

Association Européenne des Représentants Territoriaux de l'Etat

European Association of State Territorial Representatives



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**“The consequences of the war in Ukraine –
how does it affect our countries?”**

**XXVIIth European Days of State Territorial
Representatives**

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The 2023 annual European Days of State Territorial Representatives were held in Sweden, in the big southern city, MALMÖ. The working theme chosen by mutual agreement between the prefects or governors (“STR”) of the fifteen countries or federated states that are members of this association created in 1993 was to study the impact of the conflict in Ukraine on the different European countries. With an objective: to encourage the exchange of real experiences between territorial representatives in this extraordinary issue.

The reader will begin with introductory remarks from two high-level experts, Dr. Katarina Engberg, Senior Advisor, Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, SIEPS, Sweden and the French State Councilor, Mr. Yves Doutriaux, Professor of Geopolitics, University of Paris-Dauphine, former ambassador to the OSCE in Vienna from 2003 to 2006.

Then, the thematic reports of several of the working groups (WG) make it possible to understand the extent of the challenges that the STRs have had to handle for more than two years, whether it concerns the perception of the conflict by opinions of local public, or impacts on national defense policies, or even impacts on economic or social policies.

Finally, a summary note from Mr. Jean-Michel Bricault, from the University of Reims, puts all of the European Days’ debates in Malmö in 2023 into perspective.

Pierre-Etienne Bisch, Secretary General of the EADR

DR. KATARINA ENGBERG

Senior Advisor, Swedish Institute for
European Policy Studies, SIEPS, Sweden

The conflict over Ukraine is a tragedy first and foremost for the Ukrainian people. But it represents also an existential threat to all of Europe and forces us to live on a war-footing for the foreseeable future. However, it may also offer an opportunity.

The fall in the 70s of the dictatorships in Greece, Portugal and Spain opened the way for a democratic transition and for the three countries to join the European Economic Community, EEC. Soon thereafter, another democratic transformation swept through Central- and Eastern Europe, resulting in the end

of the Cold War and 10 new members in what had then become the European Union. The division of Europe ended, and we enjoyed 30 years of peace and prosperity, with the important caveats of the Balkan wars and the financial crisis in 2008. And now a major war in Europe, the first since the end of the second world war. After a brief democratic break-through in the Soviet Union, with the advent of Gorbachev, the current leadership in Moscow came to view the break-down of the Soviet Union as a major geopolitical catastrophe. Hence the need to reintegrate Ukraine into the Russian sphere through a military take-over. If Ukraine retains its sovereignty and most of its territory, which it is likely to do, the war may herald another phase of democratic transition that will lead to a further expansion of the EU to encompass the remaining area in between the Union and Russia. This would expand the EU from its current 27 members to 35 and the Union would, as a consequence, have to change with regard to its governance and budget.

But while we dream of this future Europe, we will have to be realistic about the challenges we are facing. An end to the war will not bring clarity about the future orientation of Russia itself. Things will not remain the same as



before, but we will have to live on a war footing. First, the cost of supporting Ukraine, amounting to some total 54 bn euro in the form of financial and military support. The reception of 8 million refugees is an act of solidarity that has put pressure primarily on Central- and Eastern European countries. The cost amounts to some 10 bn euro. The EU has abolished all tariffs in its trade with Ukraine.

Defence expenditure will have to increase in our countries and the goal has been set to 2% of GDP. Already the

covid pandemic revealed vulnerabilities to our societies. The war has underlined the importance of improving our readiness and resilience. The EU has, for example, passed the Directive of European Resilience that points to the need to address vulnerabilities in sectors such as energy, transport, banking, financial market infrastructures, health, drinking water, wastewater, digital infrastructure, public administration, space and food.

So far, our societies have demonstrated an amazing ability to manage the energy crisis resulting from Europe weaning itself from the dependence on Russian fossil fuels. And our political unity in facing the Russian aggression has held. However, as the war drags on, we will be tested in our ability to withstand pressures on our societies, and we will have to hone our survival skills. In the meanwhile, we can dream of a future Europe, whole and free, and an EU comprising 35 members, including heroic Ukraine. And we shall wait for another Russia to emerge in the future.

Mr. YVES DOUTRIAUX

State Councilor, Professor of Geopolitics, Paris-Dauphine University,
French Ambassador to the OSCE in Vienna (2003-2006), France

1-HOW DID WE COME TO THIS HIGH-INTENSITY WAR?

