99% (689 million US\$): Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals imitation jewelry
2.71% (234 million US\$): Plastics and articles thereof
2.49% (214 million US\$): Pharmaceutical products
2.38% (205 million US\$): Iron and steel
2.12% (183 million US\$): Optical, photographic, cinematographic, measuring, precision, medical instruments
2% (172 million US\$): Articles of iron or steel

Table 4: Import structure of Armenia

Exports structure from Georgia in 2022 represented by the following main commodity groups:
20% (1.11 billion US\$): Ores, slag and ash
17.6% (985 million US\$): Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof
10.6% (592 million US\$): Beverages, spirits and vinegar
9.24% (516 million US\$): Iron and steel
5.05% (282 million US\$): Fertilizers
3.65% (203 million US\$): Edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons
2.66% (148 million US\$): Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products thereof; bituminous substances; mineral waxes
2.5% (139 million US\$): 61 – Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, knitted or crocheted
2.47% (138 million US\$): 84 – Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof
2.21% (123 million US\$): 30 – Pharmaceutical products

Table 5: Export structure of Georgia

Imports structure to Georgia in 2022 represented by the following main commodity groups:
15.1% (2.04 billion US\$): Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof
14.6% (1.98 billion US\$): Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products thereof; bituminous substances; mineral waxes

7.78% (1.05 billion US\$): Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof
6.64% (899 million US\$): Ores, slag and ash
6.02% (815 million US\$): Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers
3.56% (483 million US\$): Pharmaceutical products
3.21% (436 million US\$): Plastics and articles thereof
3.16% (429 million US\$): Iron and steel
2.35% (319 million US\$): Articles of iron or steel
1.46% (199 million US\$): Essential oils and resinoids; perfumery, cosmetic or toilet preparations

Table 6: Import structure of Georgia

It can be clearly seen that Azerbaijan strongly depends on exporting mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances, minerals, iron, steel, cotton and other raw materials in its exports (over 92%), whereas Georgia exports ores, slag and ash, iron, steel, mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes (around 32%), and Armenia's exports consist of natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, jewelry, iron and steel, aluminum, ores, slag and ash as parts of raw materials (almost 44%). Among the rest of the finished goods, one may detect articles that are not necessarily pure exports but rather an expression of re-exports. In case of imports, as it can be seen from tables 1–6, Armenia and Georgia depend on oil and fuel, but all three nations import finished goods, including food and technology, machinery, which can be partially replaced by local products through more intensive and efficient regional cooperation. Therefore, all three countries may consider looking at each other's export potential to maximize their cooperative advantages. This would allow saving and using more efficiently local and borrowed financial resources thus leaving sufficient resources to support the social welfare. Finally, this may further improve the state of human resilience in each country and the entire region. Other recommendations are summarized in the following section.

One of the last indicators to be considered for financial security is the **financial freedom index** weighing the extent of government regulation of financial services, as well as the level of government's intervention in banks and

other non-banking financial institutions through direct and indirect ownership, the degree of financial and capital market development, state's influence on the allocation of credit and openness to foreign competition. It was assumed that higher index values would denote private banking efficiency and independence from the state control and interference in the financial system. The countries of the South Caucasus gained the following country rankings for financial freedom, as of the beginning of 2024: Georgia 8; Armenia 18; Azerbaijan 39.²² It becomes obvious that the disparities and different levels reached by the three countries might be successfully adjusted through regional cooperation and sharing of best practices.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Human security is closely related to the ability of the states to accumulate financial means to support it. Financial insecurity in local communities led to the trends of urbanization, mass migration, "brain drain", population aging, to name a few. Also, they appeared to be one of the primary reasons for divorces.

Governments of all three countries in South Caucasus need to concentrate more on regional cooperation to reduce and eliminate common financial threats: internal debt, lack of financial resources to accomplish state commitments, lack of investment in infrastructure, price volatility, slow recovery from financial crisis, decline in purchasing power of people, corruption, tax and other economic crime. Major external threats also exist including the loss of countries' foreign economic position, unequal participation in international financial regulations, an increase of the foreign financial debt, dependence on foreign loans, etc.

The governments might also consider addressing the purchasing power of people, particularly, through providing free health care, free education, state advantages and favours particularly to the vulnerable groups by paying utility bills, etc. In rural communities targeted support to vulnerable groups might also assume government subsidies to farmers, business initiatives aimed at

²² "Financial freedom – Country rankings, Business and economic data for 200 countries", *The Global Economy*, n.d. https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/herit_financial_freedom/.

the “smart agriculture,” green economy and food security. Regional cooperation on eliminating human security threats might start from signing a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as a trilateral peace agreement with Georgia. This would save enormous amounts of money that were otherwise spent on arms and would allow the countries to invest more in human capital and social welfare. Considering the fact that the financial shock in one market in the region would quickly translate into rapid shifts in others and it would easily overshadow the financial resources of all three states, the governments, in cooperation with local communities, might arrange career skills training for disadvantaged community members, business management coaching for entrepreneurs, and microfinance for women and other vulnerable groups to further empower communities to mitigate current challenges and build future opportunities.

To reduce the mass outflow of capital, regional projects need to be designed and initiated aiming at the utilization of cooperative advantages.

Regional cooperation might also solve the problems related to the lack of large foreign exchange reserves and balance-of-payments difficulties, which might be resolved through the implementation of expansionary fiscal policies with augmented assistance from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and a relaxation of the conditions under which these institutions lend money. This, in turn, might have a positive impact on decreasing the high level of public debt by the efficient and targeted use of local financial resources.

Regional cooperation is equally critical to solve the problem of continuous low demand in South Caucasus nations which, in turn, would suggest that these countries needed to enhance trade and finance links among themselves to foster economic growth.

Thus, the long history of armed conflicts in this region may lose most of its value as a predictor of the future: Armenia and Azerbaijan, for example, that have been considered enemies for last decades, might become close allies and offer a wealth of business opportunities (as it happened in the EU) in accordance with the changes brought by the project of “Crossroad of Peace.”

Analysis of Food Security in the South Caucasus

Tatoul Manasserialian

Introduction

What is the relationship between ensuring food security and building resilience? First, the nation with a proper level of food security usually moves beyond its mere survival and engages in activities improving personal, social, economic, and other conditions. Human life simply depends above all on food security. Also, while improving food systems by increasing their resilience, reducing the risks, people think of making life more stable, secure, and predictable. Moreover, there is a proved relationship between food insecurity and violent crime locally, regionally, and internationally: the higher the level of food security, the lower is the crime rate and armed attacks.¹ According to one study, all projects and policies aimed at ensuring food security

are expected not only to help countries and people cope with and recover from conflict but also to contribute to preventing conflicts and support economic development more broadly: by helping countries and people become even better off.²

However, according to seminal studies carried out by Ted Robert Gurr, it is rather *relative* deprivation which drives populations to violence. It is not absolute poverty, but rather the unfulfilled promise of improvement which sends people in the streets.³ Arguably, societies of the South Caucasus have been particularly vulnerable to such scenarios due to recent wars (2008 in Georgia, 2016, 2020 and 2023 between Armenia and Azerbaijan), the repeated economic crises caused by global mismanagement (the Great Recession of 2009), or by disputable crisis management during and after the Wuhan Coronavirus crisis.

¹ Emily Blankenberger, “Feeding Peace: An Investigation of the Relationship between Food Insecurity and Violence”, Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development-Student Research. 20 (2016), pp. 1–25.

² C. Breisinger, O. Ecker et al, “How to build resilience to conflict: The role of food security”, (Washington DC: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2014), pp. 25–46.

³ Ted R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970).

This belief is particularly true in the case of South Caucasus. The most concerning statement was made by the UN Secretary General Mr. Antonio Guterres about the upcoming threat of hunger: “We face an unprecedented global hunger crisis.”⁴ Until now, most of the regional and international experts viewed food security based on international standards and benchmarks, on the balance of supply and demand in given market, serving business projects, government policy to maintain sufficient amount of food for the population, as well as the state of the food security in the global markets. This study aims to look at the possibilities of maintaining proper level of food security in the South Caucasus through conducting a SWOT analysis.

This study will provide decision makers with a clear theoretical basis for discussing the preconditions for building resilience for human security in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia as food shortages and growing dependence on foreign supplies is considered an essential threat to economic and human security by these countries. It is also important to look at the possibilities to ensure proper level of food security in the South Caucasus through a regional cooperation by targeting, identifying, and gradually reducing existing challenges in this field.

Methodology

Several methods are chosen to examine the state of food security in Caucasus. One of them is gathering statistical data and analysing economic indicators of neighbouring states and building statistic lines to view the dynamics of maintaining food security in three countries. The other method is conducting SWOT analysis based on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in local markets. Also, the method of comparative analysis by evaluating relevant data in food security and the methods of generalizations and conclusions based on economic analysis are used in this study.

⁴ “Secretary-General Warns of Unprecedented Global Hunger Crisis, with 276 million Facing Food Insecurity, Calling for Export Recovery, Debt Relief”, SG/SM/21350, 24 June 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sgsm21350.doc.htm>.

Literature Review

In this study, the key works of scientists related to food security are examined. Particularly, among the most pragmatic ones are the manuscripts of T. Lines who focuses on improving regional food security in the South Caucasus,⁵ S. Farzalieva who concentrates on various aspects of food security in Azerbaijan,⁶ and A. Belugin who examines the evolution of the concept of “food security” and its peculiarities,⁷ as well as the scholarly articles of S. Avetisyan, G. Salnazaryan, in particular, who analyse the impact of Russian-Ukrainian conflict on Armenia’s food security risks.⁸ In addition, E. Kharaishvili provides a valuable approach to the challenges for sustainable food security in Georgia, and V. Plotnikov with M. Suleimanova have analysed the models for ensuring national food security. The outcome of studies and reports presented by various international organizations, including the UN Food and agriculture organization (FAO), the World Food Program, Oxfam and others are also extremely useful.

Scientific Novelty

Many experts have paid attention to the issues of food security either globally or in local markets. However, even in regional studies, none of the scholarly articles and reports of the governments or international organizations focus on a comparative analysis of indicators related to food security in three neighbouring countries in South Caucasus. This is the first attempt to look at food security issues as a common threat to economic and human security in the region.⁹ Moreover, we believe that continuous work including experts

⁵ Thomas Lines, “Improving Regional Food Security in the South Caucasus through National Strategies and Smallholder Production”, OXFAM, (Sept. 2019).

⁶ Susen Farzalieva, *Food Security in Azerbaijan*, Varazdin Development and Entrepreneurship Agency and University North, 65th ISC on Economic and Social Development, (2021), 61–65.

⁷ A. Yu. Belugin, “The evolution of the concept of ‘food security’: history, stages, modern interpretation”, *Scientific research of the Faculty of Economics*, 11, no. 2 (2019), 122–143.

⁸ Samvel Avetisyan and Gayane Salnazaryan, “Russian-Ukrainian conflict and Armenia’s food security risks”, *Quarterly Academic Journal Alternative* 1, (2022), 235–241.

⁹ A study linking climate emergencies and food insecurity in the horn of Africa has been conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food of Canada, in support of a UN Disaster Reduction study in 2012–2013. It linked the prevalence of drought in Somalia to internal migratory patterns to the sea coast where farmers would take up

from Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia may support the efforts of political structures, governments, and international organizations to find efficient tools for security architecture in South Caucasus.

Analysis

As one can clearly perceive from the data presented below, none of the countries in the South Caucasus, as well as their neighbouring states can report self-sufficiency in terms of food security. None of them is among the leaders in maintaining proper level of food security.

Rank	Country	2000	2006	2012	2021
27	Georgia	12.3	8.8	<5	6.3
32	Armenia	19.3	13.3	10.4	7.2
33	Azerbaijan	25.0	15.9	10.6	7.5

Table 1. Global Hunger Index Scores (2021)¹⁰

As it can be seen from the table, Armenia and Azerbaijan are ranked just next to each other and Georgia's position is not much better than five levels higher.

In Georgia, particularly, 13% of the population is food insecure. This means that they are unable to provide enough food for themselves and their families. Families living with food insecurity often must choose between paying bills or buying food. Azerbaijan has a global hunger index of 9.5, which is a relatively low level of hunger.¹¹ In Armenia 15.3% of people are food inse-

fishing during droughts. This pattern of activity was sustained for many years until the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which destroyed the fishing infrastructure on the Somali coast. The UN Development Program was quick to replace the destroyed fishing equipment, but failed to foresee the need to re-establish the coastal infrastructure to process fishing output. This left the fishermen with no way to sustain themselves than piracy which shot up in 2005. For an in-depth look at this phenomenon, see the blindingly brilliant analysis by Labarre, in Hill, H. and Pittman, J. 2012. Agriculture and Disaster Risk Reduction. Draft contributing paper submitted to the UNISDR's GAR 13. Unpublished manuscript. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Saskatoon, Canada.

¹⁰ Klaus von Grebmer, Jill Bernstein, Miriam Wiemers, et al., *Global Hunger Index 2021*, (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2021).

¹¹ The global hunger index is a scale ranging from zero to 100, with zero being zero hunger

cure. Almost two thirds of the world's population go to sleep hungry at night. After more than thirty years from the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, undernourishment remains a persistent challenge in many of the successor countries now part of different regional blocks. It is useful to know that by contrast, the East European and Baltic countries have largely managed to escape this problem. These findings emerged from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) who estimate the number and proportion of undernourished people in countries in transition. In nine of the former Soviet countries, at least 5% of the population is undernourished. In Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia at least 20% of the population suffers from undernourishment. Only Belarus has a level of undernourishment comparable to levels found in the industrialized world (less than 2.5% of the population).¹² All three countries of the South Caucasus are now classified by the United Nations as low-income, middle-income and food-deficit nations respectively. Coming to the state of food security in the South Caucasus states, particular attention is needed on the following analysis of facts and trends in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.

Azerbaijan

This part of the study considers the expert opinions of Azeri scientists specialized in food security issues, as well as the results of international organizations reports. In particular, it is suggested that the model for estimation of national food security tends to be dissimilar in different countries across the world.¹³ This is because every country has distinctive characteristics and prevailing social and economic situations. Many indicators such as availability, access, utilization and stability have been used along with four key dimensions of food security.¹⁴ These dimensions play a significant role in the food security status of any country.

and 100 being the most severe hunger: numbers below 9.9 indicate low levels of hunger and numbers between 10–19.9 represent moderate hunger levels.

¹² Belarus – Prevalence Of Undernourishment, *Trading Economics* (2021), <https://tradingeconomics.com/belarus/prevalence-of-undernourishment-percent-of-population-wb-data.html>.

¹³ Rusif Huseynov, “Multidimensional Determinants of National Food Security in Azerbaijan: an Application of the ARDL Approach”, *Zeszyty Problemy Rolnictwa Światowego* 19, no. 34 (2019).

¹⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization, *The State of Agriculture 2013*, (Rome: FAO, 2013).

One of the key causes of food insecurity issue is non-availability of food that produces price shocks. For Azerbaijan, this task remains one of the central in political, economic and social life, along with the tasks in the field of defense, general economic and national security. Since the 1970s, food security has been viewed by the world community as an integral part of sustainable development.¹⁵

The UN system and its specialized agencies, along with other international institutions and the non-governmental sector, have begun the process of developing global strategies and policies on food security. For Azerbaijan, food security is one of the central in the system of economic security. One of the main indicators here is the population's economic accessibility and the ability to purchase food in accordance with physiological norms and income level. It is also assumed that without reliably supplying the population with food, the state is unable to ensure the protection of the vital interests of society and the individual.

One of the priority tasks in the conditions of independence of modern Azerbaijan is to ensure food security, which is becoming not only the subject of scientific research, but also the object of close attention of the executive and legislative authorities, in order to ensure the stability of this nation. Therefore, it is important to analyse the impact of internal and external factors on ensuring food security in Azerbaijan. Providing Azerbaijan with food is an urgent and important issue, and attention should be paid to the prompt adoption of radical measures to correct the situation in the agricultural sector of the economy.¹⁶

Like Georgia and Armenia, the agricultural sector plays a pivotal role in the economy of Azerbaijan. The major area of the country is used for agricultural activities. About 58% area of Azerbaijan is used for growing different crops and farming a variety of different animals. The main crops grown are wheat and tomatoes, providing the maximum amount of production. In addition, the country invested in developing the sectors of cattle breeding, fishing, and forestry (poultry farming and buffalo breeding are also developed). Usually, meat is farmed and consumed by local people, provides income and thus boosting the country's economy.

According to the experts "the main causes of rural food insecurity in Azerbaijan are numerous, including environmental, structural, political, social and economic policy failures."¹⁷ Food availability depends on both

¹⁵ Farzalieva, "Food security in Azerbaijan", 61–65.

¹⁶ Farzalieva, "Food security in Azerbaijan", 61–65.

¹⁷ A. Schmitz, A., & P. L. Kennedy, "Food Security and the Role of Food Storage", in A.

economic factors: demand and supply. “To better understand the dynamics of national food security, it is important to examine the impact of multidimensional factors.”¹⁸ Therefore, experts aim to explore the impact of multidimensional factors on food security, which gives deeper understanding to policymakers. It will give a rational choice for food security policymaking for any country, thus the basic and foremost step to address the food insecurity issue is to examine its performance and to appraise the available policy choices.¹⁹ To attain sustainable food security is one of the prime objectives of social and economic policy formulation. A well-targeted policy could overcome the food insecurity gap caused by multidimensional factors. In this study, the factors that influence national food security in Azerbaijan are examined. It is our firm belief that this model can also be used to assess the state of food security in Georgia and in Armenia. Experts suggest a multidimensional food security index constructed on diverse indicators based on the food security pillars (availability, access, utilization, stability).

The PCA (Principal Component Analysis) analysis suggests that 4 indicators characterize food availability dimensions, 4 indicators embody food accessibility dimension, 4 indicators represent food utilization and safety dimension and also 4 indicators – for food stability and resilience dimension.²⁰

Generally, the multidimensional food security index, comprised of 16 indicators, represents the national food security of Azerbaijan.

S/N	Food Security Indicators (Data Sources)	Dimension	Weights	PCA Loading
1	Average food energy supply (FAO)	Availability	0.25	.413
2	Average value of food production (FAO)			.342
3	Average supply of protein (FAO)			.457
4	Average protein supply from animal origin			.830
5	Density of road (WB)	Access	0.25	.40
6	Consumer Price Index (WB)			-.53
7	GDP per capita (WB)			.33
8	Prevalence of undernourishment (FAO)			.74

Schmitz, P. L. Kennedy, & T. G. Schmitz (eds.), *Food Security in a Food Abundant World: An Individual Country Perspective*, (New York: Emerald Group Publishing, 2016).

¹⁸ Huseynov, “Multidimensional Determinants of National Food Security...”, 44–50.

¹⁹ L. Vasa, R. Huseynov et al., “The regional and geographical aspects of food security: A spatial analysis in the case of Azerbaijan, Hungary, Austria, Singapore and Georgia”, *Geographia Technica* 15, no. 2, (Oct. 2020): 161–170.

²⁰ Huseynov, “Multidimensional Determinants of National Food Security...”, 44–50.

S/N	Food Security Indicators (Data Sources)	Dimension	Weights	PCA Loading
9	Access to clean/improved water sources	Utilization	0.25	.39
10	Prevalence of anemia among pregnant women			-.45
11	Percentage share of kids under 5 years of age who are underweight			-.23
12	Prevalence of iodine deficiency			-.13
13	Food import dependency ratio	Stability	0.25	-.67
14	Percentage of food imports over total merchandise exports			-.42
15	Variability in CPI			-.34
16	Variability in Exchange rate			-.64

Table 2: List of selected food security indicators²¹

Overall weights are obtained with the help of multiplying PCA loading indices with component assigned weights and each food security dimension with equal weights specifies the uniform importance of each food security dimension for multidimensional index and these established the robustness of index results. Each indicator indices from the estimation have the expected sign of weighting relative to their impact on national food security.²²

According to Adams and Harman, the sign of loading PCA factor is arbitrary whereas indicator variance will be unchanged as signs of selected indicators are reversed.

Hence, this criterion is equally applied to all dimensions of food security. The signs for selected indicators of PCA loading are negative in food utilization and food stability dimensions because any variation in these indicators leads to changes in national food security status in the opposite way.

Huseynov suggests:

Azerbaijan government should develop a comprehensive and broad-spectrum food security policy and advocates a well-targeted policy could overcome the food insecurity gap caused by multidimensional factors.²³

For developed countries, two main approaches are used for improving food security. First is the high priority to support national agricultural producers (EU) and the second one is related to equal support for both agricultural producers and food consumers (USA). The following measures are suggested to ensure the country's food security:

²¹ Huseynov, "Multidimensional Determinants of National Food Security...".

²² Huseynov, "Multidimensional Determinants of National Food Security...".

²³ Huseynov, "Multidimensional Determinants of National Food Security...", 44–50.

Stimulation and support of the most important sectors of domestic production of basic food products; increasing the competitiveness and productivity of agricultural production; seek international recognition of the national quality system by confirming the quality of domestic goods, so that this does not become a technical barrier to trade; increasing employment in rural areas in the processing of agricultural products and creating jobs for large-scale production; creation of a modern warehouse and logistics infrastructure; improvement of land legislation; improvement of credit policy in the direction of stimulating the development of medium and large-scale commodity production; state support for the development of agro export potential and, first of all, enterprises for deep processing of agricultural raw materials and production of final products.²⁴

As it is described in many international reports, Azerbaijan is one of the countries with limited land and water resources, so the climate change directly impacts the country. One of the reasons that give rise to threats and challenges to food security, causing concern in all countries, is related to climate change at the global level, and global warming.

Georgia

According to the Georgian experts, results that were achieved by Millennium Development Goals appeared to be insufficient to overcome poverty and ensure food security both in the world and in Georgia. “In the future growth in demand for the food is expected to occur due to the increasing number of population and revenues. To meet increased demand, actual transformations have to occur in the agricultural sector.”²⁵ Agriculture in Georgia has always been vital in ensuring food security and improving wealth. Nevertheless, food production has been reduced in recent decades, the level of self-sufficiency of domestically produced food and the incomes are low, poverty level in rural areas is high and the deficit of food is covered by imported products. Also, as it is indicated in the Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia, 2015–2020, “the pace of development of agri-food sector is relatively low compared

²⁴ Farzalieva, “Food security in Azerbaijan”, 65.

²⁵ A. Dobermann and R. Nelson, “Sustainable Development and Planetary Boundaries. Background Paper for the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, prepared by the Co-Chairs of Sustainable Development Solutions Network Thematic Group on Sustainable Agriculture and Food Production, 2013. http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Rockstroem-Sachs-Oehman-Schmidt-Traub_Sustainable-Development-and-Planetary-Boundaries.pdf.

to that in other sectors of economy.”²⁶ It is worth mentioning that growth in agriculture reduces poverty more rapidly than growth in any other sector of economy. For Georgia it is extremely significant to meet the following three goals out of 17 set by UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: poverty eradication, ensuring food security and sustainable development of agriculture. Reducing food losses is also very important, because this value is about 30–40% of total food volume. Implementation of food policy on a local level will ensure formation of new relations between the government and the society and the “sustainable food security and poverty reduction will highly depend on the development of agriculture.”²⁷

It is evident that the benefits of economic growth are not equally distributed among various groups of population. Most of the working people are occupied in subsistence agriculture. Besides, a lot of employment has been informal (especially for women), with low productivity in the agrifood sectors. Low productivity and incomes among smallholders are a major challenge for Georgia, since agriculture accounts for a significant share of rural employment but generates only small economic results. Given the high potential of agriculture in Georgia, improving competitiveness is one of the first steps to be taken for utilizing it particularly for the rural areas. In turn, increased competitiveness, and diversification of the GDP in rural areas is among the most critical steps for reducing poverty and improving the quality of life. Consequently, ensuring high level of food security can catalyse the overall progress of economic reforms within the framework of Rio+ 2030 Agenda.²⁸ With agriculture being the key economic activity in rural areas, climate-smart agriculture and the fishery and forestry sectors can have a transformative effect if progress is made towards the set objectives. The latter include increased competitiveness and stable growth of high-quality agricultural production, food safety and security, and the elimination of rural poverty through the sustainable development of agriculture. On the other hand, low agricultural productivity and high regional disparities strongly impact on the labour market and the share of rural areas in the gross domestic product.

²⁶ Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia, Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia, 2015–2020, (Tbilisi: Ministry of Agriculture, 2015).

²⁷ Daniele Giovannucci, et al, “Food and Agriculture: The Future of Sustainability”, *SSRN Electronic Journal*, (Jan. 2012).

²⁸ United Nations, “UN Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030”, A/RES/70/1 (2015), 17–30.

One of the policy priorities in the country is the work towards enhancing human security by improving access to services, livelihoods, and decent employment opportunities, especially for conflict-affected communities. It should be specifically ensured that conflict-affected communities are equally covered by post-pandemic socio-economic recovery programs, including support in achieving food security and improved nutrition through the provision of agricultural products and improved subsistence farming and production.²⁹

According to the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (ARDS) of Georgia 2021–2027,³⁰ the low-productive agricultural sector presents a potential risk for rural and agricultural development. One of the challenges in this area is the low level of efficiency due to the prevailing handy work, particularly the handy work of women. Therefore, this is also aimed at

rural women's economic empowerment and has the following three strategic directions: 1) competitive agricultural and non-agricultural sectors; 2) Sustainable usage of natural resources, retaining the ecosystem, adaptation to climate change; and 3) effective systems of food/feed safety, veterinary and plant protection.³¹

The inequalities and disparities between urban and rural areas may also be reduced by boosting the role of competitive agricultural production and its diversification leading to a higher level of social justice inclusive social protection. As in neighbouring countries, in Georgia, FAO, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA), is currently focused on increasing agricultural productivity and improving livelihoods in rural areas to reduce rural poverty. Therefore, strengthening food systems will enhance food security and nutrition for all and will cover the entire range of actors and their interlinked activities, such as production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food products that originate from land and marine resources.³² Also, MEPA and FAO continue to assist the Government of Georgia on the follow-up to the United Nations Food Systems Summit³³ held on 24–26 July 2023 in

²⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*, (Rome: FAO, 2021).

³⁰ Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture, *Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia 2021–2027*, (Tbilisi: MEPA, 2019).

³¹ UNDP, “Sustainable Rural Development in Georgia – ENPARD III”, (Tbilisi: UN FAO, 2022), <https://www.undp.org/georgia/projects/enpard-3>.

³² UNDP, “Sustainable Rural Development in Georgia – ENPARD III”, (Tbilisi: UN FAO, 2022), <https://www.undp.org/georgia/projects/enpard-3>.

³³ UN Environmental Program (UNEP), “The UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2)” Rome, Italy, (July 24–26, 2023), <https://www.unep.org/un->

Rome, and the implementation of the national pathway, in collaboration with other UN partners. Furthermore, the mentioned international organizations are committed to encouraging the increase of private sector's competitiveness, particularly the micro and small businesses in agriculture and food processing, focusing on business initiatives in rural areas in terms of technological advancement in selected clusters.

The FAO will further assist in the accumulation of data that will serve as the foundation towards the digital rural revitalization and transformation in Georgia through farmer capacity and needs assessment and assessment of existing digital technologies in the agriculture sector. In addition,

this work will enhance the digital literacy of project stakeholders to share and promote the information via digital channels. Finally, it will be supporting MSMEs and contributing to the advancement of digital agriculture practices on the ground.³⁴

FAO's activities are expected to contribute to the reduction of rural poverty among the targeted rural population through improved development policies and agricultural services by further promoting existing pilot activities in the field. Policy advice to the MEPA and local municipal governments will be provided through gender-sensitive and socially inclusive rural development. In addition, to

enhance the level of food security, policy support is expected to enable food safety standards, better consumer protection and enhanced export opportunities under the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the European Union. The quality and coverage of food safety inspections will increase awareness of sanitary and phytosanitary/food safety principles, and regulatory requirements among food business operators, primary producers and civil society. FAO will design and implement an investment support component for food business operators and primary producers to address the need to improve food safety standards at farmer and food business operator levels. FAO will provide investment opportunities through matching grants, linking them with building capacity, developing business and enhancing linkages among stakeholders.³⁵

food-systems-summit?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwkdO0BhDxARIsANkNcrbCJCQ9-rSiVUnfSKCzQV-FlicNL9ToQfQüU8nNKBnkJx-7kLEEAjI2EALw_wcB.

³⁴ UN Environmental Program (UNEP), "The UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2)".

³⁵ FAO, *Technical Assistance to the Georgian National Food Agency for Meeting the European Union Association Agreement priorities*, (Tbilisi: FAO, February, 2022).

Efficient stewardship of natural resources (land, forest, terrestrial, aquatic) to ensure the conservation of ecosystems and improve social and environmental resilience to environmental shocks is needed to contribute to the improvement of sustainable and climate-resilient management of agricultural lands, forests and protected areas, which will increase nature's contributions to people and preserve biodiversity, including agricultural-biodiversity in targeted rural communities. Joint work towards strengthening the capacities of fisheries managers and stakeholders to manage commercial fisheries, with a particular focus on small-scale fisheries and aquaculture producers is expected in addition to the support to fisheries managers for emerging monitoring, control and surveillance technologies in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Black Sea. Additionally, national authorities are required to ensure local and cross-border cooperation in addressing agricultural natural disasters, namely limiting the threat posed by locust invasions in the country and the broader region.

In order to mitigate impacts on climate change, and within the context of land degradation neutrality, Georgia attempts to maintain and increase the amount of healthy and productive land resources in line with the nationalized SDGs. Georgia has also released five voluntary land degradation neutrality targets. According to the Georgian government priorities, the implementation of two of these targets, namely the integration of land degradation neutrality principles into national policies, strategies and planning documents and the rehabilitation of degraded land are also among the priorities.

Finally, international organizations continue to support Georgia to implement climate-smart and gender-responsive technological solutions, initiatives and projects to ensure climate change adaptation and mitigation among agri-food sector stakeholders. This will enhance efforts in the decarbonization of agricultural industries to contribute to the achievement of Georgia's NDCs as well as in the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy of Georgia for 2030, its respective Action Plan (2021–2023), and the Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategy (LEDS).³⁶

³⁶ UNDP, "Georgia's Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy", February 2022. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-07/undp-georgia-eu4climate-leds-summary-eng.pdf>.

However, according to some experts, the mentioned steps are not enough to ensure a high level of food security in Georgia. According to E. Kharashvili, the following need to be considered to maintain proper level of food security in Georgia:

- Self-sufficiency coefficients for basic food products in Georgia are low and several times less than that in EU countries;
- Agricultural development is the main challenge for sustainable food security;
- Farms are underdeveloped.³⁷

Armenia

As the Russian-Ukrainian crisis is intensifying, with a growing number of casualties and destruction, insecurity is on the rise and warnings of a looming famine and bread crisis are voiced. It is already clear that this war is leading to a shortage of food and rising prices in the world. Due to the ongoing conflict, Ukraine is losing crops, and Russia is losing export markets. In fact, this is a part of the global trend leading to sharp inflation in both rich and poor countries. Such a conclusion has good grounds, as Russia and Ukraine account for about a third of the world's wheat exports. To be more precise, Russia was the first among the countries exporting wheat in 2021, and Ukraine was the fifth. The latter also had a leading position in the export of corn, especially sunflower oil (about 80%).

The Financial Times cites that at the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian events, the price of wheat on the Chicago Board of Trade immediately increased. As of March 7, 2022, the price of wheat in the world market was already higher than at the beginning of the year.³⁸ Armenia is closely connected to the Russian market in terms of almost all imported goods. Armenia has some trade relations with Ukraine. In the structure of Armenia's foreign and mutual trade, the share of Russia in 2021 was 28% of exports and 37.2% of imports, and the share of Ukraine was 0.9 and 2.8%, respectively. In 2021,

³⁷ Eteri Kharashvili, "Challenges for sustainable food security in Georgia, Conference: XV EAAE Congress in Parma: Towards Sustainable Agri-Food Systems", Parma, Italy, 2017.

³⁸ "Russia's war on Ukraine threatens a global food security crisis", *Financial Times*, (March 7, 2022), <https://www.ft.com/content/02095093-329b-4b66-9f80-13d07350014c>.

in terms of food products, Armenia imports from Russia 99% of wheat, 80% of corn, 97% of vegetable oil, more than 70% of margarine, 40% of sugar, 15% of dry milk, 13% of poultry, and finally about 70% of non-essential products, such as chocolate. More than 34% of poultry meat, 25% of dry milk, about 15% of butter, about 60% of soybean and 20% of confectionery were imported from Ukraine to Armenia.³⁹ More than half of the demand for dry milk is met by imports from Belarus. That is why the Russian-Ukrainian crisis is also a threat to Armenia's food security.

Armenia, as shown in Table 3, imported about 266 thousand tons of wheat in 2021, 99.7% of which came from Russia. The country also accounted for 99% of the imported 24.6 thousand tons of flour, 88.58% of pasta and 32.7% of rice. As the Russian-Ukrainian war has shown, such a monopoly position of the exporting country is risky.

	2021 annual total	Exporting country	2020 annual total
Wheat	265,599	264,863 from Russia, 736 from Georgia	356,329
Flour	24,625	24,345 from Russia, 64 from Italy, 134 from Belarus, 1 from Greece, 81 from Kazakhstan	23,953
Pasta	10,324	9,138 from Russia, 1003 from Italy, 28 from China, 2 from France, 1 from Thailand, 10 from Belarus, 94 from the Islamic Republic of Iran, 48 from Kazakhstan	11,029
Rice	7,596	3,264 from Thailand, 946 from Iran, 2,483 from Russia, 763 from India, 5 from Spain, 34 from Italy, 2 from Paraguay, 45 from the United States, 2 from Vietnam, 52 from the United Arab Emirates	7,118

Table 3: Data on wheat, flour, pasta and rice imported to Armenia, tons (2020 and 2021)⁴⁰

In recent years, the resource potential of Armenia's agriculture has not been fully used. For a sparsely populated country like Armenia, it is intolerable

³⁹ S. Avetisyan., G. Salnazaryan, "Russian-Armenian Conflict and Armenia's Food Security Risk", *Alternative Journal* 4, (2023): 238.

⁴⁰ S. Avetisyan., G. Salnazaryan, "Russian-Armenian Conflict and Armenia's Food Security Risk".

that only 50% of arable land is sown, and only 26% of total sowing is allocated to the main food crop, wheat. Of course, this is mainly due to the low level of income from cereals.

Indicators	Area, thousand hectares		Yield, c/ha		Gross harvest, thousand tons	
	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021
Total arable lands	444.0	444.0				
Total sown area	222.7	227.2				
Cereals and legumes	121.7	124.9	20.5	12.9	246.1	153.2
Wheat products	59.4	59.1	22.5	16.8	132.0	97.2
Potatoes	20.5	20.1	212.8	179.3	437.2	364.6
Vegetable and vegetable crops	25.3	24.0	323.8	313.0	819.4	751.2
Other crops	55.2	58.2				

Table 4: Area of RA main agricultural crops, yield and gross harvest⁴¹

In order to give a preference to this or that point of view, it is necessary to give a realistic assessment of the economic and geopolitical position of the country. Some of Armenia's partners point to Singapore's high food security record, claiming that the country has no agriculture but has the highest food security rates. In 2019, Singapore was the first of 113 countries in the world in terms of food security, and in other years, the rating of this country was quite high. At the same time, the "World Food Security Ranking" states that, in the first place, unexpectedly, is Singapore. It is worthy to mention that, for example, Armenia does not have a shortage of land and water resources for wheat production.⁴² But there is no seed production of high-yielding varieties, and no modern high-yield combine harvesters, as well as an infrastructure for loss-free and efficient post-harvest processes. In addition,

⁴¹ Armenian Statistical Office, data for 2020–2021, <https://armstat.am>.

⁴² S. Avetisyan., G. Salnazaryan, "Russian-Armenian Conflict and Armenia's Food Security Risk".

there is no effective system of state subsidies, which will allow us to partially mitigate the rise in prices for diesel fuel, fertilizers, agricultural maintenance services and insurance due to the rising dollar.

To sum up,

the EU spends more than 50 billion euros a year, or 40.0% of the total EU budget, on Armenia's agri-food policy measures. The majority of these funds (about 4/5) are directed in the form of subsidies to provide direct financial support to the villagers to maintain prices and, consequently, the required level of income. The remaining 1/5 of the budget's agricultural expenditures are directed to financing the sustainable development of rural settlements, including rural infrastructure.⁴³

The analysis shows that the risks of food security in Armenia are obvious. The logical way out of this situation, as evidenced by international experience, is the diversification of foreign trade in food products and state support for agriculture with efficient structures.

The Armenian government also implements various state support programs for agriculture. However, due to imperfect state structures, they are not well perceived by farmers. Following the experience of EU countries, it will be worthy to direct financial support per unit of sown area to produce strategic agricultural products, to subsidize the prices of fertilizers, diesel fuel, seeds, necessary services and some other costs.

The efforts to improve the state of food security in Armenia strongly depend on the improvement of state policies aimed at increasing the efficiency in agriculture and rural development.

Agriculture plays a significant role in ensuring proper level of food security due to two principal reasons. First, agriculture is an important link in the value chain of the food industry and is one of the key sectors of the economy with high export potential. And secondly, the development of agriculture in terms of increasing productivity in that sector and creating opportunities for non-agricultural employment in rural areas, as well as ensuring balanced territorial development, are extremely important. The predominant part of the income of the population of rural settlements is obtained from agricultural production and wage labour in that field. Therefore, the level of

⁴³ S. Avetisyan, G. Salnazaryan, "Russian-Armenian Conflict and Armenia's Food Security Risk".

poverty in those settlements is largely determined by the state of agricultural development.

As for the development prospects of the sector we suggest the following:

- to develop integrated family farms with well-established agricultural organizations, cooperatives and market infrastructures using advanced technologies;
- to combine the interests of food security and the principles of comparative advantages in foreign trade of food products, stable food supply of the population;
- to satisfy the demand for agricultural raw materials for the agricultural processing sector;
- to increase the gross output in agriculture by improving labor productivity and reducing the number of people employed in agriculture;
- to use part of the surplus workforce through re-trainings in non-agricultural fields of activity;
- to process a significant part of the produced agricultural goods by micro, small and medium farms;
- to increase the volumes of agricultural products with high added value in the intra-regional structures of plant breeding and animal husbandry;
- to improve the level of food security by ensuring self-sufficiency of the most vital food products, and by reducing rural areas poverty and urbanization.

The future of modern agriculture is industrialization, i.e. increasing the productivity in this field, and the application of modern technologies and management systems. In turn, the targets mentioned can be achieved by better utilizing the resources of agricultural holdings (complete use of arable land, intensifying agricultural production, increasing the yield of crops and food for animals), as well as by promoting non-agricultural employment in rural settlements, creating capacities for crafts, processing of agricultural products, agriculture service, and agro-tourism.

In order to maximize the size of the arable land, it is important to implement targeted subsidy programs aimed at the cultivation of land in the most unfavourable zones, to subsidize the prices of most relevant resources used in agriculture. In the meantime, better land use may be facilitated by the improvement of production and technical services due to special leasing projects of agricultural machinery. In order to increase the efficiency of land use, it is necessary to encourage and motivate the farmers to jointly use the fragmented, divided plots of land by various promotion levers (loans, grants, state programs, etc.) in the latter direction. The formation of regulated wholesale markets for agricultural products, the activities of collection points, and information centres for the sale of agricultural products also require special consideration.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To provide adequate solutions to the set of problems in the region, it is necessary to develop a joint program for regional collaboration and implement a comprehensive agrarian policy based on the characteristics of each country and aimed at the development of the sector and the utilization of competitive advantages of each village and farm.

The role of the states in agriculture needs to be appreciated, to constantly carry out a multi-level and multi-faceted study of foreign markets for domestically produced agricultural products and products obtained from their processing. Also, the state may support or co-finance the promotion and advertising of domestic products at different international forums and exhibitions.

One of the most effective means to advertise domestic products is to promote them during the visits of government officials and businesspeople abroad as gifts and souvenirs.

The role of the state is particularly important in developing, spreading and utilizing the country's positive image and competitive national advantages vis-à-vis increasing challenges of unfair competition posed by different countries.

Coordinating and managing foreign trade and economic relations with neighbouring countries should be considered as an important task of the state considering the most vital needs of farms and the farmers.

It is always useful to study advanced business models such as “green economy,” “circular economy,” ensuring food security from developed countries. On the other hand, some success stories of neighbouring and other developing nations with a more comparable level of economic development also deserve attention and actions aimed at cooperation.

More fruitful and well-designed relations with the international organizations are also needed to develop regional cooperation with the help of joint pilot projects including all three nations of South Caucasus.

The role of Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian communities living in neighbouring countries may also facilitate the efforts to develop regional cooperation and to form a common market in South Caucasus, with a strong and competitive agricultural component. Mentioned steps may serve as a solid ground to better utilize not only national competitive advantages, but also joint cooperative advantages of all three nations.

To sum up, our research based on the comparative analysis of the state of food security in the South Caucasus allows us to conclude that there are certain commonalities in strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that are currently present in this region. **Common strengths include** bio products, hardworking human resources, natural resources, favourable climate, high level of demand on local agricultural products, increased level of competitiveness in agro business. **Common weaknesses include** dependence on foreign markets, low use of technologies, lack of farmer’s knowledge in local and international marketing, low level of incentives to cultivate the land, mass outflow of population from rural areas, high level of urbanization, limited support of state and subsidies, high level of competition with foreign goods. **Common opportunities include** cooperation, communications, logistics, local and foreign demand of agricultural goods, regional and international projects, and multilateral cooperation within international organizations. **Common threats include** war and tense relations, isolation from neighbours (particularly for Armenia and Azerbaijan), mountainous region, limited markets, hostility between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Thus, our study justifies the obvious connection between the efforts to maintain proper level of food security, human security and resilience. By ensuring sufficient level of food security, the state also looks at the opportunities to

improve the quality of life of the people. This makes human lives more stable, secure and predictable. In addition, the role of the European Union, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, UN Food Program is highly appreciated to eliminate hunger and malnutrition, as well as to utilize international standards and benchmarks.

Despite the mentioned weaknesses and threats the South Caucasus countries have enough resources to feed their inhabitants. It is more an issue of better management and rational organization, as well as of firm political will, rather than a real shortage of resources. Once these states with transition economies become well organized not only internally but also actively involved in a bilateral and multilateral cooperation, most of the comparative and absolute advantages are expected to be better utilized in the region. Multilateral exchange of goods and services must be encouraged by the governments. Moreover, it is advisable that the cooperative advantages of all three nations shall be jointly utilized to reach common goals in the political and economic agenda of the South Caucasus. This in turn will benefit all countries around the South Caucasus and their citizens and will allow for the implementation of the agreed and signed by the countries' goals within the regional and global economic frameworks.

Lessons Learned from Water Cooperation in Conflict Management in the South Caucasus

Henry Wathen

Introduction

The need of humans to band together to predict and control water flows is linked to the dawn of our first complex societies and ancient civilisations.¹ In modern times, water management is well established as a central theme in human security, emphasising the “interdependence of nations and individuals” and their livelihoods.² Access to water for irrigation is essential for crop production. Planting agriculture dependent on water provision may constitute both subsistence, as well as commercial revenue. In many conflict-affected regions, agriculture is a primary source of livelihood. Beyond irrigation water for agriculture, drinking water may be a resource even more crucial for human security. Conflict-torn and fragile societies typically see disruptions to the access of both irrigation and drinking water. Access to water is at the core of societal resilience.

A related theme to cooperation on irrigation and drinking water is that of dam safety. The water reservoirs, that irrigation water is drawn from, may be linked to energy provision. Hydroelectric facilities of a certain size are typically strategic objects. Their importance lies in both energy provision as well as threats connected to flooding in case of their destruction. Ukraine’s Kakhovka dam being blown up in the early summer of 2023 while under the watch of Russian forces, and the subsequent inundation of a war zone provide a recent example of dilemmas and risks concerning (artificial) water reservoirs with dams.

¹ Stefan Döring, *Cooperation and Conflict amid Water Scarcity*, PhD Thesis, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University 2022, citing Giulio Boccaletti, *Water – A Biography*, (New York: Pantheon, 2021).

² S. Tadjbakhsh, & A. Chenoy, “Human Security: Concepts and implications (1st ed.)”, (London: Routledge, 2007).

In conflict management, at worst, dams present menaces or diversionary targets. At best they are the subject of confidence building measures and/or cross-conflict energy cooperation. One example of functional cooperation in the South Caucasus concerns the Enguri hydro power plant. Its dam is on Georgian government-controlled territory, but the power generating facilities are in breakaway Abkhazia. Even in times of tension, the stakeholders of Georgia, Abkhazia and Russia have managed to agree on sharing the electric energy generated from Enguri, coupled with provisions of electricity from Russia through other power lines.³ In summary, when properly managed dams are pivotal resources. However, they may also be maliciously exploited, even to become major threats.

Georgia has addressed the energy dialogue with Russia and Abkhazia on the ministerial level. In contrast, water cooperation with breakaway South Ossetia has been addressed at working level meetings facilitated by the OSCE and the EU. The cases and lessons identified in this chapter are based on my experience of serving in the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM), reinforced by inputs from former colleagues among partner organisations. The two case studies from the South Caucasus presented in the current chapter demonstrate how meeting formats with a third-party can provide an opportunity for local stakeholders to reach agreements. Water management and functional irrigation can assist communities across the dividing lines to continue agricultural activities, thereby contributing to food security and economic stability – corner stones of societal resilience. Notably, water cooperation over a conflict divide may also generate a positive spill over to peace-building and conflict transformation broadly.

