



CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION

Security Sector Governance Pillar

“Conference on Security Challenges for Europe”

SSG-7-23

6-7 December 2023

Zagreb, Republic of Croatia

Introduction

A two-day “Conference on Security Challenges for Europe” was held in Zagreb on 6-7 December 2023. The Conference was a continuation of an established series of activities aimed towards enabling open and comprehensive discussions on emerging security challenges for Europe and South East European countries in particular.

It was the eleventh annual activity conducted as a result of fruitful cooperation between RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Office in Croatia. RACVIAC long-standing academic partner in this event is the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies (Balkans 360 Initiative).

Due to security-related and other concerns and possible travel restrictions for participants and speakers, the Conference was organised as a hybrid event with core “in-person” participation but also a possibility for the attendees to participate online.



The Conference venue

The Conference was dedicated to energy and climate security topics and the impacts of the war in Ukraine. The Conference main objectives were closely connected to the Russia–Ukraine war and its implications for a Euro-Atlantic response, climate change and energy security, taking into account its main implications for South East Europe.

The main Conference objectives were:

- ❖ To recognize and share facts regarding energy and climate security as 21st century challenges and their influence on the military and political development
- ❖ To inquire into and analyse regional energy security in the shadow of the war in Ukraine. To identify the implications for South East European countries
- ❖ To rethink and analyse Euro-Atlantic security concerning the actual developments regarding the war in Ukraine.
- ❖ To examine regional climate security in the shadow of the war in Ukraine with its consequences for South East Europe
- ❖ To provide a common platform for reviewing the newest geopolitical shifts and resulting national security issues in view of the existing Euro-Atlantic integration processes
- ❖ To provide participants with the opportunity to share national considerations concerning the current risks and threats posed by the present security challenges
- ❖ To support an academic approach in identifying common interests and suggest possible solutions in national security policy development.

The Conference gathered more than 150 participants, senior level national security policy makers and subject matter experts from the ministries of foreign affairs, ministries of interior, ministry of defence, Diplomatic corps, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and members of the academic community involved in addressing the contemporary security challenges and policy development processes.



Conference Opening - VIP guests at the Conference hall in Hotel Hilton Garden Inn Zagreb

Execution

The Conference was opened by RACVIAC Director, H.E. Ambassador Constantin-Mihail Grigorie, Mr. Holger H. Haibach, Head of the KAS Office in the Republic of Croatia, and Dr. Matthew Rhodes, Professor at the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies. The audience was warmly welcomed in the Introductory messages given by H.E. Dr. Christian Hellbach, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Croatia, and Mr. Christian Lynch, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission of the United States of America to the Republic of Croatia. Finally, the Conference Keynote Address was delivered by H.E. Ivan Anušić, Minister of Defense and Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia.



H.E. Ambassador Constantin - Mihail Grigorie, Director of RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation

Opening the Conference, H.E. Ambassador Grigorie, in his Welcome Address, proudly underlined the importance of this event by saying that this was the eleventh conference in a series of similar events, and that it is the biggest RACVIAC event in terms of participation, and a flagship event of RACVIAC.

Furthermore, he expressed special gratitude to Mr. Holger H. Haibach and the KAS Office in Croatia for putting enormous efforts into its organization, as well as Dr. Rhodes and the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies for supporting it with such a high level of expertise. “I sincerely hope that this solid bond of cooperation and overall synergy will continue to expand”, he added.

Ambassador Grigorie introduced the agenda of the four Conference Panels to the audience and highlighted their importance for transnational security. The Conference, Director of RACVIAC underlined, is aimed at focusing on Energy and Climate security in connection to the Russia-Ukraine war while also taking the influence of the Middle Eastern crisis on Euro-Atlantic and South East European security into consideration.

The inaugural Panel, “Energy and Climate as 21st Century Issues,” will comprehensively analyze the interconnection between climate change and energy security in Europe. It will aim to provide evidence of this connection and discuss strategies for improving energy

efficiency to reduce carbon emissions significantly, Ambassador Grigorie said.