The unprovoked invasion of February 24, 2022 took place in a long-standing context of growing tensions between Ukraine and Russia and between Russia and western countries:

1-1- increasingly tense relations between Russia and Ukraine:

a) the “orange” revolution of 2004, a color revolution that followed *the rose revolution* in Georgia in 2003. In both cases, rigged ballots provoked demonstrations and then new elections brought in a new generation of leaders oriented towards cooperation with Euro-Atlantic countries rather than with Russia; for Moscow, these revolutions would be secretly activated by western countries who would seek to oust Russia from its sphere of influence;

b) the **Maidan revolution** in autumn 2013 caused by President Yanukovich's refusal, under pressure from Russia, to sign an association agreement with the EU; **Russia seizes Crimea**. The EU and the United States adopt political (exclusion of Russia from the G8) and economic sanctions against Russia which takes economic “countermeasures” against the EU. Russia supports secessionist movement in the **Donbass**. France and Germany bring their mentoring to the **Minsk agreements** of February 2015 providing for a ceasefire in the Donbass, exchanges of prisoners, the withdrawal of heavy weapons, a “special status” for the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, elections under international control, Ukraine's control of its border with Russia... But the discussions did not allow these agreements to be implemented: the Russians maintained that Ukraine had not modified its Constitution to introduce the special status, while Ukraine, having not regained control of its border with Russia, maintained that it could not prepare a special status and elections.

1-2- increasingly cold relations between Russia and the West:

a) NATO action against Serbia in Kosovo in 1999 had been denied by Russia – and China – as contrary to international law; in 2003, Russia like France and Germany condemn the invasion of Iraq by the United States;

b) Russian leaders saw “color revolutions” as moves



supported by the West to challenge Russia's presence in its “nearest environment”;

c) If, at the beginning of his mandate, Putin had seemed open to the development of Euro-Russian relations, he considered (speech at the 2007 Munich conference) that the expansion of NATO is “*a serious provocation lowering the level of mutual trust*”;

d) in August 2008, the Russian army invaded part of the territory of Georgia and then Moscow recognized the

independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia;

e) the annexation of Crimea in 2014 significantly affected relations of the West with Russia;

On February 23, 2022, Putin identified a “*fundamental threat to Russia's security posed by NATO's eastward expansion and the bringing of its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders*”.

f) glaciation of relations between the EU, the United States and Russia:

- **political sanctions** (exclusion from the Council of Europe, from the UN Human Rights Council; in retaliation, Russia denounced the European Convention on Human Rights.

- economic sanctions:

10 sets of EU sanctions: - general sanctions and individual sanctions - asset freeze and visa ban - for the oligarchs and persons and entities seen as responsible for the invasion:

Effects of sanctions on Russia, Russian GDP: - 4.5% in 2022 according to the World Bank, a less significant drop than expected.

If the energy price effect has allowed Russia to continue to obtain considerable sums to finance the war in Ukraine, this country is obliged to find other buyers who demand discounts (China, India, etc.).

g) EU's aid to Ukraine:

- reception of displaced people with favorable **temporary protection** status;

- economic and humanitarian aid;

- EU funding of **supplies, including lethal supplies, intended for the Ukrainian armed forces**: European peace facility;
- **candidate status granted to Ukraine** by the EC of June 23, a political gesture but the negotiation will necessarily be long;
- creation of a “European political community”.

2-THE SEVERITY OF THE HUMAN AND

- more than 7 million refugees in Europe
- war crimes, crimes against humanity

3- THE CHANGES IN THE WORLD INDUCED BY THIS CONFLICT:

a) economic and energy consequences in Europe:

- The German model of dependence on Russian gas called into question.
- Sharp increase in energy prices before the invasion and raw materials (cereals, fertilizers) hitting economies emerging from the covid crisis, starting with the poorest countries; but gas prices returned to their level as before invasion. Russian coalition with OPEC to reduce oil production and thus maintain high prices.
- Effect of the war on EU energy policy: coordination of gas imports, method of calculating the price of electricity, revival of nuclear power, etc. Contradiction between the use of LNG, in particular from shale gas from the United States greenhouse gas emitter and the energy transition.
- Effect on purchasing power and public opinion in Europe and the United States; towards a weariness of a growing part of the opinion with significant differences between the member States. This weariness can also be observed in the United States.

b) Political consequences:

Within the EU:

- Shift of the center of gravity of the EU towards the east which had anticipated the invasion unlike the west; weakening of the “Franco-German couple”?
- Effect of the war on the theme of “strategic autonomy”? In the direction of strengthening the Europe of defence: the EU adopted a "strategic compass" in March 2022 and finances through the peacebuilding facility lethal weapons intended for Ukraine and training of Ukrainian soldiers. EU member States supply increasingly “offensive” weapons (tanks, etc.). The *compass* recommends a coordinated response to **cyber-attacks**, preventive measures and sanctions against their originators. The Union must also fight against **information manipulation** and interference activities carried out from abroad, including Russia in the context of *its hybrid warfare*. **Risks and threats in space** are also taken into account.
- At the same time, reinforcement of NATO in the process of enlargement to Sweden and Finland. Is this a strengthening of Europe's dependence on the United States and its arms industry?
- Unprecedented rearmament of Germany which reconsiders its antimilitarist reflexes resulting from the 2nd World War;

- Preparation of populations with regard to the new threats of hybrid warfare;

In the rest of the world:

- While a **large majority** of UN member States condemned Russia's aggression of Ukraine, only the EU and the United States as well as Japan, Canada, Australia, South Korea and Switzerland have sanctioned Russia. A minority of States - including China and India or South Africa - refused to condemn the invasion while worrying about nuclear threats and the economic effects of the war, as China is dependent on international trade. But India and China have increased their purchases of Russian oil. Many in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America - the "**rest of the world**" - consider that Ukraine is the affair of the "*west*" which has dominated the world for too long since the end of the Cold War.