Georgia and the *de facto* Government of South Ossetia

In the spring of 2019, the EUMM Georgia and the OSCE launched an initiative to resume cooperation on irrigation. The destined platform was to invite to so-called “technical meetings.” Such meetings were associated with the ‘Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms’ (IPRM) – an established format for field-level talks, focused on confidence building and ex-

³ See for example “Georgian, Abkhaz Sides Agree on Cooperation in Energy Sector” *Civil.ge* (Oct. 6, 2005): <https://civil.ge/archives/108266>.

change of information.⁴ The achievements of the initiative were modest in comparison to earlier works facilitated by the OSCE from 2010 to 2014. In these years following the 2008 conflict, strong donor engagement and in retrospect less international polarisation, together, generated progress. Specifically, agreements concerned works of noteworthy technical complexity and equipment transfers over contested boundaries. The resulting infrastructure repairs benefitted agriculture and dam safety – crucial to residents on both sides of the conflict divide or “Administrative Boundary Line,” (ABL) separating breakaway South Ossetia from territory controlled by the Georgian central government.⁵

By 2014 the erection of fences and other obstacles, so-called ‘borderisation’ had made access to agricultural land and irrigation ditches more difficult. The Ergneti IPRM and associated technical meetings were at times used to discuss the clearing of particular canals through 2016 and 2018. In early 2019, EUMM and the OSCE made a concerted effort for momentum in water cooperation. Acting as co-facilitators, EUMM and the OSCE hosted a number of meetings in Ergneti through the spring and summer of 2019. Tangible progress was made ahead of the irrigation season in 2019. However, a worsening political situation and increase in tensions from the autumn of 2019 halted progress.⁶ Yet, after the restrictive measures imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic were mainly lifted, cooperation in the sphere of water

⁴ IPRM meetings facilitated by EUMM and OSCE, bring together Georgian, Russian and South Ossetian de facto security actors. Since 2009, these meetings have been held in a “neutral zone” close to the village of Ergneti between the effective lines of control of the Georgian government and the Russian border guards based in South Ossetia. These meetings are referred to as the Ergneti IPRM. (A few early meetings were held in Dvani) IPRM meetings which include Abkhazian separatists have been held in the town of Gali (located on the Abkhaz side) at the UNHCR field office. These meetings referred to as the Gali IPRM was agreed to be chaired by the UN, with participation of the Abkhaz de facto security actors (security service, police and ministry of defence at times). The general parameters for both IPRMs were elaborated and agreed at the 4th round of the Geneva International Discussions in February 2009.

⁵ See “EU/EC-funded Water Projects on both sides of the ABL” Project contract 144868, Final Narrative Report, OSCE Secretariat, Conflict Prevention Centre, 29 June 2012, and “EU/EC-funded Water Projects on both sides of the ABL” Project contract IFS-RRM/2012/299-602, OSCE Secretariat, Conflict Prevention Centre, 20 May 2014.

⁶ See for example Tornike Zurabashvili, “Tsnelisi-Chorchana Crisis: Facts, Details And Chronology”, *Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (Rondeli Foundation)* Opinion Paper, no. 130 (2019).

management resumed through the above-mentioned technical meetings held near the Georgian village of Ergneti.

Assessing factors for success, established cooperation lines and a regular exchange of information between EUMM and the OSCE were essential for mediating a resumption of dialogue on water management in 2019. As co-facilitators of the Ergneti IPRM meetings, EUMM Georgia and the OSCE acted with an established complementarity. The OSCE was able to visit and interact with people on both sides of the conflict divide to prepare the ground for negotiations. EUMM's relatively large ground presence is on the side of Georgian controlled territory, which is also where most of the beneficiaries of irrigation water from the Tiriponi and other canals are.

After the Mikheil Saakashvili gaining power, the government of Georgia was not inclined to sign any formal agreement with the separatist entity of South Ossetia. Rather, the Georgian position was to emphasise that negotiations were with Russia, the "occupant." In the Georgian political discourse, the August 2008 war was seen in the context of a conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia. South Ossetia (as well as Abkhazia) was neither seen as a party to the conflict, nor as an equal counterpart in any negotiations. Geopolitics were mirrored on the local level. District heads and mid-level Georgian officials would not sign any written agreement directly with *de facto* representatives of South Ossetia, or 'Tskhinvali region' (the term Georgians use). Nevertheless, the Georgian authorities realized the need to address concrete issues affecting the lives of the conflicted-affected population with the South Ossetian (as well as the Abkhaz) counterparts. The IPRMs as well as technical meetings were established to provide a necessary format to reach some pragmatic (verbal) agreements on practical issues.

The resumption of meetings in 2019 was preceded by the teams from EUMM and OSCE piecing together background information from their respective archives and engaged in a working level exchange and shared assessment. The office of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia and the Embassy of Switzerland also contributed with key institutional memory in compiling background information crucial to the initiative.

As mentioned above, EUMM and the OSCE have two key aspects of complementarity. The ground presence of EU monitors was a key enabler for the effort to be launched, as the monitors were well informed and had a good understanding of conditions on the ground. The Mission's field office in Gori is well placed to access local interlocutors in the conflict-affected areas along the South Ossetian ABL. Monitors of the EUMM's Human Security Teams⁷ regularly confer with locals about the conditions for agriculture, interface with authorities on the municipal level and possess in-depth knowledge of the geography, i.e. stretches of canals in the irrigation system and their critical junctures, such as sluice gates and pumping stations. The OSCE, in contrast, have few staff dedicated for Georgia, but enjoys access also to stakeholders in South Ossetia and have well-established relations to key political figureheads in the broader region. In this case the OSCE could even speak directly to members of the affected communities of the envisaged water cooperation in South Ossetia. As the crucial summer period approached, the urgent need for irrigation water was conveyed and physically demonstrated to OSCE representatives. The sense of urgency combined with South Ossetian parliamentary elections in the early summer of 2019 catalysed broader engagement, enabling the series of meetings to convene.

The implementation of agreements reached at the technical meetings were coordinated via the EUMM-managed "hotline", a practical communication tool with modalities agreed upon in the IPRM foundational document. The hotline was used for requests to open and close sluice gates, to provide information and updates on maintenance and upcoming work on irrigation canals, as well as on the water level of the Zonkari dam. This artificial reservoir provides additional water for irrigation. The participating specialists proposed to begin (or resume) sharing measurements of water levels on several locations.

Past negotiations on irrigation, as well as those in 2019, specified canal sections on both sides of the ABL that the stakeholders would commit to clear

⁷ The personnel in EUMM's Human Security Teams have a diverse background. A number of them have worked with non-governmental organizations and even on the ground with development cooperation projects. Typically, the civilian monitors in these teams have more time in the mission, as Police and Military colleagues from most Member States face more obstacles from their home authorities to extend beyond one year.

from debris or to open sluice gates. The principle was tit-for-tat or that each measure was accompanied by an equivalent *quid pro quo* from the opposing stakeholder. An essential aspect of the negotiation process in the Georgia case was the identification of shared interests and *quid pro quo* arrangements. Clearing canal sections, opening sluice gates, or exchanging water flows benefited different farmers and villages within the competence of different local government officials. In some instances, locations that were completely distant were identified as subject to an agreement to exchange in effect one flow of water for another flow of water. The direct beneficiaries were different farmers or villages, but locations could be under the administration of the same respective local government official.



Figure 2: EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, 2019⁸

The local conflict geography shaped the situation. Most importantly, the major irrigation artery, the Tiriponi canal is at times parallel to the ABL and at times intersects it. This creates an obvious interdependence on the unhindered flow of irrigation water. Second, the size and the resources of the

⁸ European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, *The EUMM Monitor*, Issue 8 (September 2019), https://eumm.eu/data/file/36635/issue_8_eng3_LATEST.pdf.



Figure 3: View from the Zonkari Dam (Emmanuel Anquetil, OSCE, 2011)

affected communities are asymmetric. The number of residents and agricultural enterprises on the Georgian-controlled areas that draw water from the Tiriponi canal system far outnumber those on the territory controlled by breakaway South Ossetia, where the Russian Federation is the security provider and exceptionalist political actor.

One of the points highlighted in the Georgian case is whether to link water management to other issues or to compartmentalize it to separate the discussions. The experience on the ground from Georgia indicates that in effect it is very difficult to completely isolate such an issue in a conflict setting. As for articulating trade-offs, the participation of water experts facilitates identifying a *quid pro quo* – analogue water flow where reciprocity can be agreed upon. In 2019, the OSCE made attempts to start technical meetings on fighting wildfires. Unlike the meetings on irrigation, these meetings did not generate tangible outcomes beyond goodwill in a small circle of people. Fighting fires in other contexts has delivered cooperation as there is a sense of urgency. Comparatively, in 2019 the urgency of lack of water produced momentum to engage. When a community impact became known, political actors got involved. The Georgian case also highlights the complexities as a result of interplay between the national and local level political dynamics. The national level narrative of the conflict as the Georgian-Russian war is juxtaposed to the acknowledged need to interact with the *de facto* authorities to address the issues on the ground. Therefore, the case of

Georgia highlights the need to consider local politics and power dynamics when engaging in conflict resolution on the ground level.

In our effort to resume meetings in 2019, all participants initially sought discretion, but the need arose to inform the concerned communities, where sluice gates needed to be regulated, and repair works of canals needed to be done. Such matters cannot obviously be kept secret. In the small digitalised South Ossetian media sphere, the cooperation efforts were discussed. The leading representative from Tskhinvali was quoted in the media clarifying what had been discussed/agreed.⁹ Notably, the meetings began in the spring leading up to the *de facto* parliamentary elections in South Ossetia in June 2019. The link to the political dimension appears to have given the water management process positive momentum in 2019.

Furthermore, the case study underscores the importance of information management and archiving in organizations like EUMM and OSCE, which often experience a large personnel turnover. Collaborative efforts to piece together background information from respective archives and working-level exchanges played a crucial role in the initiative. EU monitors' field presence in Gori enabled access to local interlocutors, while the Human Security Team's engagement with local authorities provided valuable insights into irrigation infrastructure.

The experience from the meetings in 2019 and thereafter suggests that the field level dialogue on water management ("IPRM technical meetings"), though seemingly local in nature, had broader implications. Separatist South Ossetia's president since 2022, Alan Gagloyev has focused particularly on the development of agriculture.¹⁰ With South Ossetia's mostly mountainous topography, the flat areas along the conflict divide have become more

⁹ Guguli Valiev, "Когда заработает Тирпионский оросительный канал?" *Yuzhnaya Osetia*, (March 19, 2019), <http://www.nykhas.ru/625266/kogda-zarabotaet-tiriponskiy-orosit/>.

¹⁰ Gagloyev identified agriculture and domestic food production as areas of focus before his election. See for example: "Алан Гаглоев: воссоединение с Россией – вековая мечта осетинского народа" *RIA Novosti* (20 April 2022), <https://ria.ru/20220420/gagloyev-1784305792.html>. On reports of increased agricultural land see: "Посевная площадь зерновых культур в Южной Осетии увеличилась на 700 га – министр" *LA RES* <https://cominf.org/node/1166549916>.

important when food security is deemed a priority. In September 2023, the South Ossetian separatists cleared a key canal from Tskhinvali toward Ergneti, unilaterally. In conclusion, technical meetings with experts may bring progress closer, but they never take place in isolation from the larger context. Political will is necessary for success in all negotiations not dominated by coercion.

Armenia and Azerbaijan

After the first Karabakh war in the 1990s, the government of Azerbaijan and Armenian separatists in Karabakh did on a number of occasions cooperate on water management in and around Armenian controlled areas.¹¹ As tensions rose in 2016, water cooperation in and around the separatist entity of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding occupied areas of Azerbaijan ceased. However, despite regular escalation on the ground, Armenia and Azerbaijan have through two decades intermittently engaged in a fruitful dialogue on managing the many bodies of water straddling the state border. The International Crisis Group even before the war in 2020, stressed water management as a suitable venue of cooperation along the state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan.¹² Also after the 10 November 2020 ceasefire agreement, Armenia and Azerbaijan have continued cooperation on managing the multiple rivers and estuaries that intersect the state border. These discussions have progressed despite escalations on the ground in 2022–2023. At first glance it may seem a paradox.

Actually, progress in negotiations parallel with increased hostilities became the normal state of affairs between Armenia and Azerbaijan, once referred to as a “frozen conflict.” However, it is worth noting that the geographical areas about which progress was made in the dialogue, were not in or directly adjacent to the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh separatist region. For Karabakh, progress on water management dialogue stalled in 2016. Water was intertwined with energy, which became a bone of contention. Water in

¹¹ The OSCE supported water management cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan after 2000 through multiple instruments, including the Environment Security ENVSEC initiative. See for example “ENVSEC in the South Caucasus – An Overview of Projects” OSCE, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/e/89301.pdf>.

¹² “Preventing a Bloody Harvest on the Armenia-Azerbaijan State Border” *International Crisis Group*, Europe Report No. 259, (24 July 2020), p. 15–16.

Karabakh's Sarsang Reservoir was during the 2022–2023 winter used for energy generation within the separatist region, rather than for irrigation to downstream Azerbaijani farming communities. Azerbaijan on their part, instrumentalized blockages of all sorts, to put pressure on the separatist enclave leading up to its dissolution in October 2023.¹³

Water cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan along the state border is one item of discussion, along with delimitation and demarcation of the state border. This internationally recognised state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan is to this day not delimited and demarcated but remains an abstract line up for interpretation depending on which map one uses. Up until the war in 2020 the largest run of the border was of little practical significance, as Armenian forces controlled the territory on both sides. The autumn war of 2020 changed the situation drastically both on the ground as well as generated multiple fora of mediation. The ceasefire agreement of November 2020 was announced by Russia, who also dispatched peacekeepers to Karabakh. Parallel negotiations followed on various levels and in three major tracks; chaired by Russia, the EU and the US. Russia capitalised on its presence of peacekeepers for facilitating meetings *in situ*, whereas the US and EU Member States directed both political support and development cooperation instruments to support the effort towards agreements.

Water management is also a component in the larger frame of connectivity and establishing transport links. A “Mid-Term Project Report” in the donor funded initiative; “Economic Connectivity Armenia-Azerbaijan Dialogue Series” (ECAADS) identifies the bodies of water with prospects for cooperation: Arpa River/Arpaçay, Vorotan River/Bazarçay and Joghaz Reservoir.

¹³ The standoff/blockade of 2022–2023 exemplifies the complexity of water issues, albeit an isolated theme, but interlinked with the societal fabric. The Sarsang Reservoir was up until October 2023 controlled by Armenian separatists. Armenian media asserted the hydropower station at the reservoir became the only or major source of electrical energy for Karabakh, as Azerbaijani authorities did not allow for maintenance work on power lines between Karabakh and Armenia. Azerbaijani media spoke of mismanagement on part of the *de facto* authorities in Karabakh which left Azeri communities downstream without irrigation water the summer (agricultural season) of 2023 and constituted a looming “ecological catastrophe.” “Sarsangskoe Vodokhranilishche Vysykhaet iz-za Sozdannooi Separatistami Ekokatastrofa” Baku TV/RU YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cj16X3iHTRc&ab_channel=BakuTV%7CRU accessed 23 August 2023.

The elements of cooperation, which were discussed, are for example, exchange of data on water levels, as well as instituting payments from communities of water consumers downstream from those upstream.¹⁴ In summary, a couple of observations can be drawn from the case of water management cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan after the 2020 war. First, progress was not possible in Karabakh where a major conflict on political status persisted. Second, the issue of water was interlinked to other topics discussed under a broader framework of interconnectivity and unblocking transport links. Third, the plurality of stakeholders in the mediation process can be seen both as a challenge and a source of complementarity. Regardless, it is a factor to reckon with in any conflict analysis or feasibility assessment on the Armenian-Azerbaijani dialogue context.

Lessons Learned

Compartmentalise Water Management or Address it as Part of a Larger Context?

Central to any mediation effort is the question of agenda setting and whether to separate discussions on security matters from human security or humanitarian issues. The dilemmas of linking or separating humanitarian and development projects from security concerns are a classic theme in the scholarly and policy literature on human security.¹⁵ The two case studies above provide positive examples of dedicating specific meetings for water management. However, any abstract compartmentalization of issues cannot isolate water management from the overall context. Thus, the recommendation is to give water management attention and time on the agenda, but to always see the topic as part of a larger context. Attempts to compartmentalize or decouple water management should be seen as temporary measures to allow a professional informed discussion. Giving experts the floor is an achievement, as the primacy of security actors stifles much progress.

¹⁴ “Economic Connectivity Armenia-Azerbaijan Dialogue Series” (ECAADS) White Paper, Mid-Term Project Report, (September 2023), 19–20.

¹⁵ S. Tadjbakhsh, Shahrbanou & A. Chenoy, A. M. (2006). Human Security: Concepts and Implications. Human Security: Concepts and implications. 1–272. 10.4324/9780203965955.

Agreements: Vague Versus Specific – Written Versus Verbal

The relative stability between Georgia and the South Ossetian separatists may owe a lot to the diplomatic ambiguity around the six-point agreement and subsequent agreed upon measures.¹⁶ However, matters concerning water management are often technical in nature, and the desired outcome is not refraining from action, but actually to take action. The agreed interventions will likely require geographical specifics as well as dates, times and perhaps volumes of water release. Hence, forging a written agreement is necessary sooner or later. Herein lies the key challenge: to be specific in technical aspects, but to circumvent territorial/political conflicts and disputed terminology. You – the chair, the mediator, the third party – are typically in a better position to articulate the points to which the stakeholders agree. To avoid time consuming semantic transgressions, verbally summarizing the points agreed is ideally done at the end of a meeting. Following that, the points agreed upon may be disseminated to the conflict stakeholders – the negotiators. You may share a draft separately to various stakeholders to receive their comments.

Shared Interests and Quid Pro Quo/Trade-Offs

The most obvious trade-offs in water management are selecting analogue bodies of water where the roles of which community are upstream versus downstream are reversed. Such examples most clearly illustrate the mutual benefits of cooperation. A tit-for-tat approach in demanding concessions seems more common than unilateral or so-called goodwill gestures. The participation of water experts from across the conflict divide and engagement with local (rather than national) authorities and civil society are prime resources for identifying demands linked to community needs. Dam safety can be a topic of mutual interest when areas that risk being flooded stretch over territory held by conflicting parties. While it is paramount to understand the stakeholders, it is not advisable to second guess their intentions in formulating demands. Mediators should focus on providing a platform for the conflict stakeholders, not articulating demands in their place.

¹⁶ The Six-Point Agreement of 12 August 2008 and the Implementing Measures of 8 September 2008.

Capitalize on Diversity of Actors and Parallel Formats

In a context with multiple parallel formats and various teams of mediators, it is very imaginable that trade-offs and the linked *quid pro quos* are negotiated in different formats. Topics and themes are presumably more interconnected in a national system, even more so in the relatively small separatist entities of the post-Soviet sphere, than in the multiverse of international organisations. The concerned stakeholders (negotiators) in the conflicts are typically in a better position to identify the most suitable *quid pro quo* in their interest than a mediating third party would be.

It is important to be aware of the other formats, who mediates, who participates and what the general scope of these discussions are. However, you shouldn't pry too intensively about the specific negotiation positions and issues. You may be seen as asserting "your" format over the other and end up spoiling progress in both. Political reasons may make it difficult for both parties to the conflict and the other mediators to share the details of their negotiations. Knowing when a meeting takes place may be the most valuable piece of information for you – in order to space meetings to allow the conflicting parties to prepare and get their green light for any possible concession. Composition of a meeting format is certainly a key factor, i.e. which ministries and agencies are represented and, of course, on what level, and who/which structure is in the lead. Exploring synergies and interlinkages is central to finding the place of your mediating activities. The general approach should be to seek harmonization or at least to deconflict with other activities. Even better to develop into mutually reinforcing related projects and formats. For example, some donors may be ready to support infrastructure work to facilitate water management. Natural resource management is an articulated priority by various donors and civil society. Mediators from international organisations should capitalise on the other interested parties. Also, external resources such as satellite imagery may provide valuable tools for assessing water levels and dam safety. As for other formats, where the same stakeholders that you mediate between, the most crucial information is who mediates and what the general scope of these discussions are.

Politization Is Inevitable – Deal with It!

Politization cannot be avoided as it matters which stakeholders are involved – a representative from the security structures or the foreign ministry may be more interested in asserting a political agenda. Governors/local authorities, on the other hand, may have a genuine interest on promoting and enhancing the conditions for agriculture locally. Parliamentarians at the national level that have a constituency in the affected agricultural area may also be key stakeholders. Each stakeholders' elections and the political processes should be taken into consideration, as well as their expected inclination to inform their constituencies.

Go Slow and Think Long-Term

Another key principle recommended for most processes is to not be in a rush and to go slow to find suitable/possible measures. A slow approach will leave the stakeholders with more time for internal deliberations on different levels to identify what is in their interest and what their counter demand could be. Rushing may damage the process. A medium-term and long-term approach are in any case necessary when dealing with matters concerning agriculture. Weather and seasons need to be taken into consideration for planning. As mentioned, the time span between the proposed meetings should allow for internal consultations. In brief, continuous momentum and dialogue are much more important than seeking any quick deliverables or launching projects and efforts that prove non-resilient/not sustainable.

Accountability and Transparency or Diplomatic Discretion?

How to best inform the public and how to manage press relations of course varies in each context. One lesson learned from working in the South Caucasus is that discretion and integrity of each negotiation format should be maintained but meetings should not be kept entirely secret. Second, human security concerns the broader public directly, thus accountability among each stakeholder is also something to encourage. Unfortunately, there is a tradition of keeping meetings overly secret that may even backfire. It would be advisable to identify the advantages of addressing and informing the public, acknowledging that public messaging would certainly differ between each stakeholder.

Holding a meeting secret may have more purpose when discussing terms for disarmament or weapons limitations zones, where the directly involved stakeholders are security actors. Matters of human security, such as water management cooperation, particularly irrigation, has obvious interest from a community of rural residents engaged in small scale subsistence farming and/or agricultural enterprises. Hence, accountability and buy-in from the local community may eventually outweigh concerns of discretion in the spirit of quiet diplomacy and perceived needs to shield meetings from the often-toxic discourse on social media.

As the Georgia case demonstrates, it would be naïve to believe that it could be possible to keep secret from the Russian side cooperation of the Georgian side with the South Ossetian representatives. Agreements do not have to be published, but it may be advantageous to agree on each stakeholder to announce agreements to their own constituencies. Today's intense mediatization and interconnectedness can easily put stakeholders on the spot. Hardliners often portray agreements as selling out without getting anything in exchange. Traditionally, working level diplomatic contacts are held discretely. This has been possible and has been part of the advantages of not raising issues at higher levels. The discretion of yesterday is harder to maintain today. Too often we may have engaged in overzealous info-securitization about working level contacts that are important for a local constituency, but rather marginal for the global audience. It would be important to consider a pragmatic approach, which acknowledges that information about the meetings will be known. Therefore, it is essential to elaborate a public communication strategy to introduce the process to the local communities in order to gain their buy-in. Do not get lost thinking excessively big and in a global discourse but think small and local.

You Are Not an Engineer, But You Must Be an Information Manager!

At the time of drafting fifteen years have passed since the launch of IPRM meetings and the first efforts in post-conflict water management dialogue. An enormous amount of information accumulated. However, information management and retrievable archiving constitute a major challenge. Organizations such as the EUMM and the OSCE are subject to great personnel turnover. As for knowledge, the average civil servant can easily get lost in the technicalities that discussions on water management easily drift into. While

experts have a natural role in the meetings, the mediating teams process input from technical experts and synthesize it with operational and political inputs. In short, water management is particularly information dense. Archiving and well-structured information management are pivotal to the situational awareness of the mediating teams and their ability to master complex discussions, just enough to coherently articulate the elements of a proposed agreement. The mediating teams should not replace the technical experts, but a common understanding is needed also between professional categories.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The material above constitutes an attempt to draw some general conclusions and to formulate recommendations that may serve as lessons learned, relevant for future efforts to mediate in water management in the South Caucasus and possibly in other contexts as well. First, the role of the mediator as a chair and a facilitator is central to drafting and disseminating agreements. An established method in mediation is to share agreed points in writing separately with each stakeholder. Thus, receiving feedback and reactions separately, but ultimately bringing the separate stances into the dialogue to forge consensus. A mediator may often have to balance humanitarian, security, and technical aspects. A key aspect dealt with above is choosing when to integrate water management into broader discussions and when to keep the format limited to technical matters. The experience from the South Caucasus is that the issue of water is interconnected and often intertwined with other aspects of conflict contexts. Hence, any separation of the issue is temporary and limited in nature. While written agreements can be time-consuming, they are essential, particularly in conflicts with political dimensions. Technical matters often require geographical specificity, dates, times, and volume specifications. Recognizing shared interests and *quid pro quo* arrangements are fundamental to successful negotiations. Stakeholders must explore areas of mutual advantage. Politicization is inherent in conflict negotiations, and stakeholders may have divergent interests. Managing political agendas during negotiations is critical. Diverse actors and parallel negotiation formats can lead to innovative solutions. Understanding existing meeting platforms and participant compositions is crucial. Patience and a long-term approach are essential for successful conflict resolution in contexts influenced by weather, seasons, and internal deliberations. Finding the right balance between transparency and discretion depends on the context. In the case of human security issues

like water cooperation, accountability to the local community is crucial, but discretion may also be needed.

In conclusion, the chapter stresses the importance of acknowledging local agency and the challenges of reassessing development cooperation projects. It highlights the need for improved information sharing and collaboration among stakeholders. The chapter points that the lessons from the Georgia-breakaway South Ossetia and Armenia-Azerbaijan cases can serve as a guiding framework for effective conflict management in water cooperation initiatives globally. Furthermore, it emphasizes that when addressing conflicts, especially those related to human security, it is essential to consider the interests and perspectives of local communities. Discretion in negotiations should be balanced with accountability to the public, given the significance of issues like water cooperation for rural residents and agricultural enterprises. Ultimately, the chapter calls for a pragmatic approach, recognizing that while negotiations may become known, careful management of the process and engagement with local communities are essential for successful conflict resolution, especially in the contexts where human security is at stake.

Too many projects in development cooperation are halted after an initial needs assessment results in the decision to reassess rather than act. Project designers being distant and insufficiently informed could be described as a systemic issue. Information sharing and cooperation is a related challenge. This illustrates the importance of the EU monitors in Georgia and staff on the ground now in Armenia having appropriate interfaces with the other instruments and actors that design the scope of project tenders and terms of reference – a challenge beyond the scope of this publication.

South Caucasus Trade Interconnectivity and Human Security in Armenia

Yeghia Tashjian

Introduction

It has been argued that opening communication channels and engaging in trade interconnectivity between rival states would help building regionalism and strengthen human security. In a report published by the World Bank “Trading Away from Conflict: Using Trade to Increase Resilience in Fragile States,” the author, using case studies from Nigeria and Palestine, argued that trade between rival neighbouring countries or communities, if translated into high-incomes and development, might disincentivize them to engage in conflicts.¹

The South Caucasus is a fragile system and a conflict zone. The November 10, 2020, trilateral statement signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia which was aimed at bringing stability to the region and opening Soviet-era communication channels between rival neighbours failed to do so. On the contrary, military clashes occasionally intensified, and Armenians of Artsakh were eventually forced to leave their homeland. However, despite the fall of Artsakh, recent attempts made by Russia, India, and Iran have revived hopes in Yerevan and Baku that they might engage in regional transport projects by integrating their infrastructures with the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and other projects.

Russia still is the main regional actor here. Despite its shrinking influence in the region, Moscow still enjoys certain leverage over Yerevan and Baku when it comes to regional interconnectivity. This paper will examine how regional trade interconnectivity, either within the context of the INSTC or of other regional trade interconnectivity projects, would enhance human security and development in Armenia.

¹ Massimiliano Cali, “Trading Away from Conflict Using Trade to Increase Resilience in Fragile States”, (Washington: World Bank, 2015), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/publication/trading-away-from-conflict>, last accessed 12/9/2023.

The INSTC is a 7,200 km model of ship, rail, and road inter-modal transport project that was initiated in 2000 by Russia, Iran, and India to facilitate trade between themselves and with Europe. This transport corridor aims to reduce the delivery time of cargo from India to Russia and Northern Europe via the Persian Gulf. As compared with the sea route via the Suez Canal, this route would shrink the distance by more than half, which brings the term and cost of transportation down.² With this corridor, the present delivery time is expected to decrease in three weeks. Hence, the INSTC not only shortens the time but also minimizes trade costs.

The project is planned to have three routes:

- The western route connects the Caucasus region to the Persian Gulf.
- The central route connects the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf again via Iran.
- The eastern route connects Central Asia to the Persian Gulf.

Hence, Iran is a key transit route in this project. The Western route is the focus of this research. The INSTC project could have a great impact on human security in the South Caucasus, mainly in Armenia, which due to the conflict in Artsakh and the economic blockade imposed by Ankara and Baku have isolated the country economically from the region. The opening of communication channels between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the economic integration of Armenia into the region, and the implementation of shared infrastructure projects could help foster greater regional stability and improve the chances for sustainable peace. Armenia could benefit from participation in the ambitious North-South international railway infrastructure initiative, or by becoming a transit hub country for the Persian Gulf-Black Sea Corridor which would envisage a transit route stretching from India to Russia and Europe via the North-South Transport Road Corridor (NSTRC). This paper will argue how regional trade interconnectivity related to the INSTC and other routes (such as the NSTRC) can promote stability and prosperity in the region and promote human security in a conflicting zone.

² “North-South Transit Corridor alternative to Suez Canal, as Russia, India and Iran ties expand”, *Info BRICS*, (Nov. 21, 2022), <http://infobrics.org/post/37116/>, last accessed 20/5/2023.



Map 1: International North-South Transport Corridor³

The Importance of Trade Interconnectivity within the South Caucasus Region

Russia has great interests in North-South connectivity. This has been stressed in official meetings, key conferences, and publications by major Russian think tanks and academic institutions. In his paper “Russia and Middle East Need International North-South Transport Corridor”⁴ published in the Valdai Discussion Forum, Russian economist Evgeny Vinokurov reflected on why Russia and the Middle Eastern countries need the INSTC, and how “its development can help countries seize post-crisis opportunities and foster economic recovery.”⁵ Vinokurov noted that the launch of this corridor would also contribute to the integration of regional transport routes and lo-

³ International North-South Transport Corridor, *Deutsche Welle Business*, DW Business Facebook page, onthemosway.eu (July 22, 2022).

⁴ Evgeny Vinokurov, “Russia and Middle East Need International North-South Transport Corridor”, *Valdai Discussion Club*, (February 21, 2022), <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-and-middle-east-need-international/>, last accessed 23/5/2023.

⁵ “Rebuilding the Economy on a New Basis: How Russia and the Middle East Can Seize

gistic systems and attract foreign investments. According to the Russian economist, by bridging the INSTC to the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway (a crucial part of the “Middle Corridor” connecting China to Europe), there will be a huge economic impact on the Eurasian Economic Union member states by enabling the expansion of railway container traffic between Turkey, Georgia and EAEU states.⁶ Moreover, Vinokurov argued that, in the long term, this project might become a development corridor for EAEU states not just to have access to the Persian Gulf but open beyond and have access to Middle Eastern and North African markets.

Apart from increasing trade volumes, the developments of the INSTC facilitate the constructions of industrial parks and special economic zones along the transit route, as well as industrial cooperation and the establishment of production and logistic chains with minor emerging economies in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean,

concluded the Russian expert.⁷

Within this context, another report was published by the Valdai Discussion Club in February 2023, titled “The Middle East and the Future of Polycentric World” written by Vitaly Naumkin and Vasily Kuznetsov, the two Russian Middle Eastern experts argue that while Russia is orienting its trade towards the South, the role of trade with Middle Eastern countries mainly Arab and GCC countries will increase.⁸ Naumkin and Kuznetsov have argued that despite the difficult situation in Syria due to the Western-imposed sanction on Damascus and the stalling of the project aiming to connect the Syrian and Iranian railway networks, there are still prospects and hopes that in the future this project will be revived somehow. Arguably, the fall of the Syrian government and the conquest by anti-Assad and anti-Russian forces in Syria, the hasty departure of Russian troops from there after a decade of deployment make that route unviable.

Post-Crisis Opportunities. Fourth Session of the Valdai Club 11th Middle East Conference”, *Valdai Discussion Club*, <https://valdaiclub.com/multimedia/video/how-russia-and-the-middle-east-can-seize-post-crisis-opportunities/>, last accessed 23/5/2023.

⁶ “Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) Rail Line, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey”, *Railway Technology*, (November 28, 2012), <https://www.railway-technology.com/projects/baku-tbilisi-kars/>, last accessed 23/5/2023.

⁷ Evgeny Vinokurov, “Russia and Middle East Need International North-South Transport Corridor.”

⁸ Vitaly Naumkin and Vasily Kuznetsov, “The Middle East and the Future of Polycentric World”, *Valdai Discussion Club*, (February 2, 2022), <https://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/the-middle-east-and-the-future-of-polycentric-worl/>, last accessed 23/5/2023.

When discussing Russia's role in the region in terms of regional trade interconnectivity, and assessing Armenia's role, it is important to analyze and briefly address Azerbaijan's role within the INSTC and other routes. If the communication channels between Armenia and Azerbaijan open one day, its impact on human security in bordering villages and towns will be crucial.

Azerbaijan's geostrategic location and its modern and developed infrastructure compared to Armenia have provided additional attractiveness to play a regional transit role. This factor has not only boosted Baku's geo-economic position but also in the coming years will boost its geopolitical position and increase its leverage over Russia and Iran (in terms of INSTC) and the EU (in terms of the "Middle Corridor").

In this vein, Baku took many important steps to connect its railways to Iran. In September 2022, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Russia signed a declaration on the development of the INSTC project. They have expressed "their readiness to cooperate in estimating and analyzing the infrastructure and options to use the corridor."⁹ According to the declaration, a more than 4,000 km long route will join Russia's Baltic ports to the Persian Gulf.¹⁰ However, expanding the route capacity will be impossible without the construction of the Rasht-Astara (146 km) railway section. When President Vladimir Putin visited Tehran on July 19, 2022, he discussed with the Iranians his vision for the INSTC and expressed Russia's readiness to construct the 146-km-long Rasht-Astara section and allocate 1.5 billion USD for this purpose.¹¹

We can see that after the outbreak of war in Ukraine, Moscow's interest in the INSTC has grown.¹² Taking into consideration the restrictions on trade

⁹ Gunay Hajiyeva, "Azerbaijan, Russia, Iran Sign Declaration on North-South Transport Corridor", *Caspian Sea*, (September 11, 2022), <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/azerbaijan-russia-iran-sign-declaration-on-north-south-transport-corridor-2022-9-11-0/>, last accessed 24/5/2023.

¹⁰ Hajiyeva, "Azerbaijan, Russia, Iran Sign Declaration on North-South Transport Corridor."

¹¹ "Россия решила дать в долг Ирану на строительство железной дороги", (Russia decided to lend to Iran for the construction of the railway), *MK RU*, (June 26, 2022), <https://www.mk.ru/economics/2022/07/26/rossiya-reshila-dat-v-dolg-iranu-na-stroitelstvo-zheleznoy-dorogi.html>, last accessed 24/5/2023.

¹² Tom O'Connor, "Russia, Iran Sanctions-Proof Railroad at Risk in Armenia-Azerbaijan Crisis", *Newsweek*, (January 26, 2023), <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-iran-sanctions-proof-railroad-risk-armenia-azerbaijan-crisis-1776602>, last accessed 24/5/2023.

between Russia and Eastern Europe and the decline of the role of the Northern corridor¹³ in connecting China's trade routes to Europe via Russia, and on the other hand, the signing of the "Preferential Trade Agreement" between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Iran, and the increase of trade between Russia, Iran, and India, Moscow's interest for the INSTC and the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway section has increased.¹⁴ Already in April 2024, Russia and Iran announced that they were finalizing the construction of the missing part of the railway section.¹⁵

According to the Iranian expert Vali Kaleji, Iran and Russia aim to revive the Soviet railway in the region.¹⁶ The expert adds that

the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway, the 55 km Zangelan-Nakhichevan railway¹⁷ line through Iranian territory and the revival of the Soviet-era railway (Jolfa-Nakhichevan)¹⁸ are the most important rail projects that regretfully have not yet been fully completed.¹⁹

Also, by reviving the Jolfa-Nakhichevan railway, Iran would be connected to Armenia by a railway through Nakhichevan and hence there would be no need for the construction of a railway connecting Iran directly to Armenia

¹³ Meray Ozat and Haley Nelson, "The Middle Corridor: The Beginning of the End for Russia's Northern Corridor?", *Caspian Policy Centre*, (June 30, 2023), <https://www.caspianpolicy.org/research/energy-and-economy-program-cep/the-middle-corridor-the-beginning-of-the-end-for-russias-northern-corridor>, last accessed 7/2/2024.

¹⁴ "Iran, EAEU sign free trade agreement", *Islamic Republic News Agency*, <https://en.irna.ir/news/85003835/Iran-EAEU-sign-free-trade-agreement>, last accessed 24/5/2023.

¹⁵ "Russia and Iran finalising Rasht-Astara agreement", *Rail Freight*, (April 18, 2024), <https://www.railfreight.com/railfreight/2024/04/18/russia-and-iran-finalising-rasht-astara-agreement/?gdpr=accept>, last accessed 26/4/2024.

¹⁶ Vali Kaleji, "Iran and Russia Cooperation in the Construction of Rasht-Astara: The Only Remaining Railway of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)", *Valdai Discussion Club*, (March 30, 2023), https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/iran-and-russia-cooperation-in-the-construction/?fbclid=IwAR2qU_Vll_xbDpfj2a5j2ExGsTsd4cQaZeyJmIx2IwvYNxGoBil2l8sjFa8, last accessed 24/5/2023.

¹⁷ Neil Hauer, "Armenia's Other Frontier: Plan To Revive Old Soviet Railway To Azerbaijan's Naxcivan Brings Potential, Concerns", *Radio Free Europe*, (January 30, 2021), <https://www.rferl.org/a/karabakh-naxcivan-railway-armenia-azerbaijan-potential-concerns/31077412.html>, last accessed 24/5/2023.

¹⁸ "Jolfa-Nakhchivan railway facilitates Iran's access to Eurasia", *Islamic Republic News Agency*, (March 12, 2022), <https://en.irna.ir/news/84680974/Jolfa-Nakhchivan-railway-facilitates-Iran-s-access-to-Eurasia>, last accessed 24/5/2023.

¹⁹ Vali Kaleji, "Iran and Russia Cooperation in the Construction of Rasht-Astara...".

via Meghri.²⁰ According to this logic, regional interconnectivity and interdependence of the regional countries would minimize the possibility of new wars in the region. To minimize the risk of new Azerbaijani incursions into southern Armenia, and convince Baku to drop any territorial claims in Syunik, Iran has offered Azerbaijan to agree on an alternative road bypassing Armenia the “Aras Corridor”.²¹ On March 11, 2022, a MoU was signed between both countries where mainland Azerbaijan was going to be connected to Nakhichevan through railways and highways bypassing Armenia.²² The agreement mentioned that four bridges (two on railway and two on road) are going to be built over the Arax River. However, the Iranian proposed corridor has not stopped Azerbaijan’s appetite for Armenia’s southern territories.

Politically, Azerbaijan has acquired cards to pressure Tehran and Moscow, as both are dependent on Baku for transit. In parallel to the INSTC, Baku is also an active transit player in the “Middle Corridor.” In March 2022, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Kazakhstan made a joint statement on the need to strengthen the “Middle Corridor” which aimed to facilitate trade between China and the European continent via Central Asia and the South Caucasus detouring Russia and Iran. For this purpose, within the same month, the Georgian railway company announced that it started collaborating with Azerbaijani and Kazakh companies to create a new shipping route between the Georgian port of Poti and Constanta in Romania.²³ To facilitate this process, Azerbaijani and Georgian leaders have recently visited Central Asia. Turkish expert Tuba Elder in her publication in the German Institute for International Security Affairs (SWP) “Russia’s War on Ukraine and the Rise of the Middle Corridor as a Third Vector of Eurasian Connectivity” argued that the war in Ukraine has disrupted trade along the Northern corridor (also

²⁰ Vali Kaleji, “Iran and Russia Cooperation in the Construction of Rasht-Astara...”.

²¹ Vali Kaleji, “Is the Aras Corridor an Alternative to Zangezur?” *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute*, (February 5, 2024), https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13788-is-the-aras-corridor-an-alternative-to-zangezur?.html&fbclid=IwAR191DblkZZJggdQujI6_mLxd-IXgYr_BSbJZR1OmQRFFBXxkUOu-sow_8A, last accessed 7/2/2024.

²² Heydar Isayev, “Azerbaijan, Iran sign transport deal bypassing Armenia”, *Eurasianet*, n.d. <https://eurasianet.org/azerbaijan-iran-sign-transport-deal-bypassing-armenia>, last accessed 24/5/2023.

²³ “Iran and Russia Seek New Sanctions Evasion Corridor”, *Georgia Today*, (September 29, 2022), <https://georgiatoday.ge/iran-and-russia-seek-new-sanctions-evasion-corridor/>, last accessed 24/5/2023.

known as the New Eurasian Land Bridge) connecting Russia to Europe due to sanctions on Russia.²⁴ Hence the only “alternative route for this corridor” for land trade between Europe and China is the “Middle Corridor.” The author also brought up the “Zangezur Corridor” narrative arguing that

the importance of opening the Zangezur Corridor and of the construction of its continuation via the Kars-Nakhichevan railway line... (the Zangezur Corridor) will not only enable Azerbaijan’s unrestricted access to its Nakhichevan exclave without needing to pass through any Armenian checkpoints but it will also provide Turkey a direct route to the Caspian basin and Central Asia.²⁵

The opening of the “Zangezur Corridor” has also geopolitical objectives, whereas Russia aims to control the route as mentioned in the November 2020 Trilateral Statement, Turkey seeks to have access to Central Asia and increase its economic and political influence over the Turkic countries. The geopolitical significance of this route was even mentioned by the US strategic intelligence publishing company Stratfor on June 27, 2012. According to Stratfor: “Whoever controls the Zangezur Corridor can project power into the Turkish sphere of influence in Anatolia, the Russian sphere of influence in the intra-Caucasus, and directly into the Persian core territories.”²⁶ Amid Western-imposed sanctions, Russia is now considering bridging any possible route passing from southern Armenia into the INSTC, by doing so it aims to consolidate its presence in the region and increase its political and economic leverage over Yerevan.

Yerevan’s main concern is granting an extraterritorial corridor to Azerbaijan where Russian border guards will secure it and Armenian authorities will lose their sovereignty over it. This may trigger further territorial demands from Baku on Syunik such as demanding a buffer zone around the corridor and causing an exodus of the villagers from their towns. Azerbaijan occasionally asked for a corridor that would be exempted from customs and border con-

²⁴ Tuba Eldem, “Russia’s War on Ukraine and the Rise of the Middle Corridor as a Third Vector of Eurasian Connectivity”, *SWP*, (October 28, 2022), <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2022C64/>, last accessed 24/5/2023.

²⁵ Ayya Lmahamad, “Azerbaijan, Turkiye discuss boosting cargo flows to BTK, Middle Corridor”, *Azer News*, (July 1, 2022), <https://www.azernews.az/business/196213.html>, last accessed 24/5/2023.

²⁶ Andri R. Chedia “Zangezur Corridor: Economic Potential and Political Constraints,” *Russia in Global Affairs* 1 (Jan.–March 2024), <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/zangezur-corridor/>, last accessed 26/4/2024.

trol checkpoints similar to the case of Kaliningrad where Russian trains pass via Lithuania to the exclave of Kaliningrad without being checked by customs officers or border guards.²⁷ This scenario was also rejected by Armenia due to a lack of trust in Baku and Moscow.

Moreover, Iran also showed opposition to this corridor where the director of the Strategic Council of Foreign Relations in Tehran, former Iranian FM, Kamal Kharazi called it “NATO’s Turan Corridor”. According to Kharazi, this corridor is initiated by NATO and Israel to foment ethnic unrest in Northern Iran and aims to isolate Iran from the region.²⁸ Hence, given the complexity of resolving the opening of the transportation routes with Armenia, Yerevan is seeking an alternative route.

Armenia’s Role in Regional Transit Routes

Given the challenges posed by Armenia’s infrastructure, as compared to Azerbaijan’s crucial role in the INSTC, Yerevan has pushed for an alternative corridor within the North-South connectivity which is the Persian Gulf-Black Sea corridor, connecting Georgia to Iran via Armenia’s North-South Transport Road Corridor (NSTRC). That road is one of the largest projects in the history of independent Armenia. It would reduce the distance from the Iranian to the Georgian border from 550 to 490 km and would simplify access to the Black Sea not only for Armenia but also for Iran.²⁹ Most importantly, many Armenian officials and economists believe that the implementation of this project would bring new investments mainly in the bordering region close to Azerbaijan and Iran.

²⁷ Ismi Aghayev, “Armenia tense as Turkey and Azerbaijan renew ‘Zangezur corridor’ discussions”, *OC Media*, (January 10, 2024), <https://oc-media.org/armenia-tense-as-turkey-and-azerbaijan-renew-zangezur-corridor-discussions/>, last accessed 27/4/2024.

²⁸ Umut Shokri, “Why Iran Opposes Azerbaijan’s Zangezur Corridor Project”, *Gulf International Forum*, (September 28, 2022), <https://gulfif.org/why-iran-opposes-azerbaijans-zangezur-corridor-project/>, last accessed 27/4/2024.

²⁹ “Key sections of the North-South highway will be built by the beginning of next year”, *Invest in Armenia*, (October 22, 2022), <https://investin.am/news/key-sections-of-the-north-south-highway-will-be-built-by-the-beginning-of-next-year/>, last accessed 7/10/2023.

The NSTRC will make it easier for the Armenian shippers to enter international markets, and export their products, through simplified procedures over both land and sea. For this purpose, Armenia is aiming to build the NSTRC (partly new, partly an extension of existing roads), 490 km long, to facilitate communication with Iran, Georgia, and beyond. Part of the road construction is being done by the Chinese company Sinohydro Corporation (under the 2009 loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank).³⁰ The construction work had to be completed in 2016, however, it began with a delay of 3 years. It is envisaged that the construction should be finalized between 2030–2032.³¹ The main financiers of the project are the government of Armenia, the Eurasian Development Bank, and the European Investment Bank.³²

Within this context and to promote Armenia's role as a regional transit country, Armenia's PM Nikol Pashinyan during the "Silk Road" International conference held in Tbilisi on October 26, 2023, presented Yerevan's "Crossroads of Peace" project,³³ emphasizing the importance of trade interconnectivity in the South Caucasus and beyond.³⁴ According to the PM, this project will enhance communication between Armenia and neighbouring countries, connect the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea, and defuse tension in the South Caucasus. India, Iran, China, and some EU countries welcomed Pashinyan's initiative. Russia stressed on the implementation of the ninth clause of the Trilateral Statement signed in November 2020, which mentions that the Russian border guards must control the road connecting Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan. Meanwhile, Baku criticized the idea of the project, arguing that, it will continue blocking the transportation

³⁰ Andranik Hovhannisyan, "Armenian-Chinese relation", *Orbeli Centre*, (May 22, 2019), <https://orbeli.am/en/post/214/2019-05-22/Armenian-Chinese+relations>, last accessed 14/9/2023.