Reflecting on the Second Panel, focused on Regional Energy Security amidst the war in Ukraine, RACVIAC Director highlighted that beyond the humanitarian impact and casualties, the invasion has caused economic collapse, asset destruction, and global energy market disruptions. The flow of oil and natural gas to Europe has been hampered by international sanctions, leading to uncertainty in renewable energy output and a strained supply-and-demand balance in the European power system. While it's premature to predict the outcomes, the crisis is expected to cause enduring changes in regards to energy supply networks and sources in electricity generation. The Panel, he added, will aim to thoroughly examine these circumstances and propose solutions.

The Third Panel, “The War in Ukraine and Euro-Atlantic Security,” would be dedicated to examining all aspects of threats arising from the Russian aggression in Ukraine within the framework of Euro-Atlantic Security, Ambassador Grigorie said. It will assess the current security situation in NATO's eastern flank and endeavors to consider recent security developments, including the Middle Eastern situation. Additionally, the Panel will aim to monitor the consequences and implications across various domains such as diplomacy, defense, economics, migration, and information security. Undoubtedly, the potential outcomes of this war will impact our strategic priorities and shape the long-term policies of European states.

Ambassador Grigorie also expressed concern that Russian aggression in Ukraine poses a significant challenge to Euro-atlantic security, marking a profound threat in the region. The widespread condemnation of Russia's actions underscores the shared perspective regarding the current situation in Eastern Europe.

RACVIAC Director, in addition, highlighted the importance of the Fourth Panel, “Regional Climate Security in the Shadow

of the War in Ukraine.” This Panel would strive to explore the often overlooked and underestimated regional climate security issues influenced by the recent security developments, he stressed.



Mr Holger Haibach, Head of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Office in Croatia.

Mr. Holger H. Haibach, Head of the KAS Office in the Republic of Croatia, in his Opening speech thanked their Excellencies the Ambassadors accredited in the Republic of Croatia, members of the Diplomatic and military corps and participants for attending the Conference. He said that it is good to go back in history and mentioned the so-called „butterfly effect“ and its consequences, the situation in Germany and the Soviet Union, and the current conflicts in Ukraine, Israel and Azerbaijan. The instability of the world calls for action, discussion and acknowledging the problems, he stressed, adding that in today's world which is rife with fake news it is important that organizations like RACVIAC exist as platforms for discussions to influence political will. He underlined the longstanding cooperation with RACVIAC, expressing thankfulness for the opportunity that KAS contributes to that goal.

Dr. Matthew Rhodes, Professor at the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies, in his Opening speech thanked everyone for attending the Conference and RACVIAC for organizing it, adding that he was glad to see Minister Anušić joining the event as well.



Dr. Mathew Rhodes, Regional Security Department, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

Professor Rhodes expressed gratefulness for the German-American partnership. He talked about the so-called „polycrisis“ in 2023 and how there are multiple challenges that should not be ignored. In many ways the war in Ukraine remains a threat for Europe, he stressed, and went on to add that one of the big challenges that we are also facing is climate change: „The resources are stretched between multiple conflict zones. For the next two days we will be looking at each crisis individually and collectively“, he concluded, saying that he was looking forward to two great days ahead.



Mr. Christian Hellbach, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Croatia

In his Introductory message H.E. Dr. Christian Hellbach, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Croatia, expressed his gratitude for being invited and to be able to share his expertise and experience on the topic. He used the opportunity to emphasize the fact that the Russian aggression on Ukraine has definitely contributed to intensifying conflicts in the Western Balkans. „It’s about how much effort we put into resolving this

conflict, a fact that will also reflect itself on the whole region“, he emphasized.



Mr. Christian Lynch, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission of the United States of America

Mr. Christian Lynch, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission of the United States of America to the Republic of Croatia first thanked, on behalf of United States of America, for being invited to the Conference. He also thanked the organizers with which the US Embassy has a longstanding cooperation. He referred to the Conference topics such as climate change, energy security and the war in Ukraine regarding which he emphasized that USA is proud to continue supporting Ukraine in its fight for freedom. „We also, in particular, thank our Croatian partners for the incredible support that they have given to Ukraine“, he added.