4-HOW TO RESOLVE?

- Ukraine's resilience surprised Russia, which had to withdraw its troops in May and then between August and November from part of the territories. The Ukrainian president wants to restore the integrity of the 1991 borders, including Donbass and Crimea. Putin's evolving war goal remains unclear: originally, they wanted to change the regime in Kyiv, then to annex four oblasts. Today it is a war against the West.

Potential **mediators**: Turkey, China, India, Israel.

Possible scenarios:

- **a war that continues to end in a frozen conflict** like many conflicts in the world. Russia has a large population and, despite the sanctions, resources that remain significant, with the complicity of North Korea, Iran and, more cautiously, China; Ukraine, with the help of the West, remains determined to go on the offensive;
- **an extension of the conflict** by Russia against the NATO countries by using the panoply of hybrid warfare. But NATO countries have cyber defense capabilities. The EU has implemented a policy to do without Russia for its energy supply while the price of gas has fallen back to its 2021 level.
- **a collapse of the Putin regime?** But pretenders to his succession would be as nationalistic if not more. Relative apathy of the population, opponents having been muzzled or gone abroad.
- ultimately a **peace agreement** with long-term guarantees for the security of Ukraine and Russia.



WG A Perception at the local scale of the conflict and the risks

Rapporteur :

Mr. ERIC FREYSSELINARD

Prefect, Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies
of the Ministry of the Interior, France

The Russian offensive in Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, has caused a strong state of stupefaction in public opinion throughout Europe. To date, more than 200,000 people have died, and 3 to 4 times that number have been injured. Before the invasion began, many Europeans refused to give credence to the warnings of an upcoming attack, even though the Russian president had organized large-scale manoeuvres and deployed 100,000 troops on the Ukrainian border, as early as November 2021. Moreover, let us recall that Russia had already annexed Crimea in 2014 and provided support to the pro-independence Donbass, a region it finally annexed in September 2022. This had been almost accepted and forgotten by Europe.

At the time of the invasion and in the months that followed, the conflict in Ukraine became the main point of attention of public opinion. The return of war to Europe dismayed all Europeans, who had forgotten the horrors of the conflicts that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. In addition, this war brought back to the forefront the question of the common values of European nations. In a video conference broadcast from his bunker to an audience in Florence, President Zelensky explained that 'saving Ukraine means saving our and your values of democracy and freedom'. From February 2022, a large-scale mobilization developed, notably through calls for donations relayed on social networks. Many households also volunteered to host Ukrainian families in exile. Europe was paved with the colours of the Ukrainian flag and a form of almost unanimous support was emerging.

Nevertheless, at present, the sensitivities of European public opinion differ according to the issues. Support for the welcoming of Ukrainian refugees is widely accepted, with nearly 9 Europeans out of 10 supporting it. Even more than 7 out of 10 sympathizers of the two French far-right parties are in favour, even though they are historically Russian-friendly and reluctant about immigration. In Italy, 29 per cent of citizens even said they would welcome Ukrainian refugees into their homes. As for sanctions against Russia, nearly 8 out of 10 Europeans support them, in Poland as well as in Spain, Ireland, Sweden and Germany. Arms deliveries to



Ukraine, however, raise more reluctance. While 80% of Poles and Swedes are in favour, barely 50% of French, Germans and Italians support them. In Switzerland, heated debates on this subject are still taking place in the Federal Assembly, with many parliamentarians fearing that the country's neutrality will be called into question. Moreover, Bern has still not authorized other European states to deliver Swiss-made military equipment to Ukraine.

While the media continue to cover the conflict massively, a form of tiredness seems to be emerging in European public opinion. The reception of refugees is reaching certain limits, with many households no longer able or willing to accommodate Ukrainian exiles, particularly in countries where the number of arrivals is relatively high, such as Switzerland. A certain weariness is also apparent, as this crisis follows the Covid pandemic. The subject is declining, especially on social networks. Moreover, while some refugees want to return quickly to Ukraine, some also want to settle in their host country. This increases the migratory pressure, sometimes already strong, and social tensions. Individuals from previous waves of migration, often non-Europeans, complain about the better welcoming given to Ukrainians, while some people justify this by pointing out the great historical and cultural proximity with Ukraine.