³¹ "China participates in Armenia's North-South Highway project", *CGTN*, (September 11, 2022), <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2022-09-11/China-participates-in-Armenia-s-North-South-Highway-project-1dfmpV4Cnmw/index.html>, last accessed 18/10/2023.

³² "Armenia North-South Road Corridor", *European Investment Bank*, (Jan. 30, 2010), <https://www.eib.org/en/projects/all/20100130>, last accessed 10/10/2023.

³³ Government of Armenia, "Crossroads of Peace" Project, (Yerevan, 2023), <https://www.gov.am/en/crossroad>, last accessed 7/2/2024.

³⁴ Hoory Minoyan, "Pashinyan presents "Crossroads of Peace," pursuing regional connectivity", *Armenian Weekly*, (November 1, 2023), <https://armenianweekly.com/2023/11/01/pashinyan-presents-crossroads-of-peace-pursuing-regional-connectivity/>, last accessed 7/2/2024.

routes with Armenia unless the former grants a corridor (controlled by Russia) to Azerbaijan.³⁵

Infrastructure Projects in Armenia Within the NSTRC Connectivity

Over the last few years, Armenia has increased its interest in finalizing the North-South Transport Road Corridor (NSTRC). The NSTRC is a strategic project for Armenia as it would connect the Northern and Southern borders via the Meghri-Kapan-Goris-Yerevan-Ashtarak-Gyumri-Bavra roads. Moreover, this corridor should join the Georgian road leading to the Black Sea ports of Poti and Batumi and on to Russia, the CIS countries, or the European Union. The NSTRC is also part of the AH 82 international road linking Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. This integrated project would improve Europe-Caucasus-Asia trade interconnectivity by joining other regional trade routes. For this purpose, Yerevan has evoked over 236 million USD in loans for the construction of the NSTRC in the Southern province of Syunik. The loan would be used for the construction of a 32 kilometer-long tunnel and 17 bridges in Kajaran and two tunnels in Meghri and Litchk.³⁶ According to the former Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures, Suren Papikyan, the roadworks would involve the construction of several mountain tunnels and bridges and in total would cost an estimated 1.5 billion USD.³⁷ MP Arman Yeghoyan said that a heavy EU funding of the road from Sisian to Kajaran, in the Southern province of Syunik, would indicate that it had strategic meaning for the EU.³⁸ The 60 km Sisian-Kajaran road will help drivers to bypass the mountain between Goris and Kapan and reduce travel time by more than an hour.³⁹ “From India, Iran, the [Persian] Gulf, Armenia, and

³⁵ Yeghia Tashjian, “Is Aliyev sincere in his “peace” plans?”, *Armenian Weekly*, (January 31, 2024), <https://armenianweekly.com/2024/01/31/is-aliyev-sincere-in-his-peace-plans/>, last assessed 7/2/2024.

³⁶ Alina Hovhannisyan, “Construction work of North-South project in Syunik moves to practical phase”, *Financial Information Portal Company*, (June 20, 2023), https://finport.am/full_news.php?id=48432&lang=3, last accessed 9/10/2023.

³⁷ Ani Mejlumyan, “Armenia gets aid boost from EU”, *Eurasianet*, (July 15, 2021), <https://eurasianet.org/armenia-gets-aid-boost-from-eu>, last accessed 14/10/2023.

³⁸ Mejlumyan, “Armenia gets aid boost from EU.”

³⁹ “Key sections of the North-South highway will be built by the beginning of next year” *Invest In Armenia*, (October 22, 2022), <https://investin.am/news/key-sections-of-the-north-south-highway-will-be-built-by-the-beginning-of-next-year/>, last accessed

Georgia, a road to Europe. 600 million is allocated for that road alone,” said the MP, he also mentioned that in addition to the EU, Iran was also interested in helping construct the road.⁴⁰ Already, in late January 2024, Iran has granted access to its Chabahar and Bandar Abbas ports to facilitate Armenia’s trade access to India and the Persian Gulf.⁴¹

Impact of Increased Trade Interconnectivity on Regional Integration and Human Security of Armenia

Regional economic integration could be an alternative to war. War destroys lives, wastes public resources on armaments, removes productive young people from the workplace, and deters domestic and foreign investments. The opening of borders and the establishment of transportation routes could have far-reaching implications for trade and connectivity in the region, leading to shorter and cheaper trade between regional and neighbouring countries. Normalization could encourage the diversification of various economic sectors. Regional states would transform their services-oriented economies to more export-oriented ones and fill each other’s imports gaps. Such economies would attract a greater variety of investors. Moreover, according to a study conducted by the Geneva Center for Security Policy ending conflicts could decrease interest rates by at least 1.5–2% across various sectors.⁴²

The challenge of unblocking transport routes is a longstanding concern for Armenia. Because of the economic blockade imposed by Turkey and Azerbaijan, due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the underdeveloped and difficult roads to Iran, and the challenges of accessing the ports of Poti and Batumi, in Georgia, transportation costs in Armenia are the highest in the region. The World Bank’s Logistics Performance Index – a comprehensive assessment of logistics capabilities – has positioned Armenia as the 97th

7/2/2024.

⁴⁰ Mejlumyan, “Armenia gets aid boost from EU.”

⁴¹ “Armenia to Use Iranian Ports for Doing Business with India”, *Tasnim News*, (January 24, 2024), <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2024/01/24/3028553/armenia-to-use-iranian-ports-for-doing-business-with-india>, last accessed 8/2/2024.

⁴² Armen M. Ktoyan, Albert A. Hayrapetyan, Ashot S. Aleksanyan, Vahram S. Petrosyan, Vasif Huseynov, Shahmar Hajiyevev and Rusif Huseynov, “The Economic Benefits of Peace in the South Caucasus”, *Geneva Centre for Security Policy*, Issue 31, September 2023, 4.

among 139 countries.⁴³ Hence, the opening of transport routes would expand Armenia's trade with Turkey, and would make possible trade with Azerbaijan, thus increasing Armenia's share of trade with its neighbours from 7%-13% in the medium term.⁴⁴ Armenia's current isolation from regional and global transportation routes carries significant costs to the country in terms of GDP benefits and rural development.⁴⁵



Map 2: Proposed North-South Road Corridor⁴⁶

The opening of the Gyumri border checkpoint and its connection to the city of Kars in Turkey, the potential integration of the railway systems of Russia and Turkey via Georgia, the creation of an additional transport corridor be-

⁴³ World Bank, "Logistics Performance Index (LPI)", (2023), <https://lpi.worldbank.org/>.

⁴⁴ Ktoyan, et al, "The Economic Benefits of Peace...", 5.

⁴⁵ Ktoyan, et al, "The Economic Benefits of Peace...", 5.

⁴⁶ Proposed North-South Road Corridor connecting Georgia to Iran via Armenia, source: upgyumri.org, <https://upgyumri.org/2020/05/20/what-about-the-north-south-road-corridor/>, May 20, 2020.

tween Turkey and Azerbaijan – with a potential link to the INSTC – would promote Armenia’s regional economic integration. The restoration of the railway connection on the Yeraskh- Julfa- Meghri-Horadiz route would enable Armenia to become not only a bridge in the INTSC but also in the “Middle Corridor” linking Europe to China. This is another reason why Russia is aiming to control the trade routes via Syunik to get leverage on both the North-South and East-West trade corridors and routes. Moreover, according to the World Bank, Armenia’s participation in the Chinese-backed “Belt and Road Initiative” and various transport route projects would increase the value of its trade by as much as 910%.⁴⁷ According to the calculation, if 35% of the cargo carried by road would be carried by rail, Armenia would save US \$38 million per year.⁴⁸

In the long run, in terms of trade with Azerbaijan, Armenia has water surplus, but is deficient in energy supplies; Azerbaijan presents the opposite profile. It would be beneficial for both Armenia and Azerbaijan if they could establish arrangements to trade or exchange water for energy. The volume of renewable internal water resources in Armenia was 7 billion m³ in 2020, while Azerbaijan’s was 8 billion m³. But Armenia’s annual water consumption is much less while Azerbaijan’s consumption is 12.6 billion m³.⁴⁹ Scientific studies have predicted that by 2040 Azerbaijan will be the most severely climate-change-affected country in the region facing a 77% decline in rainfall.⁵⁰ Hence, cooperation on the impact of climate change can be another field of peace and development instead of conflict.

Opening transport channels would also have a positive impact on human security in Armenia. In 2005, the UN stated that human security encompassed a wide variety of issues concerning people, including the exercise of human rights, encouragement of good governance, and access to education and health facilities. Central to these goals have been the attempts to reduce

⁴⁷ S. Baniya et al., “Trade Effects of the New Silk Road: A Gravity Analysis”, World Bank Policy Research Working, Paper No. 8694, (January 2019).

⁴⁸ Ktoyan, et al, “The Economic Benefits of Peace...”, 7.

⁴⁹ Ktoyan, et al, “The Economic Benefits of Peace...”, 6.

⁵⁰ N. Kuyumjian, “Perspectives: Don’t Water It Down: The Role of Water Security in the Armenia-Azerbaijan War”, *Eurasianet*, (December 2021), <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-dont-water-it-down-the-role-of-water-security-in-the-armenia-azerbaijan-war>, accessed 13/10/2023.

poverty, stimulate economic growth, and ultimately prevent conflict.⁵¹ Therefore, human security is people-centric. In this context, it is also essential to analyse the concept of community security, assessing the security of individuals within a group as it is establishing a common sense of belonging and identity rooted in shared values.⁵² Armenia's participation in the North-South trade via the alternative road NSTRC would enhance human security by attracting investments, creating new employment opportunities, and decreasing poverty.

Locally, Armenia's participation in regional trade interconnectivity projects will improve the socio-economic conditions, most importantly in the Syunik province where the people will get access to safe and efficient transport systems and improved access to service sectors.⁵³ It is also expected that the implementation of such projects will lead to positive outcomes, such as an increase in throughput capacity and road safety in Armenia, the creation of conditions for the smooth movement of trucks and passenger cars, the improvement of access to international and regional markets, the reduction of logistical costs and so forth.⁵⁴ Moreover, about two out of three households situated along trade corridors would derive their income from services or industry, and about a third could make their living in agriculture and related enterprises. Shorter travel times and lower bus fares and freight charges would also improve life for businesses and families, especially those who are poor and vulnerable.

The construction of the NSTRC will ensure easier traffic from the Southern border of Armenia to the Georgian border and up to Black Sea ports and will allow passenger and cargo transportation by European standards. This highway will also provide serious development opportunities for all communities from the North to the South of Armenia. Project implementation will

⁵¹ Peter Hough, Andrew Moran, Bruce Pilbeam and Wendy Stokes, *International Security Studies; Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2021), 55.

⁵² Paul D. Williams and Matt McDonald (ed), *Security Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2021), 221.

⁵³ "North-South Road Corridor Investment Program", *North South Corridor Investment Corridor*, n.d. <https://northsouth.am/en/projects>, last accessed 13/10/2023.

⁵⁴ "Construction of North-South Road Corridor in Armenia", *Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development*, n.d. <https://efsd.org/en/projects/construction-of-the-north-south-road-corridor-in-armenia/>, last accessed 16/10/2023.

result in improving the adjacent roads in compliance with international standards. It will also facilitate communication with neighbouring countries; expand and facilitate access to foreign markets towards Central Asia and Europe; develop major economic spheres and export expansion (industry, agriculture, mining industry, construction, tourism), etc. Moreover, the project will improve the safety of the roads, reduce time and financial costs, and integrate local infrastructural telecommunication projects. This project is implemented within the context of the following Armenian Government projects: “Reconstruction of Gyumri techno city”, “Tatev tourist centre”, “Development of Jermuk town” and “Zvartnots free economic zone” and the “Meghri free economic zone.”⁵⁵

In 2012, the Armenian government approved the reconstruction of the “Gyumri Techno Park”. The project aimed to attract foreign tech companies to the cultural capital of Armenia, Gyumri. The city is located in northern Armenia close to the Turkish border. Hence, the project will prevent migration from northern villages and towns to Yerevan and create more job opportunities for the youth mainly specializing in the service or IT sector.⁵⁶ A similar policy was implemented in the resort town of Jermuk near the Azerbaijani border. Already in 2009, the “Jermuk Town’s Development” project was being discussed aiming to turn the town into a “year-round tour centre of healthy and active lifestyle in accord with international standards.”⁵⁷ In 2017, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided 10 million USD investment for the renovation works and improvement of infrastructures. Other investors also promised to construct a large spa centre with indoor and outdoor hot springs. The mayor estimated that if all the construction works are finalized the city could host an average of 100,000 people annually,

⁵⁵ Méri Hovhannisyan, “Free Economic Zones in Armenia: boundless opportunities in a ‘bounded country’”, *Caucasus-Asia Centre*, (May 29, 2021), <https://medium.com/caucasus-asia-center/free-economic-zones-in-armenia-boundless-opportunities-in-a-bounded-country-c4648074eb38>, last accessed 20/10/2023.

⁵⁶ “Armenian Government confirmed the program on Gyumri Techno Park restoration”, *Times.am*, (April 27, 2012), <https://times.am/7030/>, last accessed 7/2/2024.

⁵⁷ “Jermuk Town’s Development concept discussed at the working conference chaired by the head of RA President’s Administration Karen Karapetyan”, *Armen Press*, (July 8, 2009), <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/219301/jermuk-townE28099s-development-concept-discussed-at-the-working-conference----chaired-by-the-head-of-ra.html>, last accessed 7/2/2024.

as there is an active tourism flow, especially in summer and winter.⁵⁸ Moreover, the implementation of these projects in Jermuk may also revive the town airport which is the highest airport in Armenia with an altitude of 2070 meters. During the Soviet times, there was a plan to link the town to the resort town of Mineralnye Vody in Stavropol Krai and facilitate domestic tourism in the Soviet Union. When the airport became non-operational, the fence was demolished, and the property turned into an agricultural area. According to a government estimation, if projects were implemented in the town, tourism would generate \$100 million annually and create 4,000 new jobs in the resort town.⁵⁹

Another important project within this context almost implemented is the “Tatev Southern Touristic Hub” a strategic program undertaken by IDEa Foundation to turn the town into a touristic hub and increase Syunik Province’s economic potential. The project aims to increase the number of tourists to 400,000 people annually, bring a 30 million USD profit on the regional economy, and create more than 1,000 new jobs. Tatev is located in a touristic zone, has proximity to the Iranian border, and has direct access to the NSTRC. Over the previous years, thanks to projects implemented over 450,000 tourists visited the town. Meanwhile, over 20 homestays were established by locals, dozens of restaurants and coffee shops have been opened, dozens of permanent and temporary or seasonal jobs were established for locals and new kindergartens, schools, and engineering labs were opened, old villages were revived, infrastructures renovated and touristic projects such as hiking, mountain biking, camping, and wildlife watching were encouraged.⁶⁰

In addition to developmental projects, consecutive governments in Armenia established free economic zones (FEZ) around the country to export Armenian agricultural products, ensure high-quality entry to international markets, develop organic farming, and invest in the IT or small industry sector.

⁵⁸ Anna Gziryanyan, “Sports complex, bicycle racetrack, hot springs: Armenia’s Jermuk to offer new opportunities for tourists”, *Armen Press*, (June 22, 2017) <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/895915/sports-complex-bicycle-racetrack-hot-springs-armeniaE28099s-jermuk-to-offerC2A0new-opportunities-for.html>, last accessed 7/2/2024.

⁵⁹ Vahe Sarukhanyan, “Jermuk: Armenia’s Highest Airport Has a Proud and Unique Past”, *Hedq*, (November 27, 2019), <https://hetq.am/en/article/110205>, last accessed 7/2/2024.

⁶⁰ “Tatev Southern Touristic Hub”, *IDEa Foundation*, (November 2016), <http://images.mofcom.gov.cn/oys/201703/20170302121124000.pdf>, last accessed 7/2/2024.

There are four FEZ areas in Armenia. These FEZs are the “Alliance Free Economic Zone” which aims to produce electronics, tech and telecommunications equipment and pharmaceuticals; the “Meridian Free Economic Zone” which specialized in jewellery, stones cutting and watchmaking; “ECOS Free Economic Zone” aiming to stimulate the development of digital business environment and produce innovative technological products and services; and finally the “Meghri Free Economic Zone” launched in 2017 established in the strategic bordering Syunik province and town of Meghri near Iran aiming to produce agricultural products and become a logistic and transportation hub.⁶¹

The Meghri FEZ is significant as it is directly linked to the NSTRC as it is expected to host 120 companies with an investment of 250–400 million USD. The project is expected to create 2500 new jobs, while average annual exports are expected to target 80–100 million USD.⁶² The Iranians are mostly interested in manufacturing leather goods; hence, the FEZ will bring new investments in the village and create new job opportunities for the locals. It has also an agricultural purpose as farmers will be able to sell their products at high prices and resolve storing and sale problems and benefit from tax benefits.⁶³ According to head of the Meghri community, “the multi-vector trade regimes in Armenia have the potential to become bridging solutions for Iran, EAEU, as well as the EU.”⁶⁴ It is worth mentioning that Armenia is the only EAEU country bordering Iran, and as Iran and the EAEU have signed a free trade agreement this will create an opportunity for EAEU members to use the Meghri FEZ as a launchpad to enter the Iranian market as the Iranian “Araz FEZ” is located on the Iranian side of the border with Armenia.⁶⁵

⁶¹ “Free Economic Zones”, *Multifunctional Business Support Center of Armenia*, n.d. <https://www.am.business/zones>, last accessed 7/2/2024.

⁶² “Armenia advances plans to open free economic zone on border with Iran”, *Common Space*, (August 2, 2017), <https://www.commonspace.eu/news/armenia-advances-plans-open-free-economic-zone-border-iran>, last accessed 8/2/2024.

⁶³ “Free Trade Zone to be formed in Armenia”, *ARKA News Agency*, (November 26, 2008), <https://arka.am/en/news/economy/12172/>, last accessed 7/2/2024.

⁶⁴ Gayane Mkrtchyan and Gayane Mirzoyan, “Meghri hopeful the free economic zone to be rolled on the border between Armenia and Iran”, *Urbanista.am*, n.d. https://urbanista.am/meghribudgetstory_eng, last accessed 8/2/2024.

⁶⁵ Benyamin Poghosyan, “Armenia pins high hopes on Meghri Free Economic Zone”, *Common Space*, (December 20, 2017), <https://www.commonspace.eu/opinion/opinion->

The implementation of the North-South Road Corridor is crucial in attracting investments in key bordering towns and implementing new projects. These projects will significantly contribute to the human security, resilience and development of key sectors in bordering areas in Armenia.⁶⁶

Conclusion

The NSTRC and the INSTC are critical for regional integration. It is worth mentioning that roads transport most of Armenia's imports and exports; building railways and corridors would improve travel times and reduce costs, which will lower the price of goods and push for greater competitiveness. Though it is highly unlikely for Armenia to join the INSTC anytime soon due to the closure of communication and transport channels with Azerbaijan, Yerevan already has an alternative route. Once the NSTRC is completed, and the Black Sea – Persian Gulf corridor becomes operational, it would enable Armenian businesses to achieve economies of scale and integrate into global value chains more easily. This would also be the path in the future to push Armenia to integrate its roads with the INSTC routes. Upon the realization of this project, Armenia would be involved in the transport corridors that are connecting Europe/Russia to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. The building of the North-South Transport Road Corridor will provide Yerevan with the tools to put the country on the regional geo-economic map and consolidate its security and geopolitical position.

Most importantly, the bordering towns and villages will attract foreign and local investments. Within this context, the projects such as the "Reconstruction of Gyumri techno city", "Tatev tourist centre", "Development of Jermuk town", "Zvartnots free economic zone" and the "Meghri free economic zone" will facilitate the growth and expansion of service sector and create new employment opportunities. Within this context, the "Tatev Southern Touristic Hub" and "Meghri free economic zone" are important for Armenia's strategic Syunik region. The region turned into a spotlight after the 2020 war amid Baku's and Ankara's demands for an extraterritorial corridor under Russian guardianship.

armenia-pins-high-hopes-meghri-free-economic-zone, last accessed 8/2/2024.

⁶⁶ "North-South Road Corridor Investment Program."

Finally, this project will enhance human security and resilience in bordering villages and towns. As Armenia's working-age population keeps declining due to aging and immigration, such initiatives will encourage young skilled people to remain in their villages and border towns, improve food security, and create sustainable economic opportunities hence enhancing community resilience and human security. About two out of three households positioned alongside the NSTRC derive their income from the service sector or light industries and about a third make their living from farming and agricultural trade.⁶⁷ Shorter travel times and reduced travel costs will improve the living standard of these families, especially the vulnerable and low-income people. It has also an agricultural purpose as farmers will be able to sell their products in new markets opening in front of Armenia as Armenian businesses will integrate into global market chains and the entire Armenian economy would benefit from this process.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Shane Rosenthal, "Armenia Needs the North South Road Corridor", *Mediamax*, (September 12, 2017), <https://mediamax.am/en/news/society/25049>, last accessed 15/10/2023.

⁶⁸ Rosenthal, "Armenia Needs the North South Road Corridor."

PART III: Case Studies from the South Caucasus and Beyond

From Individual to Societal Resilience Against Human Security Hybrid Threats: Case Studies from Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies

Iryna Lysychkina, Olha Lysychkina, Armen Grigoryan, Andrzej Klimczyk

Introduction

Human security refers to the protection of individuals by the government or the international community, as well as the empowerment of individuals and communities to address the threats on their own. In today's world, hybrid methods of warfare – such as propaganda, disinformation, and deception – are widely used to influence public opinion and undermine human security. Hybrid threats in the information domain are becoming drastically sophisticated, with significant increases in their speed, intensity, and scale.

This chapter **aims** to define effective strategies for building individual and societal resilience against hybrid threats, particularly psychological and information impacts, during peacetime and modern warfare, in both conflict and post-conflict societies. Human consciousness is one of the most important areas for this. This chapter proposes cases from Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine to illustrate effective strategies for addressing challenges to human and societal resilience.

Individuals at the Core of Human Security

Human security is a paradigm that seeks to understand global threats and vulnerabilities from a human perspective, placing the individual at the centre. As UN General Assembly resolution 66/290 notes, “human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people.”¹ Human security calls for “people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific, and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people.”² It focuses on protecting the

¹ United Nations General Assembly. Resolution A/RES/66/290.

² United Nations, *What is Human Security?* n. d. <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/>

integ-*ri*ty of the individual against numerous threats, including poverty, violence, and diseases.

The human security approach places people at its core, emphasizing their well-being and safety as the ultimate priority. At the heart of this approach lies the empowerment of individuals and the prevention of circumstances that could jeopardize their survival, livelihood, and dignity. Empowerment is a fundamental aspect of human security. When people have the means and opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, access education and healthcare, and build sustainable livelihoods, they become more resilient and better equipped to navigate the challenges they may face. Furthermore, human security places a strong emphasis on prevention. It recognizes that addressing the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation, is essential for creating a stable and peaceful world. By preventing crises and conflicts before they escalate, human security aims to avoid situations where people's survival, livelihoods, and dignity are put in jeopardy.

Individual and Societal Resilience in the Information Domain

Resilience is both a philosophy and a methodological practice that emphasizes the role of recovery post-disruption as much as the absorption of a threat and its consequences.³ Being resilient means being able to anticipate an event (difficulty/disruption/threat) and its possible effects, proactively react to those events, manage risks, cooperate, respond after the event to mitigate effects, transform, and/ or adapt. In psychology, **resilience** refers to both the process and the outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences.⁴ Resilience is the ability to adapt to change positively, recover from difficulties and persist in facing challenges.⁵

Individual resilience involves behaviours, thoughts, and actions that promote personal well-being and mental health, referring to a person's ability to

what-is-human-security/ (accessed on March 17, 2023).

³ Igor Linkov, Benjamin Trump, and William Hynes, *Resilience Strategies and Approaches to Contain Systemic Threats*. SG-NAEC 5 (17–18 September 2019).

⁴ American Psychological Association, *Resilience*. n.d. <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience> (accessed on March 13, 2023).

⁵ Emma Ogilvie, "What is Resilience? Defining Resilience" n.d. <https://www.resilience-training.co.uk/what-is-resilience/> (accessed on March 13, 2023).

withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity. Individual psychological resilience is influenced by factors such as worldview, social support networks, and coping mechanisms. Coping skills can be learned to help individuals adapt to stress and maintain or return to a state of mental health well-being which correlates with the balanced state of mind when “coping with stress and psychological well-being is a function of the balanced state of mind ratio of positive thoughts to the sum of positive and negative thoughts.”⁶

Individual resilience is the bedrock of societal resilience. **Societal resilience** is an emerging paradigm that refers to responses and strategies at the level of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies that are dealing with complex societal problems.⁷ These responses contribute to innovative solutions that make society more resilient to current and future challenges. By building social cohesion, strengthening community networks, and fostering innovative approaches to problem-solving, societal resilience complements individual resilience in addressing hybrid threats in the information domain.

Building societal resilience in information and psychological domains requires a collective effort and a comprehensive approach. In the field of education and awareness, it is vital to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills in schools, universities, and communities, as well as encourage people to question the source and credibility of information they receive and teach them how to fact-check. In terms of applying collaborative efforts, it is recommended to create partnerships between government, civil society, and media organizations to increase awareness about the risks of misinformation and develop joint initiatives to combat it. Mental health support can ensure access to psychological support services for those who may be affected by the psychological impact of misinformation or other related stresses. Fact-checking initiatives help to establish fact-checking mechanisms, such as independent fact-checking organizations or fact-checking sections in media outlets, to verify information and provide corrections when necessary. From the perspective of regulation and accountability, it is necessary to encourage media outlets and social media platforms to take responsibility for the con-

⁶ Shyh Shin Wong, “Balanced states of mind in psychopathology and psychological well-being”, *International Journal of Psychology* 45, no. 4 (Aug. 2010): 269–277.

⁷ Torgeir K. Haavik, “Societal resilience – Clarifying the concept and upscaling the scope”, *Safety Science* 132, (2020).

tent they publish and enforce regulations on hate speech, incitement to violence, and other forms of harmful content. Active community involvement might foster a sense of community involvement and engagement in decision-making processes related to information and psychological domains, and encourage dialogue, respect for diverse opinions, and collaboration towards common goals. By implementing these strategies, we can build a more resilient society that is better equipped to handle the challenges posed by misinformation and psychological stress.

Challenges and Effective Strategies of Building Individual and Societal Resilience – Cases from Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia

Challenges to Individual and Societal Resilience as a Defensive Weapon in the War in Ukraine⁸

National security focuses on protecting a state's territory and sovereignty, while human security prioritizes meeting people's basic needs: food for the family, adequate shelter, good health, education and schooling for the children, protection from violence, and freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights and safety – their ability to live a life free of fear, so the domestic realm becomes more exclusive to human security.⁹ The war in Ukraine demonstrates that national security and human security are interconnected and dependent on each other.

Human security is based on human needs. According to Maslow's needs hierarchy,¹⁰ when a lower need is met, the next need on the hierarchy becomes the focus of attention. Maslow suggests that, at any given time, most people tend to have each of their needs partly met, and that needs lower on the hierarchy are typically the ones that people have made the most progress towards. The hybrid war in Ukraine impacts all the levels of human needs,

⁸ This case study includes the authors' personal multi-faceted (as individuals, leaders, researchers) experience of building and maintaining individual information and psychological resilience going through the war in Ukraine in a combat action city.

⁹ Mahendra P. Lama, "Human vs. National Security", *Global E Journal* 11, no. 22 (April 17, 2018), <https://globalejournal.org/global-e/april-2018/human-vs-national-security>.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Hopper, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Explained", n. d. <https://www.thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4582571> (accessed March 10, 2023). See Elena Mandalenakis' contribution in this volume.

namely physiological (shelter, sleep, food, water, power), safety (security, employment, healthcare, property); love (distance to nearest and dearest, losses, sense of connection); esteem (self-esteem, status, freedom), and self-actualization.¹¹ Maslow also believed that we need to learn new information and to better understand the world around us and that learning more about the world can help us feel safer. Satisfying this need for information is a crucial challenge in Ukraine today.

The information domain has become increasingly significant, surpassing that of the traditional theatre of war. In line with the information control strategies implemented by the USA and Great Britain during WWII, Ukraine has adopted a kind of wartime censorship for media coverage of the war. According to a survey conducted by the “Democratic Initiatives” Foundation named after Ilko Kucheriv, in Ukraine, 95% of journalists believe there is censorship in the Ukrainian mass media:

The absolute majority of respondents – 95% – in 2023 said that, in their opinion, censorship in the Ukrainian mass media exists. This has not changed much compared to 2019. Still, we see an interesting trend: in 2023, compared to 2019, there has been a larger share of journalists who believe that censorship in the Ukrainian media is a systemic phenomenon or that it is isolated cases in individual media.¹²

However, due to the vast and diverse landscape of social media and networks, gaining control in this area is more crucial and more challenging to achieve. To unify and promote the state’s information strategy, Ukraine has taken several steps, including establishing a small group of credible communicators, launching the United News TV marathon (Telemarathon)¹³ to broadcast censored content on every TV channel, creating a military news platform,¹⁴ and establishing a system to monitor and control social

¹¹ Arsalan Bilal, “Hybrid Warfare – New Threats, Complexity, and ‘Trust’ as the Antidote”, *NATO Review*, (November 30, 2021), <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2021/11/30/hybrid-warfare-new-threats-complexity-and-trust-as-the-antidote/index.html>.

¹² Ilko Kucheriv, “95% of journalists report censorship in Ukrainian mass media – survey”, “Democratic Initiatives” Foundation, (May 4, 2023), <https://dif.org.ua/en/article/95-of-journalists-report-censorship-in-ukrainian-mass-media-survey>.

¹³ Isobel Koshiw, “‘Death to the enemy’: Ukraine’s news channels unite to cover war”, *The Guardian*, (May 25, 2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/25/death-to-the-enemy-ukraine-news-channels-unite-to-cover-war>.

¹⁴ “Military Media Center began its work in Ukraine’s defence sphere”, (Kyiv: Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, Aug. 18, 2022), <https://www.mil.gov.ua/en/news/2022/08/>

media.¹⁵ Despite these efforts, overwhelmed with censored information and still in an information vacuum, people often resort to seeking alternative sources of information, ranging from reputable international media to unreliable “junk-information” sources such as Telegram channels or Russian sources (accessing using VPN).

Social media pose many threats to individual cognitive resilience through information overload, fostering echo chambers, and promoting shallow engagement with content, potentially leading to reduced critical thinking skills and vulnerability to disinformation and misinformation. Information overload leads to cognitive overload and makes it challenging to focus on the most relevant information. Social media algorithms often show users content that reinforces their existing beliefs and values, which can create filter bubbles where individuals are exposed predominantly to information that confirms their preconceptions, limiting their exposure to diverse perspectives and potentially reinforcing echo chambers. This can limit exposure to diverse perspectives and hinder the development of critical thinking skills. Social media can spread misinformation and fake news quickly, and users may not have the skills to differentiate between accurate and inaccurate information. During wartime, the level of hatred, aggression, and violence in society rises, and social media often become a platform for cyberbullying and harassment.

The spread of false information and conspiracy theories on social media can further erode cognitive resilience by creating confusion, mistrust, and divisiveness within society. For instance, following the February 2023 earthquake in Turkey and Syria, a viral conspiracy theory emerged in Ukrainian social media that the earthquake and related tectonic plate movement were caused by Russian aggression and a large number of Russian missiles exploding in Ukraine., experts had to step into that hot discussion and explain to a wide audience that there was no link.¹⁶

18/military-media-center-began-its-work-in-ukraines-defence-sphere/.

¹⁵ “Russia, Ukraine, and Social Media and Messaging Apps: Questions and Answers on Platform Accountability and Human Rights Responsibilities,” *Human Rights Watch*, (March 16, 2022), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/16/russia-ukraine-and-social-media-and-messaging-apps>.

¹⁶ “Чи могли ракетні удари по Україні призвести до землетрусу в Туреччині: Що кажуть експерти,” *MUKACHEVO.NET*, (February 14, 2023), <https://www.mukachevo.net/ua/news/view/4711568#>.

Another distractive practice is labelling as fake any information simply because it goes against a particular strategic narrative without evidence to support that claim, it can be seen as an attempt to manipulate or control the narrative rather than a genuine effort to promote truth and accuracy. It is important to prioritize factual accuracy and transparency in all communication, regardless of whether it supports or contradicts a particular narrative. People require clear explanations of the reasons (WHY) behind actions or decisions and the processes (HOW) involved in various situations. Emotional labelling often falls short in providing the necessary understanding, as it lacks the depth and context that detailed explanations can offer, which are crucial for informed decision-making and meaningful communication.

Generalization of facts – a practice of making broad, sweeping statements or conclusions based on a limited set of specific examples or data (isolated incidents and/or statistics – is another challenging practice in the information domain. It is dangerous for individual resilience building and critical thinking development as it can lead to an inaccurate or incomplete understanding of a situation, group of people, or phenomena. Information requires accuracy even during wartime. For instance, the symbol of a school ruined by Russian missiles in Ukraine is Kharkiv School #134 though unlike 107 other schools in the city (59% of all schools), it was burned by Ukrainian troops because the school had been seized by the Russians.¹⁷ Therefore, it is important to avoid generalizing and to strive for accuracy, fairness, and openness in our perceptions and interpretations of the world around us.

A report from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) highlights the impact of lack of information on the security and safety of Ukrainian women refugees abroad. Shockingly, almost half of respondents stated they had not received any information on human trafficking or how to stay safe.¹⁸

¹⁷ Російські окупанти заняли школу в Харькове, – Немичев (ВІДЕО) *Депо* (27 February 2022), <https://kh.depo.ua/rus/kh/rosiyski-okupanti-zaynyali-shkolu-v-kharkovi-nemichev-video-202202271429414> (accessed March 9, 2023).

¹⁸ OSCE, “ODIHR Survey on the Safety and Security of Women Refugees from Ukraine”, (28 March 2023), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/536019> (accessed on March 16, 2023).

Another major challenge facing Ukrainians, whether they are living in intense combat zones, temporary displacement, or refugees abroad, is the need to live with a short-term perspective only. Simple daily activities, such as meeting friends or going grocery shopping, now depend on various factors and alerts. This has made life fragile and planning tentative. The situation is further complicated because, according to Hofstede's scale of uncertainty avoidance,¹⁹ Ukrainians tend to feel threatened by ambiguous situations.²⁰

The World Health Organization estimates that one out of four people in Ukraine is currently at risk of developing severe mental health conditions.²¹ Experts have observed that dozens of military personnel are being hospitalized with "acute and tragic anxiety, depression and psychiatric conditions"; and that "mental health is becoming a predominant public health issue in Ukraine"; and that "the war and its consequences have led to an increased use of licit and illicit psychoactive substances."²² Additionally, there has been an increase in the number of people experiencing mental fatigue, rapid body ageing (by up to 10–15 years), stress, severe nervousness, anxiety, and tension.²³ It is therefore imperative to focus on building individual psychological resilience to address this urgent problem.

Effective Strategies

Individual resilience to false information can be built by promoting information hygiene (being careful about the sources of information one consumes and shares, and verifying the accuracy of information before believing or sharing it); critical thinking development (developing one's ability to evaluate information and arguments, identify biases, and assess evidence); media literacy (developing one's ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and create media

¹⁹ "Ukraine. Culture Compass. Countries Compared", *Hofstede Insights*, n.d. <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/ukraine/> (accessed on March 16, 2023).

²⁰ "Ukraine. Culture Compass. Countries Compared."

²¹ "Quarter of Ukrainians at risk of severe mental health conditions – adviser", *Reuters* (9 February 2023), <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/quarter-ukrainians-risk-severe-mental-health-conditions-who-2023-02-09/> (accessed on March 16, 2023).

²² "Quarter of Ukrainians at risk."

²³ "Quarter of Ukrainians at risk."

in a variety of form, including fact-checking/information verification, information sources diversification and prioritization, etc.); and cognitive reframing (actively challenging negative thoughts and replacing them with more positive or realistic ones).

In Ukraine, there are numerous initiatives promoting media literacy, such as the “Filter” National Media Literacy Project²⁴ launched by the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy in 2021. This project focuses on providing Ukrainian society with opportunities for increasing their resilience to misinformation in times of war by uniting the efforts of the state, NGOs, international organizations, and the media community to improve Ukrainians’ media literacy. The project provides useful materials for various audiences, including educators (at both school and university levels), students of all ages, parents, journalists, and others. It is an excellent resource for those who want to make media literacy a life skill.

Resilience is often associated with the concept of a culture of preparedness, where individuals and communities are expected to be continuously ready to cope with unlikely but possible stresses. Resilience in the psychological domain can be built by applying mindfulness and relaxation techniques (activities such as meditation, deep breathing, and yoga, which can help reduce stress and promote emotional regulation); social support (having a network of supportive friends and family members can help individuals cope with stress and build resilience); and seeking professional help (when the help of a mental health professional may be necessary).

The development of psychological resilience can be supported through the establishment of women’s centres, local communities, and school psychologists. Recently, many volunteer anonymous psychological help centres have been created in Ukraine, which operate through helplines and online and offline counselling, providing resources on how to maintain mental wellness, communicate with loved ones, support military spouses, and soothe children affected by the war.

²⁴ Ministry of Education of Ukraine, “National Media Literacy Project ‘Filter’”, n. d. <https://filter.mkp.gov.ua/en/about-the-project/> (accessed on March 16, 2023).

The war in Ukraine remains ongoing and will continue to pose challenges in building individual resilience against human security hybrid threats. The lessons learned and best practices from Ukraine's experiences can serve as a valuable lens for other conflict and post-conflict areas facing similar threats. However, it is important to recognize the cultural and societal specificities of each region, such as differing attitudes towards resilience versus compliance, as indicated by Hofstede's culture compass.²⁵ By taking these factors into account, strategies for building resilience can be tailored to best fit the needs and values of the communities they serve. These strategies might address cross-cultural adaptation, local engagement, information sharing, education and awareness, psychological and psychosocial support, etc.

In summary, individual and societal resilience can be critical defensive weapons during wartime. Resilience refers to the ability of individuals, communities, and nations to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity. In times of war, resilience can be the key to survival and victory. At the individual level, resilience can help combatants and civilians to cope with the physical and psychological challenges of war. Combatants must be physically and mentally prepared to endure the hardships of combat, including exposure to danger, trauma, and stress. At the societal level, resilience can help nations to withstand the impacts of war, including damage to infrastructure, disruption of supply chains, and displacement of populations. Societal resilience can be built through investments in infrastructure, disaster preparedness, and social cohesion. Communities that are well-prepared and well-connected can better respond to the challenges of war and recover more quickly from its aftermath. Resilience can also be a powerful deterrent to enemies by demonstrating a population's ability to withstand and recover from adversities, making it less appealing to disrupt or attack. A society that showcases resilience sends a clear message that it can withstand challenges and emerge stronger, discouraging potential threats. Nations that are known for their resilience and determination are less likely to be targeted by aggressors, as they are seen as difficult to defeat.²⁶ Thus, individual and societal resilience can be a key defensive weapon during wartime.

²⁵ "Ukraine. Culture Compass. Countries Compared."

²⁶ Peter Dickinson, "Ukraine's remarkable resilience may prove decisive in long war with Russia", *Atlantic Council*, (August 29, 2023), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraines-remarkable-resilience-may-prove-decisive-in-long-war-with-russia/>.

Challenges to Building Societal Resilience Against Hybrid Warfare in Armenia

The affordability of broadband internet connection, along with many benefits, has also had an adverse effect on social attitudes and has contributed to political polarization. Social networks, blogs, and other relatively new means of communication have greatly contributed to the spread of dis- and misinformation, various false narratives, conspiracy theories, and hate speech. Digitalization and information society development create various new opportunities related to access to information and public services, education, employment, engagement within and beyond local communities, culture and entertainment, and so forth. At the same time, there is a strong tendency to use disinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories for political purposes, and data and information security can be easily compromised. Such tendencies, combined with a lack of critical thinking and media literacy, polarise the local communities and society in general, and reduce trust, the level of cooperation, and productive engagement in social life, particularly for more vulnerable social groups. These phenomena deserve to be analysed as components of hybrid threats, although the latter, of course, are not limited to the mentioned information threats applied by domestic and foreign actors.

Different groups of Armenia's population have been facing different levels of exposure to the hybrid threats as actions conducted by state or non-state actors, whose goal is to undermine or harm a target by influencing its decision-making at the local, regional, state or institutional level in the information sphere, depending on age, level of education, living in an urban community or a village, and so on, and the existing methods of dealing with the issue are not always efficient. Certainly, this problem is not unique to Armenia. For example, Moldovan analysts have noted a similar issue, also regarding the use of some countermeasures: "much of civil society activity is concentrated in Chisinau and deals with people who are reasonably well equipped to spot disinformation and propaganda".²⁷ In Slovakia, the older generation has appeared as a specifically vulnerable target group.²⁸ Similar

²⁷ WatchDog.MD team, "Moldova" in *Disinformation Resilience Index in Central and Eastern Europe in 2021*, Pavel Havlíček & Andrei Yelisseyeu, eds. (Warsaw: EAST Centre, 2021), 174.

²⁸ Matúš Jevčák, Peter Dubóczy, "Slovakia" in *Disinformation Resilience Index in Central and Eastern Europe in 2021*, Pavel Havlíček & Andrei Yelisseyeu, eds. (Warsaw: EAST Centre, 2021), 224.

patterns may likely be observed elsewhere as well. The narrative about the West's moral decline, exemplified by alleged worship of material values, homosexuality, and sinfulness in general, which has been a recurrent topic in the Armenian political discourse for over two decades, has also been exploited in several countries.²⁹

During a discussion on the topic “Propaganda and disinformation in the context of the conflict in Ukraine: How Armenian independent media and civil society may resist such narratives” organised by Freedom House on 11 March 2022, the participants mentioned available research showing that a significant increase in the intensity of disinformation and propaganda happened after the “Velvet Revolution” in 2018. Besides, the president of the Yerevan Press Club, Boris Navasardyan, noted that along with “universal” narratives about the alleged threat to “traditional values” and identity presented by the West, there are narratives equating the West with Turkey, developed specifically for targeting the Armenian audience, and such propaganda is used by both the political opposition attempting to topple the government and by the Russian circles interested in a weak Armenian government which could be easily manipulated.³⁰

Among the narratives tailored specifically for the Armenian audience, those targeting different aspects of Armenia's cooperation with the EU are particularly visible in the recent period. During the campaign before the 2021 parliamentary elections, ex-president Robert Kocharyan claimed that the future EU aid package for Armenia would be against Russia, and later repeated that the EU as well as U.S. aid is “geopolitical.”³¹ The €2.6 billion aid package agreed later in 2021 was also labelled as “a payment for changing the foreign policy vector” and “the price of damaging the relations with Russia.”³² Significantly, since 2021 each of the armed escalations in Nagorno-Karabakh or

²⁹ Armen Grigoryan, “The origins and use of some propaganda techniques and conspiracy theories”, *Armenian Institute of International and Security Affairs* Paper Series, (March 2020), <http://www.lragir.am/en/2020/03/11/74292>.

³⁰ LIVE: Պրոպագանդան ու ապատեղեկատվությունը Ուկրաինայում կոնֆլիկտ (March 11, 2022), <https://www.facebook.com/mediacenterarmenia/videos/329185175928667/>.

³¹ Interview with the 2nd Armenian channel, 5th channel, and Yerkir Media, 21 July 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaoEQJB045w>.

³² Arshaluys Barseghyan, “Why does Armenia receive 2.6 billion Euros from the EU”,

along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border triggered statements in favour of fulfilling Russia's demands, and since the large-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine in February 2022 such demands usually also imply the imperative of joining the Russia-Belarus Union and otherwise question Armenia's sovereignty. In this context, the EU's mediation efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan have been continuously misrepresented as a hostile act against peaceful resolution.³³ In recent months, the EU Mission in Armenia has also been vilified similarly. Particularly, media controlled by proxies of the former top officials keep saying that the EU, and the "collective West" in general, are protecting Türkiye's and, by extension, Azerbaijan's interests, while attempting to set discord between Armenia and Russia.³⁴

Effective Strategies

Building societal resilience and, concurrently, the state's resilience against hybrid warfare currently threatening both human security and state sovereignty requires improving media literacy, particularly through educational programs adjusted for the needs of different social groups, but also improvements in the legal framework.

The National Security Strategy adopted in 2020 contains a one-page section titled "Ensuring open and safe information and cyber domains," which views cyberattacks by foreign states, international terrorist organizations, criminal groups, and individuals as threats to information security, acknowledges that

information wars, including propaganda, manipulations, fake news, and other disinformation tools are becoming more prevalent, and often target democratic values. In this context, we will work to raise public awareness and media literacy to strengthen the capacity of society and the state to counter such information wars.³⁵

Media.am, (Sept. 16, 2021), <https://media.am/hy/verified/2021/09/16/29518/>.

³³ Armen Grigoryan, "Sustainability of the EU-Armenia cooperation: Disinformation resilience component", *Open Society Foundations-Armenia policy fellowship final paper*, (2022), <https://www.osf.am/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ՀՀ-ԵՄ-համագործակցության-շարունակականություն.-տեղեկատվական-անվտանգության-բաղադրիչը.pdf>.

³⁴ Zaruhi Dilanyan, "EU monitoring mission serves the interests backed by collective West's geopolitical demand", *168.am*, (Aug. 16, 2023), <https://168.am/2023/08/16/1913928.html>.

³⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (MFA Armenia), *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia*, (Yerevan, 2020), 29–30, <https://www.mfa.am/>

Furthermore, the strategy states that

a major challenge is the imperfection of a comprehensive state policy regulating the information and cybersecurity sector, the absence of legislation to ensure the protection of critical information infrastructure, the insufficient level of institutional capacity of computer emergency response teams, and the absence of a national cybersecurity centre.³⁶

The strategy pledges to develop national information and cyber capabilities, including a national cybersecurity centre and computer emergency response teams.³⁷ The way the issue is envisaged by the strategy is innovative compared to the previous strategy adopted in 2007. However, little progress has been achieved in practical terms. Particularly, several media experts interviewed for a project on disinformation resilience noted the lack of articulated information policy (except some guidelines vis-à-vis Azerbaijan), and the lack of strategic thinking, with the government's approach being rather non-systematic. There is hardly a comprehensible strategy regarding digital and information security, and that can be observed during crises such as hacker attacks.³⁸

A study supported by Freedom House mentions that disinformation about social and cultural issues, civil society and democracy, and, more recently, the 44-day Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020, has been increasing since 2018. However, although the state has made some attempts to remedy the problem through legislation, “efforts have been neither comprehensive nor indicative that policymakers have understood disinformation as a form distinct from, for example, hate speech or defamation.”³⁹ In late 2022, the government also proposed amending the Criminal Code, so public statements questioning state sovereignty would be considered a criminal offence. However, dealing with the full spectrum of hybrid threats would require a more systematic approach.

filemanager/security%20and%20defense/Armenia%202020%20National%20Security%20Strategy.pdf.

³⁶ MFA Armenia, *National Security Strategy*.

³⁷ MFA Armenia, *National Security Strategy*.

³⁸ Armen Grigoryan, “Armenia” in *Disinformation Resilience Index in Central and Eastern Europe in 2021*, Pavel Havlíček & Andrei Yelisseyeu, eds. (Warsaw: EAST Centre, 2021), 44.

³⁹ Lusine Grigoryan, “General assessment” in *Disinformation and Misinformation in Armenia: Confronting the Power of False Narratives*, (Washington: Freedom House, 2021), https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Disinformation-in-Armenia_En-v3.pdf.

Such an approach should include cooperation between the state institutions and civil society representatives, media experts, and other non-governmental actors to build individual and societal resilience. Some analysts' and civil society institutions' activities toward identifying the main external and domestic actors involved in hybrid actions have been quite effective, and a significant change in the social attitudes towards different external actors may be observed. Yet, the fact-checking activities of the Media Initiatives Centre,⁴⁰ the Fact Investigation Platform⁴¹ run by the non-governmental organisation Union of Informed Citizens, and other similar platforms may potentially attract more attention. The discussion of noteworthy practices and initiatives becomes an essential component of the discourse. One such commendable example deserving attention is Hetq.am,⁴² a platform renowned for its commitment to investigative journalism, with a particular emphasis on leveraging open-source intelligence. The steadfast dedication to the principles of investigative reporting not only upholds the highest standards of journalistic integrity but also serves as a compelling model for emulation within the journalistic community.

Additionally, another influential non-governmental entity, CyberHUB-AM, merits special recognition. Established in 2019 by the Media Diversity Institute – Armenia (MDI), CyberHUB-AM operates as a digital support helpdesk. Its primary objective is to meticulously document prevailing trends in digital security and targeted cyber-attacks. This vital resource plays a pivotal role by offering guidance and counsel to both governmental bodies and numerous civil society organizations.⁴³

Furthermore, it is imperative to underscore the necessity of organizing comprehensive training programs focused on information security and strategic communication for public servants. The dynamic nature of the digital landscape demands a proactive approach to ensure the cybersecurity of government operations.

⁴⁰ Media Initiative Centre. Materials published at the webpage media.am.

⁴¹ Fact Investigation Platform <https://fip.am>.

⁴² Platform at <https://www.hetq.am/hy>.

⁴³ Platform at <https://cyberhub.am/en/>.

Governmental agencies responsible for cybersecurity policy have demonstrated a growing willingness to collaborate with potential partners. Notably, the Ministry of High-Tech Industry has shown remarkable enthusiasm for exploring cooperative opportunities with foreign stakeholders. This collaborative spirit aims to enhance legislation and policy implementation. The Ministry has been proactive in seeking expert guidance, often soliciting input from non-governmental organizations like the Centre for Policy Studies. Moreover, the Ministry has also actively championed user education initiatives. A recent illustration of this commitment is its partnership with the Union of Employers of Information and Communication Technologies. Together, they have orchestrated an intensive training program, wherein the government subsidizes a substantial portion – between 30% and 80% – of the participation costs. This initiative demonstrates the government’s dedication to fostering a well-informed and cyber-resilient populace.⁴⁴

In July 2023, a pioneering initiative emerged when the Armenian Institute of International and Security Affairs, in collaboration with the Centre for Policy Studies, joined forces with several esteemed partner institutions from the European Union. Together, they introduced a groundbreaking curriculum encompassing strategic communication courses tailored explicitly for Armenian civil servants. This landmark endeavour marked a noteworthy milestone in the realm of professional education and capacity-building within Armenia.⁴⁵ While it remains a reality that many such initiatives are reliant on foreign donor funding, it is essential to underscore the increasing imperative for the regular organization of such courses, especially those focusing on information security. Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of the need for budgetary support to sustain these vital educational endeavours consistently. This recognition underscores the importance of nurturing a cadre of civil servants who possess a nuanced understanding of strategic communication and information security, vital components in the contemporary landscape of governance.

Moreover, the desirability of fostering professional education and related initiatives has garnered heightened attention, both from the Armenian government and its foreign partners. A significant development emerged in

⁴⁴ Armen Grigoryan, “Some characteristics of the Visegrad Four states’ cybersecurity policies”, *Centre for Policy Studies*, (2023), 12.

⁴⁵ Curriculum available at <https://aiisa.mysite.am/en/publications/10>.

September 2023, wherein a pivotal project pertaining to communication architecture formation was agreed upon within the framework of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA).⁴⁶ This recent development exemplifies the collaborative commitment to fortifying the communication and information security infrastructure within Armenia – a testament to the growing recognition of the indispensable role such initiatives play in the nation’s governance and international partnerships.

Further work focusing on counteracting disinformation and false narratives should particularly take into account the importance of the development of media literacy among non-digital natives.

It is important to underscore that the media willing to avoid likely engagement in disinformation activities should abandon the practice of using Russian video footage and texts while reporting about events in third countries. A previous policy recommendation in this regard, not yet implemented, may be repeated: Partnerships with reliable media and NGOs in the concerned countries should be developed, possibly with some support from international foundations and supranational structures, to perform fact checks, identify and use relevant, freely available sources, or additionally, secure opportunities to buy licences for the use of copyrighted materials.⁴⁷

Challenges to Individual and Societal Resilience to the Occupation of Georgian Minds

Hybrid threats, such as propaganda, deception, and other tactics, have long been used to undermine Georgia’s aspirations toward NATO and the EU. Occupation is not the sole threat coming from Russia; daily, one can encounter various elements of hybrid warfare, including propaganda, fake news, and trolling. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in anti-Western and pro-Russian disinformation narratives in Georgia.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Support to CEPA monitoring, implementation, and communication – ENI/2023/442–873 project, <https://www.bseurope.com/node/60495>.

⁴⁷ Grigoryan, “Armenia”, 53.

⁴⁸ Andrzej Klimczyk, “Anti-Western and Pro-Russian Disinformation Narratives in Georgia”, *New Geopolitics Research Network*, (April 22, 2023), <https://www.newgeopolitics.org/2023/04/22/anti-western-and-pro-russian-disinformation-narratives-in-georgia/> (accessed on November 3, 2023).

One of the primary tactics employed by Russian propaganda is the strategic manipulation of historical memory to create nostalgic sentiments surrounding the Soviet Union. This approach seeks to portray the Soviet era as a time of strength, stability, and unity, conveniently downplaying its dark chapters of oppression and human rights abuses. By promoting a selective and sanitized view of history, Russia aims to generate a sense of longing for the past and foster support for the idea of resurrecting the perceived glory of the Soviet Union.⁴⁹

A specific aspect of this propaganda strategy revolves around the figure of Joseph Stalin. Despite being responsible for countless atrocities and crimes against humanity, the Kremlin's propaganda machine works diligently to portray him as a heroic and visionary leader. They attempt to rewrite history, obscuring the brutal realities of his regime, and instead, highlight his role in industrialization, victory in World War II, and other accomplishments. By deceptively glorifying Stalin, the Russian authorities seek to foster a sense of pride and patriotism, often appealing to the older generations who may have experienced the Soviet era.⁵⁰

Moreover, it is essential to recognize that while the Soviet propaganda machine used traditional media channels during its time, modern Russian propaganda utilizes digital platforms, particularly social media, to amplify its message. Social media provides a fertile ground for spreading narratives, as information can reach millions of users instantaneously. State-sponsored trolls and bots are deployed to manipulate online discussions, promote pro-Russian narratives, and even sow discord among foreign populations:

Moscow's narratives are amplified in Georgia by far-right, pro-Kremlin, and nationalist politicians, as well as religious groups – especially certain representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Politicians – both government and opposition – use disinformation to target their opponents. This conflation of foreign-backed and homegrown disinformation – whether it is toolkits for spreading misleading infor

⁴⁹ Chaim Shinar, "Vladimir Putin's Aspiration to Restore the Lost Russian Empire", SSRN, (Nov. 15, 2016). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2869863> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2869863>.

⁵⁰ Irina Sherbakova, "Vladimir Putin's Russia is rehabilitating Stalin. We must not let it happen", *The Guardian*, (July 10, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jul/10/vladimir-putin-russia-rehabilitating-stalin-soviet-past>.

mation, or misleading content itself – is toxic and has led to a polluted information landscape, endangering both Georgia’s democracy and its most vulnerable groups.⁵¹

Government-linked media sources also play a pivotal role in disseminating propaganda. Russian state-controlled news outlets, such as RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik, are known for propagating Kremlin-approved narratives that often distort the truth and promote a positive image of Russia while denigrating the West. These media outlets use sophisticated messaging techniques to appeal to specific audiences and exploit existing grievances or divisions within Western societies by providing a platform for promoting Russian narratives and alternative viewpoints, often characterized by biased reporting and propaganda.⁵²

For example, during periods of heightened tension between Russia and Western countries, Russian propaganda outlets may amplify stories that criticize Western governments or highlight social issues and controversies within those countries. By doing so, they aim to undermine confidence in Western institutions, create doubts about democracy and freedom, and foster a perception of moral equivalence between Russia and the West. The long-term impact of such developments might be unpredictable if the problem and scale of disinformation are not addressed. Effective instruments are to be employed to measure the impact and thus to model an accurate scope of the problem.

According to the report published by Transparency International Georgia, the Georgian government is not effective in combating such pro-Russian narratives and disinformation.

Moreover, there is no political will to tackle the problem, although relevant departments have been established in various state and public agencies to work on disinformation and cybersecurity (for instance, Georgia’s Central Election Commission), accurate analysis of this challenge by the state, inter-

⁵¹ Isabella Wilkinson, Tamar Dekanosidze, “Georgia must bolster resilience to information warfare”, *Chatham House*, (March 14, 2022), <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/03/georgia-must-bolster-resilience-information-warfare>.

⁵² Iuliia Iashchenko, “Understanding Russian disinformation strategies inside and outside the country”, *Aspenia Online*, (July 4, 2023), <https://aspensiaonline.it/understanding-russian-disinformation-strategies-inside-and-outside-the-country/>.

agency coordination and the effectiveness of specific state actions remain a problem. The spread of anti-Western disinformation and discrediting statements by Georgian government officials against Western partners, ambassadors, NGOs, and strategic allies has resulted in growing scepticism towards the West among the population. This not only divides society but also strengthens Russian disinformation influence in the country.

There is currently no national strategy in place to effectively counter hybrid threats, and the National Security Concept needs to be updated accordingly. Despite the recommendations made by the parliamentary working group on disinformation and propaganda to public agencies in 2019, a large portion of them have yet to be implemented.

One of the primary issues contributing to this problem is the lack of government cooperation with NGOs and media outlets, which should be crucial allies in the fight against disinformation. Public agencies have been ineffective in promptly informing the public about Russian disinformation narratives and taking measures to mitigate their harmful influence. Georgia's civil society, media, and government all have a role and responsibility in improving resilience to information warfare, but a whole-of-society approach faces many obstacles due to the polarization of Georgia's political scene and public discourse, as well as low levels of trust between all actors.⁵³ Additionally, the measures taken to promote media literacy are insufficient and require further attention.

Georgia's growing economic dependence on Russia also constitutes a significant threat to the country's sovereignty. Russia has a history of using economic relations to politically leverage independent countries, and Georgia's increased economic dependence on Russia makes it vulnerable to such manipulation. Moreover, Georgia's macroeconomic stability is also at risk due to this dependence, particularly in light of Western sanctions and the economic crisis in Russia caused by the war and other factors. This crisis is likely to continue in 2023 and beyond, further compounding the economic risks facing Georgia.

⁵³ Wilkinson, Dekanosidze, "Georgia."

Elements of hybrid warfare, such as propaganda, fake news, and trolls, are present in daily life and can have a significant impact on vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities. Disinformation about ethnic minorities such as Azerbaijanis or Armenians is also used to undermine Georgia's social cohesion.⁵⁴ Based on our experience and observations, it is evident that Armenian ethnic minorities residing in Akhalkalaki are significantly impacted by Russian propaganda.⁵⁵ This influence stems from their limited understanding of the Georgian language and comparatively lower integration into Georgian society, leading them to rely heavily on Russian media channels for information. Russian TV channels and social media are often the main sources of information for these groups, making them particularly vulnerable to Russian disinformation campaigns. As a result, ethnic minority groups are frequently targeted and under the influence of such disinformation.

Effective Strategies

Georgia needs to increase resilience and to achieve that it is necessary to build the capacity of the civil society to spot out and resist disinformation efforts. Georgia needs to increase resilience in representatives of ethnic minority groups living in the country, including local civil society members, opinion-makers, teachers as well as youths by equipping them with skills necessary for recognizing components of hybrid threats such as disinformation, fake news, and propaganda and to be able to counter them.

The government should prioritize building individual and societal resilience to disinformation. The National Strategy on Countering Hybrid Threats and the National Security Concept should outline clear goals and timeframes for combating disinformation, as well as responsible agencies and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of possible activities. These strategic communication documents should be regularly updated to address emerging challenges.

The public should be systematically and proactively informed about disinformation narratives to ensure that citizens are prepared to confront them

⁵⁴ Wilkinson, Dekanosidze, "Georgia."

⁵⁵ #WeAreSakartvelo: Using Information to Build Bridges, *US AID*, n. d. <https://www.usaid.gov/georgia/news/wearesakartvelo-using-information-build-bridges> (accessed November 7, 2023).

and to reduce the impact of disinformation. It is important to provide citizens with detailed information about who is spreading disinformation in the country, how it is being spread, the sources of funding, and what the government is doing to address the problem.

USAID/Georgia announced the Georgia Information Integrity Program, a new five-year initiative designed to help Georgia build societal resilience against disinformation. Through 2025, USAID is partnering with the Government of Georgia and others to develop a comprehensive, “whole-of-society” approach to protecting Georgia’s information space. USAID will also support a network of domestic organizations that actively combat disinformation to ensure that Georgia’s citizens have access to fact-based information about key issues. By engaging these domestic partners, USAID can leverage local expertise and ensure domestic ownership of development outcomes.⁵⁶

In 2022, visitor arrivals from Russia to Georgia increased significantly, with 1.1 million visitors making up 20% of the total visitors – twice as high as the previous year. This is the first time since 2011 that the share of Russian visitors has reached this level. Additionally, some Russian visitors are long-term settlers indicated by company registrations, tens of thousands of accounts opened, and deposits made in Georgian banks.⁵⁷

Informed, consistent, and reliable ethnic minority groups will play an important role in countering anti-NATO propaganda in Georgia, which has escalated in recent years. Furthermore, investing in the education and awareness of ethnic minorities will help Georgia become more resilient against the disinformation campaign that Russia carries out daily on Georgian citizens.⁵⁸

In 2022, The Georgian Strategic Analysis Centre (GSAC)⁵⁹ conducted its project “Resilient Ethnic Minorities as a Response to Disinformation and

⁵⁶ “USAID Launches New Program to Build Georgia’s Resilience Against Disinformation,” *USAID* n.d. <https://www.usaid.gov/georgia/news/usa-id-launches-new-program-build-georgias-resilience-against-disinformation> (accessed on November 7, 2023).

⁵⁷ “Georgia’s Economic Dependence on Russia: Impact of the Russia-Ukraine war”, *Transparency International Georgia* (February 22, 2023), <https://transparency.ge/en/post/georgias-economic-dependence-russia-impact-russia-ukraine-war-1>.

⁵⁸ Klimczyk, “Anti-Western...”

⁵⁹ The author of this part of the chapter works for GSAC and took part in preparation and

Hybrid Threats”⁶⁰ aimed at enhancing the resilience of representatives from various ethnic minority groups in Georgia. This included local civil society members, opinion-makers, teachers, and youths by imparting them with essential skills to recognize components of hybrid threats, such as disinformation, fake news, and propaganda, and to enable them to counter these threats effectively.

More specifically, the project introduced participants to a range of topics, which included: hybrid threats, disinformation, the Soviet Union: the dream and reality, Joseph Stalin: Tyrant or Hero, techniques of Stalinist propaganda, the most common tactics used in operating propaganda machines, methods to identify disinformation and effectively deal with it.⁶¹ The training sessions incorporated lectures, simulations, and round table discussions. These sessions were conducted by established professionals with diverse thematic expertise in disinformation, politics, security, and media literacy. This project allowed to: create a critical mass of ethnic minority representatives who are not only aware of the risks associated with disinformation but also capable of identifying and neutralizing them by effectively utilizing the knowledge acquired during the training course; strengthening the understanding of ethnic minority representatives regarding modern disinformation threats and the various forms in which they may manifest; improve the knowledge of ethnic minority representatives concerning the tactics employed by Russia in targeting disinformation campaigns. This, in turn, raised awareness about how hybrid warfare poses challenges to Georgia’s democracy, and national security, as well as its aspirations for NATO and EU integration and awareness among ethnic minority groups regarding the techniques used in Stalinism propaganda, providing them with a more discerning perspective on historical narratives.

The GSAC project effectively empowered representatives of the Armenian ethnic minority in Georgia by providing them with unbiased information and

conduct of the project related to information resilience of minorities in Georgia. He will refer to this project as an empirical data on the topic.

⁶⁰ GSAC, “Resilient Ethnic Minorities as a Response to Disinformation and Hybrid Threats”, n.d. <https://gsac.ge/resilient-ethnic-minorities-as-a-response-to-disinformation-and-hybrid-threat/> (accessed on March 17, 2023).

⁶¹ “How Russian propaganda uses the Soviet past”, *#DisinfoChronicle*, (June 30, 2023), <https://disinfo.detector.media/en/post/how-russian-propaganda-uses-the-soviet-past>.

essential skills to combat disinformation, fake news, and propaganda. This comprehensive approach aimed to create resilient and informed individuals capable of countering the challenges posed by hybrid threats in the contemporary information landscape.

The results of the training conducted on information warfare, disinformation, and combating them in Kakheti's Kharajala villages, predominantly populated by Azerbaijani ethnic groups, and in Samtskhe Javakheti's Ninotsminda, inhabited mainly by Armenian ethnic groups, have shown significantly different perspectives on Georgia's foreign policy priorities and Russia's involvement in these matters. The findings revealed contrasting outcomes in the two ethnic groups. In areas dominated by the Azerbaijani ethnic group, a relatively high level of pro-Western orientation, nearly 40%, was observed.⁶² However, the remaining respondents exhibited uncertainty, mainly due to the lack of informative sources, leaving them unfamiliar with concepts such as NATO or EU.

Consequently, they tend to rely more on Azerbaijani state-controlled information sources. On the other hand, in the Armenian-oriented group, the situation was significantly radical, with more than 80% expressing negative views toward the Western community.⁶³ This negative sentiment can be attributed to Russia's state propaganda, as well as the influence of private TV channels and social media platforms. The efforts of the Polish Embassy and GSAC, through the conducted training, have shown slight improvements in this negative perspective, but the overall situation in the region remains similar to the starting point in Ninotsminda.⁶⁴ Armenia's influence and Russia's purposeful and aggressive propaganda mission are major contributing factors to the prevailing pro-Russian sentiment in the area.

In conclusion, the findings indicate a significant divergence in views on Georgia's foreign policy priorities and Russia's involvement between the Azerbaijani and Armenian ethnic groups in the region. While pro-Western sentiment is relatively higher in the Azerbaijani-oriented areas, a strong negative perception towards the Western community persists in the Armenian-

⁶² GSAC, "Resilient Ethnic Minorities."

⁶³ GSAC, "Resilient Ethnic Minorities."

⁶⁴ GSAC, "Resilient Ethnic Minorities."

oriented group, largely due to Russia's propaganda efforts and Armenia's influence. The conducted training has had some impact, but the pervasive propaganda mission continues to influence the overall situation in the region.

The situation in Georgia illustrates the importance of individual and societal resilience to hybrid threats, which can complement each other. Mass and social media can be utilized to promote individual resilience as a fashionable trend and required skill globally. To build societal resilience, governmental bodies, and NGOs should develop media literacy and information hygiene programs, while the Georgian Government should prioritize reducing economic dependence on Russia through free trade agreements with strategic partners. Clear statements of the government in the form of the National Strategy on Countering Hybrid Threats and the National Security Concept contribute to safeguarding Georgian sovereignty in the information domain.

Conclusion

Human security is considered a necessary part of human development and fulfilment, but it is not sufficient. Human security is a people-centered paradigm that aims to understand and address global threats and vulnerabilities from a human perspective, emphasizing prevention, early action, and comprehensive responses to protect the integrity of individuals against various challenges, including poverty, violence, and diseases. Requirements for human development and well-being go beyond those of human security.⁶⁵

Resilience encompasses both a philosophy and a practical approach that emphasizes recovery and adaptation in the face of threats, encompassing individual and societal levels, and can be fostered through media literacy, collaboration, mental health support, fact-checking initiatives, responsible media regulation, and community involvement.

Individual and societal resilience to psychological and information impacts should be at the forefront of state/government resilience programs and NCOs efforts. It is necessary to focus on the primary sources of information and the level of trust in them; the adoption of a sustainable humanitarian

⁶⁵ Sabina Alkire, "A Conceptual Framework for Human Security", *Working Papers CRISE* (Department of International Development, University of Oxford, 2003).

policy about modern warfare challenges; development of a system of counter-narratives; improvement of the corresponding programs and strategies for regional development about existing and potential threats and risks of information wars.

The war in Ukraine highlights the interconnection between national security and human security, with challenges in the information domain posing threats to individual cognitive resilience and mental health, emphasizing the importance of promoting accurate information, critical thinking, and psychological resilience in addressing these complex issues. Building individual and societal resilience against human security hybrid threats in times of war is crucial and can be achieved through various strategies, such as promoting information hygiene, critical thinking, and media literacy, as well as mindfulness techniques and social support for psychological resilience. The ongoing war in Ukraine serves as a valuable case study for understanding the importance of resilience in addressing complex challenges. Tailoring resilience-building approaches to specific cultural and societal specificities is essential for effective implementation in diverse conflict and post-conflict regions. Ultimately, resilience can serve as a powerful defensive weapon during wartime, helping individuals, communities, and nations withstand, adapt, and recover from adversity.

Armenia's population faces different levels of exposure to these hybrid threats in the information sphere, and existing methods to counter them are not always effective. The affordability of broadband internet has both positive and negative impacts, with increased connectivity contributing to the spread of disinformation, false narratives, and hate speech. Specific narratives targeting Armenia's cooperation with the EU have emerged, with claims that EU aid packages are against Russia and misrepresentations of EU mediation efforts in the region. The increase in disinformation is often exploited by political opposition and Russian interests seeking to manipulate Armenia's government. Building societal resilience and state resilience against hybrid warfare threats requires improving media literacy through educational programs for different social groups and enhancing the legal framework. Practical progress in addressing disinformation and information security remains limited, and a more systematic approach is needed, including cooperation between state institutions, civil society, and media experts. Media outlets should avoid using Russian video footage and texts to counter

disinformation, and partnerships with reliable media and NGOs can help perform fact checks and use credible sources.

Georgia faces various hybrid threats, including propaganda, fake news, and trolling, orchestrated by Russia to undermine its aspirations toward NATO and the EU. The strategic manipulation of historical memory, particularly regarding Joseph Stalin, aims to create nostalgic sentiments and foster support for the resurrection of the Soviet Union. Moreover, Georgia's economic dependence on Russia poses a significant threat to its sovereignty and stability. Ethnic minority groups are particularly vulnerable to Russian disinformation campaigns due to limited language proficiency and reliance on Russian media for information. Georgia needs to enhance resilience against hybrid threats by building the capacity of civil society and ethnic minority groups. The government should prioritize countering disinformation through strategic communication documents and regular updates to address emerging challenges. Individual and societal resilience can complement each other in countering hybrid threats, and media literacy and reducing economic dependence on Russia are essential aspects of building resilience.

In conclusion, building individual and societal resilience against hybrid threats, especially psychological and information impacts, is crucial during peacetime and modern warfare in conflict and post-conflict societies. To ensure an accurate and non-biased information landscape, it is recommended to establish partnerships with trustworthy media outlets and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the relevant countries. These partnerships could potentially receive aid from international foundations and supranational organizations to carry out fact-checking, identify and utilize appropriate and publicly accessible sources, and potentially obtain licenses for copyrighted materials.

Russia's Trojan Horse: Russian Influx into Georgia Since the Russian-Ukrainian War¹

David Matsaberidze

Introduction

Since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, some 1.2 million Russian citizens have entered Georgia, increasing by 30% Georgia's current population.² This influx of Russians into Georgia has been differently reflected in political narratives of the ruling Georgian Dream and opposition parties – Strategy Agmashenebeli, Lelo, and the United National Movement – securitizing the phenomenon from the political and socio-economic perspectives as an urgent menace to the country's national security. Parties frame the issue via public political narratives, setting the ground for competitive securitization of an issue in a zero-sum manner and undermining the constituents' ability to develop the information that would enable proper resilience.

The paper explores the case of Georgia which has experienced mass migration of citizens from the Russian Federation, in terms of alternating internal discourses on the Russian migrants in domestic politics, securitizing the issue through different political and economic lenses; and aspects that have already influenced, re-shaped and determined the internal domestic political security and socio-economic dynamics of the country, arguing that the competitive domestic discourses undermined or created conditions for the absence of resilience.

Russians fleeing from their country and “welcomed” in Georgia could entail long-term negative consequences in terms of security. Georgia has received

¹ The first draft of the paper was presented at the PoSIG Teacher Academy 2023: Resilience amidst Conflict(s): Migration, Gender, and Governance, 24–30 April 2023 / University of Salzburg, Austria. See: PoSIG Education. Some parts of this paper appear in F. Labarre and G. Niculescu, eds. *Discussing a South Caucasus Short of Russian Dominance*, Study Group Information Band 17/2023, (Vienna: Landesverteidigungsakademie 2023).

² G. Silagadze & CRRC, Datablog: How do Georgians Feel About the Influx of Russians? *OC Media*, (February 7, 2022) <https://oc-media.org/features/datablog-how-do-georgians-feel-about-the-influx-of-russians/> (Accessed 03.05.2023).

a large number of Russians (with families and businesses) that have already changed the local context not much in demographic, but in socio-economic terms. The paper argues that this fact has been differently securitized by the political elites and uncovers the emerging competing discourses of the ruling Georgian Dream and main opposition parties, mainly that of the United National Movement, constructed on the Russian migrants across the political and economic aspects, securitized by political parties for their gain before the parliamentary elections of 2024. The Georgian Dream highlighted positive economic addition of the Russian migrants to the country, through their socio-economic activities, whereas the United National Movement securitized the issue in terms of its influence(s) on the country's economic and political-demographic stability. Economic dependence on Russia has arguably increased and could have some negative political drawbacks. The paper demonstrates that the influx of Russians became an *ad hoc* challenge in Georgia, employed by the ruling Georgian Dream and the opposition parties, for their political gains, leading to a lack of resilience from the population.

Georgia has become one of the top destinations for politically active, educated, and socially engaged Russian citizens fleeing Russian mobilization. The most acute threats to societal security is the concentration of Russians in Georgia that could be conducive to the effectiveness of the Russian propaganda by means of soft power.³ In this regard, a matter of concern is the rising trend in the Russian acquisition of real estate in Georgia, that had a short term positive effect on country's economy with one-time injection of flow of money, although with negative consequences due to price fluctuations on private property in Tbilisi and Batumi. By the end of 2023, prices stabilized to the previous level, but the country's economy is still in dire need of foreign direct investment due to the negative impact of the Russian-Ukrainian War. Thus, a precise look at the economic and political impacts of this mass flow of Russians in Georgia is needed. Although Georgia secured EU candidate status in December 2023, continuing mass migration could affect the EU's reputation in the country.⁴

³ Kornely Kakachia & S. Kandelaki, "The Russian Migration to Georgia – Threats or Opportunities?" *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo* No. 818 (December 19, 2022), <https://www.ponarseurasia.org/the-russian-migration-to-georgia-threats-or-opportunities/> (Accessed 03.05.2023).

⁴ O. Schmies, "The Eastern Partnership Countries and the Influx of Russian Citizens Following Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Steps to be Taken by the EU. Guest Commentary",

Although some migrants who came in early 2022 have left Georgia to third countries, those who have remained have kept a low profile. The mass influx of Russian migrants has become a point of discord between the ruling Georgian Dream and various opposition parties. In this respect, opposition parties and the ruling Georgian Dream continue to criticize each other for nearly everything that occurs in the state; the opposition denounces the decision of the Georgia Dream government for not adopting the visa regime for the Russian citizens, to contain their mass entry to Georgia. The Georgian Dream leaders in turn accuse opposition parties of chauvinism and xenophobia against Russians, stressing that most of them are in Georgia for touristic purposes. While opposition parties demand changes of state migration policies, such as the new visa policy for Russian citizens. More pertinent, however, is the risk of seeing Russian migrants help their mother country evade sanctions imposed by the international community.

Since the start of the War and the subsequent imposition of a sanction regime by the West, the export and import dynamics of Georgia have changed.⁵ This issue is not so much a matter of migration, as an issue of putting Georgia in the position of commercial turntable to third countries, enabling Russia to evade sanctions.⁶

The Georgian Dream claims that remittances and cash inflow from Russia had positive effect on the country's economy, and while the rising prices of goods and services have brought higher profits to some, this tendency has also harmed disadvantaged social groups economically. Examples include prices for groceries, energy, as well as commercial and personal rents. It has harmed unemployed people and students from the regions who study in

Stockholm Centre for Eastern European Studies [SCEEUS] Guest Platform for Eastern European Policy 18, (December 15, 2022), <https://www.ui.se/globalassets/ui.se-eng/publications/sceeus/the-eastern-partnership-countries-and-the-influx-of-russian-citizens-following-russias-invasion-of-ukraine.pdf> (Accessed 03.05.2023).

⁵ M. Kakulia, & N. Kapanadze, *Dynamic and structure of Georgia's Trade with the Russian Federation Before and After the Full-Scale Russian Invasion in Ukraine* (Tbilisi: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung & Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, 2023) <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/20308.pdf>.

⁶ Kakulia & Kapanadze, *Dynamic and Structure of Georgia's Trade...* See also J. A. Sonnenfeld and M. Wyrebkowski, "The Dangerous Loophole in Western Sanctions on Russia", *Foreign Policy*, (July 9, 2023).

Tbilisi who can no longer cover their basic needs. Deteriorating social conditions are also seen through public opinion polls conducted in Summer 2022 that show that people have not enough money to buy food in the prior 12.⁷ The rise of emigration from Georgia also attests that economic situation is worsening and there is no hope for improvement in the foreseeable future. The population feels insecure to live in Georgia and highlights poverty, unemployment, rising prices and Georgians' emigration as primary sources of their feeling of dissatisfaction and insecurity.⁸

Mapping the Threats Stemming From the Russian Migrants to Georgia

One of the primary arguments against granting residency to Russians is that Putin's will be able to maintain a latent invasion pretext under the guise of *protecting Russian citizens*. Georgians do not wish to see a re-enactment of the 2008 war. After the re-launch of the war in Ukraine in 2022, this possibility appears extremely plausible. Yet the government's vision of the issue diverges from the real attitudes of the population, as in some cases Russian migrants have been given preference over Georgian citizens because of their economic power.⁹

Social dissatisfaction has been expressed through open revelation of dissent against the acceptance of the citizens of Russia in Georgia without any restriction or filtration at border checkpoints. At least three separate online petitions have called on the government of Georgia to introduce visa requirements for Russian citizens, who at present can travel to Georgia under the visa-free regime. Online petitions differentiate between those fleeing the regime from other visitors; some are against making it easy for supporters of the Kremlin's aggressive policies to seek comfort in Georgia as the Russian economy suffers. The authors of the petition also called for imposing a visa regime and time limitations for Russians wanting to stay in

⁷ Kakachia & Kandelaki, "The Russian Migration to Georgia...".

⁸ "Taking Georgians' Pulse: Findings from October-November Survey", (Washington: National Democratic Institute, December, 2023). https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Georgia_GGF%20poll_October_2023_Eng_VF.pdf (Accessed 09.03.2024).

⁹ Kakachia & Kandelaki, "The Russian Migration to Georgia...".

Georgia.¹⁰ These cite Kremlin practices of abusing the question of nationality as a pretext for invasion. Further concerns include economic impacts, such as fears about property becoming unaffordable for locals due to the raised demand, or Russian citizens withdrawing U.S. dollars from ATMs, thus harming the national currency and economy.¹¹

Russians' Influx and Domestic Political Rhetoric: The Georgian Dream vs. Opposition Parties – Georgia's Security at Stake?

Georgian public opinion is divided on the issue of the increased migration of the citizens of Russia to Georgia, primarily in terms of their impact on Georgia's economy. The government views this process as a new economic opportunity, while the opposition parties and segment of Georgian society assesses it through the prism of social and economic inequality and risks to national security. The fears of Russia's negative economic impact on Georgia were defused by the Minister of Economy of Georgia, Levan Davitashvili, who argued that Georgia was only used as a transit country even though more than 100,000 citizens of Russia have remained in the country to date.¹²

The chairman of the Georgian Dream and member of parliament Irakli Kobakhidze argued that “the government of Georgia monitors the migration of the citizens of Russia to Georgia and has a close eye on the national security issues” and that “campaigns had been unleashed against the Russian tourists, fears proved absolutely groundless, fake and artificial, serving political goals.”¹³ According to him,

the situation is fully under control and the government assumes full responsibility for it [...] calling on political actors, including the *radical opposition* [the term the Georgian Dream party uses recently to denote the United National Movement – D.M.] and the relevant NGOs, to refrain from war-mongering rhetoric and provocations.¹⁴

¹⁰ “We Demand to Abolish the Existing Visa Free Regime with the Russian Federation – Address of the Citizens of Georgia”, *Change.org*, n.d. <https://www.change.org> (Accessed 9 March 2024).

¹¹ “Worries in Georgia amid Reports of Russian Influx”, *Civil Georgia*, (Apr. 3, 2022) <https://civil.ge/archives/477538> (Accessed 5 March 2023).

¹² Schmies, “The Eastern Partnership Countries and the Influx of Russian Citizens...”.

¹³ “Georgian Politicians Comment on Tightening Immigration Rules for Russians”, *Civil Georgia* (Sept. 23, 2022), <https://civil.ge/archives/509035> (Accessed 3 May 2023).

¹⁴ “Georgian Politicians Comment on Tightening Immigration Rules for Russians”.

Another MP from the ruling Georgian Dream, the chairman of the parliament's Foreign Relations Committee, Nikoloz Samkharadze, pointed to the fact that "there are a lot of ethnic Georgians among Russian citizens who returned to Georgia and if the risks are as high as to require legislative amendments or restrictions, relevant agencies should issue such recommendation."¹⁵ His viewpoint is supported by the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Tea Akhvlediani, stating that "this time, a threat is hypothetical in nature. We will discuss this issue if it becomes real."¹⁶

In response to the calls for visa requirements to be instituted, Kobakhidze stated that the visa policy with Russia had been eased after the Russia-Georgia August War of 2008, and now it is "simply irrational" to revise it. He reminded everyone that visa requirements had been lifted by the United National Movement party – in other words, Saakashvili's administration now in opposition. The Speaker of Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili explained that taking the years 2020–2021 as a comparison is "irrelevant" because of the years of government restrictions imposed because of the Wuhan coronavirus crisis.¹⁷ The Chairperson of the Legal Affairs Committee of Parliament, Anri Okhanashvili added that raising the visa issue may destabilize relations with Russia.¹⁸

The opposition is more cautious towards the issue of the migration of Russians and argue for the necessity of imposing a visa regime for Russians. Kakhaber Kemoklidze, member of the For Georgia party and former Secretary of the National Security Council, argued that "Russia is facing a defeat in Ukraine and this will prompt a lot of people to leave Russia and a wave of migration will grow further, increasing national security risks" and "given the potential scale of the influx *from a hostile state*, security services won't be able to control for risks on the operative level even if there was the political will to do so."¹⁹ The ruling party does not want to see the threat, although measures could be taken to tighten immigration control and increase the

¹⁵ "Georgian Politicians Comment on Tightening Immigration Rules for Russians".

¹⁶ "Georgian Politicians Comment on Tightening Immigration Rules for Russians".

¹⁷ "Worries in Georgia amid Reports of Russian Influx".

¹⁸ "Calls Increase for Visa Requirements for Russians", *Civil Georgia* (June 8, 2022), <https://civil.ge/archives/503240> (Accessed 03.05.2023).

¹⁹ "Georgian Politicians Comment on Tightening Immigration Rules for Russians".

amount of information the state gets about the new entrants.²⁰ Ex-Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, founder of the For Georgia party proposed reducing the one-year visa-free regime for Russian citizens to a period of 1 to 3 months.²¹

The “stark rise of the number of visitors from Russia can bring the situation out of control and pose serious challenges to the security of our country,” the opposition *Lelo for Georgia* party claimed and suggested introducing a “temporary visa regime with countries currently involved in the military aggression against the state of Ukraine.”²² Salome Samadashvili a member of that party, argued that

Russia’s military call-up will lead to increased numbers of Russian citizens leaving their country, whereas Georgia remains the easiest place for Russian citizens to enter without visas. Considering our security challenges, we have been warning the government since the very beginning of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine that it is necessary to focus on imposing visa requirements for Russian citizens through adopting relevant legislative amendments and introducing strict short-term visa requirements for Russian citizens.²³

Paata Manjgaladze, member of the opposition party *Strategy Agmashenebeli*, understands that migrants

do not want to go to war, have rushed to the borders of various countries, but most European countries are closed for them. Naturally, we cannot turn Georgia into the place of concentration of deserters...we should let in only those people who are against Putin’s regime. Georgia’s security should not be jeopardized, because nobody knows who will come in together with the so called “deserters.”²⁴

Giga Bokeria, chairman of the *European Georgia* party, shares the view that “the inflow of Russian citizens further expands Russia’s capabilities to have a deeper intelligence network for the future.”²⁵ Bokeria goes as far as to argue that many Russian citizens coming to Georgia are trying to bypass international sanctions imposed on Russia. “It’s unacceptable for Georgia to become a black hole for Russia and Russian citizens to evade sanctions...these

²⁰ “Georgian Politicians Comment on Tightening Immigration Rules for Russians”.

²¹ “Calls Increase for Visa Requirements for Russians”.

²² “Worries in Georgia amid Reports of Russian Influx”.

²³ “Georgian Politicians Comment on Tightening Immigration Rules for Russians”.

²⁴ “Georgian Politicians Comment on Tightening Immigration Rules for Russians”.

²⁵ “Georgian Politicians Comment on Tightening Immigration Rules for Russians”.

measures can be implemented by restoring the visa regime, as well as by introducing separate, emergency measures.”²⁶

The Lelo for Georgia party came out with the initiative of establishing visa requirements declaring that “the flow of visitors from the occupying country is beyond all control.”²⁷ The party leaders voiced their concerns and called to limit and control as much as possible the issue of land and other real estate acquisition and residency rights for Russian citizens. This includes business registrations.

Warning against the anger growing into xenophobia, former Defence Minister Tina Khidasheli said that reports of Russians leaving their country, if true, may have two reasons – fleeing the dictator and fear of repression or fleeing sanctions discomfort. According to Khidasheli, visa regimes should filter applicants. “Those fleeing sanctions while keeping Putin’s pictures on their Facebook pages should not be allowed in Georgia.”²⁸

The analysis of various speeches of the ruling Georgian Dream and the representatives of the opposition party members reveals ambivalence concerning Russian migration. The ruling party considers them as a positive addition to country’s economy. While initially it had some positive influence, in a long-term perspective migration could increase Georgia’s dependence on the Russian economy. The Georgian Dream has communicated very poorly on the pros and cons of the Russian migration to the Georgian public, preferring to downplay the issue to the detriment of the opposition. The securitization of the Russian migrants in Georgia by the opposition is discredited by the ruling Georgian Dream representatives as discrimination, chauvinism and xenophobia towards particular ethnic groups.

Conclusion

The Russian migrants entering Georgia are currently politically passive, but the huge gains in terms of economic standing in the country could translate to effective political power. It is against that eventuality that the Georgian

²⁶ “Calls Increase for Visa Requirements for Russians”.

²⁷ “Calls Increase for Visa Requirements for Russians”.

²⁸ “Worries in Georgia amid Reports of Russian Influx”.

public is rendered defenseless by the tug-of-war between the Georgian Dream and opposition parties, focusing mainly on the issue of visas, and economic impact.

The parliamentary process in application between the ruling party and opposition has not effectively informed the Georgian population as to what is at stake security-wise. Constituents therefore end up not having the factual and intellectual tools to apprehend the issue in depth, and thus, fail to develop resilience regarding the Russian migration issue. In other words, Georgian society does not truly know what it does know about this phenomenon. It may be preferable for Georgian society to be maintained in this status of information deficiency lest it become capable of forming an opinion which might be contrary to the elite's – or more in line with the opposition. In short, there is a fear that any “resilience” generated in Georgian society be directed against either the government or the opposition policies and points of view.

It is therefore sufficient to conclude that, as pertains the security issues which Russian migration may represent, the Georgian society is not able to develop any resilience at all – at psycho-social level. Georgian society is not resilient to the polarization affecting the ruling party relative to the opposition parties. This means that Russian migration is allowed to continue, with the usual commercial and macro-economic consequences. Against the latter consequences also, Georgian society is woefully unprepared. The proof of this lack of resilience against the economic consequences of migration is the brain drain which Georgia continues to suffer, as more and more of the better integrated Georgians seek sunnier economic and commercial climates. It is skilful political maneuvering, masquerading as normal politics in times of acute crisis, which has prevented this multi-varied resilience from blossoming within society.

Cyber Security in Armenia's Comprehensive Security and Defence System

Armine Arzumanyan, Hrachya Arzumanyan

Introduction

The outcomes of the second Artsakh war are forcing the Armenian people to reconsider the foundations upon which their statehood and public life were built after the restoration of independence in the post-Soviet period. The second Artsakh war and the emerging international security environment have shown the impossibility to defend Armenia's national and state sovereignty based exclusively on functioning state institutions and the currently effective alliances. The location of Armenia in a region where the interests of geopolitical and regional power centres with imperial pasts collide, the evolution of neo-imperial projects, and the existential nature of threats require the involvement of the capabilities of the entire Armenian people to ensure national security and effective defence.

In this context, building a comprehensive security and defence system would allow responding to the quantitative and qualitative advantages of the aggressors. A critical element of the system is the pan-Armenian platform "Vogezan." The platform is expected to create conditions for coordinating the non-governmental potential and capabilities of the Armenian people and directing their cooperation with the state apparatus. As an open platform, Vogezan held its third assembly in Yerevan on March 21, 2023.

Within Vogezan, the imperative to find and apply disruptive technology solutions and innovations for defence has led to a vision of creating a Techno-Military Union (TMU) operating at tactical/operational levels. The TMU shall be called upon to solve the problems of accelerated development, testing, production, and implementation of innovative organizational and technological solutions and products. With the transition still in its infancy, the TMU is currently being established within Armenia's updated territorial defence system, and a Comprehensive Defence and Security taskforce became operational in the Office of the Security Council in April 2023.

Given the emphasis on technology, the prospects of Armenia's comprehensive defence and security system require that particular attention be paid to cyber and information security. The present paper addresses these developments in the following manner. Part I focuses on the concept of comprehensive defence, the strategic context in Armenia leading to the emerging transition to a comprehensive defence and security system, and the role of technology in the system. Part II addresses the gaps and objectives in cyber and information security as part of the comprehensive approach. The paper then concludes with four possible directions for NATO-Armenia cooperation in cyber and information security within comprehensive defence.

Armenia's Comprehensive Defence and Security System

The Concept of Comprehensive Security and Defence

A holistic, comprehensive approach to security and defence based not only on the governmental institutions but the entire society and nation is historically well known. The term "comprehensive security" evolved from the "total defence" concept that emerged in Sweden in the early 1950s. During the Cold War, "total defence" constituted broad military and civilian training and preparedness for the defence of a country, requiring close cooperation and coordination between armed forces, other state institutions, and the private sector. The principle of total defence is that all the nation's human, material, and cognitive capabilities augment and support military efforts.¹

As a response mechanism to threats posed by politically and militarily stronger and larger powers, total defence was an essential element of the security policy of neutral and non-aligned countries. It required a society's preparedness to take over their country's defence despite the massive disparity of capabilities of a small state facing off a great power(s). In addition, total defence operated as a mechanism of deterrence for a potential aggressor by increasing the costs of launching hostile actions. In the early 1960s, the term

¹ Erich Ludendorff, *Der Totale Krieg*. (München: Ludendorffs, 1935), 5.; Der Bundesrat, *Bericht des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Sicherheitspolitik der Schweiz (Konzeption der Gesamtverteidigung)* [Report of the Federal Council to the Federal Assembly on Switzerland's security policy (Conception of Overall Defence). (June 27, 1973), <https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/sipol-11-740-bericht-d.pdf>].