The Conference Keynote Speaker, H.E. Ivo Anušić, Minister of Defence, Special Envoy of Prime Minister Andrej Plenković

At the end of the Opening session H.E. Mr. Ivan Anušić, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, in his Keynote Adress pondered on the central theme of this year’s conference, emphasizing the critical issue of energy and climate security. He delved into the repercussions of the ruthless Russian

aggression against Ukraine. Acknowledging the multifaceted challenges in Europe, ranging from traditional warfare to hybrid conflicts, he highlighted the use of energy, migration, and even food as weapons.

The constant threat of terrorism in various forms remains a pervasive concern, posing risks to both individual and collective security while contributing to the broader radicalization of the political landscape, he added. „An additional dimension of caution has been introduced regarding the potential adverse effects of technologically advanced solutions across various aspects of life and work. The transformative impact of disruptive technologies on the nature of warfare creates new arenas for both state and non-state actors to engage“, he also stressed.

Mr. Anušić drew attention to the evolving operational domains of cyber and space, emphasizing their potential for manipulating information and disrupting critical infrastructure. He underlined the interconnectedness of the discussed threats, asserting that they cannot be effectively addressed in isolation. The same interconnected approach applies for understanding the implications of climate change on security and society at large, adding another layer of complexity to the overarching security context.

Furthermore, Mr. Anušić said that a resurgence of the challenges faced in the 1990s would be detrimental to everyone in the region, primarily benefitting external powers seeking to fragment and undermine Europe. The ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East should act as a poignant reminder of the high stakes involved and the significant losses incurred by those who resort to violence for personal gains, he added.

„With this perspective in mind, I extend my wishes for a productive and open exchange of ideas to all participants. I also affirm my personal commitment, along with that of the Ministry of Defence, to support events like this one whenever feasible“, he concluded.

The Conference consisted of four Panels:

- ❖ “Energy and Climate as 21st Century Security Issues”
- ❖ “Regional Energy Security in the Shadow of War in Ukraine”
- ❖ “War in Ukraine and Euro-atlantic Security”
- ❖ “Regional Climate Security in the Shadow War in Ukraine”.

The First Panel, “Energy and Climate as 21st Century Security Issues”, started with the remarks of the Panel moderator, Dr. Matthew Rhodes, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies. He opened it by introducing the speakers, Dr Louise Selisny, Senior Research Associate, Climate Change and (In)Security project, Oxford University and H.E. Dr. Réka Szemerkényi, Senior Advisor for Transatlantic Strategy, International Republican Institute.



Dr. Matthew Rhodes, Regional Security Department, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

Among other things, it was mentioned that climate security is nestled between climate change and defence and security and has a series of implications for drought, lack of water, erosion, vegetation reduction, increase of sea levels, etc. As a main consequence migrations caused by climate change can represent a significant issue. Reduction of resources can also be used for further radicalization and expansion of terrorist organizations. Terrorist organizations can weaponize resources to expand their influence beyond the existing margins. The deterioration of agriculture production as a consequence of climate change can lower economic efficiency and, therefore, have a negative impact on the

public perception and political situation. Lack of water can also negatively affect gender equality, education and other state services.

Further migrations across Europe are expected to take place. Climate change with all its consequences is going to amplify this phenomenon.



Dr. Louise Selisny, Senior Research Associate, Climate Change and (In)Security Project, Oxford University

It was also stated that energy is multisectoral and at the same time cross-sectoral from an economic perspective. There were three major points discussed: the proper definition of energy security, strategic use of energy and policy recommendation. Before 1990 the main concern, when it comes to energy, was availability, but after 1990s a new element was added in the shape of a triangle, creating the so-called “Energy trilemma”.

A major change happened in 2022 when traditional dependence on Russian energy (oil and gas) was interrupted by the Russian aggression on Ukraine and the sanctions imposed on Russia. Russia underestimated that the European reaction would be slow and calculated concerning energy dependence. Russia expected that circumstances would pressurize Europe to not take a stance and evade causing energy shortages for its economy.