However, if the enthusiasm for the fate of Ukraine tends to weaken, European public opinion has not changed, despite the consequences of the conflict in economic and energy matters. Despite the return of inflation and past fears of shortages of agricultural products, gas and electricity, support for Ukraine and the sanction against Moscow remains firm. Russia has overestimated its ability to cause harm, despite its numerous interferences and attempts to destabilize European democracies. Nevertheless, at this stage, an evolution of opinion is still possible, fuelled by weariness regarding a conflict that is ongoing and feeds inflation.

WG B Impact on national defense policies

Rapporteur :

Mr. MARKO PUKKINEN

Director General, Regional State Administrative Agency for Western and Inland Finland, Finland

WG B - Impact on national defense policies (the question of NATO, new direct threats, and specific challenges for countries with borders directly threatened, preparation of civilian populations for new military threats)

The European security environment has changed significantly since Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. To meet the changes, European countries, the European Union, and NATO have had to review their military and civilian preparedness accordingly. The adequacy of the military resources, as well as the level of civil society's preparedness, preparedness measures and cooperation needs have been under scrutiny in each country.

The threat posed by Russia is reflected especially in countries that share a common border with Russia. Belarus, as a state supporting Russia's military actions in Ukraine, can also be seen as a cause of instability, comparable to Russia's threat.

Special points of interest in Europe, including the northernmost parts:

- The Barents region and the Arctic Ocean in Norway and in the vicinity of Finland.
- The Baltic Sea region, especially Gotland, Åland Islands and the straits between Denmark and Sweden.
- The Baltic countries and the Suwalki corridor.
- The border between Poland and Belarus.
- The Moldovan part of Transnistria as a potential crisis center.
- The Bospor Strait in a military and trade policy sense.

European countries have improved and will continue to develop both their military and civilian preparedness in the coming years. Military improvements can already be seen in the defense budgets, which have increased in most European countries. Military capability improvements are most visible in the countries that share borders with



Russia or Belarus. Actions, however, are on-going in other countries, as well. For example, in Germany, the defense budget is being raised from the level of 1.3%/GDP to the level of 2.0%/GDP. The level is required by NATO and all NATO countries are currently clearly aiming for that.

Russian intelligence, jamming of GPS signals and outright espionage have been detected. In France, for example, special attention has been paid to protection against influencing through cyber or information. The border between Finland and Russia. NATO has intensified its activities and presence, especially in the eastern parts of Europe.

The refugee situation caused by the war in Ukraine impacts the European countries in different ways. Most of the refugees have arrived from Ukraine, specifically to Ukraine's neighboring countries, but refugees are also arriving from Belarus and Russia. Many Ukrainians have moved on, mainly to Central and Northern Europe. For example, Germany has received 1.1 million Ukrainian refugees. On the other hand, Albania has received practically none.

The new security situation has changed Europe profoundly. The significant improvement of military and civilian preparedness will have a large and long-term effect on the direction of economic resources. NATO's role has strengthened. Refugees are visible in everyday lives of many people. One can say that Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine has united European countries and the people in a whole new way. The war has directed countries to take common steps to improve Europe's level of defense, security, and preparedness, together, in close cooperation.

WG C Impact on economic and social policies

Rapporteur :

Mr.ROLAND BERDOZ

Prefect of Riviera-Pays-d'Enhaut district,
Canton of Vaud (Switzerland)

Our President of the group, **Gérard Gavory**, Prefect of Vendée (**France**), mentioned in his introductory speech several topics related to the current energy crisis. He mentioned that the war in Ukraine was not the only cause of rising energy prices and underlined the importance for States and final users to be aware of their dependence on third countries, not only for energy, but also for essential raw materials.

Mr. Christian De Boisdeffre, General Administrator of public finances (**France**) detailed the 12 goals of economic and social resilience plan implemented by France, as well as the positive results observed. During the exchanges, the France 2030 program was mentioned, with the aim of strengthening sovereignty by promoting the relocation of industrial production.

Mrs. Pascale Trimbach, Prefect of Allier (**France**), spoke of the significant repercussions of the conflict in Ukraine on the agricultural market in Europe and worldwide, as well as the challenges for Ukraine, Russia and Europe. The discussions highlighted the risks linked to the differences in requirements between Ukraine and European producers, as well as the influence of the collection of customs duties on the grain market.

Mrs. Nicole Isnard, Prefect, ACPHFMI Vice-President in charge of external relations (**France**) shared her expertise on the consequences of the war in Ukraine for vulnerable young people. Indeed, 13.1% of young people aged 15 to 29 in the European Union are NEETs



(Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training), i.e. between 12 and 14 million young people during the most difficult periods of the crisis. These young people are particularly exposed and vulnerable to pro-war propaganda. It is therefore essential to strengthen crime prevention actions by emphasizing education in the critical reading of information on the Internet.