“comprehensive defence” and “comprehensive approach to defence” were increasingly used instead of “total defence” due to the negative connotations of totalitarianism and total war. After the Cold War, the concept of comprehensive defence gradually expanded into comprehensive security, encompassing not only war but also other types of crises, non-military threats, and peacetime challenges. Switzerland, Nordic countries, Baltic states, Austria, Israel, Singapore, and others have adopted a comprehensive security approach.²

In short, comprehensive security operates through coordinating the activities of national, public, governmental institutions, and local communities as a whole, providing the proper functioning of state institutions, the political system, the economy and society. The approach requires incorporating a wide range of military and non-military aspects of national security: military cooperation between civilians and the military during an armed conflict, interaction during crises, natural disasters, epidemics, and other challenges.

At present, there is a growing interest for comprehensive security due to the changes in an increasingly dynamic security environment. The modern discourse in this area is formed by such concepts as “countering hybrid threats”, “competition with partners”, and “grey zones”, where the boundaries between peace, crisis, and war become increasingly blurred. Political and military goals are thus achieved through integrating military and non-military tools of state power. In this context, the ability of the state and its people to posture defence and successfully constrain threats depends on the preparedness to integrate all elements of national power, including contributions of individuals.³

² Kurt R. Spillmann, “Beyond Soldiers and Arms: The Swiss Model of Comprehensive Security Policy”, *Forschungsstelle für Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktanalyse*, (1987), 6. <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/zb_2.pdf>; Sebastian Larsson, “Swedish total defence and the emergence of societal security,” in S. Larsson, and M. Rhinard, (Eds) *Nordic Societal Security: Convergence and Divergence*. (London: Routledge, 2021), 45–67; Ieva Berzina, “From ‘total’ to ‘comprehensive’ national defence: the development of the concept in Europe”, *Journal on Baltic Security* 6 no. 2, (October 27, 2020), 1–9.

³ Ieva Bērziņa, “Total defence as a comprehensive approach to national security,” in Nora Vanaga, and Toms Rostoks eds. *Deterring Russia in Europe: Defence Strategies for Neighbouring States*. (London: Routledge, 2019), 71; Piotr Szymański, “New Ideas for Total Defence Comprehensive Security in Finland and Estonia”, *OSW Report*, Centre for Eastern

The modern concept of comprehensive security and defence is based on two fundamental principles: resilience and resistance.

Resilience can be defined as a country's ability to withstand and survive a hostile attack due to defence preparedness of society, inaccessibility of territory for an enemy's operational purposes, irregular and hybrid warfare, and support from various state structures and the whole of society and people for the armed forces.⁴ Resilience is the result of a combination of civil preparedness and the military capacity of a state. It is easier for a united society with a strong national identity to resist external aggression and pressure.

According to NATO, resilience constitutes a country's ability to: effectively preserve the continuity of government and critical public services; maintain the security of energy, food, and water supply chains; manage the uncontrolled movement of people; deal with mass casualties (health services); ensure cyber-security and the durability of civil communications systems; and ensure functional transportation routes (vital for military mobility and maintaining critical services).⁵

Resistance refers to the will and preparedness of the private and public sectors to launch organized efforts spanning the entire spectrum of action from non-violent to violent under the leadership of a legitimate government, expelled/displaced government, or a shadow government. Following comprehensive security and defence, the government and the entire society are responsible for organizing and conducting military and civil actions within the resistance framework. The goal of the resistance is the restoration of independence within the boundaries of a sovereign state whose territory has been fully or partially occupied by a foreign power(s) led by a legitimate government.⁶ Resilience is an integral pillar of resistance.

Studies (OSW), (March 2020), 11. https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/OSW-Report_New-ideas-for-total-defence_net_0.pdf.

⁴ NATO, "Commitment to enhance resilience" Press Release (2016) 118, Jul. 8, 2016, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133180.htm.

⁵ NATO, "Commitment to enhance resilience".

⁶ Otto Fiala and Ulrica Pettersson. "ROC(K) Solid Preparedness Resistance Operations Concept in the Shadow of Russia", *PRISM* 8 no. 4 (2020), 17–28.

A comprehensive security approach cannot operate as a formally documented process or standardized plan. Instead, it should be adaptable and flexible. For example, NATO has decided not to develop a standard definition of the comprehensive security approach, thus leaving member states the opportunity and the right to develop their own understanding of the concept. Countries must be self-sufficient in implementing their comprehensive security and defence strategies, thereby contributing to the collective security system of the Alliance.

A Comprehensive Defence and Security System for Armenia

In the Armenian case, one must distinguish three categories of non-governmental actors to be incorporated into a comprehensive security and defence system (see Table 1): Armenian society, Armenian churches, and the diaspora. Figuratively speaking, the state sector covers only 5% of the potential of the Armenian people, while 95% are concentrated in the other categories. The key task of comprehensive security and defence is to systematically use the potential of the nation.

COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY AND DEFENCE ACTORS							
Society of Armenia				Armenian Diaspora		Armenian Churches	
Public Sector		Vogezan Platform					
Mili- tary/ Security	Civil	Private Sector	Civic Sector	Private Sector	Civic Sector	Reli- gion	Interna- tional & Civic Activity
		Business	NGO's	Busi- ness	NGO's	Apos- tolic Catho- lic	
Conven- tional Forces;	Gov't Agen- cies	Indus- tries; Privately Owned Energy;	Civic Groups;			Evan- gelic	

Border Security Force;		Privately Owned	Individ- ual citizens				
Military Police;		Hospi- tals;					
Internal Force		Other Infra- structure					
Etc.							

Table 1: Actors of the Comprehensive security and defence system of Armenia⁷

The Techno-Military Union of the Vogezen Platform

A critical requirement for establishing the comprehensive security and defence system of Armenia is the accelerated development and implementation of innovative and disruptive technological solutions. Without elevating the role and place of innovative and disruptive technological solutions we cannot provide the critically important acceleration of defence processes. In its general form, the comprehensive security and defence system of the Armenian people can be perceived as presented below in Figure 1.

The imperative to implement disruptive technology solutions and innovations for comprehensive defence requires creating a Techno-Military Union (TMU) operating at tactical/operational levels. The main vision for the TMU is for it to accelerate the development cycle of technological and organizational solutions at the tactical/operational levels. Moreover, the TMU is relatively autonomous and free to choose both military and technological solutions. However, the TMU involves not only rapid development but also accelerated production and then the testing and implementation of new solutions and products. Therefore, not only the development but also the production, purchase, and implementation of new solutions and types of weapons and military equipment (WME) should become rapid when ready-made solutions are immediately deployed within the framework of the

⁷ Hratchya Arzumanyan, “Հորիզոններ. համապարփակ մոտեցում ազգային անվտանգության կերտմանը.” [Horizons: The comprehensive approach to national security posture]. (Koghb Foundation, Yerevan, 2023).

Vogez platform and the territorial defence system. This approach involves not only R&D but also the availability of an experimental production base, as well as educational and technological/technical centres.

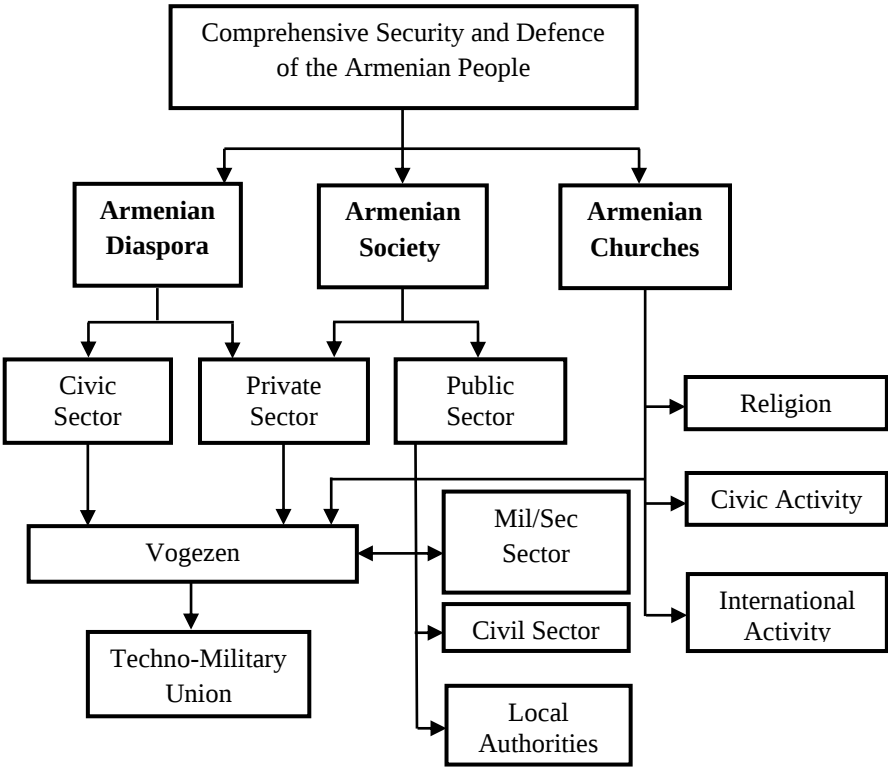


Figure 1: Block diagram of the Armenian comprehensive security and defence system⁸

Cyber and Information Security in Comprehensive Defence

Given the emphasis on technology, the prospects of Armenia’s comprehensive defence and security system require that particular attention be paid to cyber and information security. The following sections focus on the current

⁸ Arzumanian, “Հորիզոններ. համապարփակ մոտեցում ազգային անվտանգության կերտմանը.”.

state of cyber and information security policymaking, as well as on related achievements and projected changes.

Military cyber operations, including both cyber warfare and cyber operations below the threshold of war, constitute coordinated efforts aimed at generating effects in or through cyberspace. Cyberspace can be defined as the combination of cyber identities, cyber objects such as software and data, and physical information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructure, i.e. hardware. Cyberspace is a man-made domain and part of the information environment.

Cyber operations aim to generate primary and secondary effects in all three dimensions of the information environment – the cognitive, virtual, and physical – thus supplementing traditional kinetic military operations that produce effects in or through the physical dimension, and psychological operations targeting the cognitive dimension. Hard cyber operations, popularly referred to as “hacking,” aim to generate effects in cyberspace by utilising digital tools targeting digital objects in cyberspace. Soft cyber operations, alternatively called “influence” operations, use information transmitted through cyberspace targeting the psyche of the target audience(s) and the cognitive dimension of the information environment. Hard and soft cyber operations can also be used in conjunction, such as through a hack-and-leak operation. These cyber operations may be conducted by various governmental and non-governmental bodies (i.e. armed forces, intelligence services, shadow governments, and “cyber-terrorists”).⁹

Efforts and Gaps in the Public Sector

To date, the Republic of Armenia has never had a national cybersecurity strategy or a focused cybersecurity agency. Prior to the Velvet Revolution of

⁹ Mathias Schulze, “Cyber in war: Assessing the strategic, tactical, and operational utility of military cyber operations”, in: *12th International Conference on Cyber Conflict (CyCon)* 1300, (IEEE, 2020), 183–197; L. Maschmeyer, “Subversion, cyber operations, and reverse structural power in world politics”, *European Journal of International Relations* 29 no. 1 (2023), 79–103; Samuli Haataja, “Cyber operations against critical infrastructure under norms of responsible state behaviour and international law”, *International Journal of Law and Information Technology* 30, no. 4, (2022), 423–443; James M. Acton, “Cyber warfare & inadvertent escalation”, *Daedalus* 149, no. 2, (2020), 133–149.

2018, state capacity on cybersecurity was concentrated in the Ministry of High-Tech Industry, yet no attempt at developing a systemic cybersecurity strategy was made. Under Pashinyan's administration, cybersecurity efforts were concentrated in the Office of the Prime Minister and were led by former Vice Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan. Between 2018 and autumn 2020, an incomplete national cybersecurity strategy was drafted. However, the development of the strategy was stalled after Mr. Avinyan quit office in November 2020. No comments or confirmations have been made as to whether efforts at a cybersecurity strategy have been reignited since. The lack of state regulation and cyber policy became evident when, prior to the 44-day war, a now-infamous series of coordinated cyberattacks on Armenia's governmental email correspondence system went practically undetected with the exact extent of damage and information leak remaining unknown. The government has made no public statement on the issue.

Currently, the only strategic document addressing cybersecurity is the interim National Security Strategy, developed by the Office of the Security Council and ratified in July 2020. Cybersecurity is addressed in the seventh chapter of the NSS which, nonetheless, bears no mention of plans for a separate national cybersecurity strategy and offers no concrete policy directions or plans for systemic reform in cybersecurity policymaking. The chapter does recognise the looming threats associated with both hard and soft cyber operations and promises coordinated efforts at increasing media and cyber literacy nationwide. However, the chapter runs short of projected solutions to the issues it identifies, and the state has thus far initiated no concrete steps to fulfilling the loosely defined statements of the chapter. Importantly, due to limited public knowledge and recognition of threats in cyberspace and information warfare, there has been little to no public demand or pressure on any of the Armenian administrations thus far to initiate cyber reform.

Following the second Artsakh war and the resignation of Mr. Avinyan, cybersecurity policymaking, and coordination were transferred to the Central Bank of Armenia, although the authorities have named no comments explaining this decision. Under the Central Bank, a cybersecurity division has been cooperating with the NATO Cyber Centre of Excellence in Estonia indirectly through expertise exchanges with Estonian personnel, although the contents, goals, and directions of cooperation are not disclosed.

The Private Sector and the Comprehensive Approach

As explained in detail in the previous section, the apparent shortcomings in state capabilities to accommodate the national security objectives of Armenia have led to the slow emergence of the vision for comprehensive security. As mentioned, within the comprehensive approach, a techno-military union is being established between private technology enterprises and the state defence sector to help systemically account for, among other objectives, cybersecurity, cyber operations, and information warfare. With the systemic assistance of private tech enterprises, the comprehensive security system envisions establishing training and technology centres to educate, on a voluntary basis, cyber corps for hard cyber operations that can join ‘cyber-arms’ with the state as required.

Additionally, the Cyber Community of Armenia as a civic organisation has begun coordinated, but limited training aimed at increasing resilience against soft cyber operations in the regions of Armenia. The Community envisions cyber academies and mobile cyber literacy modules aimed at enhancing cyber citizenship, cyber literacy, and information/media hygiene of the broader society in the face of information warfare with a particular emphasis on schoolchildren. Importantly, the training intends to educate and empower citizens to recognise and combat foreign-government-funded soft cyber operations, particularly Russian,¹⁰ Turkish,¹¹ and Azerbaijani¹² state-funded soft cyber operations, as well as narrative and information warfare tactics disseminated via identifiable sources and bearing distinct characteristics. In these efforts, the Community receives limited support from US expert circles via the mediation of the American University of Armenia.

¹⁰ Natalia Spînu, *Armenia Cybersecurity Governance Assessment*, (Geneva: DCAF, 2020).

¹¹ L. Gulesserian and D. L. Phillips, “The Media War by Azerbaijan and Turkey against Armenia”, *Institute for the Study of Human Rights*, (New York: Columbia University, 2020), <https://www.humanrightscolumbia.org/news/media-war-azerbaijan-and-turkey-against-armenia-and-nagorno-karabakh> (Accessed Feb 1, 2024); S. Martirosyan, “Armenia at the Center of State-Sponsored Cyber Attacks”, *EVN Post*, (2018), <https://evnreport.com/politics/armenia-at-the-center-of-state-sponsored-cyber-attacks/> (Accessed Feb 1, 2024).

¹² L. Gulesserian and D. L. Phillips, Ibidem, A. Papyan, “The Cyber Battlefield is Just as Important: Armenia’s Cybersecurity”, *EVN Post*, (2021), <https://evnreport.com/magazine-issues/the-cyber-battlefield-is-just-as-important-armenia-s-cybersecurity/> (Accessed Feb 1, 2024).

Tailoring a Comprehensive National Cybersecurity Strategy for Armenia

A comprehensive defence and security system requires a horizontal cybersecurity strategy, which involves all contributing stakeholders in Armenia: the public sector (both civilian and defence), essential service providers and sectoral entrepreneurs, academia, and private individuals. The present section presents a proposed general approach to developing a horizontal cybersecurity strategy for Armenia, combining the situation in Armenia and various policy experience of Estonia, Sweden, and Switzerland.

The objectives and key indicators of a cybersecurity strategy could be planned in a five-year perspective with an interim review. The main aims of the strategy are to create sustainable long-term conditions for all stakeholders in society to work effectively on cybersecurity and to raise the level of awareness and knowledge throughout society. By means of the strategy, the government would systemically establish mechanisms to support the efforts and engagement that already exist in the private sector and academia for enhancing cybersecurity. The strategy thus encompasses the whole of society – central government authorities, municipalities and regional councils, private enterprises, civic organisations, and private individuals.

Before proceeding to a proposed model of a national cybersecurity strategy for Armenia, see annex 1 for definitions of the concepts utilised in the text.

What Is to Be Protected?

Aiming to enhance open democratic society and statehood in Armenia is dependent on the ability to maintain the desired confidentiality, integrity, and availability when handling information. This means that both the information itself and the systems used to store and transfer that information must be protected. Cybersecurity efforts are a necessary activity for safeguarding the quality and effectiveness of societal functions and a prerequisite for being able to harness the opportunities of digital transformation, such as developing digital public services.

Structured cybersecurity efforts will enable Armenia to:

- ensure defending the country's security and national interests in the cyberspace, such as preservation of statehood, protecting the lives and health of the population, collective psychological security, safety of web-based activity, and sustainable socio-economic development,
- ensure the security of the citizen in cyberspace,
- safeguard fundamental human rights and freedoms of the population in cyberspace, and
- maintain continued and safe digital transformation.

Cyber and Information Risks and Threats

Currently, we can observe a shift from maturity-based cybersecurity to risk-based cybersecurity globally.¹³ The scale of threats and risks in the area of information technology ranges from risks for individuals to precision attacks against vital parts of the functioning of society as a whole via various forms of hard operations such as disrupting software, hardware or the operating environment, and/or soft operations, such as disinformation and influence campaigns.¹⁴ External physical events, such as fires, severed underground cables, solar storms and others are also a part of the threat scenario.

As a society entrenched in and facing long-term hybrid warfare posed by multiple adversaries, Armenia faces the substantial risk of cyber espionage and attacks from state and state-sponsored actors against security-sensitive activities in Armenia or against Armenian interests abroad with the aim of appropriating information about Armenia's defence capability and planning, its security policy objectives, vital societal services and critical infrastructure. Covert intrusions and attacks may sabotage critical infrastructures in peacetime and be used openly as a tool primarily in the initial stages of military operations. Cyberattacks can have major consequences for vital societal functions and critical IT systems similar to a conventional armed attack and

¹³ J. Boehm, N. Curcio, P. Merrath, P., et al. "The risk-based approach to cybersecurity", *McKinsey Partners*, (2019).

¹⁴ P. Brangetto and M. A. Veenendaal, "Influence Cyber Operations: The Use of Cyberattacks in Support of Influence Operations", in N. Pissanidis et al. (eds.), *8th International Conference on Cyber Conflict, NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, (2020).

can therefore, in some cases, be considered an armed attack and managed accordingly.

As part of hybrid warfare, psychological operations pose another substantial risk.¹⁵ Disinformation and influence campaigns can be used to intentionally disseminate untrue or misleading details in order to influence people's attitudes, standpoints, and actions in a certain direction with the use of a broad spectrum of methods, both open and covert, a subset of which might be data intrusion and other cyberattacks, coupled with political, diplomatic, economic and military instruments of power and coercion.¹⁶ Carrying out cyber operations is also a way to probe for weaknesses and grey areas where objectives can be achieved at lower cost than with conventional warfare.

Another general risk is the global trend toward growing and increasingly service-based cybercrime.¹⁷ A distributed denial of service stack or ransomware campaign no longer requires high technical skills or major resources to commit. This means a much larger pool of potential criminals with the capability of attacking Armenian state and people via the internet. A number of factors affect the spread of cybercrime, such as the security of services architecture, the population's awareness of the dangers and how to protect

¹⁵ Sunil Narula, "Psychological operations (PSYOPs): A conceptual overview", *Strategic Analysis* 28, no. 1 (2004): 177–192; S. G. Chekinov and S. A. Bogdanov, "Прогнозирование характера и содержания войн будущего: проблемы и суждения" (Forecasting the nature and content of wars of the future: problems and assessments), *Voennaya Mysl'* (Military Thought) 10, (2015), 44–45; T. L. Thomas. "Information Security Thinking: A Comparison of U.S., Russian, And Chinese Concepts", *Foreign Military Studies Office*, (July 2001), <<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/infosecu.htm>> (Accessed Jan 27, 2024); B. Vian, "Psychological operations in digital political campaigns: Assessing Cambridge Analytica's psychographic profiling and targeting", *Frontiers in Communication* 5, (2020), 67.

¹⁶ Keir Giles & E. Castronova, "Digital Disinformation and Information Operations: Let Me Convince You of Something That Is Not True", *Annual Review of Criminology* 4, (2021), 325–345; K. Mshvidobadze, "The Battlefield On Your Laptop", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, (March 21, 2011), <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/2345202.html> (Accessed Jan 25, 2024).

¹⁷ Joanna Curtis and Gavin Oxburgh, "Understanding cybercrime in 'real world' policing and law enforcement", *The Police Journal* 96, no. 4 (2023): 573–592; Kirsty Phillips, Julia C. Davidson, Ruby R. Farr, Christine Burkhardt, Stefano Caneppele, and Mary P. Aiken, "Conceptualizing cybercrime: Definitions, typologies and taxonomies", *Forensic Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2022): 379–398.

themselves against them, the effort required to commit a crime, and the projected gains. Cybercrime can be used as a unconventional tools in cyber warfare. Combating cybercrime requires adequately equipped law enforcement and legislation, which Armenia lacks.

Another factor contributing to cyber treats and risks in Armenia is limited technological autonomy. Armenia is part of the global digital environment and relies largely on foreign IT solutions, meaning that our cybersecurity situation is impacted by the security vulnerabilities in the IT solutions of other countries and attacks against them. The (cyber defence) software used in government systems as well and its origin can have implications for national security.¹⁸

Challenges Aggravating Risks and Threats

Limited specialization capability in the public sector, private companies and research institutes is a fundamental problem for a relatively small and decreasing population. Even though the small community of experts may ensure efficiency and flexibility in the initial response to crises and incidents, it is not sustainable in a situation where the complexity of IT systems and threats keeps on growing and pose complex long-term threats.

It is necessary for all stakeholders to have a comprehensive view of cybersecurity, which is a complex and multidisciplinary area, covering fields including technology, administration, economics and law. Strategic integral leadership in the field of cybersecurity and united coordination are therefore major challenges. Successful cybersecurity efforts presuppose clarity in terms of who is responsible for what. This applies at all levels – both within organisations and in society as a whole.

Limited digital architecture and digital sovereignty, as well as low awareness of cybersecurity both among state and private sector leaders and in society in general is another challenge, which in turn leads to a low sense of responsibility. The challenges posed by a shortage in R&D and resources allocated

¹⁸ D. Susser, B. Roessler, and H. Nissenbaum, “Technology, autonomy, and manipulation.” *Internet Policy Review* 8, no. 2, (2019).

to strategically important research areas in cybersecurity are further aggravated by insufficient cooperation between state and research institutions in this field.

The Objectives of a Horizontal National Cybersecurity Strategy for Armenia

Given the aforementioned environment and threats, the following ten areas of managing cybersecurity with respective objectives therein must be considered in the process of formulating a horizontal national cybersecurity strategy. The potential and capacity of mainland Armenians and diaspora Armenians alike can and should be mobilised toward reaching these objectives in peacetime, crises, and war.

Standardisation and Certification

- Evaluation and introduction of minimum standards within authorities and relevant private enterprises.
- Increase the clarity of authority governance and highlight the importance of satisfactory cybersecurity efforts internally at the authorities, enhance collaboration between authorities that have particular tasks in the area of cybersecurity.
- Establish national certification mechanisms in cooperation with the private sector.

Incident Prevention and Management

- Examination of a reporting obligation for cyber incidents and decision on introduction in both public and private sectors.
- Enhance national-level CERT capacity.
- Establish an agency/office responsible for collecting, storing, and analysing data on cyber incidents nationwide, and coordinating cooperation between the central government, regional authorities, and relevant agencies and competence centres with regards to cyber incidents.

- Ensure that activities in need of continuous monitoring and with particular needs of protection receive access to a sensor system or detection and warning system.
- Improve Armenia's IT and network infrastructure and technological autonomy.

Cyber Defence

- Ensure the continued development and strengthening of an effective and seamless cyber defence with the capability to prevent, detect and manage cyberattacks, both for military and civilian activities, which also includes the Armed Forces and the emerging Intelligence Community.
- Establish a cyber-command and cyber conscription is a promising direction for change.
- Establishing a signals and electronic intelligence agency and a government communication office can add structure to managing hard cybersecurity in society and the public sector respectively.

Comprehensive Governance

- Establish a National Cybersecurity Centre responsible for coordinating comprehensive efforts in cyberspace within the Office of the Security Council of Armenia.
- Improve the conditions for the different stakeholders in society to conduct systematic cybersecurity efforts and make more uniform assessments of threats, risks and security measures, through the development of a national model for systematic cybersecurity efforts.
- Ensure appropriate information sharing and collaboration between public and private stakeholders.

Cybercrime, Law Enforcement, and Legislation

- Ensure that the protective security legislation meets the changing demands on protective security in the area of cybersecurity, in part through an adequate system of sanctions and an effective supervision.

- Establish a well-equipped law enforcement office tasked primarily with tracing and combating cybercrime. Switzerland's Central Office for Cybercrime could be a good model to adopt.
- Increase the awareness and knowledge of non-law enforcement authorities regarding how they can contribute in the work to prevent cybercrime.
- Strengthen international cooperation against cybercrime in order to increase legal proceedings in Armenia.

Data Encryption and Storage

- Implement a national strategy and action plan for secure data encryption and storage systems. The experience of Sweden can be helpful in this regard.
- Development and broad adoption of a government cloud solution, allowing information systems to be kept in a secure environment and guaranteeing that security is up to date. The experience of the USA in employing domestically commercially produced cloud solutions can be applicable to Armenia.¹⁹
- Following Estonia's experience, a network of data embassies can be developed Outside Armenian territory. That means that if data centres under state control become inoperable for any reason, the state can provide critical services remotely via the data embassy's technical solution. These embassies can be based within partner states.

Critical Infrastructure

- Focus on the protection of critical infrastructure in peacetime, crises, war.

¹⁹ L. Odell, "Department of Defense Use of Commercial Cloud Computing Capabilities and Services", *Institute for Defence Analysis* (2015), <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1002758.pdf> (Accessed Jan 27, 2024); IMarc research project. "C4ISR Market: Global Industry Trends, Share, Size, Growth, Opportunity and Forecast 2020–2025", (2019), <https://www.imarcgroup.com/c4isr-market>; B. Katz, "The Analytic Edge Leveraging Emerging Technologies to Transform Intelligence Analysis", *CSIS brief*, (2020), https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/201008_Katz_Analytica_Edge_0.pdf (Accessed Jan 28, 2024).

- Establish a public-private partnership for operators of critical infrastructure. Switzerland's experience with Reporting and Analysis Centre for Information Assurance (MELANI) can be an applicable model for Armenia.²⁰
- Conduct joint risk and vulnerability analyses and tests for the critical sub-sectors.

Public Preparedness and Awareness

- Communicate cybersecurity awareness and risk assessments to the public highlighting the convergence of cyberspace, information warfare and psychological security via the at least annual reports or the annual meetings.
- Create and implement a 'communication concept' akin to that of Switzerland and Estonia, where the state establishes a regular mechanism for communicating cybersecurity situational awareness and risk-based skills instructions to the public, while maintaining a balance between confidentiality and the public's need for information.²¹
- Increase the public's media hygiene skills in peacetime, crises, and war through trainings, including in middle and high schools nationwide.

Education, Research and Development

- Enhance partnerships between higher education institutions, industrial research institutes and the private and public sectors in order to increase utilisation and innovation in the area of cybersecurity.

²⁰ Maryam Dunn Cavelty, and Filip Egloff, "Hyper-Securitization, Everyday Security Practice and Technification: Cyber-Security Logics in Switzerland", *Swiss Political Science Review* 27, no. 1, (2021), 139–149; L. Ildikó, "Effective Methods for Successful Information Security Awareness", *Pro Publico Bono—Public Administration* 9, no. 1, (2021), 108–127; D. Percia, M. Keupp, and A. Mermoud, "Knowledge absorption for cyber-security: The role of human beliefs", *Computers in Human Behavior* 106, (2020); M. Tvaronavičienė, T. Plėta, S. Della Casa, and J. Latvys, "Cyber security management of critical energy infrastructure in national cybersecurity strategies: Cases of USA, UK, France, Estonia and Lithuania", *Insights into regional development* 2, no. 4, (2020), 802–813.

²¹ Ildikó, "Effective Methods for Successful Information Security Awareness", 108–127; The Federal Council. "National strategy for the protection of Switzerland against cyber risks (NCS) 2018–2022", (2018), 27.

Actors to Develop a Horizontal Cybersecurity Strategy for Armenia

Selecting the agencies to take up the responsibility of tailoring a national cybersecurity strategy is an essential step of planning. In Armenia, based on the nature and operational direction of aforementioned objectives, the process of formulating a national cybersecurity strategy will need to involve the Office of the Prime Minister, the National Security Service, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Education, the Ministry of Justice, the Police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Bank of Armenia, and the Ministry of Economics. The proposed National Cybersecurity Centre to be established within the Office of the Security Council can coordinate the process.

Conclusion and Recommendations for NATO-Armenia Cooperation on Cyber and Information Security

The outcomes of the second Artsakh war are forcing the Armenian people to reconsider the foundations upon which their statehood and public life were built after the restoration of independence in the post-Soviet period. The second Artsakh war and the emerging international security environment have shown the impossibility to defend Armenia's national and state sovereignty based exclusively on functioning state institutions and the currently effective alliances. In this context, building a comprehensive security and defence system with an emphasis on disruptive technology would allow responding to the quantitative and qualitative advantages of the aggressors. Given the emphasis on technology, the prospects of Armenia's comprehensive defence and security system require that particular attention be paid to cyber and information security.

The unprecedented volume of security cooperation between Armenia and the collective West has been dictated by a multidimensional convergence in security objectives, including but not limited to objectives in cyber and information warfare. Importantly, due to the emerging comprehensive security system and the projected continuous involvement of private tech enterprises in national security and defence, previously unavailable mechanisms for cooperation have now become viable. Expertise can now be exchanged via the public and private sectors alike, as well as via mediators between the two, such as the Techno-Military Union. Not only does this increase cooperation

routes but also helps decrease geopolitical risks and creates a stable leeway for strategic private-to-private and public-to-private sector exchanges.

Based on the afore-addressed concise presentation of cyber and information security objectives and gaps in Armenia's current security environment, we can underline at least four possible directions for cyber policy and cybersecurity cooperation between Armenia and the collective West. One possible direction to enhance private sector efforts is exchange of knowledge and funding assistance to private and civic organisations, e.g. assistance in establishing Cyber Training and Technology Centres and/or Cyber Academies in the regions of Armenia. A second direction can focus on experience exchange for establishing a proper state agency for cybersecurity, as well as signals intelligence services akin to the GCHQ. A third direction would be systemic public sector experience exchange for reigniting work at developing a national cybersecurity strategy, incorporating, and accounting for both soft and hard cyber operations and adaptable to the emerging Comprehensive Security and Defence System. Finally, cloud technology experience exchange aimed at enhancing information security in the intelligence data storage and transmission cycle would also aid the shared security objectives of Armenia and NATO in the coming decade. With regards to the public sector, talks can be held with the recently established Comprehensive Security and Defence System task force at the Office of the Security Council, as well as with Security Council leadership.

Annex 1: Cybersecurity-related concept definitions²²

Cyberspace	The entirety of information and communication infrastructures (hardware and software) that exchange, collect, store or process data or convert data into (physical) actions, and the interactions between individuals, organisations and states made possible as a result.
Cyber attack	An intentional, unauthorised act of a person or group in cyberspace to compromise the integrity, confidentiality or availability of information and data; depending on the type of attack, this may also have physical effects. Cyber-attacks can manifest through both hard and soft cyber operations or a combination of the two. <i>Hard operation example:</i> a denial-of-service attack is a cyber-attack in which the perpetrator seeks to make a machine or network resource unavailable to its intended users by temporarily or indefinitely disrupting services of a host connected to a network. <i>Soft operation example:</i> disinformation and influence campaigns. Disinformation can be used to intentionally disseminate untrue or misleading details in order to influence people's attitudes, standpoints and actions in a certain direction. An influence campaign is centrally controlled, while also offering the use of a broad spectrum of methods, both open and covert, a subset of which might be data intrusion and other cyberattacks. It can also include political, diplomatic, economic and military instruments of power. <i>Combining soft and hard operations:</i> Fusing denial-of-service attacks to prevent access to the media; using data intrusion to steal information and/or hijack websites or broadcasts in order to introduce false or misleading information.
Cyber incident	An intentional or unintentional event which results in a process that may adversely affect the integrity, confidentiality or availability of data and information and may lead to malfunctions. Confidentiality means that unauthorised persons cannot access the information. Integrity means that the information is not modified, manipulated or destroyed in an un-

²² Elina Tikk, and Mika Kerttunen, (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of International Cybersecurity* (London: Routledge, 2020).

	authorised manner. Availability means that authorised persons can access the information in the manner and at the time offered by the services. Cyber-attacks constitute intentional cyber incidents, but not all cyber incidents are cyber-attacks.
Cyber risk	The product of the probability of occurrence and the extent of damage caused by cyber incidents.
Cyber threat	Process that can lead to a cyber incident.
Cybercrime	Cybercrime <i>in a narrower sense</i> refers to criminal offences committed with the help of information and communication technologies (ICT) or that exploit the vulnerabilities of these technologies. These criminal activities are new and only possible because of these technologies. Cybercrime <i>in a broader sense</i> uses the internet as a means of communication, abusing opportunities such as email traffic or the exchange or provision of files for harmful purposes. These criminal activities are not new, but the means of perpetration or storage media used (email, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Telegram and electronic data carriers instead of paper, cloud services, etc.) are new.
Cyber sabotage	Activities aiming to disrupt or destroy the reliable and error-free functioning of information and communication infrastructures in cyberspace; depending on the type of sabotage, this can also have physical effects.
Cyber espionage	Activities for gaining unauthorised access to protected information in cyberspace for political, military or economic purposes.
Cyber security	Desirable state within cyberspace in which communication and data exchange between information and communication infrastructures function as originally intended. This state is achieved with measures of information security and cyber defence is the intactness of the authenticity, confidentiality, integrity and availability of an information and communication technology system and the data processed and stored therein.
Cyber defence	The entirety of intelligence and military measures leading to the disruption, suppression or slowing down of cyber attacks, serving to identify authorship, ensuring the operational readiness of the Armed Forces in all situations, and serving to build capacities and capabilities for subsidiary support of civilian authorities.

WPS Agenda in Wartime: Ukraine's Best Practices, Lessons Learned, and Way Ahead

Iryna Lysychkina, Olha Lysychkina

Introduction

The Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has been the focus of attention since 31 October 2000 when the UN Security Council adopted a resolution (S/RES/1325) on women, peace and security¹ that

reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.²

UNSCR 1325, together with its nine subsequent resolutions, makes up the WPS agenda focusing on protection, participation, prevention, relief and recovery and gender mainstreaming. In this regard, the resolutions also outline measures of implementation for the military across mandates, obligations and tasks at strategic, operational and tactical levels. It is worth mentioning that the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept³ emphasizes the integration of the WPS agenda and human security across all core tasks.

The War in Ukraine is the first war in Europe in the XXI century. The latest research on the impact of this war that was conducted by the Small Arms Survey confirms that women and men experience this conflict differently⁴ thus, Ukraine's best practices and lessons learned in implementing the WPS

¹ UN, "UN Security Council adopted resolution (S/RES/1325)", adopted on October 31, 2000, (New York: UN, 2000) <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>.

² UN S/RES/1325/2000.

³ NATO, "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept", approved on June 29, 2022, (Brussels: NATO, 2022), https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_210907.htm#:~:text=The%202022%20Strategic%20Concept%20describes,and%20management%3B%20and%20cooperative%20security.

⁴ Gergely Hideg & Callum Watson, "Russia's War: Weighing the Human Cost in Ukraine", *Small Arms Survey*, (May 15, 2023), <https://smallarmssurvey.medium.com/russias-war-weighing-the-human-cost-in-ukraine-9ecc73a41987>.

agenda in wartime can be a valuable source to strategize resilience building, as well as to design and implement human security policies.

Since the connections between WPS agenda implementation and societal resilience are multifaceted and context-specific, this chapter focuses on five best practices and five lessons learned that allow the authors to suggest strategic ways ahead in implementing the WPS agenda during and after the war. The WPS agenda implementation helps to empower individuals and communities, promote social cohesion and trust, build capacity and adaptability, and ultimately invests in a more resilient future for all citizens.

Best Practices in Implementing the WPS Agenda in Wartime

Based on the conducted research, the authors of this chapter have defined five best practices in implementing the WPS agenda in Ukraine, namely attention to WPS-related legislation (1), strategic communication narratives promoting the WPS agenda or including a gender perspective (2), important contribution by the civil society and the military in terms of mainstreaming gender and WPS (3), women support initiatives including educational campaigns and projects (4), and gender analysis practice in the defence and security sector and the society in general (5).

Necessary Legislation to Sort Out WPS Issues

War is not an excuse to postpone important changes in legislation. On the contrary, it acts as an accelerator to adopt necessary long-awaited changes to establish and maintain the rule of law. Ukraine's experience shows that the WPS agenda is always topical and urgent even during wartime.

Firstly, a milestone event was that in 2022, the government of Ukraine ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).⁵

⁵ "Ratification of the Istanbul convention is an important step towards the EU accession", *EU Advisory Mission to Ukraine, (EUAM)*, (May 24, 2023), <https://www.euam-ukraine.eu/news/ratification-of-the-istanbul-convention-is-an-important-step-towards-the-eu-accession/>.

Secondly, talks have been initiated on the legislation to ensure LGBT rights such as property settlements, access to emergency wards etc. since same-sex marriages are not legally recognized in Ukraine. According to the results of all public opinion polls conducted since February 24, 2022, the stance of Ukrainian society towards the legalization of same-sex unions is mostly tolerant – approving or indifferent – and this attitude is constantly improving.⁶ Labour legislation will also be modernized:⁷ the new version of the Labor Law introduces the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, regardless of gender, which will increase the effectiveness of judicial protection. Inspections by the State Labor Service based on complaints about gender-based pay discrimination will be introduced. A national methodology for gender-neutral job evaluation and training for labour inspectors and employers will also be developed.

Thirdly, Ukraine further updated the second National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS covering the period from 2020 to 2025 to include necessary changes due to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Ukraine keeps revising this NAP though the Istanbul Convention has not been referenced in the new WPS NAP. At the moment, the notable updates in the latest version of the Ukrainian NAP include an expanded list of main target groups affected in different ways by the war of aggression, namely prisoners of war and/or those missing, relatives of combatants, as well as women or men with dependent young and minor children and other family members. The NAP further addresses potential risks of refugees, especially those who had to flee abroad: human trafficking, human-rights violations, gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).

Despite remaining questions to Ukraine concerning the ways to address conflict-based sexual violence, it is remarkable that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women concluded its consideration of the

⁶ “Public support for the legalization of same-sex unions in Ukraine is growing”, *Nash Svit*, (August 25, 2023), <https://gay.org.ua/en/blog/2023/08/25/public-support-for-the-legalization-of-same-sex-unions-in-ukraine-is-growing/>.

⁷ “Olena Zelenska: Gender equality should be not only about duties and responsibilities, but also about opportunities”, *Office of the President of Ukraine*, (May 11, 2023), <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/olena-zelenska-gender-na-rivnist-maye-buti-nelishche-v-obovyaz-82817>.

ninth periodic report of Ukraine, with Committee Experts commending Ukraine on the measures it had taken to advance gender equality in the country.⁸

Strategic Communication Winning Hearts and Minds

War is built on the rigid binary concept of masculinity (the strong defend the weak from the enemy) and femininity (the need for protection, vulnerable and passive). Currently, it is essential to increase the visibility of the diversity of roles for women and men (as well as non-binary individuals) in war transcending the traditional victim-soldier dichotomy. Ukraine's external communication emphasizes women's participation in the conflict response, as well as the CRSV committed by the Russians. Simultaneously, messaging to the outside world has contained pictures of women and children as victims, playing on stereotypes where "women do the caring and men do the protecting." In cases where women are also portrayed as fighters, it connects to stereotypes of "the vengeful mother protecting the nation."⁹

Since the invasion in 2022, the Ukrainian narrative of masculine protectors and brave Ukrainian female warriors has been used to mobilise support and repel the enemy. Protecting the family and community is associated with being "a good man" and men who do not want to fight are often mocked and shamed for it.¹⁰ The Ukrainian media research shows that

gender both shapes and is shaped by media content. These personal stories contribute to the overall narrative of the war and feed into a larger story of power and information exchange. The more complex and human media portrayals of gender may also affect the world's understanding and empathy of Ukrainians' peril on the

⁸ "Experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Commend Ukraine for Achievements in Gender Equality, Raise Questions on Conflict-Based Sexual Violence", *ReliefWeb* (October 20, 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/experts-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women-commend-ukraine-achievements-gender-equality-raise-questions-conflict-based-sexual-violence>.

⁹ "Thematic Analysis: The use of Gender Perspective in the Conflict in Ukraine", *Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations*, (June 23, 2023), https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/english/swedint/engelska/swedint/nordic-centre-for-gender-in-military-operations/thematic-analysis_ukraine_ncgm_june23.pdf.

¹⁰ Kristin Skare Orgeret & Bruce Mutsvairo, "Ukraine coverage shows gender roles are changing on the battlefield and in the newsroom", *Incubator for Media Education and Development*, (March 22, 2022), <https://www.imedd.org/ukraine/ukraine-coverage-shows-gender-roles-are-changing-on-the-battlefield-and-in-the-newsroom/>.

battlefield and as refugees and eventually influence the mood for change in international security policies.¹¹

Society's Active Position and Significant Contribution

The Russian invasion has spurred Ukrainians from diverse backgrounds to come together in the pursuit of a shared objective. Their civic involvement is directed towards more than just aiding the military; it also aims to strengthen the resilience of the civilian population.

Research on civil society engagement in the war in Ukraine shows that

contrary to the measures typically used in academia, which evaluate the strength of civil society on the basis of membership in organizations or protest potential, active Ukrainians define their civil society engagement through four main components.¹²

Activists emphasized the importance of common actions (defined as participation, impact, interaction, and donations), values (common views, a sense of being united, and awareness), responsibilities (duty, care, influence, and a desire to effect change), and belonging (membership in society or an organization, nationality, and citizenship). These classifications do not assume continuous involvement in civil society endeavours. Instead, they encourage individuals to get involved when their participation is most essential and to withdraw when an immediate need has been met. Amidst the hardships faced by Ukrainians, women have demonstrated resilience and strength, playing critical roles in providing support and care for their families and communities.

Ukrainian feminists are active contributors to the resilience of Ukraine. Feminist organizations are deeply embedded in communities, providing essential humanitarian aid to displaced individuals and vulnerable groups, vital mental health support services, creating safe spaces for healing and collective coping.¹³ They are actively connecting with international feminist networks, rais-

¹¹ Orgeret & Mutsaers, "Ukraine coverage shows gender roles...".

¹² Kateryna Zarembo, "The Resilience and Trauma of Ukraine's Civil Society", *Carnegie Europe*, (June 1, 2023), <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2023/06/01/resilience-and-trauma-of-ukraine-s-civil-society-pub-89852>.

¹³ "Ukrainian Women's Organizations and The Movement for Peace and Security", *Gendermuseum* n. d. <https://gendermuseum.com/ukrainian-womens-organizations-and-the-movement-for-peace-and-security/>, accessed on (February 2024, 12).

ing awareness about the specific needs and experiences of women in Ukraine and garnering global support. Their activity can inspire women and communities worldwide facing conflict and oppression.

Ukraine strongly demonstrates a change of attitude regarding WPS. This is a remarkable phenomenon, attributed largely to the influence of civil society. Even before the conflict, Ukrainian civil society, including feminist organizations, actively advocated for WPS principles, pushing for increased inclusion of women in the military, security sector, and peacebuilding processes. It should be noted, that deeply rooted Ukrainian cultural stereotypes (strong men protect fragile women) in the context of the Ukrainian Armed Forces used to hinder the development of a supportive environment for women. The prevailing culture lacks the necessary structures and mechanisms to provide adequate support for female service members, the Gender Advisors (GENADs) system being at the development phase and not functioning properly. Ukrainian male military are getting slowly away from the stereotypes of female contribution in combat though women themselves have not developed yet a culture of sisterhood support in the troops. Despite numerous difficulties, there has been a notable shift in recognizing the importance of gender in the affective domain of defence and security. In Ukraine, gender is increasingly regarded as a significant value that needs to be integrated into military operations.

WPS Support Projects and Initiatives

Back in 2015, women in active service and veterans, with the assistance of civilian experts, UN Women, and the Ukrainian Women's Fund, initiated a long-term project known as the "Invisible Battalion." This project centred on women who had been involved in counter-terrorism operations in eastern Ukraine from 2015 to 2017 and aimed to systematically recognize instances of discrimination and suggest ways to reform laws governing military service that were rooted in traditional gender norms. "The women of Invisible Battalion have been instrumental in changing many of these inadequacies."¹⁴

Several governments and/or internationally backed groups and companies, as well as NGOs, initiated different support programs related to the WPS

¹⁴ Ellner, "Gender stereotypes in the media...".

agenda. For instance, in March 2022, the Civil Organization “Public Movement for Empowering Women in Ukraine” created the project “Military Families Social and Psychological Support Service,” implemented with the assistance of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the Department of Humanitarian Support of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, and the National Guard of Ukraine.¹⁵ This project aims to facilitate a permanent and stable partnership between the families of servicemen and the army by providing social and psychological support extending to family members of servicemen and military personnel, supporting women and children of military personnel who are in difficult straits, creating a system of social and psychological support for families of military personnel in military structures.

In 2023, the All-Ukrainian mental health program “How are you?” was initiated by Olena Zelenska, aiming to help Ukrainians find a source of strength.¹⁶ The development and implementation of this program are coordinated by the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, with the World Health Organization being an expert partner, and the Bezbariarnist NGO being the executive partner. The site for development and decision-making is the Interdepartmental Coordination Council under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The communication campaign is implemented with the support of USAID.