H.E. Dr. Réka Szemerényi, Senior Advisor for Transatlantic Strategy, International Republican Institute

But none of these scenarios took place. Europe developed a series of energy priorities going back to 1990s. Now we have a Europe with a developed structure for LNG gas distribution, a massive shift towards the green transition and the prices for gas are now slightly higher than in 2021 but significantly lower than in 2022. Finally, EU has managed to find a replacement for Russian gas.

Three policy recommendations were proposed as a result of discussion. The first recommendation is to develop a proper European energy market including the infrastructure network development and a sufficient number of LNG terminals for stable gas distribution.

The second is to prioritize and secure a critical infrastructure taking into consideration the undersea from the scope of the sea belt warfare and vulnerabilities for that kind of infrastructure. Also, there is important demand to develop a strategic reserve to ensure redundancy of critical infrastructure.

“Think Regionally” as the third recommendation implies that none of the security dilemmas could be solved by a single country alone. All the security issues are making neighboring countries interdependent and proper responses are linking regional cooperation and marking it as high priority.

The plus one recommendation is: “Think Strategically”, meaning none of the decisions can be taken out of the overall picture of strategic cooperation and the Transatlantic arena. Taking into consideration the political developments in Europe and USA, it is very important that drivers for transatlantic

cooperation are solidly strategic, it was said.

The Panel finished with a Q&A session and a short wrap-up by Dr Rhodes, the Panel Moderator.

The Second Panel, “Regional Energy Security in the Shadow of War in Ukraine” started with the remarks of the Panel moderator Dr. Mišo Mudrić, Associate Professor, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law. He opened it by announcing the speakers, Mr. George Lazar, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Energy of Romania, Mr. Martin Vladimirov, Director, Energy and Climate Program, Center for the Study of Democracy and H.E. Anar Imanov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the Republic of Croatia.



Dr. Mihael Mišo Mudrić, Associate Professor, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law

It was mentioned that energy security represents a growing challenge beyond the need for strategic awareness of the regional and global trends. A global architecture calls for institutional coordination to promote synergies because of the multinational character of energy challenges. It was stressed, moreover, that present energy challenges require cooperation but solidarity too.

Due to the diversified and balanced energy mix, based mainly on domestic resources, Romania is supporting energy security at the regional level, managing to obtain one of the top positions in the EU in terms of the least dependence on imported fuel. It relies on a combination of hydro, nuclear, gas, renewables and coal with a clear calendar of phase out of coal to be replaced by a

more sustainable source of energy, it was also stressed.

The success of the energy transition cannot be based on a unilateral approach to renewable energies. Therefore, natural gas and nuclear energy should be complementary elements offering a back-up and flexibility in supporting the transition process towards the green economy.



Mr. George Lazar, Secretary of State, Ministry of Energy of Romania

It was also emphasized that the crisis caused by the war in Ukraine has highlighted an excessive reliance of many EU states, particularly Germany and Italy, on Russian fossil fuel. SEE countries remain vulnerable eighteen months later because they haven't done their homework yet.

It was also mentioned that despite of the sanctions Gazprom remains as the main supplier for SEE countries through different kinds of channels and methods of circumventing the sanctions.

The assessment mentioned, called the “Energy and climate security risk index”, has four dimensions: Geopolitics, Affordability, Reliability and Sustainability.

Unfortunately, the world is not ready to say no to fossil fuels and we will need to wait for a long time for that to happen due to the energy and climate security risks. There is still a lot to be done. Some EU countries are still buying Russian crude oil making significant profit for the Kremlin budget. Therefore, the overall climate and energy security risk is worsening in 2022 and 2023. The security and supply security risks are related to the geopolitical positions of major players, it was underscored.

It is questionable how we can move to full Russian gas phaseout by 2030. Increase in energy efficiency or reduction of gas consumption can contribute to a switch. The switch to electricity in industry and electrification in general is one of the options, but also promotion of cutting edge technologies such as clean hydrogen and carbon capture technologies.