Mr. Boris Cuanoud, Prefect of the district of Morges, Canton of Vaud (**Switzerland**) explained his role in the creation of a prefectural crisis unit in his district, autonomous in its electricity supply. The main objective of this cell is to guarantee bidirectional communication between the cantonal authority and the municipalities using secure VHS and POLYCOM radios.

Mr. Daniel Flotron, Prefect of the district of Lavaux-Oron, Canton of Vaud (Switzerland), explained the role of the STR in the setting up of emergency meeting points by the municipalities. He underlined the importance of this device which allows the population to quickly access the various emergency services in the event of a cut in the usual means of communication.

Finally, as rapporteur, I briefly mentioned the role of the STR in the implementation of business continuity plans by municipalities and associations of municipalities. These plans aim to formalize the functioning of each institution in charge of public tasks in order to guarantee essential services in the event of an energy shortage.

War in Ukraine: impact and opportunities

Mr. JEAN-MICHEL BRICAULT

Lecturer in public law
Reims Champagne-Ardenne University (France)



The objective of the European Days of State Territorial Representatives often consists of analyzing the concerns of its members. In the tense international context linked to the war in Ukraine(1), Sweden and neighboring Finland are concerned “primarily by the strategic question of their integration within NATO”(2). It is this deep motivation which explains the choice of the working theme of these XXVIIIth European Days relating to “*the consequences of the war in Ukraine and its impacts on the different member countries of the EASTR*”. In this context, the city of Malmö and its “tradition of welcoming the most diverse refugees since the Second World War”(3) is emblematic. It also appears that the vast majority of refugees from Ukraine who came to Sweden are in Skåne(4).

Innovatively, these European Days were organized in the form of four interactive working groups and held concomitantly. Each working group had a dedicated working theme. Working group “A” focused on “*the perception of conflict and risks at the local level*” (in the media, at the level of the political class and elections, in public opinion, etc.)(5). Group “B” for its part analyzed “*the impact on national defense policies*” (the question of NATO, new direct threats and specific challenges for countries with directly threatened borders, preparation of civilians to new military threats...)(6). Working group “C” focused on “*the impact on economic and social policies*” (supply of energy resources and agricultural products, tourism policy and freedom of international movement, internal social climate, etc.)(7). And finally, working group “D” focused on “*the reception of Ukrainian refugees*”

(accommodation, right to work, schooling, health, return to Ukraine, etc.)(8). The work of these working groups was then presented collectively during a plenary session in the form of four summaries written by rapporteurs within each working group(9). This debate process made it possible to significantly expand the list of discussed themes.

Firstly, two recognized experts(10) gave during the plenary session an overview of the international situation linked to this high-intensity war in order to frame the reflection of the members present.

According to Yves Doutriaux, State Councilor, professor of geopolitics at Paris-Dauphine University and former French Ambassador to the OSCE in Vienna (from 2003 to 2006), the “unprovoked invasion” of Feb. 24, 2022 took place “in a long-standing context of growing tensions between Ukraine and Russia and between Russia and Western countries”. For several years, relations have been increasingly tense between Russia and Ukraine: the “orange” revolution of 2004 which, for Moscow, was secretly initiated by Westerners who would seek to oust Russia from its sphere of influence; “Maidan revolution” in the fall of 2013 caused by the refusal of President Yanukovich, under pressure from Russia, to sign an association agreement with the EU; Russia seizes Crimea...In this context, the EU and the United States adopt political (exclusion of Russia from the G8) and economic sanctions against Russia, which takes economic “countermeasures” against the EU. Russia supports a secessionist movement in Donbass. France and Germany provide aid for the “Minsk agreements” of February. 2015 providing for a ceasefire in the Donbass, prisoner exchanges, the withdrawal of heavy weapons, a



1. Anneli Hulthén, Governor of Skåne county (Sweden).
2. Pierre-Etienne Bisch, Secretary General of the EASTR.
3. Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh, Mayor of Malmö (Sweden).
4. Anna Jähnke, Vice-governor and president of the regional development committee (Sweden)
5. President: Florence Siegrist, Prefect, Riviera-Pays-d’Enhaut (Switzerland).
6. President: Anne Azam-Pradeilles, honorary civil administrator, international expert in public administration reform (France)
7. President: Gérard Gavory, Prefect of Vendée (France)
8. President: Denis Mathen, Governor of Namur province (Belgium).
9. Rapp. of group “A”: Eric Freysselinard, Prefect, Director of the Institute

of Advanced Studies of the Ministry of the Interior (France) Rapp. of group “B”: Marko Pukkinen, Director general, Regional State Administrative Agency for Western and Inner Finland (Finland); Rapp. of group “C”: Roland Berdoz, Prefect of district Riviera-Pays-d’Enhaut, Canton of Vaud (Switzerland); Rapp. of group “D”: Fabrice Leggeri, High official (France).