Women encounter more than just mental health challenges during times of war. Regardless of social, economic, or any other circumstances, every woman should have the right to access gynaecological services which has become more challenging because medical facilities are shelled, and there is lack of doctors as they are relocating from the occupied and front-line territories to safer regions. To ensure the availability of medical services and their inclusivity in the Kharkiv region, gynaecological clinics with barrier-free access are operated by UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund.¹⁷ As of

¹⁵ “Military Families Social and Psychological Support Service”, accessed on (October 13, 2023), <https://www.pidtrymka.in.ua/en/team>.

¹⁶ “How are you?”, *Program for Mental Health Tyi Yak?*, accessed on (October 13, 2023), <https://www.howareu.com/>.

¹⁷ Юлія Напольська, Марина Ніколаєва, “Ми приймаємо всіх жінок”: як на Харківщині працюють гінекологічні кабінети безбар’єрного доступу”, (September 28, 2023), <https://nakipelo.ua/yak-na-kharkivschyni-pracuyt-ginekologichni-kabinety-bezbayerngo-dostypu>.

today, there are 94 barrier-free access gynaecological clinics operated by UN-FPA, the United Nations Population Fund, in Ukraine. In such clinics, women can receive the necessary medical and psychological services free of charge, confidentially, and inclusively, including cases of domestic or CRSV.

Ongoing Gender Analysis and Comprehensive Thematic Reports

The Nordic Center for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM) located in Stockholm, Sweden, confirms its leading role in mainstreaming WPS and gender analysis in conflict zones. Their first “Thematic Analysis: The use of Gender Perspective in the Conflict in Ukraine,” initially published at the beginning of 2023, was revised and amended in June 2023.¹⁸ This report regards the war in Ukraine as an example of how gender dynamics play out and how gender is used strategically in a current conflict in European territory. This thematic analysis provides a non-exhaustive overview of the behaviours of the parties to the conflict in Ukraine, as of June 2023, for a gender analysis. The authors underline that it is “important to continuously evaluate and update all gender analyses regarding the conflict and maintain a focus on gender perspective throughout all phases of the conflict”.¹⁹

The Ukrainian Armed Forces and the National Guard of Ukraine (NGU) have implemented measures to address gender-related issues. The authors of this chapter want to believe that these are only the first steps. For instance, the NGU conducts gender analysis and evaluation twice a year, using questionnaires to assess their progress. They also prioritize the needs of women in the armed forces, such as providing suitable uniforms and body armour, addressing hygiene requirements, and supporting childcare for mothers with children under 18 years of age or families where both parents are servicemen. Monitoring the impact of the war on different genders is crucial, with specific attention given to gender-based violence. Surveys are conducted to track and further address the specific needs and challenges faced by women, men, girls, and boys in war. Collaboration with civil society is essential because engaging with civil society organizations allows for a comprehensive and inclusive approach, leveraging their expertise and perspectives. Moreover, understanding

¹⁸ “Thematic Analysis: The use of Gender Perspective in the Conflict in Ukraine”.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

and addressing the gendered impact of war through monitoring, data collection, and collaboration with civil society is not just about responding to immediate needs. It is an investment in building a more resilient society, one that is equipped to face future challenges with greater equity, inclusion, and collective strength.

Ukraine's Lessons Learned in Terms of the WPS Agenda

The best practices listed above should not be misconstrued as portraying an ideal scenario for implementing the WPS agenda in Ukraine. While these practices represent positive steps forward, they do not signify a flawless or complete implementation. Several crucial areas demand substantial improvements and attention, namely existing and reinforced gender stereotypes in society (1), women's functional burden during the war (2), increase in CRSV and domestic violence (3), discrimination of men regarding freedom of movement (4), and underrepresentation of females in the armed forces (5). Addressing these pivotal aspects is vital for the effective and comprehensive integration of the WPS agenda in Ukraine. Therefore, acknowledging the existing challenges and actively working to enhance these areas remains a top priority for achieving the desired outcomes in this context.

Strengthening Gender Stereotypes Does Not Promote the WPS Agenda and Hinders Building Societal Resilience

The WPS Agenda promotes gender equality, women's participation in peacebuilding, and the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV). Strengthening gender stereotypes directly contradicts these principles. Societal resilience relies on the participation and contributions of all individuals, regardless of gender. Perpetuating stereotypes limits this diversity, hindering a community's ability to adapt and overcome challenges.

Implementation of the WPS agenda depends on the gender norms and roles established and culturally accepted in society. The authors of this chapter must acknowledge the patriarchal nature of Ukrainian culture, contrasting with the symbolic representation of a young female figure associated with Ukraine. Before the war, Ukraine was the 74th of 189 countries according to the standard of human development (Human Development Index 0.779),

and the 52nd of 162 countries (Gender Inequality Index 0.234).²⁰ Life expectancy at birth for women in Ukraine was 77 years, for men, it was 67 years.²¹ Soviet times emphasized women's pursuit of self-actualization alongside their family and childcare responsibilities, though time spent on unpaid childcare was 49 for women and 22 hours for men per week.²² The labour force participation rate was 47% and 63% for women and men respectively.²³ The gender pay gap existed since women earned on average 23% less than men.²⁴

At the beginning of the war in 2022, the media depicted women mostly as mothers, and men as fighters.

Images of refugees fleeing from the brutality of military operations invoke age-old stereotypes of women, children and the elderly being led towards safety by young or middle-aged men. Having accompanied their families to train stations or western borders, men invariably declare they are returning to join the military.²⁵

It was not very accurate since, first of all, men were subject to mandatory mobilization, and many of them were not willing; at the same time, the majority of women did not flee the war, they stayed in the country to defend it whether being part of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, or fulfilling their other job-related duties, or volunteering in the humanitarian aid area. "Casting women only as victims denies their agency, the skills and resilience it takes to keep themselves and those who depend on them as safe as possible."²⁶ As the researchers mention, "the binary picture painted by the current media narrative of traditional gender roles where women do the caring, and men do the protecting, fails to capture the diverse life experiences of Ukrainian women in relative peace and war."²⁷ Despite Ukraine's significant success in strategic communications regarding the strategic narratives system, the narratives of gender equality and the WPS agenda require more attention to avoid the current ambiguity of the usage of several mutually exclusive ones: "women as fighters", "women as victims", as well as "the vengeful mother

²⁰ UNDP, "Gender Profile of Ukraine", *UNDP in Ukraine*, (October 17, 2023), <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/gender-profile-ukraine>.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Ellner, "Gender stereotypes in the media...".

²⁶ Ellner, "Gender stereotypes in the media...".

²⁷ Ellner, "Gender stereotypes in the media...".

of the family and nation.” Gendered stereotypes need to be addressed in society within the primary education cycle and not highlighted in the media.

Thus, strengthening gender stereotypes undermines both the WPS Agenda and societal resilience. By promoting gender equality, challenging stereotypes, and empowering all individuals, we can build stronger, more peaceful, and resilient societies.

Women’s Problems Are Societal Problems

The war in Ukraine has brought about changes in gender roles and relationships. It has led to elevated unemployment rates for both men and women. As more men enlist in the Ukrainian Armed Forces, women have taken on new responsibilities to support their families. Consequently, women have found themselves taking on increased paid and unpaid work. Men who have lost their jobs due to higher unemployment rates are also facing additional responsibilities, as society often expects them to contribute to their family’s income, creating added social pressure when employment is lost. The rising poverty resulting from a lack of income likely pushes more people into the informal labour sector, disproportionately affecting groups that were already marginalized in the job market, such as the Roma population, particularly Roma women.

Furthermore, with education shifting to online platforms or schools closing, women have been burdened with the responsibility of homeschooling. The healthcare system faces a myriad of issues. While there was a notable decrease in reported COVID-19 cases, the war led to a shortage of medicines and limited availability of essential healthcare services. Access to pharmacies became increasingly difficult, exacerbating the already strained healthcare infrastructure.

Ukraine already had a large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) because of the conflict in eastern Ukraine dating back to 2014. Before February 2022, an estimated 1.5 million Ukrainians were internally displaced (60% women, 40% men).²⁸ Following the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022,

²⁸ “Thematic Analysis: The use of Gender Perspective in the Conflict in Ukraine”.

it was estimated that one-third of the Ukrainian population had been displaced, more than 8 million people had crossed the border fleeing the conflict, and over 5 million Ukrainians were estimated to be internally displaced.²⁹ The vulnerability to human trafficking rises among displaced individuals, including IDPs and refugees crossing borders. This heightened risk is a direct consequence of their displacement, and it also extends to the long term as their resources, like social connections and economic means, become increasingly scarce.

The Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament, now comprises 21% female parliamentarians, a significant improvement compared to the 12% from 2014 to 2019. The government also exhibits encouraging trends, with five female ministers (23%) overseeing crucial areas. At the same time, in the no-elections context, one cannot expect to see new female politicians. Analysing the current trends, and stating that "Ukrainian women are poised to lead future peace processes or post-conflict political settlement and reconstruction defying patriarchy and socially constructed norms," the researchers believe that

Patriarchal forces will continue to dominate international relations, especially regarding the start of war, the conduct of war, and infliction of death and destruction. This is not because of their faulty preconceived assumptions about gender and masculinity but rather because institutional structures, both domestically and internationally, assure the continued dominance of the patriarchy and male advantage in decision-making over all other genders, rendering the latter subservient.³⁰

Women need empowerment now in wartime so that they become active contributors to post-war reconstruction of the country.

Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)

Even before the war, gender-based violence was alarming in Ukraine as 2 in 3 women had experienced psychological, physical, or sexual violence.³¹ 26% of women ages 15 and older ever experienced violence by an intimate partner. 1 in 2 women had experienced at least one form of sexual harass-

²⁹ "Thematic Analysis: The use of Gender Perspective in the Conflict in Ukraine".

³⁰ Suaad Al Orami, and Osman Antwi-Boateng, "Surviving Patriarchy: Ukrainian Women and the Russia-Ukraine War", *Journal of International Women's Studies* 25, no. 6, Article 8, n. d. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol25/iss6/8>.

³¹ UNDP, "Gender Profile of Ukraine".

ment.³² For many women, the current intensification of hostilities is happening in the context of prior traumatizing experiences that date back to before 2014.

According to a survey conducted in April 2022, 93% of Ukrainians reported they knew of CRSV committed by Russian forces, and 20% reported they knew someone who had been subjected to sexual violence committed by Russian troops since February 2022.³³ While verification of cases remains difficult, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reports that 133 UN-verified cases of CRSV (85 men, 45 women, and 3 girls) occurred between February 2022 and January 2023. Among these, 109 cases were attributable to the Russian Armed Forces, law enforcement authorities or penitentiary staff. During this reporting period, OHCHR also documented 24 cases of CRSV (18 men and 6 women) in the territory controlled by the government of Ukraine, perpetrated by Ukrainian Armed Forces, law enforcement or territorial defence groups predominantly in detention contexts.³⁴

However, a combination of heightened stress, previous trauma, displacement, reduced street lighting, and the proliferation of small arms due to the ongoing conflict has likely amplified the risk of gender-based violence against women in both public and private settings. Additionally, there are concerns expressed by support organizations regarding attitudes that downplay the seriousness of domestic violence in the context of the invasion. There is also a tendency to glorify returning soldiers, which can diminish the likelihood that potential victims are heard and taken seriously. To address these issues, the government of Ukraine seems to have taken some steps by launching new initiatives, including a mobile application with a ‘panic button,’ in the absence of traditional support services. This initiative’s particular impact will be visible later.

³² UNDP, “Gender Profile of Ukraine”.

³³ “Thematic Analysis: The use of Gender Perspective in the Conflict in Ukraine”.

³⁴ Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, “Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine: 1 August 2022 to 31 January 2023”, *UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, (March 24, 2023), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2023/23-03-24-Ukraine-35th-periodic-report-ENG.pdf>.

Discrimination Is Not Only About Women

Men between 18 and 60 are bound by martial law³⁵ and not permitted to leave Ukraine with few exceptions.³⁶ While all countries have a right to conscript their citizens in wartime, civilian men in Ukraine who are not yet part of the military forces and have a deferment from mobilization find themselves restricted in their freedom of movement, often estranged from their families. This situation applies to male students as well, even though all students are granted a deferment from mandatory mobilization during their period of study. Additionally, it is important to highlight another group affected by gendered discrimination, which includes male university professors and lecturers who also have a deferment but face restrictions that prevent them from leaving the country for international conferences, research, scientific endeavours, and educational projects.³⁷ Female professors and lecturers can freely leave the country. The reason might be that men who are granted a deferment from conscription might be mobilized later when they complete their degree, quit or change jobs.

Ukrainian men who have not yet been conscripted and remain unemployed face increased vulnerability as they lack access to both financial resources and social networks. As women and children are prioritized in shelters, men's access to shelter is limited. There are also reports of men being shamed if they do not want to fight. Moreover, reports claim that in some instances, men are expected to fight without proper training.³⁸

Hardships of Females in the Armed Forces

The Ukrainian Armed Forces consists mainly of men. According to Ukrainian officials, "More than 60,000 women are currently serving in the

³⁵ Закон України "Про правовий режим воєнного стану" [Law of Ukraine "On the legal status of martial law"] (in Ukrainian) *Verkhovna Rada* (12 May 2015), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/389-19?lang=en#Text>.

³⁶ Valentyna Romanenko, "Martial law: Ukrainian men aged 18–60 cannot leave the country", *Ukrainska Pravda*, (February 24, 2022), <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2022/02/24/7325577/>.

³⁷ Roman Pilipey, "Why banning men from leaving Ukraine violates their human rights", *The Conversation*, (March 8, 2022), <https://theconversation.com/why-banning-men-from-leaving-ukraine-violates-their-human-rights-178411>.

³⁸ "Thematic Analysis: The use of Gender Perspective in the Conflict in Ukraine".

Armed Forces of Ukraine, and more than 40,000 are military personnel. In the zone of combat operations, more than 5,000 directly perform combat tasks.”³⁹ It is notable that “the number of women serving in the Ukrainian military increased by about 40 percent following Russia’s full-scale invasion and the age limits for female recruits, was raised from 40 to 60, the same as for men.”⁴⁰ Some sources claim that in 2022, women made up approximately 22% of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, which is a higher percentage than most NATO countries’ military forces.⁴¹ This proportion is decreasing since more men enlist, leading to a more realistic estimate of 8% female representation. Women can and do serve in combat roles. Discriminatory laws prohibiting women’s participation have been revised to enable increased participation in the armed resistance. However, the tendency can be observed that the percentage of women represented in the Armed Forces does not rise in wartime in light of the general mobilization of men though many women voluntarily join the Armed Forces.

Women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine have been facing the same problems as women in other armed forces, such as sexism, bullying, sexual harassment or assault. Some male service members struggle to accept their presence as permanent, not an emergency measure, a further obstacle to integration familiar with other armed forces. According to the latest research:

Although the issue of horizontal and vertical segregation of women in the Armed Forces remains problematic, the situation is gradually improving. Providing equal rights and opportunities for women in the military mandates preventing and combating sexual harassment. The number of appeals from military survivors of sexual harassment is increasing. This indicates a growing level of awareness of this problem. However, the topic of sexual violence still remains rather hushed and taboo, which allows perpetrators to go unpunished, especially during the active phase of war.⁴²

³⁹ “How many women serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine,” *The New Voice of Ukraine*, published on December 20, 2023, <https://english.nv.ua/nation/how-many-women-serve-in-the-armed-forces-of-ukraine-50377920.html#:~:text=More%20than%2060%2C000%20women%20are,than%2040%2C000%20are%20military%20personnel>.

⁴⁰ Steve Brown, “Analysis: Ukraine Deploys Female Soldiers in Combat, Russia Doesn’t – Is That About to Change?,” *The Kyiv Post*, (November 10, 2023), <https://www.kyivpost.com/analysis/23928>.

⁴¹ Trisha de Borchgrave, “Ukraine needs women to win the war – and the peace,” *Chatham House*, (February 3, 2023), <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2023-02/ukraine-needs-women-win-war-and-peace>.

⁴² Tamara Martsenyuk, “Women and gender equality in the Ukrainian Armed Forces”, in:

Ukrainian sources⁴³ report that the Ukrainian Armed Forces have appointed numerous Gender Advisors and Gender Focal Points. Many newly appointed gender advisors have other side duties and cannot focus specifically on gender perspective and the WPS agenda implementation in the troops. At the same time, the role of gender advisors cannot be overestimated in terms of assisting commanders of different levels before the latter get specific training on gender.

The Way Ahead to Promote the WPS Agenda in Ukraine and Beyond

With regard to the above-defined best practices and lessons learned on implementing the WPS agenda in Ukraine, the following strategies can be suggested to further promote gender equality and the WPS initiatives:

- Ensure the integration of gender-sensitive policies and practices in all levels of government and armed forces, with a focus on preventing gender-based violence and promoting women's participation in peacebuilding and security.
- Promote the active participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes by creating opportunities for their meaningful involvement at all levels of decision-making and encouraging initiatives that empower women to take on leadership roles in post-conflict reconstruction.
- Launch public awareness campaigns that challenge gender stereotypes and promote a more inclusive and equitable society, emphasizing the value of gender diversity in defence, security, and peace efforts.
- Implement comprehensive educational programs that address gender equality and the WPS agenda in schools and communities to raise

Dispossession: anthropological perspectives on Russia's war against Ukraine, Catherine Wanner, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2024), 208–224. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003382607>.

⁴³ “Guidelines on Integrating Gender Approaches in Training Specialists for the Security and Defence Sector of Ukraine”, Mariia Chekhovska, Natalia Chuprinova, Svitlana Hanaba et al. (Kyiv: PE Klymenko, 2021), <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/storage/app/sites/1/18%20-%20Department/Prezentacii/hei-eng-web-071021.pdf>.

awareness about the importance of gender perspectives in peace and conflict situations. Since Ukraine is in the process of reviewing its values, children should be a target audience, too. Promoting gender equality campaigns in early education, starting in kindergarten and through literature, is a pivotal means to instil values of respect, challenge stereotypes, and empower the next generation to build a more inclusive and equitable society.

- Provide training and resources to equip military personnel and law enforcement agencies, and civil society actors with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the WPS agenda effectively, including gender advisors and focal points. Such programs foster a deeper understanding of the WPS agenda and the importance of gender perspectives in all aspects of conflict resolution and security.
- Foster collaboration between civil society organizations, including women's groups, to support and advocate for the WPS agenda, ensuring their meaningful involvement in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction. Strengthen collaboration with international organizations, such as the UN and NATO, to align Ukraine's efforts with global best practices in implementing the WPS agenda and to access resources and expertise for gender mainstreaming in security and defence.
- Develop robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track progress in implementing the WPS agenda, including measures to combat gender-based violence, and ensure accountability at all levels of government and within the armed forces. It is essential to collect and analyse data on gender-related issues in conflict zones, allowing for evidence-based decision-making and accountability in implementing the WPS agenda.

Implementing the WPS agenda is not just about achieving gender equality, but also about building stronger, more peaceful, and resilient societies for everyone. It's an investment in a better future, where diverse voices are heard, and all individuals have the opportunity to contribute to their communities' well-being.

The war in Ukraine is catastrophic both for the Ukrainian peoples as well as for the state, while at the same time it provides a learning ground for the proper implementation of the WPS agenda.

Ukraine demonstrates several best practices related to the WPS agenda. The war in Ukraine has acted as a catalyst for legislative changes related to gender equality and women's rights. Notable developments include the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, progress in recognizing LGBT rights, improvements in labour legislation, and updates to the NAP on WPS to address the impact of the conflict, with commendation from international experts for Ukraine's efforts in advancing gender equality. Ukraine's narrative has utilized images of strong male protectors and courageous female warriors to garner support in the war effort, with those who choose not to fight often facing ridicule. Media content plays a significant role in shaping and reflecting these gender narratives, impacting the world's perception of the Ukrainian conflict and potentially influencing international security policies in terms of framing the conflict, prioritizing support to vulnerable population, utilizing the media potential in promoting gender equality narratives etc. The Russian invasion has united Ukrainians from diverse backgrounds in their civic engagement, which extends beyond military support to bolster civilian resilience. Women in Ukraine have demonstrated resilience amid hardships, Ukrainian feminism supports militarism based on unique historical experiences and the need for post-colonial perspectives. Despite cultural stereotypes in the Ukrainian Armed Forces hindering support for women, there is growing recognition of gender's importance in defence and security, pushing for its integration into military operations.

It is essential to take into consideration the lessons learned related to the WPS agenda. The implementation of the WPS agenda is influenced by deeply rooted gender norms and cultural roles in Ukrainian society, which were traditionally patriarchal, with women being depicted as mothers and men as fighters at the onset of the 2022 war. In reality women were serving in the Ukrainian Armed Forces and were actively contributing to various roles including political and regional (local) leadership, humanitarian aid and volunteer workers, thus, highlighting the need to challenge and dispel gender stereotypes, both in media representation and through primary education, to promote true gender equality. The war in Ukraine has brought about shifts in gender roles and relationships, leading to increased unemployment for

both men and women, as more men join the Ukrainian Armed Forces, placing added responsibilities on women to support their families, while simultaneously dealing with the burden of homeschooling due to educational disruptions. Moreover, the war has resulted in a significant increase in displaced individuals, including IDPs and refugees, elevating the risk of human trafficking due to the loss of personal resources. Gender-based violence had already been a concerning issue in Ukraine even before the war, with women experiencing high rates of psychological, physical, and sexual violence. The intensification of hostilities in the context of prior traumatizing experiences has likely exacerbated the risk of gender-based violence, prompting some government initiatives to address the issue.

The singled-out best practices and lessons learned, allow us to strategize the way ahead in implementing the WPS agenda in Ukraine, namely related to building the WPS implementation capacity, WPS policy integration, education and awareness development to various audiences from kindergarten to professional security and defence groups and politicians, empowerment of women, civil society engagement in the WPS implementation, as well as the related collaborative partnerships, transparent monitoring and reporting mechanisms as for the WPS agenda implementation. Effective WPS agenda implementation requires a long-term commitment, political will, and continuous adaptation based on context and evolving needs. By learning from past experiences and applying these best practices, a more peaceful, inclusive, and resilient society for all can be built.

Gender-Based Online Violence in Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia

Sanda Sandu, Elena Mârzac

Introduction

The ongoing challenges such as pushback against gender equality and the effects of conflicts like the war in Ukraine and military tensions in the Armenia-Azerbaijan border region have made addressing harmful gender stereotypes more critical than ever. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has resulted in the largest humanitarian crisis in Europe since World War II, with grave consequences for women and girls. Nearly 8 million refugees have fled Ukraine, and an estimated 5.4 million people are internally displaced, with women constituting 90% of those who have fled the country. The additional burden of caregiving responsibilities, exacerbated by the war and compounded by the adversities of the COVID-19 pandemic, further exacerbates gender disparities.¹ The internet has increasingly become a space where gendered hostilities are pronounced and proliferated, ranging from unsolicited explicit content and cyberstalking to more covert forms of harassment. According to a report by the United Nations, women are 27 times more likely to be harassed online, highlighting the pervasive nature of this issue across diverse demographics and geographic locations. Online harassment perpetuates gender inequities and stifles voices, contributing to broader societal repercussions. These include restrictions on freedom of expression, detrimental effects on mental health, and barriers to economic opportunities for women, underscoring the urgent need for concerted action to address this multifaceted challenge.

These issues are indeed pressing and require immediate attention and action from all sectors of society. Moreover, today's digital age, online platforms

¹ United Nations, "Women Are Increasingly At-Risk in Conflict, Underrepresented in Peace Processes, according to UN Secretary-General Report" *UN Women – Headquarters* (October 24, 2023), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/10/women-are-increasingly-at-risk-in-conflict-underrepresented-in-peace-processes-according-to-un-secretary-general-report>.

serve as a modern agora; a space where people engage, exchange ideas, and build communities. However, like any public space, online platforms also reflect the shadows of societal issues: they provide ways of expressing covert societal tendencies, divisions, and behaviours such as online violence. This has emerged as a troubling by-product of the digital evolution, often mirroring the systemic prejudices and inequalities entrenched in offline realms. A particularly distressing facet of this is the prevalence of gender-based online violence.

Taking into consideration the existing context, this article will examine gender-based online violence in Eastern Europe, particularly in Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia, with the aim of understanding the unique challenges individuals face in these regions. It assesses the role and response of major social media platforms in addressing these challenges and advocates for a human rights-based approach to combat such violence in the digital domain. By reviewing current research and international human rights instruments, the article emphasises the importance of privacy, freedom from violence, and the commitment of state and regional actors to address risks and ensure rights implementation. It argues that adopting a human rights perspective on technology-based violence is crucial for holding both State and non-State actors accountable and proposes recommendations to create a safer and more inclusive online environment. Through insightful analysis and recommendations, the article contributes to the discourse on technology-driven gender-based violence and underscores the necessity of a rights-based framework for effective intervention and accountability.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for harmful acts of abuse perpetrated against a person's will and rooted in a system of unequal power between women and men. This is true for both conflict-affected and non-conflict settings.²

Online gender-based violence³ stems from misogyny in physical spaces and the cultural norms that shape our lives. Traditional forms of gender-based

² International Rescue Committee, *The IRC in the EU*, IRC, (November 23, 2022), https://www.rescue.org/eu/article/what-gender-based-violence-and-how-do-we-prevent-it?gad_source=1.

³ UN Women, "Frequently Asked Questions: Tech-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence."

violence, like intimate partner violence, street harassment, and rape, which are well-documented in the context of violence against women, have given rise to their online counterparts. The emergence of online gender-based violence is also influenced by the practices of online communities and the absence of regulations addressing gender-specific harassment and violence within these communities.

Certain groups, notably women in professions with a prominent online presence such as leaders, politicians, artists, journalists, and advocates for human rights and gender equality, become particularly susceptible targets for coordinated campaigns of online gendered disinformation, harassment, hate speech, and even threats of death and rape.

Research suggests that the *modus operandi* of social media platforms amplify gendered disinformation and hate speech with devastating effects on women's lives in diverse ways. Women can be professionally and reputationally damaged, leading them to censor or self-censor, discouraging them from entering specific professional fields with public exposure and their mental health can be highly affected.⁴

From unsolicited explicit content and cyberstalking to more covert forms of harassment, the internet has increasingly become a space where gendered hostilities are both pronounced and proliferated. The United Nations has recognized this phenomenon, noting that women are 27 times more likely to be harassed online.⁵ This statistic transcends and cuts through societal and economic boundaries, encompassing women from all walks of life and from every corner of the globe.

The intersection of online violence with gender is more than just a digital safety issue – it strikes at the core of human rights and human security. Every

UN Women – Headquarters n.d. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/tech-facilitated-gender-based-violence>.

⁴ UNESCO, “How to Combat Hate Speech and Gendered Disinformation Online? UNESCO Provides Some Ideas” (2023), <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/how-combat-hate-speech-and-gendered-disinformation-online-unesco-provides-some-ideas>.

⁵ UN Women, “Creating Safe Digital Spaces free of Trolls, Doxing and Hate Speech”, (November 2023), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2023/11/creating-safe-digital-spaces-free-of-trolls-doxing-and-hate-speech>.

individual has the inherent right to live without fear, express themselves without retaliation, and participate in digital spaces without facing threats based on their gender.

From a human security perspective, the pervasive nature of gender-based online violence threatens the fundamental pillars of personal security. These virtual threats often transcend to the physical world with consequences in mental health, social relationships, and even physical safety.

The contemporary issue of gender-based violence is a major human rights and equality issue that concerns all physical, sexual and psychological harm to women and girls. Although, gender-based violence affects both men and women, violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent violations of human rights in the world. Worldwide, it is estimated that 1 in 3 women will experience some form of physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime.⁶

Addressing online gender-based violence (GBV) requires widespread social change. In this article, our focus is on the GBV that is mediated, practiced, or amplified via Internet technologies. Online GBV includes a broad range of behaviors facilitated through various digital technologies. Different types of intermediaries have different levels of involvement – and therefore different responsibilities – concerning different types of GBV.⁷

Tech platforms play a pivotal role in this discourse. Serving as the gatekeepers of modern communication, they bear a significant responsibility. Their policies, algorithms, and community standards can either amplify or mitigate these issues. Addressing gender-based online violence is not just a corporate responsibility for them – it's a matter of upholding human rights in the digital era.

⁶ Lauren Granger, "Tackling gender-based violence using the human rights-based approach to development", Sheffield University, n.d. <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/geography/news/tackling-gender-based-violence-using-human-rights-based-approach-development>.

⁷ N. Suzor, M. Dragiewicz, B. Harris, et al, "Human Rights by Design: The Responsibilities of Social Media Platforms to Address Gender-Based Violence Online", <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/poi3.185>.

Human Rights Framework

The concept of human rights is predicated upon the fundamental idea that every individual, irrespective of race, gender, nationality, or faith, is entitled to a set of inalienable rights simply by virtue of being human. These rights serve as the bedrock upon which individuals can lead lives of dignity, freedom, and equality.

Within the digital sphere, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) sets a precedent. Article 19, for instance, accentuates the right to freedom of expression, encompassing the freedom “to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”⁸ In essence, this underscores the right to digital access and expression. The digital realm also amplifies the importance of other rights, such as the right to privacy (Article 12) and the prohibition of discrimination (Article 7). As such, the online world is not a separate entity, but an extension of the physical world wherein human rights must be respected and upheld.

Human Security

Initially emerging post-Cold War, human security shifted the focus from state security to that of the individual, arguing for a more holistic approach to threats and challenges. It comprises various dimensions, including economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. The idea is to emphasise the “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear” for every individual.

Human security is people-centred, not threat-centred. Human security is a condition that results from an effective political, economic, social, cultural, and natural environment. But to uphold human security effectively, a pro-active attitude towards threats – whether they are threats from natural disasters such as an earthquake or the ongoing threats faced by the destitute – is essential.⁹

⁸ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) see <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

⁹ Sabina Alkire, “A Conceptual Framework for Human Security”, Oxford University, (2003). <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:d2907237-2a9f-4ce5-a403-a6254020052d>.

In the context of online spaces, human security translates to an environment where users are free from digital threats that could compromise their well-being, whether those threats are data breaches, cyberbullying, or disinformation campaigns. The virtual realm, with its global connectivity, blurs the lines of traditional threats, making the need for human security even more salient. Through policy discussions and case studies, experts can derive general frameworks and guiding principles for future interventions.¹⁰ Digital platforms, thus, need to ensure a protective environment that safeguards the psychological, social, and sometimes physical well-being of its users. Online gender-based violence can manifest through different methods, encompassing activities like tracking and surveillance, hacking, spamming, and the malicious sharing of intimate messages and photos.

Gender-Based Online Violence

Gender-based online violence can be defined as any act perpetrated against a person's will, having a harmful or negative effect on the individual, and is determined or influenced by their gender. In online settings, this manifests in various forms:

- **Cyberstalking:** Persistent online harassment, often resulting in the victim fearing for their safety.
- **Harassment:** includes acts that use information and communications technology in terrorizing and intimidating victims through physical, psychological, and emotional threats, unwanted sexual misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic and sexist remarks and comments online whether publicly or in direct messages.¹¹
- **Non-consensual distribution of intimate content:** Also known as “revenge porn,” where explicit images or videos are shared without the depicted person's consent.
- **Trolling and Hate Speech:** Targeted online attacks, often on social media, based on a person's gender or gender identity.

¹⁰ Mark Latonero, and Zachary Gold “Data, human rights & human security”, *Human Rights & Human Security* (July 1, 2015).

¹¹ UN Women, “Tech-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence.” UN Women – Headquarters, n. d. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/tech-facilitated-gender-based-violence>.

- **Doxxing:** Publicly revealing private information about an individual without their consent, which is especially harmful when used as a tool of gender-based intimidation.

The complexity of human rights that are violated due to the gender-based online violence includes – the right to security of a person (UDHR 3), to access to information (UDHR 19), to take part in government (UDHR 21), to be free from unlawful attacks on one's honour and reputation (ICCPR 17), and to truth (Resolution 2005/66).

Harassment can take many forms, including gendered attacks on volunteers who either publicly identify as female, transgender, or non-binary, doxing of personal information as well as threats of violence. At its most fundamental level, online harassment can impact on the right to be treated with dignity, but it can also impact on the right to: non-discrimination, right to security of persons (UDHR 3), privacy (UDHR 12), expression (UDHR 19), assembly (UDHR 20), participation in cultural life (UDHR 27), and the right to be free from unlawful attacks on one's honour and reputation (ICCPR 17).

Government Surveillance and Censorship

Human rights are being challenged around the world, especially in relation to free expression, freedom of the press, internet blackouts, internet content controls, and crackdowns on human rights defenders. For internet users these infringements may impact on the rights to security of persons (UDHR 3), to be free from torture (UDHR 5), privacy (UDHR 12), expression (UDHR 19), assembly (UDHR 20) and to take part in government (UDHR 21). The following risks can be manifested:

- Online surveillance – especially in countries with restricted internet freedoms or authoritarian governments and on topics considered taboo in those countries;
- Requests for user data, including formal and informal government requests to the Internet Platforms, handle non-public data to receive requests directly from government officials;
- Government censorship, ranging from blocking certain websites or articles.

The implications of such actions are profound. Victims often experience psychological trauma, which can escalate to physical threats in some instances. Gender-based online violence not only infringes upon the rights of individuals to live without fear but also poses a significant barrier to their full and meaningful participation in the digital world. It challenges the very tenets of human rights and security, pushing the narrative towards urgent and substantial action against this digital scourge.

Regional Context

Eastern Europe, with its rich tapestry of cultures, histories, and socio-political intricacies, presents a unique tableau when discussing digital rights and online behaviours. Although gender equality in Eastern Europe – Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine – is formally enshrined in the countries’ constitutions and legal systems, the lack of gender mainstreaming inhibits substantive gender equality.¹² The societal acceptance of norms that are deemed ‘misogynistic’ has a large impact on the prevalence of gender-based violence online. Cultural norms and beliefs are carried from physical communities into online spaces by actors who engage in this behaviour in person or who already agree with misogynist ideas. People who engage in physical violence against women also are likely to engage in online forms of violence. Through cultural causes, scholars claim that rather than technology creating violence online, it simply provides a new platform which users adapt to suit their desired action, some of which may include acts such as doxing, threatening, or stalking women.

Gender Rights

Over the years, Eastern Europe has seen a progressive shift in acknowledging and legislating for gender rights. Some countries have made notable strides, ratifying international conventions like the Istanbul Convention (aimed at preventing and combating violence against women), while others grapple with resistance from conservative factions.

¹² “Bringing Together Civil Society in the EU’s Neighbouring Countries in the Name of Gender Equality”, Niras, (2022), <https://www.niras.com/news/bringing-together-civil-society-in-the-eu-s-neighbouring-countries-in-the-name-of-gender-equality/>.

- The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) was ratified on 19 May 2017 by Georgia.¹³
- The Istanbul Convention was also ratified by the Republic of Moldova and entered into force on 1 May 2022.¹⁴
- On 1 November, after approval by the Ukrainian Parliament on 20 June 2022 and ratification of the Istanbul Convention on 18 July 2022.¹⁵

Digital Infrastructure and Gender Rights

The region has witnessed rapid digitization over the past two decades. Internet penetration rates have surged. However, disparities exist. While urban areas boast high-speed connectivity and tech literacy, rural areas often lag,

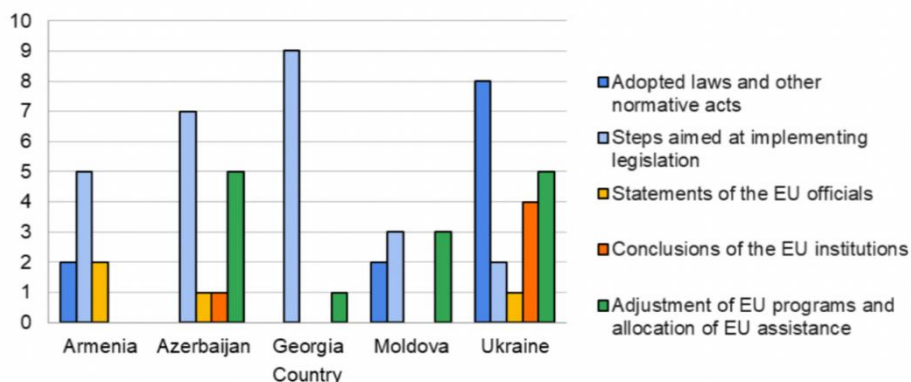


Figure 1: “Together for Resilient Digital Transformation”¹⁶

¹³ Council of Europe, “Georgia – Istanbul Convention Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence”, (2014), <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/georgia>.

¹⁴ Council of Europe, “The Republic of Moldova Ratifies the Istanbul Convention”, *Istanbul Convention Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* (January 31, 2022), <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/-/the-republic-of-moldova-ratifies-the-istanbul-convention>.

¹⁵ “The Istanbul Convention Entered into Force on 1 November 2022 – Council of Europe Office in Ukraine”, *Council of Europe Office in Ukraine*, n.d. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/-/the-istanbul-convention-entered-into-force-on-1-november-2022>.

¹⁶ Maksym Koriavets, “Resilient digital transformation in the Eastern Partnership region: State of play in 2022 and recommendations”, *Civil Society Organization “Polissya Foundation*

leading to a digital divide. Priority steps for the Republic of Moldova are also aiming at improving connectivity by anchoring Moldova in the TEN-T network. Digital flagship Initiatives for Georgia suggest developing high-speed broadband infrastructure for rural settlements. The Ukrainian flagship agenda primarily focuses on accelerating digital transformation through the modernization of public IT infrastructure.

Internet Freedom

Freedom House assesses the level of internet freedom in 70 countries around the world through its annual Freedom on the Net report. According to Freedom House, Georgians are generally free to express themselves online without fear of legal penalties, but several prosecutions for online activity have raised concerns in the past. The authorities periodically investigate internet users who threaten online, and civil society groups say their response can be disproportionate.¹⁷

In 2017, the Parliament of Georgia adopted new surveillance regulations after the Constitutional Court struck down previous surveillance legislation in 2016, which had forced companies to retain user metadata for two years and allowed authorities real-time access to vast amounts of user data.¹⁸

Country 	Total Score and Status	Obstacles to Access	Limits on Content	Violations of User Rights
Georgia	78  Free	19	31	28

Scores are based on a scale of 0 (least free) to 100 (most free)
 * Indicates a territory as opposed to an independent country.

Table 1: Freedom House Score for Georgia

for *International and Regional Studies*”.

¹⁷ “Georgia: Freedom on the Net 2022 Country Report”, Freedom House (2022). <https://freedomhouse.org/country/georgia/freedom-net/2022>.

¹⁸ Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia, “Constitutional Claim regarding Georgian Law ‘On Electronic Communications’”, (February 2, 2014), <https://ombudsman.ge/eng/konstitutsiuri-sarchelebi/constitutional-claim-regarding-georgian-law-on-electronic-communications>.

Russia’s full-scale military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 undermined internet freedom in the country. The aggressive disinformation campaigns originating primarily from Russia or linked to Russian actors sought to mislead users regarding the war, intentions of Ukraine and the Western actors. Therefore, the Ukrainian government imposed martial law, restricting freedom of expression and Government websites and news outlets were frequent targets of cyberattacks, usually by Kremlin-linked actors, that began in the days leading up to the attacks and it lasted until the end of the period covered but the Ukrainian government managed to defend itself against significant cyberattacks. The Freedom House assessment of Ukraine as “partly free” reflects the limitations on certain freedoms of information which the country has had to implement because of the war.¹⁹

Country 	Total Score and Status	Obstacles to Access	Limits on Content	Violations of User Rights
Ukraine	59  Partly Free	18	21	20

Table 2: Freedom House Score for Ukraine

Case Study: The Republic of Moldova

While women and girls in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, including Moldova, are exposed to digital gender-based violence, there remains a lack of comprehensive research and statistics specific to the region.²⁰

As elsewhere, in Moldova, there is an increase in technology-facilitated violence against women.²¹ According to the Group of Experts on Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), online and digital vio-

¹⁹ “Ukraine: Freedom on the Net 2022 Country Report.” Freedom House (2022). <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ukraine/freedom-net/2022>.
²⁰ “How Online Violence against Women Goes Unpunished”, *Balkan Insight* (May 11, 2022), <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/05/11/how-online-violence-against-women-goes-unpunished/>.
²¹ Country Gender Profile. (2021). Republic of Moldova, EU4 Gender Equality. Reform Helpdesk. <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/publications/country-gender-profile-of-the-republic-of-moldova/>.

lence against women and girls is catalysed through the amplification of sexism online, further entrenching gender inequality.

Sexist language, harassment, persecution, posting of non-consensual intimate material, and blackmail are among the forms of violence against women and girls using technology.²² According to the European Council guide for assessing and processing hate speech cases, there is an increasing number of cases of hate speech and discrimination in the public space and the media in the Republic of Moldova.

The election campaign for the presidential elections of 1/15 November 2020 was marked by intolerant public speeches, and the dynamics of hate speech and incitement to discrimination increased in intensity during the pre-election and election period and decreased after the end of the election campaign.

The relevant Moldovan media legislation, and in particular the Audiovisual Media Services Code (the Code) provides the Audiovisual Council with legal leverage for monitoring and sanctioning cases of hate speech and discrimination recorded in the audiovisual media, including in election campaigns. However, for the effective application of the provisions of the Code, the Audiovisual Council needs an enhanced internal mechanism for monitoring hate speech and collecting disaggregated data.

Generally speaking, Moldova demonstrates concerted efforts to combat gender-based violence and protect survivors through various initiatives of the National Agency for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence,²³ UN Women²⁴ programmes in Moldova, ratification of CEDAW,²⁵ progressively amending laws and policies to enhance women's rights and labour force participation.

²² Liliana Istrate-Burciu, Rodica Moraru-Chilimar, "Gender-based violence in the Republic of Moldova in the context of the humanitarian crisis produced by the war in Ukraine", UN High Commissioner on Refugees, n.d.

²³ Moldova's National Agency for the Prevention and Combating of Violence, <https://anpcv.gov.md/en> (in Romanian).

²⁴ "What we do: Ending violence against women", UN Women – Moldova, n. d. <https://moldova.unwomen.org/en/munca-noastra/ending-violence-against-women>.

²⁵ "Know Your Rights! Be Protected! Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Case Study: Ukraine

Online violence in Ukraine often intersects with political views. Women, especially those vocal about issues like the Russian war against Ukraine, face gendered threats, hate speech, and doxing.²⁶ The online violence also has a dimension of nationalist rhetoric, further complicating the issue.

The Russian war against Ukraine continues to have a significant impact on the human rights. Early in the crisis, gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation/abuse, and trafficking, coupled with online harassment and violence was identified as a significant issue.²⁷

Civil society has been active, with organizations like the Femen movement raising international awareness on the issues of gender violence, both online and offline.²⁸ The Ukrainian government has begun to recognize online violence as a genuine threat, but legislation is still in nascent stages. Tech companies, influenced by global trends, in Ukraine has enacted legal measures to address online gender-based violence, reflecting a commitment to protecting individuals in the digital sphere: Council of Europe General Recommendation addresses gender-based violence against women in the digital realm. It proposes actions aligned with the pillars of the Istanbul Convention, emphasizing prevention, protection, prosecution, and coordinated policies. Ukraine's approval of the Istanbul Convention on preventing violence against women encompasses online violence.²⁹ Ukrainian legislation mandates that personal information about survivors and those reporting gender-based violence should remain confidential, safeguarding their privacy and rights.³⁰

Discrimination against Women – Easy-Read-Version of Selected Articles”, UN Women – Moldova, (2017). <https://moldova.unwomen.org/en/biblioteca-digitala/publicatii/2017/07/cedaw>.

²⁶ Human Rights Watch, “Gendered online violence in Ukraine”, (2020).

²⁷ Securing Gender Equality in Ukraine Amidst the War. <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/02/securing-gender-equality-in-ukraine-amidst-the-war>.

²⁸ Femen’s Official Report. (2019). Online violence faced by activists.

²⁹ Council of Europe, “Ukraine reinforces safeguards against domestic and gender-based violence”, n. d. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/execution/-/ukraine-reinforces-safeguards-against-domestic-and-gender-based-violence>.

³⁰ Council of Europe, “Ukraine reinforces safeguards...”.

Due Diligence

The due diligence principle obligates States to take reasonable action to address and eliminate violence against women, whether committed by the State or non-State actors. The Due Diligence Project, initiated/developed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, looked at State compliance in five areas, namely prevention, protection, prosecution, punishment and provision of redress and reparation (5Ps) and developed a Due Diligence Framework on State Accountability to Eliminate Violence against Women.³¹

The United Nations defines human rights due diligence as a process by which enterprises “proactively manage potential and actual adverse human rights impacts due to actions of the companies.”³² These processes include four key components: Identifying and assessing actual or potential adverse human rights impacts, integrating findings from impact assessments to mitigate effects, tracking the effectiveness of mitigations, and communicating on how impacts are being addressed. Human rights due diligence processes can vary in scope and structure depending on risk, ranging from cursory reviews to assess risk, to more robust product or project-level human rights impact assessments, to comprehensive enterprise-level human rights impact assessments. Due diligence can be carried out rapidly or over longer time frames depending on the circumstances, though internal expertise or with the assistance of external experts depending on the subject matter.

The purpose of this framework is to establish normative criteria to assess the human rights-related and gender-based violence-related risks pertaining to harms directly caused by the tech platforms and social media, contributes to, or is indirectly linked to and influenced by potential external events, activities, relationships, or circumstances.

³¹ OHCHR, “Eliminating online violence against women and engendering digital equality”, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/GenderDigital/DueDiligenceProject.pdf>.

³² “OHCHR Corporate Human Rights Due Diligence – Identifying and Leveraging Emerging Practices.” n.d. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-business/corporate-human-rights-due-diligence-identifying-and-leveraging-emerging-practices>.

Social media platforms, integral to the modern digital landscape, unfortunately also serve as venues for pervasive online harassment, often transcending various online spaces and borders (UNSRP, 2019). For instance, a PEW Research survey from 2017 emphasized the heightened vulnerability of younger adults to online harassment, with a staggering 67% of individuals aged 18–29 having experienced it.³³ Even more concerning, the survey highlighted that gender-based violence distinctly impacts women, especially younger ones.