Mr. Martin Vladimirov, Director, Energy and Climate Program, Center for the Study of Democracy

There are some countries, which are obviously circumventing Russian sanctions by laundering gas, which is further distributed through pipelines. The Western Balkans will probably increase consumption of natural gas due to several newly constructed power plants caused by their efforts to replace coal. Chinese investments in the coal sector are derailing the process of the implementation of the energy and climate acquisition, it was also stressed.



H.E. Anar Imanov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the Republic of Croatia

Azerbaijan has been recognized as a reliable partner for the EU in replacing Russian crude oil since the 1990s and gas

from 2020s onwards. As it is a strategic partner in gas export for the EU the production will be doubled by 2027, but for that additional transportation capacities are to be enlarged, it was underlined. The key partner for Azerbaijan for energy is Italy. The export into the EU has increased by more than 40%. Almost half of the production of Azerbaijani gas is being exported to the EU.

It was also mentioned that Russian export of oil and gas to the EU is increasing and that Russia is the main provider of fuel for Eastern European nuclear power plants.

The Panel finished with a Q&A session and a short wrap-up by Dr. Mišo Mudrić, the Panel Moderator.

The Third Panel, “War in Ukraine and Euro-atlantic Security”, started with the remarks of the Panel moderator Dr. Monika Begović, President of Atlantic Council of Croatia. She opened it by introducing the speakers, Dr. Yevgeniya Gaber, Professor, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies and Dr. Christina Krause, Head of International and Security Affairs, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Berlin.



Dr. Monika Begović, Atlantic Council of Croatia, President

During the Panel it was discussed how the war in Ukraine affects the ecosystem in Ukraine and the Black Sea region due to the environmental damage, including pollution with toxic materials, occupation of the nuclear power plant Zaporizhia, blowing fuel depots, heavy shelling (pipelines) and undersea activities of the Russian Navy.

It was also mentioned that a stalemate is representing the actual situation in Ukraine with no major changes on both sides. Obviously, the Ukrainian counteroffensive didn't bring about the expected results. Any kind of results except Ukrainian victory in this war would serve as a kind of encouragement for Russia, it was stated. Now we are talking about incitement of military production because nobody expected that the war will take so long and that Russia would be that resilient to the sanctions. Also, obtaining military support from abroad is much easier for Russia than Ukraine. The war fatigue is something that Russia is waiting for while it affects the demography too. Judged by many factors caused by different crises in and around Europe it could be considered that Russia is in a slightly better position than Ukraine.



Dr. Yevgeniya Gaber, Professor, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

It was also discussed what the Ukrainian sentiments are like when it comes to war. The vast majority of Ukrainians are ready to fight back as long as it takes. The moral of the Ukrainians is still high and optimistic including the liberation of Crimea as a critical point for control of the Black Sea region. On the other hand, Russians are also supporting the war by a significant percentage. Ukrainians do not want a temporary ceasefire. They want sustainable and rightful peace, it was said. There were two scenarios discussed, both if Ukrainians or Russians win, with detailed consequences internationally in case of Russian victory including the Black Sea as a Russian lake and Iranian–Russian alliance on the NATO doorstep. One of the main Ukrainian successes, it was mentioned, was in the area of the Black Sea where Ukrainians succeeded to cause

huge damage for Russians and to reopen a humanitarian corridor for ships. It was argued that Ukrainian victory does not have an alternative for future sustainable peace and development in this part of the world.

Also, it was mentioned that we're facing a significant increase of defense expenditure around Europe and beyond, unlike the permanent decrease from 1990s on, namely, in the countries of Western Europe. Germany has increased spending in the defense budget after 2022 dramatically in order to reach the requested 2% of GDP in the next two years. At the beginning of the Russian invasion, Germany showed shy support of Ukraine which gradually increased and now Germany is the second supporter of Ukraine globally, it was added.



Dr. Kristina Krause, Head of International and Security Affairs, Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung, Berlin

The public opinion in Germany is, due to historical facts and current situation, reluctant to support any German leadership when it comes to the war in Ukraine, therefore, politicians should be very careful when planning future steps. NATO is redefining and has become a territorial supporter for defence of Europe. It is coming back to its original ideas, but there is definitely more room for closer cooperation, in particular, in SEE, which represents the soft underbelly of EU. There is also the challenge how to increase the number of German soldiers. One of the ideas being discussed a lot in Germany now is to introduce a so-called social year, either as service in the armed forces or by working in other areas, which would be obligatory for everyone leaving school, both boys and girls, it was stressed.