10. Dr. Katarina Engberg, senior advisor at the Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies and former director of Swedish government offices at the Ministry of Defense and then the Prime Minister's Office. Yves Doutriaux, State Councilor, lecturer in public law and public management at the Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, and professor of geopolitics at the Paris-Dauphine University. He was also French Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna (2003 à 2006).

“special status” for the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, elections under international control, Ukraine's control of its border with Russia... But the discussions did not make it possible to implement these agreements.

More generally, we have witnessed a cooling of relations between Russia and the West in recent years as a result of several phenomena (NATO action against Serbia in Kosovo in 1999 was contested by the Russia – and China – as contrary to international law; Russian leaders saw in the “color revolutions” movements supported by the West to challenge Russia's presence in its “near environment”, for V. Putin, NATO enlargement is “*a serious provocation lowering the level of mutual trust*”). In 2014, the annexation of Crimea significantly deteriorated Western relations with Russia. On February 23, 2022, V. Putin noted a “*fundamental threat to the security of Russia constituted by the enlargement of NATO towards the East and the rapprochement of its military infrastructure towards the Russian borders*”(11).

The time has now come for the “glaciation of relations”(12) between the EU, the United States and Russia due to political sanctions (exclusion of Russia from the Council of Europe, the Human Rights Council of the UN...), economic sanctions (10 sets of EU sanctions including general sanctions and individual sanctions for oligarchs, people and entities seen as responsible for the invasion). Russia's GDP contracted by 4.5% in 2022 according to the World Bank, a smaller decline than expected. For its part, the EU helps Ukraine in various ways (reception of displaced persons with a favorable temporary protection status; economic and humanitarian aid; EU financing of supplies, including lethal ones, intended for the Ukrainian armed forces, “*European facility for peace*”; candidate status granted to Ukraine by the EC of June 23, 2022, a political gesture but the negotiation will be long, creation of a “European political community”).

Dr. Katarina Engberg, member of the Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, spoke about the potential “*threats and opportunities*” of the Ukrainian conflict.

A very detailed portrait of the “democratic transformation of Europe” (Portugal, Greece, Spain, etc.) in just a few decades has been put into perspective with the dismantling of the Soviet Union and a certain weakening of Russia. A few unprecedented decades of prosperity and peace since the end of the 1980s have brought the violence of the Ukrainian conflict to the surface. Ms. Engberg, however, places the latter in the “continuity of democratic transitions” of the 1970s in Europe and sees it as an opportunity to mark the transition from a “*European Union from 27 to 35*”. Many questions remain unanswered as it stands (Eastern countries under influence

appearing as “buffer zones” ...) and several scenarios are raised regarding the outcome of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia presented as “*the last unreformed empire in Europe*”(13). The “resilience of Ukraine” surprised Russia, which had to withdraw its troops in May and then between August and November 2022 from part of the territories. The Ukrainian president wants to restore the integrity of the 1991 borders, including Donbass and the Crimea. Putin's evolving war aim remains unclear. Originally, it was about a regime change in Kyiv, then annexing four oblasts. Today it is a war against the West .

According to Y. Doutriaux, four scenarios can emerge. The first of these lies in a war which continues to lead to “a frozen conflict” like many conflicts in the world. Russia has a large population and, despite sanctions, resources which remain significant, with the complicity of North Korea, Iran and, more cautiously, China. For its part, Ukraine, with Western help, remains determined to take the offensive. The 2nd scenario results from an “extension of the conflict” by Russia against NATO countries by using the panoply of hybrid war. But NATO countries have equipped themselves with cyber defense means. The EU has implemented a policy aimed at doing without Russia for its energy supply while the price of gas has fallen to its 2021 level. A third scenario involves a “collapse of the Putin regime”. It remains that the pretenders for his succession would be just as nationalist, if not more so. There is relative apathy among the population, with opponents having been muzzled or gone abroad. Finally, we can ultimately envisage a “peace agreement” accompanied by long-term guarantees for the security of Ukraine and Russia.

Implicitly, of course, there is also the “*maintenance of Western solidarity*” over time, both financially (EU support of around €50 billion, US support, etc.), economic (consequences on the agricultural and energy markets, rising inflation...), military and societal (reception of refugees, rebuilding a “civil defense” capacity, EU directive on the “resilience of critical entities...)(15). The Ukrainian conflict obviously has major repercussions on the global context. Western countries are “*on a war footing*”(16). China is becoming a leading global player, and agrees with Russia that the West has entered into decline for various reasons.

From this tense international situation with its numerous uncertainties, a problem emerges: to what extent does the war in Ukraine impact our countries, but also to what extent can it also bring opportunities that remain to be identified? The STRs, acting on the ground, have of course been mobilized in various ways in this context.