Additionally, the FRA's survey in 2014 from 28 European countries revealed concerning data: 11% of women encountered unsolicited and inappropriate sexually explicit messages across digital platforms, while 14% faced recurring hostile messages or phone calls from the same perpetrator.³⁴

Such gender-driven infringements online not only violate individual privacy rights but are deeply connected to broader issues of violence and discrimination. Their persistence underscores an apparent inertia by State and non-State actors in addressing them, leading to an unsettling consensus that such grave infringements are somehow passively accepted.

In a broader context, these infringements denote a systematic denial of human rights, having ripple effects that perpetuate existing unequal societal structures. As technology becomes more embedded in daily lives, the resulting damages from tech-induced privacy breaches, such as cyberstalking or unwarranted surveillance, bear significant consequences for individuals and societies.

Given the expansive influence of digital platforms and the world's increasing dependency on them, it is untenable to overlook their ramifications on fundamental human rights. This highlights an urgent need for private companies, especially those in social media, to align their operations with human rights standards. At the same time, states are obligated under the principle of

³³ Maeve Duggan, "Online Harassment 2017", *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech* (July 11, 2017), <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2017/07/11/online-harassment-2017/>.

³⁴ Fundamental Rights Agency, "Violence against Women: An EU-Wide Survey Main Results" (2014), https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf.

due diligence to uphold the international rights framework that denounces gender-based violence and champions privacy.

Embracing and operationalizing this human rights framework is paramount. With the rapid evolution of technology comes a myriad of tools that, in the wrong hands, can be weaponized to perpetrate abuse and violate human rights. Thus, vigilant public and international oversight on the actions and/or inactions of both State and private entities is crucial to prevent violence in all its forms, including technology-facilitated violence against women.

Policy Recommendations

People who experience gender violence may suffer from different human rights violations – for example the right to life, freedom from torture and degrading treatment, freedom from discrimination and the right to safety and security. All these rights can be found in international and regional human rights documents, in particular by the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

Despite the significant progress achieved with the instruments mentioned above, recognition of the severity of the problem and existing legal measures are not sufficient. Effective mechanisms and processes for violence prevention and gender mainstreaming need to be put in place. In addition to the international human rights mechanisms, important national public policies or bodies at the national level need to include:

- National committees for gender advancement with a clear plan of action;
- Equality ombudsman;
- Effective legislation to ensure legal and substantive equality;
- Affirmative action, such as quotas for women in education and employment;
- Civil society organisations have an important role in advocacy or lobbying efforts.

Online platforms, in partnership with governments and civil society, have a responsibility to try to overcome these challenges. Platform hosts must take

concrete steps to minimize the harms caused by harassment, discrimination, and violent speech.

Platforms should adopt Human Rights Policies and Strategies in order to reaffirm their commitment to upholding the human rights of their users. Among other responsibilities, Public policies should commit to carry out human rights due diligence and proactively identify, analyze, and mitigate potential human rights harm the projects may cause, contribute to, or be linked to. A lot of the external threats can be countered by:

- **Completing a Human Rights Impact Assessment** for a proposed technical project, and consulting experienced users to better understand the human rights opportunities and risks.
- **Initiating a Child Rights Impact Assessment**, and consulting experienced users to identify and analyze human rights risks to minors in order to avoid them in the future or help the affected ones.
- **Developing a Human Rights Due Diligence Framework** to guide when and how the Platforms must carry out human rights due diligence in a cohesive and systematic way, which also takes into account our limited resources to monitor and to act.
- **Build internal capacity** if the organizations providing services to vulnerable groups to mainstream online gender based violence risk mitigation in line with good practice standards set out in the gender based violence Guidelines, including capacity to identify and address risks that emerge in programs and services.
- **Establish partnerships with organizations** serving particular groups of women in order to improve their access to services, for example, by partnering to deliver outreach/mobile services, establish referral protocols, and support coordinated actions for survivors.
- **Strengthening the Accountability for social media platforms:** In view of the capacity of internet companies to facilitate and amplify online and technology-facilitated violence against women, as well their vital role in reducing and mitigating harms, steps are being taken to introduce greater regulation of internet platforms, including social

media companies.³⁵ The UN Special Rapporteur has stressed in many national reports the importance of examining regulation of the private sector regarding online and technology-facilitated violence against women.

- **Designing Education** and awareness raising campaign at the national, regional and international levels.
- **Gathering Accurate data collection** to evaluate the manifestation of online violence against women and girls, in order to introduce effective law and policy reforms.

³⁵ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The digital dimension of violence against women as addressed by the seven mechanisms of the EDVAW Platform*, (Brussels: EU OHCHR, November 2022), https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/cedaw/statements/2022-12-02/EDVAW-Platform-thematic-paper-on-the-digital-dimension-of-VAW_English.pdf.

Threats and Resilience: The Influence of COVID-19 Pandemics on Post-Soviet Female Immigrants in Hungary

Sanja Tepavcercic

Introduction

Since mid-1970, by following their male family members and acting as principal wage earners, women have represented half of global migrants.¹ The COVID-19 pandemic heavily limited these migration flows “especially on permanent or a long-term basis”.² Migrants were generally seen simultaneously as key spreaders and as the most vulnerable population for a lack of access to appropriate accommodation and healthcare.³ The pandemic more negatively affected the blue-collar migrant workers than the white-collar ones.⁴ Similarly, in response to the threat of COVID-19, governments around the world introduced a set of measures that shifted the established social policies toward violating existing forms of gender equality.⁵ In the context of the pandemic lockdowns, “[t]he outsourcing of schooling and social services along with the home office has created a new trend of housewifisation”.⁶ This has negatively affected the daily life of women and in particular of the female migrants, by enforcing the reconsideration of some

¹ S. Forbes-Martin, *Women and Migration in United Nations DAW Consultative Meeting Working Papers* (Malmo, Sweden: United Nations 2004).

² A. Gamlen, “Migration and Mobility after the 2020 Pandemic: The End of an Age?” in *COVID-19 and the transformation of migration and mobility globally* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020), 10.

³ S. Tagliacozzo et al., “The Interplay between Structural and Systemic Vulnerability During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Migrant Agricultural Workers in Informal Settlements in Southern Italy”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47, no. 9 (2020).

⁴ “How the Pandemic Reversed Old Migration Patterns in Europe”, *The Economist*, January 28, 2021.

⁵ D. Bohle et al., “Riding the Covid Waves: Authoritarian Socio-Economic Responses of East Central Europe’s Anti-Liberal Governments”, *East European Politics* 38, no. 4 (2022): 662; N. Ringe and L. Rennó, “Populists and the Pandemic How Populists around the World Responded to Covid-19”, in *Populists and the Pandemic How Populists around the World Responded to Covid-19*, N. Ringe and L. Rennó eds. (London: Routledge, 2023).

⁶ J. Faludi and M. Crosby, “The Digital Economy of the Sourdough: Housewifisation in the Time of Covid-19”, *Triple C* 19, no. 1 (2021): 113–17.

well-established socioeconomic such as work from an office while children are at school.⁷

At the same time, since joining the European Union (EU), Central Eastern European post-socialist member states gradually turned from countries of emigration to countries of immigration. Governments' policies as a reaction to the COVID-19 and its effects varied even across these countries, where "politically, the crisis provided a plausible cover for authoritarian reforms as even fully-fledged democracies resorted to temporary restrictions on civil liberties".⁸ In this context, Hungary is significant for two reasons. First, it proved to be the most long-standing authoritarian-leaning regime in the EU. Second, simultaneously it appears to be the most vocally-speaking, anti-immigrant among post-socialist EU member states. The Hungarian Prime-minister Viktor Orban has prioritized the issues of both migration and national sovereignty in his political agenda and organized a permanent anti-immigrant campaign, including building a border fence on Hungary's southern border.⁹ In response to the EU's challenge in improving social inclusion of the third-country nationals (TCNs), the Commission of the European Parliament issued the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy of the EU in 2016.¹⁰ This integration model was built around the idea of self-sustaining immigrant employment, assuming that social and economic integration of TCNs in the EU are paralleled.

By analysing the post-Soviet migrant women's challenges and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic in Hungary, the present chapter draws on the

⁷ S. Tepavcevic, "(Un)Learned Resilience: Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Post-Yugoslav and Post-Soviet Female Immigrants in Austria and Hungary" in *Whole Person Promotion, Women, and the Post-Pandemic Era: Impact and Future Outlooks*, M. Crosby and J. Faludi eds. (IGI Global, 2022).

⁸ Bohle et al., "Riding the Covid Waves...", 662; A. Batory, "Hungary Creeping Authoritarianism in the Name of Pandemic Response", in *Populists and the Pandemic How Populists around the World Responded to Covid-19*, N. Ringe and L. Rennó eds. (London: Routledge, 2023).

⁹ A. Biro-Nagy, "Orbán's Political Jackpot: Migration and the Hungarian Electorate", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48, no. 2 (2021).

¹⁰ European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions. Action Plan on the Integration of the Third Countries Nationals", (Brussels: European Commission, June 7 2016).

following scholarly literature: the literature analysing the effect of global crises on migrants and on female migrants in particular; the political regimes literature, discussing the EU member-states' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, while underlying the authoritarian features of their responses; and the studies of female emigration from former Soviet republics. While discussing post-Soviet female migrants' experiences during the COVID-19 in Hungary, this chapter reveals that these women built their resilience mostly through their cooperation via social media networks.

The sections below review the literature by tracing the relationship between the concepts of threat and resilience. It contextualizes concepts of threat and resilience into the EU post-socialist states' policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, female migration, and post-Soviet female immigration in Europe. They then describe methods of inquiry used for the analysis, then traces the immigration patterns into Hungary from (post-) Soviet republics since the end of the Second World War. The penultimate section explores the challenges encountered by post-Soviet female migrants in Hungary in the context of the Hungarian government's responses to the pandemic. Finally we identify forms of resilience of the post-Soviet migrant women in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic and its political and economic manifestations in Hungary.

Analytical Framework: Crisis, Resilience, and Post-Soviet Female Migrants in Europe

Global crises represent various threats to human security, which manifest in three major forms. The first is the psychological or 'soft' form of threat, which *inter alia* includes discriminative societal discourses and perceptions that make their objects vulnerable. The second is physical and socioeconomic or 'hard' threat, which may negatively affect the human physical well-being. Following Karl Polanyi's notion of "transformation as a certain political-economic moment of radical rupture, a type of political revolution and short-term change, which might accelerate ongoing profound transformations",¹¹ the COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies a threat to physical health

¹¹ A. Novy, "The Political Trilemma of Contemporary Social-Ecological Transformation – Lessons from Karl Polanyi's 'the Great Transformation'" *Globalizations* 19, no. 2 (2021): 60.

– or ‘hard’ sort of threat to human security. The third form of threat is political or a mix of the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ forms of threat. It arises from situations, where negative perceptions, discourses and policies may turn into physical discrimination making vulnerable certain groups of humans. Authoritarian politics represents one of these sociopolitical threat to human security.¹² In this context, female immigrants are traditionally considered as a vulnerable group because they

tend to be overrepresented in the least desirable occupations, such as repetitive factory work, and lower-skilled positions in the personal care and other services sectors, although there has also been increased mobility into white-collar jobs. ... Today, in many countries, women who enter as dependents or marriage migrants do not have an entitlement to residence in their own right and may face deportation if they get divorced.¹³

In turn, the process of building resilience usually encompasses a set of coping mechanisms that respond to the forms of threat. Concerning psychological or ‘soft’ resilience, psychologist Lucy Foulkes stated that the “stress inoculation” in its’ milder form “teach(es) us ways to cope. When future stressors arise, we are then more likely to believe they are manageable.”¹⁴ Similarly, as I noted in one of my previous works,

Vulnerability of being immigrant in general and female immigrant in particular usually produces two broad types of resilience mechanisms. The first comprises ‘soft’ psychological, cultural, and sociopolitical elements, and usually manifests itself in psychological adaptation and reconsideration of national/cultural/geographical and even professional identities. The second type of resilience mechanism comprises ‘hard’ meaning legal and socioeconomic aspects, and it usually materializes through entrepreneurship.¹⁵

Following these definitions, throughout the present analysis, I differentiate between coping mechanisms (on a daily basis) with challenges posed by the crisis as a process, and resilience (foreseeing beyond the current crisis) as a long-term security strategy. In other words, coping mechanism is the first reaction to an emergency, resulting in immediate survival. In turn, resilience

¹² S. Tepavcevic, *Global Crises, Resilience, and Future Challenges: Experiences of Post-Yugoslav and Post-Soviet Migrants, Balkan Politics and Society* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2024).

¹³ S. Castles, H. Haas, and M. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 6th ed. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 61.

¹⁴ L. Foulkes, *Losing Our Minds: The Challenge of Defining Mental Illness* (St. Martin’s Press, 2021), 203.

¹⁵ Tepavcevic, “(Un)Learned Resilience...” 197.

represents further adaption to emergency and changes for female migrants that it generates.

The scholarly literature that focuses particularly on post-Soviet female migrants tackles mostly the socioeconomic aspect of resilience. On one hand, focusing on Russian-speaking female immigrants in Hungary, Zueva demonstrated that some of them founded companies and became entrepreneurs mostly in order to obtain residency permits.¹⁶ Furthermore, Munkejord focused on local and transnational networks of Russian female entrepreneurs in the Finnmark area of Norway, and pointed out that, being part of the mainstream economy and support of the family ties were the most striking features of their immigrant entrepreneurship.¹⁷ On the other hand, examining Russian-speaking former Soviet female immigrants in Italy, Cvajner pointed out that they usually arrived to Italy illegally and served as social care providers to Italian elderly.¹⁸ Considering it as downgrading in contrast to their previous positions and level of education, these women commenced entrepreneurship to regain their social status and human dignity that had suffered through the process of illegal migration and social care provision. Furthermore, comparing experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic among post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet migrant women in Austria and Hungary, I noted that post-Soviet migrant mothers settled in Hungary experienced “triple vulnerability: being female, a mother, and a migrant.”¹⁹

These insights suggest two broad theoretical propositions concerning threats to female migrants’ security during the pandemic. The first is that in general, they were among the most vulnerable social groups during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially if they had under-aged children. The second theoretical proposition is that they responded to the physical and social challenges by starting their business. The following analysis examines the relevance of

¹⁶ A. Zueva, *Gendered Experiences in Migration from Russia to Hungary* (Prague: Migrationonline.cz, 2005).

¹⁷ M. C. Munkejord, “Local and Transnational Networking among Female Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Peripheral Rural Contexts: Russian Female Entrepreneurs in Norway”, *European Urban and Regional Studies* 24, no. 1 (2017).

¹⁸ M. Cvajner, “The Presentation of Self in Emigration: Eastern European Women in Italy”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 624, no. 1 (2012).

¹⁹ Tepavcevic, “(Un)Learned Resilience...” 204.

these two propositions in the context of the Hungarian government's policies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods of Inquiry

Autoethnography was utilized as a major theory-building strategy in collecting data about the experiences of post-Soviet migrant women's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in Hungary. Adams Ellis and Holman Jones define this research approach as follows:

Autoethnography uses personal experience ("auto") to describe and interpret ("graphy") cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices ("ethno"). ... Given the focus on personal experience, auto-ethnographers also describe moments of everyday experience that cannot be captured through more traditional research methods. Doing autoethnographic fieldwork allows what we see, hear, think, and feel to become part of the "field."²⁰

I apply autoethnography in two ways. First, I conducted the research through personal experience of the COVID-19 pandemic in Hungary as a close-to-native Russian speaker, who studied and worked in Russia for almost two decades. Many of my acquaintances and friends are female immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Hungary, and I am actively embedded in these communities. This informal membership provided me with access to genuine insights regarding post-Soviet female immigrants in Hungary through informal conversations, online surveys in social media groups and semi-structured online interviews. Personal notes and reflections from face-to-face and online conversations with fellow female immigrants during and after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns serve as the first form of data used in this chapter. Second, I inevitably extended my research to digital ethnography – a systematic participant observation of social media discussions. With regard to my positionality, I am also a member of numerous post-Soviet Facebook and Telegram public groups initiated and administrated by and for immigrants, for example "Russian-speaking Women in Hungary." All responses were used anonymously.

The propositions from the scholarly literature about female immigrants' vulnerability served as a guidance in creating anonymous online questionnaires.

²⁰ T. Adams, C. Ellis, and Holman-Jones S., "Autoethnography" in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017), 1–4.

They included the following questions: how did the pandemic influence your life, a) in terms of work and income, b) in terms of your personal well-being, c) in terms of your family life, if any? The respondents were also asked about their gender, age group (choosing among three options – 18–35, 36–50, and 51–65), time of arrival to Hungary, and the country of origin. These online questionnaires were conducted during the March-April 2021 lockdowns, and resulted in 25 responses with 18 of them being female respondents. The answers received from online surveys and personal conversations were divided into two groups: one describing the challenges faced during the pandemic, and another describing the responses and solutions to these challenges.

Method of research	Reference in the text
Interviews and personal communication conducted via telephone, email, or online applications	Personal communication, time when conducted (month and year)
Digital ethnography and virtual immigrant groups in social networks	Social media group discussion, a time when occurred (month and year)
Surveys created online and shared in social media groups to receive responses anonymously	Online survey, time received (month and year)

Table 1: Methods of inquiry

Soviet and Post-Soviet Immigration in Hungary

After the Second World War 60,000 people constituting the Southern Soviet troops were located in various places across Hungary with the largest communities located in Budapest, Paks and Debrecen.²¹ To fulfil their own needs, they organized hospitals, schools, clubs, and shops, where officers' spouses were working, making their livelihood activities community-based and community-self-sustaining . During the existence of the Soviet bloc, Soviet citizens continued to immigrate to Hungary mostly as spouses of

²¹ S. Tepavcevic, "Immigrant Entrepreneurship in the Post-Socialist Countries of the European Union: Motives and Patterns of Entrepreneurship of Post-Soviet Immigrants in Hungary", *Migration and Ethnic Themes* 1 (2017).

Hungarian citizens.²² Simultaneously, the member countries of the former Socialist bloc opted economic policies that would guarantee full employment. Furthermore, Hungary recognized equal employment rights to non-Hungarian workers but who were citizens of the former Soviet bloc.²³ In addition, intergovernmental agreements permitted the exchange of students and the invitation of various experts.

With the demise of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc,

visa-free regimes remained between former socialist countries and were ... extended to Western European countries. Before Hungary's EU accession, however, visas were introduced for citizens of non-EU countries, including the post-Soviet countries (except the Baltic states).²⁴

As a result, the citizens of the majority of the former Soviet republics, who migrated to Hungary starting from 2000, have usually been native Russian speakers, highly skilled labour migrants with families and small-to-mid-scale entrepreneurs. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the number of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Hungary was approximately 15,000, which made them the second largest immigrant group in Hungary after 'ethnic' Hungarians citizens of the neighbouring countries.²⁵ More than half of these former Soviet immigrants in Hungary were women.²⁶

Threats and Challenges:

Impact of COVID on Post-Soviet Female Migrants in Hungary

The COVID-19 pandemic created an incentive to the right-wing Fidesz party-led Hungarian government to interfere in the economy, by upholding essential production, services and more specifically social work services. Particularly, in March 2020, the Fidesz parliamentary supermajority approved the Coronavirus Defence Act, enabling Fidesz leader, Prime Minister Viktor

²² "Changing Geography, Retaining the Mentality: Social and Economic Integration of Post-Soviet Immigrants in Austria and Hungary", *Review of Economic Theory and Policy* 3 (2021 a).

²³ I. Moricz, "An Overview of the Migration Policies and Trends- Hungary", (2013).

²⁴ Sanja Tepavcevic, *Diversity of Migrant Entrepreneurship in Varieties of European Capitalism. Post-Soviet Entrepreneurship in Austria, Spain and Hungary, Economics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 105.

²⁵ Tepavcevic, "Changing Geography...".

²⁶ Tepavcevic, "(Un)Learned Resilience...".

Orban to rule by decree for an unlimited period until the end of the emergency state of affairs.²⁷ This created a situation where households, firms, and workers became almost utterly dependent on governmental assistance, allowing the government to prescribe the rules of performance of the child-care. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic in Hungary “brought together the motive (anti-liberals in government), means (international resources) and opportunities (decrease of international surveillance and domestic resistance) to push the economy into authoritarian territory.”²⁸

Hungarian citizens had some options for resistance, which stemmed from

opposition parties in parliament, civil society – especially trade unions in the sphere of labour and women’s movements in the sphere of social reproduction, businesses and regulatory agencies evading state capture, and international organisations.²⁹

As immigrants from countries less developed than Hungary, post-Soviet women had fewer sources of resilience. Online survey responses of post-Soviet migrant women living in Hungary suggested that restrictions and bans on movement both within and across the borders were introduced by the government for certain types of leisure and services (for example, visiting sports sections, restaurants, entertainment events and beauty salons) negatively influenced both their mobility and incomes.

When asked, “How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your employment and your financial situation?” two of 18 responded that they had lost their jobs, and three respondents noted that they had reoriented to another type of income-generating activity, while one of them changed her job, but continued to work in her specialty. Those 12 female respondents, who reported no change in financial status and employment during the pandemic turned to be mainly middle level managers of multinational corporations. Answering the question “What field did you work in before the pandemic?” a third of the respondents answered that they worked in tourism, restaurants and/or hotels, which were among the most affected sectors. These turned out to be responses of post-Soviet female migrants, who either changed their income-generating activity, or lost their jobs because of the lockdowns. Some of the

²⁷ Z. Kovacs, “Hungarian Coronavirus Act Passes, Granting Viktor Orbán Unprecedented Emergency Powers” *Index* (2020), <https://index.hu>, 2020.

²⁸ Bohle et al., “Riding the Covid Waves...” 669.

²⁹ Bohle et al., “Riding the Covid Waves...” 669.

respondents noted that lockdowns, indirectly, negatively affected them due to the loss of jobs of their family members:

My Hungarian husband lost his job in the movie industry temporarily, though the taxes remained the same and there were no compensations or state support, so it was heavily challenging to survive having only my salary (online survey, April 2021).³⁰

As Bohle et al. correctly stressed “the state-owned Hungarian Tourist Agency provided generous grants to businesses owned by former Fidesz ministers, oligarchs and local governments run by Fidesz.”³¹ Similarly, the government launched the Competitiveness Enhancing Support Programme, a state aid scheme in order to fund new investments undertaken by medium and large companies. However, foreign multinationals representing the manufacturing sector turned to be the Programme’s greatest beneficiaries.³²

The lack of state support to all other firms and sectors was also displayed in the answers of post-Soviet female respondents of the online survey. Four out of 18 respondents reported that prior to the pandemic they worked in the financial services, while three of them answered that their work was related to information technologies. Two reported employments in science and education. When asked about the sector in which they have worked since the beginning of the pandemic, none of the 18 respondents indicated the sphere of tourism, restaurants and hotel business. At the same time, during the pandemic, the number of post-Soviet female immigrants in Hungary increased in occupations related to financial services and in the sphere of science and education.³³

An example of one of the interlocutors from Ukraine is remarkable. Prior to the pandemic, she worked in a Chinese trade company in Hungary as a salesperson. As the trade was oriented mostly on Chinese tourists, the company closed as soon as the first lockdown was authorized in China, much before COVID reached Europe. She was receiving a minimum salary for several

³⁰ Tepavcevic, “(Un)Learned Resilience...” 208.

³¹ Bohle et al., “Riding the Covid Waves...” 670.

³² Bohle et al., “Riding the Covid Waves...” 670.

³³ I. Molodikova and S. Tepavcevic, “Особенности Дигитальных Коммуникаций И Интернет-Предпринимательство Русскоговорящих Сообществ В Период Карантина Covid-19 На Примере Венгрии”, *Vestnik (Вестник)* 35 (2021). Tepavcevic, “(Un)Learned Resilience...” 208.

months (personal communication, May 2020). As the company closed, she searched for another job, and it took her another six months during lockdowns to find it (personal communication, May 2021). Another female immigrant from Russia aged 37, who before the pandemic held a top-manager position in the tourism sector, noted that she was not able to survive during the pandemic without finding an additional job. As at the moment of the beginning of pandemic she had already spent more than half of her life in Hungary, including secondary and tertiary education she had already acquired advanced Hungarian language skills and a wide social network in Hungary to rely on. Therefore, she felt confident enough to look for a second job and entrepreneurship opportunities. As a result, she reported that during the pandemic, she became a private entrepreneur, a cosmetologist.

Furthermore, as the Hungarian government's policies during the pandemic included

[T]he closure of schools and childcare facilities, in March 2020, without any governmental compensation or other form of support left hundreds of thousands of families facing a huge challenge of balancing work-related duties, home-schooling and elderly care.³⁴

In this way, the Hungarian government followed a neoliberal gender regime – where all genders had the same opportunities and responsibilities – in which provision of social welfare safety net was replaced by emphasis on family values.³⁵ Problems with remote education became both technically and socially difficult for many post-Soviet migrant mothers, who mostly came to Hungary as marriage migrants in the period over the last two decades. As one of them, who came to Hungary about 15 years before the pandemic and having one school-age child, noted,

My kid had just entered school, and after the first semester, there was the first lockdown. ... For me it was important that she attends all classes, because, unlike the parents of her Hungarian classmates, my knowledge of Hungarian is limited, and I would not be able to help her as much as they can help their kids (personal communication, June 2020).³⁶

³⁴ Bohle et al., “Riding the Covid Waves...” 672.

³⁵ A. Gregor and E. Kovats, “Work–Life: Balance? Tensions between Care and Paid Work in the Lives of Hungarian Women”, *Social Science Review* 7 (2019).

³⁶ Tepavcevic, *Global Crises, Resilience, and Future Challenges...*, 207–208.

Another mother of two, who came from Russia to Hungary about a decade before the pandemic encountered similar problems.

Despite the teachers' claims that there will be remote classes during the lockdowns, my kids' school did not provide them properly. The teachers sent homework in emails, and they had some online meetings for 20 minutes once a week. As a result, I spent all of the lockdown teaching my kids. I never studied in Hungarian and I have limited knowledge of this language (personal communication, January, 2021).³⁷

These extracts from the two informal conversations with post-Soviet female migrants reveal that the Hungarian government's neoliberal policies during the COVID-19 pandemic increased the social responsibilities of women and further worsened the position of migrant mothers, who were non-native Hungarian speakers. Similarly, the combination of the Hungarian government's lockdown-related bans and the neoliberal gender regime it implemented, had extremely negative impact on some of my interlocutors, who moved alone to Hungary as labour migrants prior to the pandemic:

In Hungary, I live alone, I have only neighbours and friends, and working from home and being isolated is so depressing... we were required to continue to work online [...] We were not allowed to travel to our home countries and to work remotely from there. [...] Our CEO was constantly sending letters asking us to be mindful toward the colleagues who have small kids. Being single, I felt invisible and forgotten (personal communication, January 2022).³⁸

Nevertheless, some detailed responses to the online survey demonstrated that the pandemic had also a positive impact on the personal lives of some younger women, who moved to Hungary a couple of years prior to the pandemic. "Prior to the lockdown, I met a man that I liked. During the lockdown we moved in together and a couple of months later we got married" (female immigrant from Russia in Hungary, 18–35 age group).³⁹

Overall, coupled with the Hungarian government's long-standing neoliberal economic policies and gender regime, which threatened the overall female population in Hungary to the effect of precarious work and care, the pandemic had significant negative socioeconomic and, in some cases, negative psychological influence on post-Soviet female immigrants. This extends argument about the negative impact of the Hungarian neoliberal or gender-

³⁷ Tepavcevic, "Changing Geography, Retaining the Mentality..." 207.

³⁸ Tepavcevic, "(Un)Learned Resilience..." 208.

³⁹ Tepavcevic, "(Un)Learned Resilience..." 207.

neutral economic regime on social work to female migrants’ position in Hungary, and highlights the ways in which this policy made them even more vulnerable during the pandemic. About a third of online survey respondents reported either the loss of jobs during the pandemic or their transition to another economic sector with more employment opportunities. This seems to be the result, as reported in interviews and surveys, that in the pre-pandemic period many of them were employed as blue-collar workers. This finding extends the general trend during the pandemic recognized by stating that the pandemic more negatively affected blue-collar migrant workers than white-collar ones. According to *The Economist*:

a shifting economy and changing work patterns are bringing many of them [migrants] back. A “brain gain” has begun... A new grey economy has sprung up across the EU, with white-collar staff living in one country but illicitly working in another.⁴⁰

Hence, the white-collar migrant workers were more resilient in establishing new ways to earn their living. In turn, the most vulnerable among female post-Soviet migrant women in Hungary were the mothers of school-age children, who prior to the pandemic held blue-collar jobs.

Age group	18–35	36–50	51–65
The form of impact	The ban on travel and leisure activities and the related negative psychological impact	The ban on travel, loss of jobs, neoliberal government’s policies that resulted in marginalization of single female migrants, and migrant mothers, who lacked adequate Hungarian language skills needed for home-schooling during the lockdowns	The ban on travel, less contacts with friends and family

Table 2: Summary of threats to human security encountered by post-Soviet female immigrants in Hungary during the pandemic

⁴⁰ *Economist*, “How the Pandemic Reversed Old Migration Patterns in Europe” online edition.

Solutions: Building Resilience During COVID-19 Pandemic

Answering questions regarding proposed solutions to the challenges encountered by post-Soviet women migrants in Hungary during the pandemic, the majority of the online survey respondents stated that the pandemic itself was a unique situation for them that could not be compared to any previous experience. Many of them, who represented the youngest surveyed group (18–35) built “soft” psychological resilience during the pandemic, by maintaining their pre-pandemic routines as much as possible. This age group of post-Soviet female immigrants in Hungary also displayed more optimism during the pandemic, than their more mature counterparts. In their responses to online surveys, many of them posited that remaining physically and socially active, as well as learning new skills by taking online courses helped them to avoid anxiety during the lockdowns. Most of these young female migrants from post-Soviet republics, residing and working in Hungary, held white-collar positions in various economic sectors, ranging from information technologies (IT) and finance to pharmaceuticals and medical research. Sharing the pandemic experiences with one of my middle-aged acquaintances, who moved to Hungary from Russia as an employee of one of multinational corporations, I learned that she and her colleagues organized a trade union within the company in order to receive compensation for their use of electricity and equipment while working remotely.⁴¹ In addition, she stated that constant contacts and collaboration with her colleagues, migrants from other EU countries, helped her to overcome anxiety of isolation.

Noting the ability to continue their jobs and maintain their level of salaries during the pandemic, post-Soviet female migrant employees of multinationals also used either their corporate networks with locals to find teachers to help their children cope with the Hungarian school programs, or turned to the social media of the Hungary-based Russian-speaking groups, in order to find experienced bilingual tutors. In 2020 and 2021, the number of these groups on the then social network Facebook, currently Meta, increased significantly. For example, a “Women’s Club” was founded as a platform for post-Soviet women in Hungary to help each other during the pandemic. Similarly, the “Doctors Hungary” group emerged as a platform to exchange the information related to medical services. The emergence of these thematic

⁴¹ Tepavcevic, “(Un)Learned Resilience...”.

groups suggested that health services were also a challenge for many post-Soviet immigrants in Hungary. Among them, women first turned to their post-Soviet counterparts in Hungary for support during the pandemic.

The titles and relatively large membership – ranging between 500 and 5,000 – in other thematic groups that emerged in the same period “Buy Sell” and “Part-time jobs” confirmed that many post-Soviet immigrants in Hungary, not only women, encountered decrease in income and employment. In turn, these groups served as recruiting sites with advertisements for vacancies in Hungary. Some advertisements were duplicated in several groups, especially the ones concerning travel information with minibus or private cars to Ukraine, particularly as the migrants from Ukraine chose to return to their home country as a temporary solution to unemployment due to the pandemic. Similarly, a group titled “Museum meetings with Masha” emerged as a platform regularly reviewing the cultural situation in Hungary in Russian language. Probably the most striking example of ‘soft’ resilience was the post-Soviet women’s global Facebook group “The Frog in Vodka and the Bear in Champagne”, which united women from different countries of the world counting over 43,000 members. As Molodikova and Tepavcevic demonstrated, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this group

served as ‘a psychotherapeutic laboratory’ not only for Russian-speaking wives of foreigners, but also for Russian-speaking women abroad: it is, among other things, a virtual travel agency. Any “frog” can write to members of the group in another country where she is going to travel, and get not only complete information, but also help in organizing a stay, an excursion program.⁴²

Given the increasing global dominance of the digital economy during the pandemic, self-employed post-Soviet migrant women in Hungary also rapidly moved their small and medium businesses online. As the principal of one Budapest-based language and arts school noted in one of these informal conversations, she installed Zoom and instructed her colleagues how to use it. As a result, though finding language teaching online more challenging for the children than in-person format, her school continued its’ language teaching programs and kept practically all the clients.

Overall, while migrant women encountered multiple vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic in Hungary, post-Soviet women have built resili-

⁴² Molodikova and Tepavcevic, “Особенности Дигитальных Коммуникаций...” 158.

ence throughout the crisis. On the one hand, this kind of resilience – finding long-term behavioural or ‘soft’ and material or ‘hard’ solutions to continuous emergency – may be interpreted as personal with generational characteristics. In this context, younger respondents faster adapted to the emergency than their more mature counterparts. On the other hand, for many of the post-Soviet female migrants the pandemic represented a learning experience that generated ‘soft’ form of resilience, namely psychological immunity irrespective of their age.

Form of resilience	Examples
‘Soft’ resilience	Obtaining new skills via online courses, increasing online communication
‘Hard’ resilience	Creation of social media platforms for communication and business, moving business to online format, creating trade unions within the companies to compensate for the costs of working from home
‘Mixed’ resilience	Retaining physical and social activities to keep the mood positive

Table 3: Forms of resilience during COVID-19 pandemic amongst post-Soviet female immigrants

As Table 3 demonstrates, retaining, and sometimes even increasing physical and social activities resulted in the third form of resilience – a blend of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ elements of adaptation to the pandemic as a complex human security threat.

Building Resilience – Conclusions

Conducted as a synthesis of three strands of scholarly literature and the case study of post-Soviet female migrants in Hungary, the analysis in this chapter leads to one significant conclusion in relation to human security. Namely, it demonstrated that trying to use a global crisis to strengthen the control over society, the Hungarian government pursued authoritarian policies that generated additional burden to the most vulnerable population, instead of protecting them against the negative effects of the crisis. This finding suggests that in an event of major global crisis, as it was the COVID-19 pandemic, authoritarian politics represents the sociopolitical threat to human security.

Such politics threaten not only the citizens of their countries, but also the migrant residents with permanent and temporary permits.

The analysis in this and earlier works, has demonstrated that the ‘triple vulnerability’ of being woman, migrant and mother in Hungary during the COVID-19 pandemic can to a large extent be attributed to the Hungarian government’s neoliberal gender regime stressed by Gregor and Kovacs,⁴³ which simultaneously increased general “housewife-ization” in Hungary.⁴⁴ Marital status, also appeared as the source of either vulnerability or even resilience during the pandemic: the analysis demonstrated that the ‘soft’, ‘hard’ and mixed resilience mechanisms of the examined post-Soviet female immigrants depended on whether they were single, living with a partner, or mothers of underage children.

For post-Soviet migrant women in Hungary the ‘housewife-ization’ during the lockdowns was accompanied with the acute problem of poorly organized online schooling. The Hungarian government’s policies caused either job and income losses or the lack of technical equipment for work from home. In turn, post-Soviet migrant women, who at the time of the beginning of the pandemic had school-age children and blue-collar jobs, appeared to be the most vulnerable to the pandemic threats. The ‘hard’ resilience in such cases took two forms: either these migrant mothers took the role of insufficiently qualified home teachers, or they turned for support to virtual post-Soviet migrant communities by hiring fellow immigrant or local teachers through digital communication platforms. Additionally, the analysis has demonstrated that in entrepreneurship in the form of self-employment emerges as a socio-economic response and resilient strategy not only in the process of immigration and integration to the new environment, but also as the response to changes in environment and crises. Therefore, it is not surprising that, according to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), most Hungarians consider entrepreneurship to be a desirable, high-status career option. The global, EU and Central and Eastern European averages for the proportion of people holding this view are almost identical to Hungary’s.⁴⁵

⁴³ Gregor and Kovacs, “Work–Life: Balance?...”.

⁴⁴ Faludi and Crosby, “The Digital Economy of the Sourdough: Housewifisation in the Time of Covid-19”.

⁴⁵ Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, “Entrepreneurship a Desirable Career Choice for Majority in Hungary” (2023).

In such a context, as the analysis have demonstrated, the number of post-Soviet social media groups in Hungary emerged as the response to ‘hard’ or tangible forms of threat to health and socioeconomic security, namely, to mitigate the neglect and dysfunction of the Hungarian economic regime in social protection. Simultaneously, their extensive use as platforms for advertisement and communication with other post-Soviet migrant women based in Hungary, served as means of building ‘soft’ or behavioural resilience to the challenges posed by the pandemic. Finally, these conclusions are limited to the study of post-Soviet female immigrants in Hungary.

Main Aspects of Demographic Security in Georgia

Nika Chitadze

Introduction

Two factors determine the demographic dynamics of the population – natural and mechanical movement. From its turn, Natural Movement is a generalized name for the totality of births and deaths that change the population in the so-called natural way. Natural population growth is the absolute value of the difference between the numbers of births and deaths over a certain period.¹

Mechanical movement – in this case, population movement – occurs because of migration processes. There are internal and external migrations, according to duration – temporary, permanent, as well as seasonal, and pendulum. By nature, planned and spontaneous migrations are distinguished.²

The development of the state mostly depends on the different aspects related to the population of the country. The natural and mechanical movement of the population also determines the country's demographic security. Population growth in post-Soviet Georgia has never been so low (notwithstanding the incidental migration of Russian draft- and sanctions-dodgers to Georgia). Despite many devastating invasions, the birth rate and accordingly natural growth have always ensured the extended reproduction of the population when the generation of children outnumbers the generation of parents. After the restoration of the national independence of Georgia, the situation has been changed radically. The birth rate of the current generation and accordingly reproduction is significantly lower than the rate of the previous generation (parents). Emigration further exacerbates the demographic crisis and raises the questions of how to resolve the demographic problems of Georgia.

¹ Georgian Institute of Geography, *Social-Economic Geography of Georgia. II Volume*, (Tbilisi: Academy of Science of Georgia, 2003).

² Georgian Institute of Geography, *Social-Economic Geography of Georgia*.

The birth rate and natural increase have always ensured the extended reproduction of the population when the generation of children outnumbers the generation of parents. But let's follow it consistently.

The natural movement and reproduction of the population of Georgia were historically of a European type. In the 19th century and even in the 20th century, Georgia with a much lower economic level of development, from the demographic point of view was characterized by the demographic parameters of the economically developed countries, which was a peculiarity of Georgia. Specifically, this meant that even though the birth rate in the 19th century in Georgia was lower compared to European countries and Russia, at the same time, the death rate (mortality) was also lower in comparison to the mentioned countries, as a result of which the natural increase (reproduction) of the population of Georgia, was not lower than in the Europe or European part of Russian Empire.³

In the modern period, some tendencies are conserved, and it can be mentioned that the natural movement (reproduction) of the population in Georgia mostly coincided with that of the economically developed European countries – characterized by low birth rate and mortality.

Methodology

Descriptive, applied, and historical demography theories will be used in the paper. Descriptive demography is a branch of demography, the purpose of which is the general quantitative characterization, and description of population distribution, level, and trends of demographic processes in the territory of a specific country or region.

Historical demography, on the other hand, is how the discipline of demographic analysis studies population reproduction from a historical point of view. The main goal of historical demography is to determine the historical regularities of population reproduction, including the study of the historical

³ M. Khmaladze, "Natural population movement in post-Soviet Georgia", (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University, 2018), <https://dspace.tsu.ge/bitstream/handle/123456789/406/The%20natural%20movement%20of%20the%20population%20in%20post-soviet%20Georgia.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

dynamics of the population, changes in its composition, density, settlement, and migration processes.

We used quantitative statistical methods for this chapter. In particular we used first and foremost a statistical study relating to the determination of the number population, several birthrate and death rates, migration, etc. of the population of Georgia. We also produced a comparative analysis relating to the review of the demographic situation in Georgia during the different periods of the history of the country.

The scientific novelty of the research paper represents the deep analysis of the demographic processes and dynamics of the population of Georgia from the period of the Middle Centuries – particularly from the 13th century until today and presents the reasons for the current deep demographic situation related to low birthrate and migration processes, etc. and ways out from the avoiding the difficulties and resolving the demographic position of Georgia by the adoption the appropriate measures.

Furthermore, there are presented the various statistical data related to reproduction, migration, number of IDPs and immigrants, and a comparative analysis of the population of Georgia and the demographic situation in the country since the period, when the census of the population and publishing an official report on demography has been started.

The Main Historical Aspects Related to the Population of Georgia⁴

According to the data obtained in historiography, the population of Georgia reached 5 million in the 13th century. The data of the 14th–17th centuries are not known. In the middle of the 18th century, the population of Georgia (within today's borders) was estimated at 761,000, of which 5% lived in cities. By 1800, the population of Georgia (within today's borders) was more than 675, 000 of which 45.6% of the population came from Eastern Georgia and 54.4% from Western Georgia. In 1832, it increased to 840,000, and in 1865 it exceeded 1,289,200. In 1897, the population of Georgia was 1,919,400

⁴ Much of what follows has been taken from prior research done by the author, notably N. Chitadze, *National structure of the population of Georgia*. (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University, 1993), and from the National Statistical Office of the Republic of Georgia.

people, and in 1914, it was 2,600,400. For one century, the population of Georgia increased 3.4 times. According to demographers, the population of Georgia in 1916 was 3,365,000 people.⁵ The population of Georgia decreased by approximately 200,000 during the First World War and during the years of the First Republic of Georgia (1918–1921), due to constant wars and loss of territories. In 1921, the population of Georgia reached 2 million 410, 000. The first census in Soviet Georgia was conducted in 1926, and the last in 1989.

If we consider the mentioned censuses, it is possible to note that in 1926, the population of Georgia was 2,677,000, and by 1959, it had reached 4 million. From the 1960s until the 1980s, the trend became negative, with more people leaving the Republic than arriving. Nevertheless, natural increase continued to significantly outweigh the mechanical decline. In 1989, the population of Georgia had reached 5,443,000.

In 1990–1996, the birth rate of population decreased, although the number of births still exceeded the number of deaths. In 1997–2004, the death rate exceeded the birth rate. To this was added intensive mechanical decline, because of all this the population of Georgia decreased sharply. By 2011, the country's population was just shy of 4 and half million people (without Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions), which is almost a million less than in 1989.

The situation worsened further in the following years. According to the 2014 census, the population of Georgia (excluding the occupied territories) was 3,713,804 people and 57.2% of the population lived in the city.⁶

Main Aspects of Population Reproduction in Georgia

After 1991, the demographic situation in Georgia worsened as a result of political and economic instability. The number of people who went abroad for work amounted to several hundreds of thousands, mostly young people. This drastically reduced the birth rate – in 1992, this rate decreased to 14.9,

⁵ P. Ingorokva, *About Historic Borders of Georgia*, (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University, 1990).

⁶ National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023. Retro-projection of main demographic indicators for the period 1994–2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.geostat.ge/en/single-archive/3199>.

and in 2002, it further decreased to 10.7 per thousand people. In 2002, when a general population census was conducted for the first time in the history of independent Georgia, it was found that in the same 2002, the population decreased by 15,8% in comparison to 1989.⁷ At the same time, within this period, the mortality rate was increasing due to the increase in the proportion of the elderly. Furthermore, the rate of natural increase did not exceed 5.3 per thousand in 1992, and 2.1 per thousand in 1994, and became zero in 1997.⁸ The mentioned situation was somewhat corrected at the end of the first decade of the 21st century when by 2010 the coefficient of natural increase was 3.8 per thousand.⁹

The nature of natural population growth determines the type of reproduction. It reflects the population's ability to sustain itself through the continuous process of generational change and renewal. A distinction is made between accelerated succession when the number of the population of a certain age is significantly greater than the number of the population of the same age a generation ago, and simple reproduction – when the difference is insignificant (i.e., when the generation of children is approximately the same as the generation of their parents at the same age). There is also limited reproduction, where each successive generation is smaller than the previous generations. Currently, Georgia has moved from the stage of simple production to the stage of limited production. In 1960, the number of children under one year of age was 102,000, and at the beginning of the 21st century, it was only 46,000.¹⁰ These numbers mention for themselves the acute demographic situation in the country.

Current Demographic Situation in Georgia

As of January 1, 2023, the population of Georgia amounted to 3,736,400 people, which is 1.3% more than the corresponding period of the previous year. It should be noted that in 2022, a negative natural increase (-6,799) and a positive migration balance (54,509) were recorded. Georgian official statis-

⁷ N. Virsaladze, *Population dynamics of Georgia and demographic problems*, (In Georgian) Retrieved from: <http://economicprofile.org/pdf/6b40ca1e5e59220bf7d94d014703aaef.pdf>.

⁸ Virsaladze, *Population dynamics of Georgia and demographic problems*.

⁹ Virsaladze, *Population dynamics of Georgia and demographic problems*.

¹⁰ N. Elizbarashvili, Z. Davitashvili, *Geography of Georgia*, (Tbilisi: Meridiani, 2018).

tics reveal that the share of the population aged 0–14 in the entire population is 20.7%, the share of the working-age population (age group 15–64) is 63.8%, and the share of the population 65 years and older is 15.6%.

As of January 1, 2023, the male population was 1,793,800, for 1,942,500 females. It should be noted that the number of men under the age of 35 exceeds the number of women, and after the age of 35, the opposite picture is seen, which is due to the higher life expectancy of women compared to men. Compared to the previous year, the life expectancy in 2022 increased to 73.7 years, including 69.4 years for men and 78.1 years for women. In 2022, there was a net increase of the population of Georgia due to Russian immigration.¹¹

Reproduction of the Population of Georgia in 2023

2023 marked the year of Georgia's lowest birth rate in thirty years. In 2023, there were 40,214 births in Georgia. This figure is the lowest figure since 1994. For comparison, the number of births for 1994 was 57,311. A higher birth rate in the country was recorded only in 2014 and 2015, respectively, with 60,635 and 59,249 births.¹² In the first half of 2023, the number of births in Georgia was 19,431 children while 21,944 people died during the same period. Accordingly, during the same period, the natural increase (the difference between the number of live births and deaths) was 2,513 people.¹³

Another factor is added to this, which was highlighted recently, that due to the difficult socio-economic situation, marriages do not last long. For example, if previously the average age of marriage was 20, 22 and 25 in different

¹¹ EuroNews “Population in Georgia is increasing”, *EuroNews Georgia*, (April 27, 2023), <https://euronewsgeorgia.com/2023/04/27/sakartveloshi-mosaxleobis-raodenobazrdeba/>.