The Panel finished with a Q&A session and a short wrap-up by Dr. Monika Begović, the Panel moderator.

The Fourth Panel, “Regional Climate Security in the Shadow of War in Ukraine”, started with the remarks of Dr. Yevgeniya Gaber, Professor, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, who introduced the speakers, Dr. Marta Zorko, Associate Professor, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Political Science and Dr. Dimitar Bechev, Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe.



Dr. Yevgeniya Gaber, Professor, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

It was mentioned that the first thing when we talk about security is national security as a concept which doesn't have a mechanism to deal with security issues, but when we're talking about climate change it is usually related to human security. Broader or heavier militarization leads towards air or water pollution, it was added. The second issue is food security that the war in Ukraine perpetuated taking into account that in the area of the Western Balkans 11% of GDP is generated from agriculture. The last issue could be the migration wave, generated by climate change. Regarding scientific reports and observation the key issues connected with climate security in the Balkans are droughts. It was also stressed that droughts can potentially lower investment into hydro plants and lead to investments directed into traditional carbon-related sources which is in conflict with the EU Energy Strategy.



Dr. Marta Zorko, Associate Professor, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Political Science

The Western Balkans became some kind of spotlight after the Ukrainian War because of the narratives of belongings that opened up in some of the states in the region, like, f.e., Russian vs. European discourse. This pressure provoked an answer on the part of the EU in the sense of enlargement and integration of the Western Balkan countries into the EU.

It was also mentioned that if there is a factor that drives the green transition of the Western Balkans it is the European Union. The EU has the ambition to be a global climate leader. Also, the Western Balkans is a part of the EU marketplace. In 2020 leaders of the Western Balkans in Sofia committed rhetorically in a declaration that they will be aligning with climate goals by reducing the emissions by 2030 and become carbon neutral by the middle of the century. There is the Regional initiative to prepare legislation of candidates for EU membership, including Ukraine and Georgia. Finally, the states of the Western Balkans are members of the Paris Climate Accord. If we look at performance, the picture is not encouraging, it was added. The countries do not have binding timelines with regard to phasing out of coal. There are no clear commitments regarding embedded in national legislation in the countries of the Western Balkans in contrast to the EU member states. Furthermore, in view of the EU trading policy, there is the emissions trading scheme. Without that scheme, coal will be very competitive.



Dr. Dimitar Bechev, Carnegie Europe

On the positive side, international financial institutions and private investments have moved away from coal in the region. China is not investing into coal either. But why is bigger progress among the countries of the Western Balkans not seen? The shift from traditional power production could be an issue for local politicians because it employs thousands of people and provides affordable electricity for the population. Cheap electricity could be used also for heating in case of lack of other sources. Also, state capture perpetuates the status quo of not bringing about change.

There is some internal pressure for the politicians in some cities driven by poor quality of air, particularly during winter time. In addition, the sulfur dioxide as a by-product of use of fossil fuel and coal is being produced in the Western Balkans as much as in the rest of Europe, it was stressed.

To enable the countries of the Western Balkans to make a shift it is necessary to make countries eligible for the transition fund of the EU.

There has to be investment in renewable energy, but the private sector is supposed to take the lead, because this cannot be done through the government alone. There is the risk of corruption when it comes to green energy while governments can prioritize projects of affiliate individuals, but it seems that this could be the price for decarbonisation, it was stressed. The Western Balkans need to think about energy storage, because there is a problem with renewables with intermittency, which is important for balancing the grid in peak periods. This could be done on a regional scale rather than national. As a conclusion, the Western Balkans will be integrated into the EU also in the green front. This is not a burden for the region, but also an

opportunity because of the access of the EU market, it was added.

The Panel finished with a Q&A session and a short summary of all the topics covered by Dr. Yevgeniya Gaber, the Panel moderator.