11. Mentionned by Y. Doutriaux.
12. *Idem*.
13. Dr. Katarina Engberg.

14. Y. Doutriaux
15. Dr. Katarina Engberg.
16. *Idem*.

I) IMPACTS OF THE UKRAINIAN CONFLICT

The human and material consequences of this conflict are very serious. In addition to the tens of thousands of direct victims of the conflict, there are more than 7 million Ukrainian refugees who have been welcomed in Europe.

Reception of refugees, between efficiency and improvisation

This welcome was mainly provided by Poland. Italy welcomed 170,000 Ukrainian refugees, France, around 115,000, and more than 6,000 were welcomed in the canton of Vaud in Switzerland alone, which has 800,000 inhabitants. Nearly 9 out of 10 Europeans are in favor of welcoming Ukrainian refugees(17).

Within the EU, European Directive 55 of July 20, 2001 “relating to temporary protection in the event of a massive influx of displaced persons”(18) was implemented for the first time. It establishes a system to deal with a massive influx into the EU of foreign nationals who cannot return to their country of origin, particularly due to war. It puts in place “immediate and temporary protection for these displaced people” and ensures a balance between the efforts made by EU member states to welcome these people. However, it does not provide for the compulsory distribution of asylum seekers among member States.

As a preliminary to the work of group “D”(19), the support of FRONTEX to Member States was highlighted, particularly in terms of consolidated information on flows. The deployment of the European corps in Romania was also explained.

On the ground, the role of prefects in welcoming refugees was central and determining in liaison with local authorities and particularly municipalities (accommodation, creation of reception centers with state assistance, financial aid, etc.). In Switzerland, all Ukrainians were welcomed “without quotas”, the organizations were set up, “S” permits were issued...

In practice, the reception of refugees was also marked by an abundance of private voluntary initiatives (citizens, associations, private homes, etc.) demonstrating a strong solidarity on all fronts (in terms of accommodation, educational and professional integration...). The work of group “D” attests to this. For the moment, there appears to be unwavering support on the public opinion front in Europe (see summary of group “A”) on the question of welcoming Ukrainian refugees.

However, points of tension appear, particularly at the local level. The “temporary protection” (health, school, work, etc.) offered to “displaced persons” (Directive 2001/55/EC cited above) allows Ukrainian refugees to obtain a difference in treatment which results in the creation of “two-speed refugees » sometimes perceived as discrimination by refugees of other nationalities. For example, in Switzerland, the free public transport once offered to Ukrainian refugees was a source of intense controversy. Tensions also appeared on the question of housing in the context of a market which is already very tense. Tensions are also reported in the population also linked to the intense solicitation of “the militia” (civil protection service) on the Ukrainian question.

A whole series of questions linked to duration are beginning to arise (mobility of Ukrainians themselves, question of minors, secondary and higher education, etc.).

Economic and energy impacts / Issues of public opinions

The risk of public fatigue over time is real (see summary of working group “A”(20)). Since this conflict has economic and energy consequences in Europe, directly affecting the purchasing power of European citizens in their daily lives. We saw a sharp increase in the prices of energy even before the invasion and of raw materials (cereals, fertilizers, etc.), thus hitting economies that were barely emerging from the Covid crisis. The repercussions of the conflict in Ukraine on the agricultural market in Europe and around the world are significant. The discussions highlighted the risks linked to differences in requirements between Ukraine and European producers, as well as the influence of the collection of customs taxes on the grain market(21).

However, the economic and financial sanctions policies set against Russia by the EU are popular. Indeed, nearly 8 out of 10 Europeans surveyed support these sanctions, in Poland, Spain, Ireland, Sweden and Germany. In France, support is slightly more timid since only 7 out of 10 French people support these sanctions. Also, it is interesting to note that the degree of empathy towards Ukraine appears aligned with diplomatic activism and the intensity of support for the Ukrainian cause from the governments of each country.

The arms deliveries were well received by Europeans with approval rates of around 80% for Polish and Swedish people. A little less in France and Germany, with an adherence rate of 50 to 60%, but this position can also be fact that these two countries



17. Report of the group “A”: Eric Freysselinard.

18. Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 relating to minimum standards for the granting of temporary protection in the event of a massive influx of displaced persons and to measures tending to ensure a balance between the efforts made by member States to welcome these people and bear the consequences of this reception, L 212/12, JOCE of 7.8.2001

19. Report of the group “D”: Fabrice Leggeri.

20. Report of the group “A”: Eric Freysselinard.

21. Report of the group “C”: Roland Berdoz.

are geographically far from Russia and therefore feel less in danger. There has been no erosion of support for the Ukrainians as dreamed of by the pro-Russian cronies who predicted a collapse of the West with the cessation of Russian gas and oil exports. There were no shortages, no social anger, no change in public opinion. Russia has overestimated its capacity to cause harm. Thus, the Russian offensive turns out to be a failure in the battle of public opinion(22). The summary of working group “A” clearly mentions this aspect. We can also note from the latter's work that the conflict was the subject of very intense media coverage in all of our countries. It aroused strong “emotion” throughout Europe (numerous demonstrations of solidarity, humanitarian enthusiasm, etc.) with the democratic question underlying it.