¹² Business Press News, “The birth rate in Georgia is at a historical minimum in the last 30 years”, (2024), <https://www.bpn.ge/article/129159-sakartveloshi-shobadobismachvenebeli-bolo-30-clis-istoriul-minimumzea/>.

¹³ Interpressnews, “Skastat: the number of live births in Georgia in January–June 2023 amounted to 19,431 children – in the same period, 21,944 people died in the country”, (2023), https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/769828-sakstati-sakartveloshi-2023-clis-ianvar-ivnisshi-cocxlad-dabadebulta-ricxovnobam-19-431-bavshvi-sheadgina-amave-periodshi-kveqanashi-gardaicvala-21-944-adamiani/?fbclid=IwAR3kseEwLU3_dOVk7PHmiP5LDwEDD3SFX70Sl6U6xJ_ykcSvE2NhJdEN2K0.

years, the mentioned age has also increased and reached 33 years. On average, a woman gets married at the age of 33. The number of women who give birth to children over the age of 35 has also increased.¹⁴

Georgian Demography and Human Security

Various factors influence the birth rate and overall demographic situation. Among them, one of the most important is the age structure of the population and the specific share of young people in the total number of the population. Accordingly, taking into account this aspect, the aging rate of the population in a particular country is also determined. It is natural that in countries with a higher percentage of young people, the level of reproduction is relatively high. At the same time, many socio-economic, psychological, medical, social and moral factors should be added to the demographic factors, which are reflected in such negative events as the family crisis, which occurs in a small number of families.

Thus, the severe demographic situation in Georgia has a very negative effect on the **gender-age structure** of the population. The higher the birth rate and natural increase, the higher the proportion of young people in the population, and vice versa. According to the age composition of the population, demographically young and aging nations are distinguished. Examples of young nations are the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, where half of the population is less than 18–20 years old. And the people of Europe and North America belong to the aging group, because here the proportion of young people is continuously decreasing, and the proportion of elderly people is increasing. Unfortunately, Georgia also belongs to aging nations, since the proportion of elderly people is increasing. For example, if in 1926 the number of people over 35 years of age did not exceed 28.5% of the entire population, today this figure reaches 50%.¹⁵

In turn, this has a negative impact on the share of the economically active population in the entire population of Georgia. In particular, by the beginning of 2010s, the economically active population was a little less than half

¹⁴ Business Press News, “The birth rate in Georgia...”.

¹⁵ N. Elizbarashvili, Z. Davitashvili, Z. and N. Beruchashvili, *Geography of Georgia*, (Tbilisi: Meridiani, 2014).

of the entire population of Georgia (some 1.9 million people). The number of unemployed was equal to nearly 317,000, or 16.3% of the economically active population.

Another problem related to demography is the fact that due to the lack of work in rural settlements, there was a **mass migration of the population from the countryside to the city**. Consequently, such internal migration created serious problems. The population of Georgian villages decreased significantly, in many of them only the elderly remained, and some mountain villages were completely emptied. Due to this, the population of the city increased unnaturally. First of all, this applies to Tbilisi, where a quarter of the population of Georgia has gathered, which is a highly rejected event and prevents the normal development of the country.

One of the most important demographic factors is the low birthrate. The situation could become tragic if current trends (two children per family) continue, as the nation may eventually cease to exist if each family only has two children. A low birthrate poses the risk that, over time, the population could decline to the point of extinction if this pattern persists. Based on the fact that statistically, every fifth person in the country is a pensioner, if the birth rate is not encouraged, the process of the **nation's aging** and birth rate decline cannot be stopped. If we take into account the fact that every fifth person in Georgia is a pensioner, and in the last 5 years this indicator has increased by 9.8% and equalled 22.4% of the total population, while in the same period the number of the population decreased by only 0.3% has grown. According to the latest data of 2023, the population was 3,736,357, of which 838,097 people were pensioners.¹⁶ So, when talking about the aging of the population, it is necessary to consider the number of pensioners in Georgia and the retirement age. Thus, the share of pensioners is about 23% of the entire population of Georgia. From this, the pension of pensioners under the age of 70 is 315 GEL (about 177 USD), for those over 70 it is 415 GEL (about 154 USD).¹⁷

¹⁶ Business Press news, "The birth rate in Georgia...".

¹⁷ Sputnik Georgia, "How many pensioners are in Georgia? Latest Data", *Sputnik News Georgia*, (June 16, 2024), <https://sputnik-georgia.com/20240616/ramdeni-pensioneria-saqartvelosi-monacemebi-288430020.html>.

The main part of pensioners is under the age of 75, namely, approximately 12,000 pensioners over 90 live in Georgia, of which 2,900 are men and 9,200 are women. Almost a quarter of pensioners live in Tbilisi. Women are pensionable from the age of 60, and men from the age of 65.¹⁸ This factor weighs heavily on the state budget. It is no coincidence that the Ministry of Health and Social Security of Georgia, which, among other things, is responsible for the pension provision of the population, received the most funding, about 6 billion GEL (about 2.2 billion USD), which is more than 10% of the state budget of Georgia.

Migration Aspects of the Demographic Problems: Refugees and IDPs

To discuss the mentioned issue, first of all, it is necessary to determine who are internally displaced people and refugees. An internally displaced person (IDP) is a citizen who is forced to leave his place of residence for another one in the same State because of armed conflict, civil strife, systematic violation of human rights, or natural or anthropogenic disaster.¹⁹ This is essentially the definition applying to people who had to leave unrecognized territories of Georgia, like Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The 1998 Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced Persons defines the term as individuals or groups of individuals who have been forced to flee their homes or permanent residences, primarily to avoid becoming victims of armed conflict, violence, human rights violations, or /and natural/man-made disasters, although they do not cross the internationally recognized borders of their own country.²⁰

To assess and monitor the current situation of internally displaced persons, the United Nations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees founded an international organization in Geneva in 1998, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. According to quantitative data prepared by the Centre in a 2018 Report, 41.3 million people were internally displaced

¹⁸ Sputnik Georgia, “How many pensioners are in Georgia? Latest Data”.

¹⁹ Oxford Learners Dictionaries, “internally displaced person”, (2023), www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/idp.

²⁰ Legislative Herald of Georgia, “On Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories of Georgia”, (2014), <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2244506?publication=1>.

due to armed conflicts, human rights violations, and violence, which is an increase compared to 2017.²¹ According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), there are currently 293,000 internally displaced persons in Georgia.²²

A refugee is a person who has been subjected to violence, or persecution, or who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race or national origin, religion, language, particular social group, or political opinion, and is forced to leave his or her habitual residence and is, or intends to be, in a State in the territory of which he is not a citizen. In addition, the reasons for which a refugee leaves his country may be aggression, occupation, domination by foreigners or events that have seriously disturbed the order in this country, or events of a natural nature (drought, earthquake, flood, etc.) when the human population in this country has been affected.²³ It is estimated that up to 100,000 refugees live in Georgia,²⁴ including some 17,000 Ukrainian refugees, who remain in Georgia.²⁵ According to the report, 65% of surveyed Ukrainians plan to stay. 9% are undecided, and 10% are going to change the country of residence. Only 16% are thinking of returning to Ukraine.²⁶

Conclusions and Recommendations

The size and composition of the population represents an important indicator of the strength and resilience of a society. The natural movement of the population also determines the country's demographic security. As already

²¹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Global Report on Internal Displacement", (2018), <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/2018-global-report-on-internal-displacement>.

²² Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, "Number of IDPs in Georgia", (2021), https://www.moh.gov.ge/uploads/files/2021/_Devnilta_Statistika.pdf.

²³ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "What is a refugee?" n.d. <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>.

²⁴ National Library of Georgia, "Number of Refugees outside of Georgia", (2023), <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/greenstone3/library/collection/period/document/HASH018ff225178fdb8f7a1665ed;jsessionid=20B45EA2B0FE2A4A374CA4F7588A0798?ed=1>.

²⁵ National Library of Georgia, "Number of Refugees outside of Georgia".

²⁶ Business Formula, "There are 17 000 Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia", (2023), <https://businessformula.ge/News/12880>.

mentioned, such a low natural increase in the population, as in post-Soviet Georgia, has not been experienced throughout its history.

The severe demographic situation in Georgia is due to low birth rates, an increase in the death rate, and the tendency of the population to age. The unfavourable demographic situation is aggravated by the difficult economic situation in the country. Considering all the above, it is important to develop an appropriate state policy to improve the demographic situation. In this regard, one of the important mechanisms for solving demographic problems in the country is the family support policy.

The family support policy involves the implementation of such measures by the state as financial support and assistance to the family, and the creation of an appropriate environment for combining work and family. Financial support of the family involves the implementation of the following financial measures by the state: financial assistance for the child/family, one-time financial assistance in connection with the birth of a child, assistance in covering expenses related to childcare, granting tax benefits and creating a differentiated system of taxation of the family's joint income. Creating an appropriate environment for the reconciliation of work and family involves the development by the state of appropriate guarantees for maternity leave (or leave related to childcare) and allowing both parents to enjoy the said right. The studies confirm that the existing family support policy in Georgia cannot provide the solution to demographic problems and the creation of appropriate conditions for social support of large families, and needs to be improved, taking into account the practices of EU member states.

Taking into account the difficult economic situation in Georgia, the limited state budget, and, accordingly, to use the funds effectively, the state should develop a targeted state program for promoting the improvement of the demographic situation, which will be targeted at low- and medium-income families and will be spread throughout the country. Particularly, the following steps should be taken:

- With the new National Security Concept of Georgia the difficult demographic situation should be determined as one of the main threats and challenges for Georgia. At the same time, the improvement of

the demographic situation should be recognized as a main priority for the country.

- A detailed demographic development program of Georgia should be designed aiming not only to stop the decrease in the birth rate but to increase the birth rate. A new governmental agency or even a new ministry should be responsible for this task.
- The experience of the leading economically developed countries in the field of demographic policy should be studied and analysed with the purpose of its introduction to Georgia for the improvement of the level of reproduction.
- By presenting concrete statistical data Georgia should increase public awareness of the difficult demographic situation in the country.
- The special fund for the graphic revival of Georgia should be founded, where the leading business companies of the country together with the state institution should play the decisive role.
- Georgia should work with the appropriate International Organizations, for example with the UN Population Fund, UNDP, International Organization for Migration, etc. to gain experience from those international institutions related to how to resolve the demographic and migration situation in the country.
- The state should work to provide further socio-economic development of the country, which should be implemented by maximal participation in the different projects, including transport and energy projects for increasing the transit potential of the country and attracting investments in the different sectors of the economy. Those and other socio-economic factors will play a key role in the creation of new jobs, which in turn will establish a convenient base for increasing the income of the families and those people, who are not married but will have more motivation to create the family.
- Socio-economic development will further increase the volume of the budget, which in turn will allow the release of more funds and implementation of the appropriate programs in the field of demography with the increasing motivation of the people to increase the birthrate in the country etc. Particularly, parliament can adopt the law for the establishment of financial benefits for those families, who will have three or more children.

Resilience in Human Security as Factor of Civic Integration of Ethnic Minorities in Georgia

Zviad Abashidze

Introduction

Ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism have been crucial and problematic challenges for post-communist Georgia. The so called “ethnic conflicts” occurred in the 1990s (Abkhazia and Tskinali Region) and later Russian-Georgian war in 2008, created the main framework of ethnic relations in post-communist Georgia. The goal of the current paper is to highlight the importance of minority issues from the perspective of human security. This perspective extends beyond traditional post-Westphalian and Hobbesian understandings of “security”, incorporating new dimensions such as economic failure, human rights violations, and discrimination.¹ Authors working in human security argue, that there

should be a shift of attention from a state-centred to a people-centred approach to security, that concerns regarding the security of state borders should include concerns about the security of the people who live within those borders.²

Notably, Barry Buzan, in his discussions on the scope of human security, includes ethnic factors as potential challenges to peaceful coexistence.³

Broadly speaking, in post-communist multi-ethnic societies minority issues are an integral part of the general traditional security framework and sustainable institutional development. In the post-Soviet region, the “national question” and the formation of modern nation-states are products of late modernization. Diverse ethnic segments of society have often established parallel communities, creating a clear distinction between “majority” and “minority”, peaceful, and stable in many cases. Consequently, issues of ethnicity and hu-

¹ Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, “Human Security: Concepts and Implications with an Application to Post-Intervention Challenges in Afghanistan”, *Les Études du CÉRI* 117–118, (September 2005), 4.

² Tadjbakhsh, “Human Security: Concepts and Implications...” 5.

³ Tadjbakhsh, “Human Security: Concepts and Implications...” 6.

man security are intertwined, unlike in their Western counterparts, necessitating a re-evaluation of traditional understandings of security and stability.

The former Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia is closely connected to the “securitization” of minority issues. Thus, the successful integration of minorities is important for human security and resilience particularly given the country’s history of sharp ethnic mobilization and conflicts that has claimed thousands of lives.⁴ The examination of minority issues in Georgia can be viewed through the following lenses; Georgia’s Soviet socio-cultural past; Georgia’s moral stance before the international community, as it participates to international and European regulations on minorities and human rights, and through the civic integration of minorities.

The Soviet Socio-Cultural Legacy

After a brief period of independence, Georgia became an integral part of the Soviet Union, a totalitarian project of “social justice” and “internationalism.”⁵ Along with other principles, one of the main interesting characteristics of the USSR was the so-called “national question.” Bolsheviks were firm supporters of Marx’s belief that “national differences and antagonisms between people are vanishing gradually from day to day”⁶ and the supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish fast. In the 1916 pamphlet “Socialist revolution and National self-determination”, Lenin accepted the right to national self-determination but viewed class interests as standing above the national ones.⁷ Nevertheless the ideological foundation of the Soviet concepts of the “nation” and “nationality” was theorized in Stalin’s famous work “Marxism and national question.” Stalin defines the concept a nation as “...a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological

⁴ John Rex and Gurbhpal Singh, “Multiculturalism and Political Integration in Modern-Nation-States – Thematic Introduction”, *International Journal on Multicultural Societies* (IJMS) 5, no. 1, (2003): 3–19.

⁵ Achieving Social Justice and internationalism instead of nationalism was the fundament of idea of Soviet Union based on ideas of Lenin style interpretation of Karl Marx. Author’s note.

⁶ R. Sunny, *State-building and nation-making: The Russian Revolution*, (New York: Blackwell Publisher. 2001).

⁷ Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics, an Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 1989).

make-up manifested in a common culture.”⁸ Stalin erected the Soviet policy of nation-building upon the principles of “titular nation” and the “politization of ethnicity.”⁹ This became the cornerstone of the soviet ethno-federalism. As Richard Pipes notes “Soviet Russia became the first modern state to place the national principles at the foundation of its federal structure.”¹⁰

The ultimate aim was the creation of a new type of person, often called *Homo Sovieticus* which would be a-national or supranational. As Richard Sakwa points correctly, the “concept of new Soviet person was promoted as a supranational entity whose loyalty to the socialist commonwealth would take precedence over ethnic affiliation.”¹¹ Consequently, ethnic groups became primary targets in the pursuit of political power and social prestige. Ethnic affiliation often indicates membership in specific political or social groups, which reinforced “democratic centralism.”¹² Given this legacy from the Soviet past, it becomes evident that the origins of regional conflicts are rooted in ethnic affiliations. Such conflicts and the resulting “ethnic” polarization determined the institutional stability and resilience of the post-Soviet space, including Georgia.

Moral Stance and Obligations: International Dimension

There is no clear juridical definition of “national/ethnic minorities” in international law. As a result of such ambiguity, the definition of “minorities” remains in the juridical prerogative of nation-states (for instance France, Greece and Türkiye reject the existence of “minorities” on their territories). In Western societies, the definition of “national minorities” originated in the 1992 UN Declaration concerning People belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Such definition has been relatively successful within the European area. The first mentioning of such a “success” is in

⁸ Sakwa, *Soviet Politics*...

⁹ Nation/ethnic group in majority living on given Soviet Socialist Republic or Autonomy were accepted as privilege nation/ethnic group over others and therefore all types of distributions of resources were based on such ethnic/national hierarchy.

¹⁰ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism 1917–1923*. (1954).

¹¹ Sunny, *State-building and nation-making*... 239; Sakwa, *Soviet Politics*...296; И.Б.Сталин, *Марксизм и национальный вопрос*.(Сочинения: Тбилиси, 1953), 22.

¹² Lenin’s term. Authors note.

the 1992 European Declaration on Minorities and Regional Languages by the Council of Europe. In such case, the definition is indirect and highlights the linguistic belonging as marker of being a minority. The approach does not bear the universalistic character and remains only as significant in the European context. Moreover, there is no definition of “minorities” in the European Framework Convention of Minorities adopted by the Council of Europe in 1994.¹³

There are several formal documents and regulations on minorities that do not bear any juridical obligatory character but have strictly advisory character. These formal regulations are the following:

- European Charter of Minority Languages. The main goal of such document is to take care on languages that are standing on the lines of extinction. From the South Caucasus only Armenia is signatory of the Charter. Azerbaijan only signed it without ratifying it. Georgia has neither signed nor ratified the Charter.
- The European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1994/5. The main objective of the Convention is to underline the necessity to protect the minorities who are concentrated in a specific geographic area. Georgia has signed and ratified the Convention since 2006.
- European Commission on Racism and Intolerance. The commission is working within the framework of the Council of Europe and monitors the cases of racism and intolerance policies of every signatory state. Member states are obliged to write reports about the issues on ethnic minorities in their countries. Georgia as member of the Council of Europe operates within the framework of the Commission.
- The OSCE adopted several documents on minorities issues since 1989. There are several regulations on minorities within the framework of the OSCE, such as a) the Hague recommendations Regarding Education Rights of National Minorities (1996), b) the Oslo

¹³ ECMI, “Minority issues mainstreaming in South Caucasus: a practical guide”, (Tbilisi, 2011), 8, http://www.ecmi.de/uploads/tx_ifpubdb/Minority_Issues_South_Caucasus_fulltext.pdf.

Declaration Regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities (1998), and c) the Lund recommendations.¹⁴ As long as Georgia is the member of the OSCE, it is obliged to abide with the above-mentioned regulations. However, we should mention that the EU does not have a separate special mandate on minority regulations, and it operates more within the framework of the Council of Europe, but it does not imply absence of the EU from the context of minorities. The minority questions turned out to be crucial for the EU during its enlargement process. Minority issues continue to be important during the negotiation process between the EU and the candidate states.

On the 2nd of May 2014, the Anti-discriminatory Law was adopted by the Georgian Parliament, which highlighted the importance of elimination of all kinds of discrimination, among them the discrimination on an ethnic base. The Law was adopted as a prerequisite for the Association Agreement with the EU, it is therefore not an independent Georgian decision. Despite Georgia's adoption and ratification of the law, EU membership for Georgia remains far off. Along with some other issues, the Agreement underlines the need for more regulations on minorities, but the question has been examined within the broader context of human rights and is not the subject of separate reasoning. The Agreement stresses the peaceful resolution of conflicts, which is a direct or indirect normative base for minority relations.¹⁵

The above-mentioned regulations have a significant impact on Georgian life, both directly and indirectly and create a new framework concerning minorities. Georgia is practically connected to the whole package of international humanitarian law, but there are certain European regulations which have not yet been signed by Georgia.

One of the documents that have not yet been signed by Georgia, despite its obligation to do so as a member of the Council of Europe, is the European Charter of Minority Languages. If Georgia signs the Charter, it will likely have to recognize the existence of 19 languages within its territory and will have to ensure their preservation. The case of the recognition of Megrelia

¹⁴ ECMI, "Minority issues mainstreaming..." 9–17.

¹⁵ ECMI, "Minority issues mainstreaming..." 25–35.

and Svan languages as minority languages is the most controversial. According to expert linguists, the Megrelian and Svan languages are languages formed without alphabet and therefore, a writing culture tradition. Some linguists examine Svan and Megrelian as the only strong dialects of the common Georgian language and thus, their recognition as independent languages would create artificial dividing lines within the broader Georgian identity. Moreover, the formalization of every minority language that might be an additional threat to Georgian identity. In short, Georgia tries to avoid the formalization of minority languages (except for the Abkhazian Constitutionally Official Language statutes on the territory of Abkhazia) because of fears of future secession movements. Such fear is not unfounded, if we look at the Georgian post-communist secession movements.

From the other side, Georgia has been connected to the European Framework Convention of Minorities since 2006, and its implementation occupies a significant position of political agenda. The clear articulation of civic integration policy was the adoption of “National Convention of Tolerance and Civic Integration” in 2008, which created a normative base for development of minority policies.¹⁶ Georgia officially does not reject the repatriation process of the so called “Meskhetian Turks” to their former homeland (an obligation undertaken by the Georgian state before the Council of Europe prior to its membership), but there is no official date and timing of fulfilment of such policy.¹⁷

The political processes taking place after the so called “Rose Revolution” of 2003 proposed many institutional changes, including Constitutional ones. The question of minorities took a more “respectful” place in the political agenda. Minority policies were determined not only as part of internal needs but as international obligations. As a result of such attitudes, several official structures were created working on minority policies. After 2004 the branch on civic integration was created as responsible branch for minority issues, which later became the State Ministry of Reconciliation and Civic Equality. At the same time, the Council of Tolerance and Civic Integration was created, sharing its obligations and operations with the Advisor of the President

¹⁶ Rex and Singh, “Multiculturalism and Political Integration...” 3–19.

¹⁷ ECMI, “Minority issues mainstreaming...” 120–125.

on Civic Integration. As a result of such joint operation, the Georgian government approved the National Convention of Tolerance and Civic Integration in 2009.

The Council of Tolerance and Civic Integration was delegated the power for working on relevant policies on minorities. As a result, the Council adopted the “National Convention of Tolerance and Civic Integration and its implementation plan.”¹⁸

The competencies for ethnic minorities and civic integration are divided among several governmental branches, under the coordinating role of the State Ministry of Reconciliation and Civic Equality. From the legislative branch, the Standing committee of Human Rights and Civic Integration has been directly involved in minority rights defence and civic integration issues. At the same time, there are some other Committees working on minorities, but their operations are expressed more in indirect ways. There is one additional branch on minorities within the apparatus of Ombudsman, Council of Minorities, but its obligations are rather recommendations and therefore are not part of official decision/policymaking.¹⁹

The functions of the above-mentioned structures are often confused, which makes policy-making ineffective. The international community requires the creation of a central, authoritative institution with clear competences on the issues, but there is less motivation from the Georgian political elites to meet this demand.²⁰

Civic Integration Process

According to the census of 2014, ethnic Georgians represent 86.6% of the total population. Besides the majority, there are the two biggest minorities: Azerbaijanis (6.3%) and Armenians (4.5%). Both minorities are concentrated in two regions, with the Azerbaijanis mostly living in the Kvemo Kartly

¹⁸ National Concept of toleration and Civic Integration (in Georgian) at www.diversity.ge.

¹⁹ National Concept of toleration and Civic Integration.

²⁰ “Analysis of civic integration of policy”, *btkk-politikis research group*, program on ethnic minorities (in Georgian), (Tbilisi 2008) at www.btkk.ge.

Region (south-east, near Azerbaijan) while the Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti (South-West, near Armenian Republic). During the Soviet Union, because of the above-mentioned nationality and indigenization policies these populations were separate from the ethnic majority. Party mobilization was the way to achieve mutual cooperation and coexistence. In most cases ethnic groups were positioned as interest groups in the sphere of resource distribution and not as individual citizens with rights and obligations in the sense of Western liberal democracies.

The creation of parallel societies was the main trend of Soviet life. Unlike in Abkhazia and the Tskinali region, ethnic misunderstandings did not transform into conflicts, but at the same time the level of alienation remained high and dangerous. As Svante Cornell argues, autonomy meant the destruction of institutions and practices which permitted a relatively peaceful coexistence without armed conflict.²¹

Compactly populated ethnic minorities are inadequately integrated into the general Georgian polity, and it can be said that in many ways they are organized as parallel to the Georgian ethnic majority. Surveys prove that citizenship is not the determining factor in identity formation. Ethnicity and religion have a greater impact on political affiliation. The Azerbaijani case is a clear example of how religious identity is the cornerstone of ethnic identity. This is in clear contrast to the Armenian minority and Georgian majority, where ethnicity and religion are interchangeable. This has the potential to damage not only traditional concepts and practices of security, but also human security in general.²²

There are several empirical researches and surveys in Georgia organized by the local academia and think tanks, as well as their international counterparts, that are interested in minority-majority relationship matters. Ethnic Georgians are typically forthcoming with interviewers and their responses are consistently candid and insightful. Most respondents are forthright and candid

²¹ Svante Cornell, "Autonomy as a Source of Conflict: Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective", *World Politics*, Volume 54, Issue 2, January 2002, pp. 245–276.

²² Salome Dundua, Zviad Abashidze, *Issues of ethnic and religious identity and civic integration process in Georgia*, (Intelekti Publisher 2009).

with interviewers, attempting to provide open and honest responses. Furthermore, it is clear that ethnic Georgians have a relatively higher level of education and a less pronounced internal group hierarchy.²³

Ethnic minorities are different. Armenians are open, but they are afraid to respond openly. This can be explained by their relatively higher level of education and traditions.²⁴ The Azerbaijani community is the most closed and hierarchical of all. Such closeness and social hierarchy are determined by Islamic cultural traditions, visible domination of men over women, and low level of general education.²⁵ Such differences are concerning.

All respondents define their identity in terms of their ethnicity. The only exception is the Azerbaijanis, whose identity is mostly linked to their religious affiliation, which is an indicator of the strong influence of Muslim cultural traditions in this community. Therefore, we can conclude that the “national identity” of the citizens of Georgia runs along ethnic lines and affiliations.²⁶

To the question “What does it mean to be a citizen of Georgia”, 90.7% of Muslim Georgians answered, “living in the motherland”. The results of this question were similar for Azerbaijanis and Armenians as 83.6% of Azerbaijanis and 87.3% of Armenians consider Georgia as their motherland. Thus, it can be said that all the ethnic groups surveyed consider Georgia as their motherland and main place of residence. Azerbaijanis are mostly weakly involved in the public-political sphere. Only 0.7% of them consider themselves to be active participants in civic-public life.²⁷

The case of marriage issues varies according to ethnic communities. Ethnic Georgians, whether Orthodox or Muslim, have a strong preference for marrying within their own ethnic group. The same is true for the Azerbaijanis.

²³ Zviad Abashidze, “Ethnic Fragmentation as Challenge for Post-Socialist Georgia”, *Polskie Studia Politologiczne* 48 (2015): 190–206.

²⁴ Abashidze, “Ethnic Fragmentation as Challenge for Post-Socialist Georgia”, 190–206.

²⁵ <https://publika.ge/article/rogor-da-ratom-arian-etnikuri-umciresobebi-saqartveloshigariyulebi/>.

²⁶ Dundua and Abashidze, *Issues of ethnic and religious identity and civic integration...* 35–37.

²⁷ Dundua and Abashidze, *Issues of ethnic and religious identity and civic integration...* 40–43.

The majority of Armenians are not concerned about their future spouses' ethnic affiliations.²⁸

In inter-ethnic communication practice, ethnic minorities are stronger in comparison with ethnic Georgians. 64.4% of the Azerbaijanis and 86.4% of Armenians are connected in everyday life with people of different ethnic affiliations. Only 37.2% of Georgians regard themselves to be connected in everyday life with citizens of non-Georgian ethnic origins. Ethnic minorities are leaders in inter-ethnic communication practice. Azerbaijanis and Armenians are connected in everyday life with people of different ethnicities at a rate of 64.4% and 86.4% respectively. In comparison, only 37.2% of Georgians regard themselves to be connected in everyday life with citizens of non-Georgian ethnic origins.²⁹

In information-receiving issues, it is clear that the majority of respondents from ethnic minorities receive information through informal channels. Furthermore, their trust in informal networks is significantly higher than their trust in official information sources. It is clear that, with the exception of Azerbaijanis, most respondents trust information from their family and friends. TV broadcasts are the main source of information for most people, while only a few Azerbaijanis use traditional printed media as a source of information due to a lack of knowledge of the official language.³⁰

The majority of respondents have a positive attitude towards the official state symbols, including the flag, anthem and coats of arms. It is surprising that only 83.2% of Georgians have positive attitudes towards such symbols, despite their strong Christian background. In contrast, 92% of Armenians and 94.3% of Azerbaijanis have absolutely positive attitudes towards the symbols. It is likely that ethnic minorities do not express their true attitudes towards symbols. Otherwise, it is unclear why Muslim Azerbaijanis have positive attitudes towards Christian symbols, while Orthodox Georgians often express their negative perception of the state symbols.³¹

²⁸ Abashidze, "Ethnic Fragmentation as Challenge for Post-Socialist Georgia", 198–199.

²⁹ Abashidze, "Ethnic Fragmentation as Challenge for Post-Socialist Georgia", 199–200.

³⁰ Dundua and Abashidze, *Issues of ethnic and religious identity and civic integration...* 40–42.

³¹ Dundua and Abashidze, *Issues of ethnic and religious identity and civic integration...* 45–46.

Ethnic minorities clearly prefer relationships with other groups, mostly in their neighbourhood. Family-type relationships are the most common among Armenians (5.9%). The majority of respondents stated that their ethnic or religious affiliations do not prevent them from advancing in the civic and public sphere, provided that they possess the necessary level of knowledge of the official language.

Ethnic Georgians are primarily concerned with their own ethnic or religious affiliations when it comes to marriage and elections. Over half (56.4%) of them believe that the ethnic/religious affiliations of a future marriage partner or political candidate are of great importance. Ethnic minorities did not express any interest in candidates' ethnic or religious affiliations during the elections.

The Georgian language is the mother tongue only for those who are ethnically Georgian. In this case, the majority of representatives of ethnic minorities are homogeneous and regard their ethnic tongue as their mother tongue. Only about 10% of the Armenian Georgians see Russian as their principal tongue of usage.³²

Conclusion

As we seen from above, “ethnic” issues have been crucial for post-communist Georgia’s sustainable institutional development and resilience. That’s why it is seen very reasonable to include in this case issues of minorities and civic integration in general resilience and the human security concept within the context of an ethnically divided society, like in Georgia. It is quite clear that “ethnicity” and “civic integration” is not just an ordinary part of traditional political routine and agenda. It is rather a part of basic foundations of stable state-building and human peaceful coexistence where the political institutions could be in charge to avoid citizens from biased context. As it clear, the situation is quite dangerous not only from political perspectives, but from the human dimension as well. Ethnic mobilization and tension are common in post-communist, ethnically plural societies, where the tradition of civic, peaceful coexistence has not been the predominant experience within the framework of modern nation-states.

³² Dundua and Abashidze, *Issues of ethnic and religious identity and civic integration*... 23.

To achieve these goals, Georgia must first develop new governmental strategies that promote national unity based on civic principles, in order to prevent potential ethnic tensions from escalating further. This process is important for traditional security building, which in turn forms the foundation for sustainable human security and resilience. Peaceful coexistence must be accompanied by the necessary guarantees to free political participation and reduce ethnic bias. Without free participation, stable democratic institutions, and a robust network of free market exchanges, it will be challenging for Georgia to evolve into a strong and stable modern nation-state by traditional standards. However, it may be more important to focus on building a polity centred on human security, where ethnicity no longer serves as a source of significant misunderstandings or conflict. It is clear that weak democratic institutions pose a significant challenge to human security. When power and authority are not used as instruments of power sharing and justice, but rather as tools for accumulating resources by individuals or oligarchic groups, it hinders the ability to make decisions based on the rule of law.

PART IV: Conclusion

Resilience as Confidence

Frederic Labarre

This Handbook is replete with contributions exploring human security and celebrating the value of resilience. Nevertheless, there are important nuances to underline. The first is that there is a conceptual linkage connecting infrastructure, institutions, and information. A second nuance is that hybrid challenges provide the need for resilience.¹ Hybridity and resilience have an inherent causal relation, and this causal relation affects infrastructure, institutions, and information. To this must be added the asymmetrical understanding of key concepts of security and resilience, mostly based on considerations of incomplete (or perceived as incomplete) nation-building processes. This has consequences for analysis, which are discussed separately below. Otherwise, this conclusion is an attempt to develop a holistic concept which may help future researchers (ostensibly the users of this Handbook) to articulate the foregoing themes into a coherent theory, or better yet, policy.

Russia's "hybrid warfare" is a favourite topic, and it has heavily motivated the accomplishment of this project. "Hybrid" warfare is nothing new, however. It has been used for centuries.² Russians themselves pointed out, in the mid-2000s, that it was the West who had instigated it.³ In reality, hybrid warfare is as old as war itself. However, it is not hybridity which is at issue, but the point at which resilience to "hybrid assaults" collapses, leading to actual war. The same could be said about the solidity of society to incidental phenomena such as gender gaps, climate crises, or demographic pressures. This observation presumes that an understanding of resilience *and* hybridity is incomplete when it does not address the consequences for information, institutions, and infrastructure.

¹ See Stephen J. Flanagan, Annika Binnendijk, Clint Reach et al. *Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020).

² Mikhail A. Strokan and Brian D. Taylor, "Intelligence" in Andrei P. Tsyganok, ed. *Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge, 2018), 163.

³ A. A. Bartosh (Col. Ret.), "Laws and Principles of Hybrid Warfare", *Military Thought (Voennyi Mysl)* 32, no. 1, (2023): 11–20.

Resilience and the Perception of Incomplete Nation-Building

Many of our contributors have pointed to specific challenges as societal pressure points. It is interesting to note that those challenges, although they point to progressive political agendas of Western hegemons or international organizations which exert powerful attraction, find interpretation in conservative parlance. Thus, problems of demography seem construed to rely on a return to the traditional family as a remedy. But this is because the issue of demography is understood as an indicator of the health of the traditional nation-state, and of national identity seen as collective expressions. At the same time, there remains the issue of individual rights and freedoms at the granular level which are guaranteed by the application of Western norms. These principles have often been seen in contradiction to one another in the academic literature and have usually found poor resolution in policy and legislation among developed countries.

Reconciliation of collective and individual rights seem to provide added challenges when considering gender gaps, minorities and other factors, because they emerge at a moment when some nations are still grappling with their post-Soviet legacy, trying to find their “national” unity, while at the same time integrating Western norms. The issue of resilience finds expression in new and interesting ways, as resilience as a value becomes caught on the definition of statehood and on that of collective rights simultaneously. For instance, addressing gender challenges within post-Soviet societies is a necessary step to be resilient against the power of Soviet legacy. At the same time, jettisoning the Soviet legacy also means embracing nationalistic concepts which put the onus on conservative notions of the family, and make nation-building resilient to Soviet nostalgia. Naturally, conservative notions of family and progressive aspects of gender may clash. The same complexes may be in operation with regards to minorities or demographic stresses. In other words, the image of what stressors are like depend on the desired image of an accomplished nation-state. And the definition of “accomplishment” (under-explored in this Handbook) is intensely personal; because of this, what looks like a stressor to one analyst (and requiring a resilient outlook) may not be an important indicator to another analyst. Some indicators may look alarming viewed from one point of view, whereas viewed from another, they are negligible. This must be borne in mind while looking at some contributions herein, lest the reader perceive incongruities, inconsistencies or

incoherences in analysis. Another reason for this is the excessive reliance on slogans to short-cut complex ideas, and, in some cases, the politicisation of those slogans. There is a way to re-interpret resilience to enable the analyst and the reader to make a leap of imagination. We make this exposition below.

From Resilience to Confidence

Resilience is rife. Resilience is everywhere. We have too much resilience, not too little. No slogan has ever been better promoted and defended. Everybody is resilient, even our adversaries. Except that they are not always adversaries. This is the paradox of all our efforts at resilience; resilience reinforces divisions. It invites the very polarization which we lament, and which is our (real) adversaries' objective. Our societies become so divided that the middle ground between opposite poles is no longer a place where policies and solutions serve the public good.

When resilience elevates stubbornness to a virtue, democratic debate dies, putting at risk institutions and infrastructure. The challenge that confronts us in this Handbook pertains, in the end, with the need to rekindle sound democratic debate in a context of persistent resilience. At this juncture, the reader may become sceptical of our claim of a linkage among all forms of resilience and information, institutions, and infrastructure. The lynchpin is hybrid warfare, which affects all these themes.

As most institutions and infrastructures discussed in this Handbook operate in the public sphere as products of civil society or government action, hybrid assaults will first target public perception by having information mix truth with falsehood.⁴ Public perception thus negatively affected, turns its attention to public institutions, those institutions that are frequently responsible, in our Western welfare states, for the infrastructure which facilitates the provision of social services. Vitiating information engenders a cascade of mistrust across society, incapacitating it. This leads to a profound observation. Hybrid warfare *does not sow doubt*; on the contrary, *it sows certainty* in the hearts and minds of people, private and public. Certainty that soothing information

⁴ See, in that regard, Frederic Labarre and George Niculescu, eds., *Understanding the Contemporary Information Landscape*, Band 6/2022, (Vienna: National Defence Academy, 2022).

is truthful. Certainty that institutions are not trustworthy. Certainty that infrastructure is unsound. In such conditions, resilience is less a function of prudence than a normal human reflex which seeks to establish distance between ourselves and danger. It is revulsion, not resilience, which pits individuals against one another in a battle of opinion, which leads institutions to react harshly to criticism, and which leads public officials to engineer infrastructural defences in a way that “zero risk” amounts to “zero freedom.”

What resilience is for is not always what resilience does. As long as resilience amounts to polarization, what it seeks to protect will remain vulnerable. What we have presented in each of our case studies can be summarized into a renewed conception of resilience. Whereas current resilience concepts – reduced to slogans – may invite polarization *because* they force actors to oppose *any* contrary view, whether ideological or physical, instead resilience must *relate to* where the public good resides – in the synthesis of diverse actors’ aims and interests, which should be oriented towards *measurably* improving that public good.

The application of resilience in such a context would imply that the “parties” would have to “compromise” their cherished positions, there is little likelihood of any meaningful progress. The merit of a particular position, policy, or idea must be measured against how well it serves the public good, as opposed to the sooth of the parties. To take one example, imagine the following conflicting narrative. One campaigner promises massive tax breaks to win over an electorate. The opposing camp – being resilient – automatically insinuates that this is a “gift to the wealthy that will affect the poor.” Such an acerbic position invites the first campaigner in an escalation; “it is *you* who want to steal from hardworking citizens...” We have all been witness to such exchanges, laden with emotion. By contrast, should the campaigners formulate their position with a conscious effort to relate to the public good, the delivery of the statements may sound like this; “a tax break will enable people to save for their retirement, alleviating pressure on the state pension system.” Already the statement is more factual and, if implemented, the policy can be easily *measurable*. The opposing camp is more likely to reply with the inquisitive stance; “what will happen to the funding of social services in the meantime?” Again, the focus is on one interpretation of the public good, and it is not a personal attack on the opposite campaigner. Similarly, debate about the

performance of institutions, or about the efficiency of infrastructure may benefit from a technocratic approach.

For instance, several countries have made unpopular commitments to meet Kyoto protocol goals – understood to be a genuine public good. When Kyoto-inspired policies are put into practice, such as with the erection of an appropriate grid to recharge electric vehicles, the issue of resilience could consider the longevity of the grid, the stability of the supply chain (is there enough electric capacity, or is there a market of electric vehicle purchasers to begin with, but also, is the provision of this capability relying on unstable regions, etc.) as part of a feasibility study for ulterior implementation. As we have seen, many countries have vowed to forbid the sale of fossil fuel vehicles from a certain date as a matter of political ideology, and out of a desire to impede opposing debate on this issue, and shutting down dissenting voices (in other words, building resilience to opposing views, instead of being open to dialogue, and searching for middle ground).

The argument that we have put forward may seem naïve or idealistic, even reminiscent of the conflict resolution techniques borne out of the annals of early post-Cold War peace studies. For all its similarities, this is a technique that makes the beneficiary of resilience not the actors in dispute, but the public itself. The condition of resilience floats to mind because deep down, no matter how complex or solid a society seems,

...it is actually quite fragile. It can be destroyed. What are its enemies? First of all; Fear. Fear of war. Fear of invasion. Fear of plague. Fears that make it simply not worthwhile constructing things, or planting trees, or next year's crops... And then Boredom. A feeling of hopelessness which can overtake a people with a high degree of material prosperity... Of course, civilization requires a modicum of material prosperity... But far more it requires *confidence*. Confidence in the society in which one lives. Belief in its philosophy. Belief in its laws. Confidence in one's own mental powers...⁵

In the example we have given above, the confidence that the actors have in presenting a policy or an idea aimed at the public good is not inherent. We are not speaking here of the bombastic confidence of politicians who rely on appeals to emotion to carry their point across. We speak of the confidence

⁵ Kenneth Clark, OBE, *Civilization*, Part 1. (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1969). (Author's italics).

in one's own mastery of arguments and facts as they are, and not as one would wish they were. We speak of the confidence which enables the actors to reckon with unpleasant and inconvenient facts with realism. Such confidence is essential to critical thinking and enables the re-emergence of sound public debate. Resilience therefore is not necessarily closing oneself off to dissenting views. It is not shielding institutions with armies of lawyers and public relations experts. And it is not adding ever thicker layers of physical protection to our infrastructure. Effective resilience is *confidence*.

The Way Back as the Way Ahead

The solution is straightforward; the return to a classical education program. Education in civics, ethics, and political thought at the earliest possible age. This skill will enable the *capacity to doubt* eradicating the certainty which hybrid assaults on information systems, institutions, and infrastructure have created.

In certain regions of the world, like the Greater Black Sea, in the wider former Soviet Union, this program may prove exceedingly difficult. Difficult because the stakes are high, as regions are torn between eastward and westward destinies. Difficult also because the understanding of what the public good may differ markedly from the Western experience and take an abstract form. Nevertheless, the foregoing has been a modest contribution to bring about a discussion on the matter. It is understood that in certain regions emotions run high after the tragic experience of the last several years. This is particularly true for Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Nevertheless, the example of Ukraine (imperfect as it is) has come to epitomize the idea of resilience as confidence. The Greater Black Sea and more particularly the South Caucasus have a destiny as a bridge between East and West. Now is the moment to fulfil that destiny at the intersection of several civilizations. Undertaking this responsibility will require confidence – being able to resist naysayers or doubters by providing coherent and rational policies.

Confidence will be necessary to distinguish a simple ontological disagreement from a full-blown hybrid assault. In that distinction lies the real effect of resilience *cum* confidence; the acceptance and adaptation of opposing views, the preservation of political discourse, and the creation of solutions at the service of the greater good.

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List of Abbreviations

ABL	Administrative Boundary Line
ACWA	Arab Company for Water and Power
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AH	Asian Highway Network
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ARDS	Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy
ATMs	Automated Teller Machines (Cash Machines)
BC	Before Christ
BP	British Petroleum
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CEOs	Chief Executive Officers
CEPA	Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement
CERT	Cyber Emergency Response Team
CHS	Commission on Human Security
CIS	Communication and Information System
CISS	Social Services Trainings Centre
COP	Conference of the Parties, referring to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) international meeting focusing on climate
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CRRC-Armenia	Caucasus Research Resource Centre-Armenia Foundation
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CSAM	Child Sexual Abuse Material
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ECAADS	Economic Connectivity: Armenia-Azerbaijan Dialogue Series
ECOS	Environmental Coalition on Standards
EU	European Union
EUBAM	European Union's Border Assistance Mission
EUMM	EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FEZ	Free Economic Zones
FM	Foreign Minister
FRI	Fair Recruitment Initiative
GAF-RE	German-Armenian Renewable Energy Fund
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
GENADs	Gender Advisors
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
GS	General Security
GSAC	Georgian Strategic Analysis Centre
GW	Gigawatts
HPPs	Hydropower Plants
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDeA	Initiatives for Development of Armenia
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Center
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IFF's	(EU) Independent Fiscal Institutions'
ILO	International Labor Organization
INSTC	International North-South Transport Corridor
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPRMs	Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
IT	Information Technologies
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
LED	Light Emitting Diode
LEDs	Low-Emission Development Strategy
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
LGBTQ2+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning und Two-Spirit+
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDI	Media Diversity Institute – Armenia

MELANI	Reporting and Analysis Centre for Information Assurance
MEPA	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
MOIM	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member(s) of Parliament
MSMEs	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
MW	Megawatts
NAP	National Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCGM	Nordic Center for Gender in Military Operations
NCOs	Non-Commissioned Officers
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NGU	National Guard of Ukraine
NPP	Nuclear Power Plant
NSS	National Security Strategy
NSTRC	North-South Transport Road Corridor
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PM	Prime Minister
PNA	People's National Army
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PV	Photovoltaic
RA	Republic of Armenia
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
RT	Russia Today
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

SPPs	Solar Power Plants
SSR	Security sector reform
SWOT	Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats Analysis
SWP	German Institute for International Security Affairs
TANAP	Trans-Anatolian (Gas) Pipeline
TAP	Trans-Adriatic (Gas) Pipeline
TCNs	Third-Country Nationals
TIP Council	Trafficking in Persons
TMU	Techno-Military Union
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNPFA	UN Population Fund Armenia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
U.S./US/USA	United States of America
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USD	US dollar
VPN	Virtual Private Network
WHO	World Health Organization
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WME	Weapons and Military Equipment
WPPs	Wind Power Plants
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security
WWII	World War II

Building resilience against human security threats and risks requires strong governance and institutions. Good governance, rule of law, and effective institutions could reduce vulnerabilities by providing public services, protecting rights, and ensuring security. Education fosters resilience by equipping students with the knowledge and skills to navigate risks and adapt to new challenges. This Handbook aims to help educators, including those from defence and security education institutions, explain and illustrate strategic approaches to building resilience against human security risks and threats. In addition, this Handbook argues that regional cooperation is essential for building resilience.

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