Nevertheless, at this stage, a change in opinion remains possible, it could come from a certain "fatigue" with regard to a conflict which is ongoing over time and fuels inflation (in particular of energy)(23). Furthermore, from one country to another, questions arise in public opinion and in the media (the “fear of the future”, the problem of gas stocks, the risks of power cuts, the question of the nature of weapons provided to Ukraine so as not to “provoke Russia too much” present in almost all countries, perception of nuclear risk, problem of Swiss neutrality in connection with the re-export of weapons to Ukraine, question of Russian assets in Swiss banks, resurgence of the question of “atomic shelters” in Switzerland, existence of a Russophile trend in France, political risk with the rise of populism, etc.). A decline in media coverage of the Ukrainian conflict has already been noted, including on social networks.

Geopolitical impact

The presentations and summary of working group “B”(24) clearly exposed the problem of “critical borders” in Europe with Russia. These are areas of high geopolitical risk. More precisely, six borders were explained (the 1,300 km long Russian-Finnish border; the Baltic countries; the Suwałki corridor connecting the Kaliningrad oblast; the Gotland islands; the Ukrainian border; Moldova and Transnistria).

In this context, many issues were the subject of very precise presentations (question of patrols, fences, the demilitarized islands of Åland, the problem of the security of Stockholm, the challenges for Poland, the 18th military power in the world, the situation in Lithuania, Belarus, etc.).

In the end, it obviously appears that the context carries significant risks. However, opportunities exist.

II) SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES

The Ukrainian conflict has the seeds of many developments. It enabled a strengthening of NATO (see summary of working group “B”) in the process of being enlarged to include Sweden and Finland. But the war also has an effect on the theme of “strategic autonomy” in the sense of strengthening European defense. The EU adopted a “strategic compass” in March 2022 and finances lethal weapons intended for Ukraine and Ukrainian military training through the “Peacebuilding Facility”. EU member States are supplying increasingly “offensive” weapons (tanks, etc.). The “compass”, seeking to provide a response to strategic challenges, recommends a coordinated reaction to cyber-attacks, preventive measures and sanctions against their perpetrators. The Union must also fight against information manipulation and interference activities carried out from abroad, including Russia as part of its hybrid war (preparing populations for new threats, etc.). Risks and threats in space are also taken into account. This conflict can be “an opportunity for Europe to wake up geopolitically”(25). Most of the countries present at these European Days (Germany, France, Romania, etc.) are experiencing sharp increases in their military budgets, breaking with the sluggishness that marked previous decades (Cf. summary of working group “B”). The concluding remarks of this working group highlight the importance given to public information in the current context. Emphasis is also placed on the issues of “preparation and civil defense” and on the need to “create networks between democratic European countries” in a “spirit of defense” around “shared values”.

Resilience

It was also mentioned, more specifically in working group “C”, that this episode of the war in Ukraine could serve as a springboard for profound developments in our countries in terms of energy and economics(26).

The 12 goals of the “Economic and Social Resilience Plan” set by France (tariff shield, France Relance program, etc.), as well as the positive results observed, were analyzed. During the discussions, the France 2030 program was mentioned, with the objective of strengthening sovereignty by promoting the relocation of industrial production (agricultural, food sovereignty, etc.). More generally, it is possible to take advantage of the



22. Report of the group “A”: Eric Freysselinard.

23. *Idem*.

24. Report of the group “B”: Marko Pukkinen.

25. Dr. Katarina Engberg.

26. Report of the group “C”: Roland Berdoz.



situation to develop more sustainable pragmatic solutions in terms of food production, for example.

In terms of energy policy, the war in Ukraine resulted in an improvement in coordination (gas imports, the method of calculating the price of electricity, relaunch of nuclear power, etc.)(27). It also made it possible to move away from a certain “naïveté” in this area marked by dependence on third countries and by an overall lack of preparation regarding the risks of energy or other shortages.

We can here mention the role of the Swiss STR in the implementation of “business continuity plans” (PCA in French) aimed at formalizing the functioning of each institution responsible for public tasks in order to guarantee essential services in the event of a shortage of energy resources. The same applies to the establishment of “emergency meeting points” which allow the population to quickly access the various emergency services in the event of a breakdown in usual means of communication.

These 28th European Days of State Territorial Representatives were the subject of intense “informed discussions”(28). Following the Russian offensive in Ukraine in Feb. 2022, it appears that many threats have arisen in our societies. The political, economic, energy and even societal consequences are immense. However, past the state of astonishment and like Ukrainian resilience itself, our societies are able to seize opportunities and thereby demonstrate a certain capacity for adaptation.

27. Yves Doutriaux.

28. Ola Melin, Deputy County Governor of Skåne (Sweden), moderator of the XXVIIIth European Days.



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