Closing Perspectives

The Closing Perspectives were delivered by Mr. Radovan Bogojević, General Director for Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro and Dr. Nikola Brzica, Strategic Analyst.

It was mentioned that in recent years, rapid digitalization and exponential increase of cyber-attacks in the Western Balkans have posed significant challenges. The imperative to fortify cyber resilience has emerged as a precondition for stability and security. In August 2022, Montenegro faced a cyber-attack targeting government infrastructure and public service delivery. Montenegrin government took the necessary measures to protect public service with ample support by the allied countries. Montenegro is establishing the Regional Western Balkan Cyber Capacity Center in collaboration with the Government of Slovenia and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France in Podgorica, facilitating education and expertise improvement in the field of Cyber Security, it was underlined.



The Closing Perspective, Mr. Radovan Bogojević, General Director for Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro

Furthermore, it was mentioned that both climate and energy play a fundamental role in our perceptions of individual and collective security.

Recent weather disasters in Europe have caused unprecedented damage and incurred significant losses of human lives. Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022 has fundamentally altered the calculus of Europe's energy security. Faced with these and other challenges, Europe must find an optimal way to guarantee safety and security for its member states and their populations. It was further stated that traditional and bureaucratized Risk Assessment sometimes could not provide all the necessary information and solutions due to different kinds of biases.

Climate is a “political” topic, both as an issue and in terms of organizational responsibility, it was assessed. Individual states have limited ways and means to predict and respond effectively to weather events. Extreme weather events can have enormous political/social/economic impacts. Initiatives such as the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) enable a crisis response at a collective level within the EU. Systemic collaboration is the only way forward to minimize the impact of disasters (2023 RAR on DRR, UN O DRR). “Supplying power gives you power”. Not all EU countries are subject to equal energy risks. Demand side reductions are only a temporary/partial solution. Collective and coordinated investment is necessary to have balance. Energy (and food) inflation disproportionately affect lower income households, it was further stressed.



The Closing Perspective, Dr. Nikola Brzica, Strategic Analyst

Both climate and energy security challenges appear to manifest similar characteristics, it was concluded: politicization, cross border manifestation,

inability of individual countries to effectively mitigate risks, significant political/social/economic implications, disproportionate effect on specific segments of the population. Russia's 2022 large scale invasion has created an acute global energy and food inflation crisis. Although regional efforts to maintain security have thus far been successful, there is no room for complacency. Quality analysis, as well as collective planning, investment and action are central in efforts to deal with both challenges, it was added.

Conclusion

The Closing remarks were delivered by Dr. Matthew Rhodes, Professor, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies and RACVIAC Director, H.E. Ambassador Constantin-Mihail Grigorie.

It was stressed that it is necessary to maintain focus on all topics that were mentioned during the Conference whether it is the ongoing war in Ukraine, climate change or the role of the energy issue. A lot has been done in this sense, but we are very partially on the way and still need to keep going.



Closing Session, Dr. Mathew Rhodes, Regional Security Department, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

There is a need for a strategic approach to deal with these issues. It is a broad term which includes a lot of sub-points and the conceptual-practical link in order to find realistic solutions for the issues we're dealing with. It comes to cooperation in the end as a solution, because these issues cannot be solved by just one entity individually. Finally, the importance of events like this one lies in the fact that they

play a role in encouraging the strategic approach and keeping our focus on the issues that can be forgotten.



Closing Session, H.E. Ambassador Constantin-Mihail Grigorie, Director of RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation

It was also mentioned that awareness about the facts and issues discussed during the Conference, thanks to the very successful cooperation of all partners in the organization of this event, is an example by itself of how cooperation could lead to success. A common picture and common understanding can support a joined answer to the different challenges that our societies are facing, it was concluded.

Thanks to the successful cooperation of all three partners involved in its execution, the “Conference on Security Challenges for Europe” contributed to boosting interest among state officials and academic society in the region and beyond. The evidence of this is the steady increase in the number of participants from RACVIAC Members, Associate Members, and Observers. Its up-to-date topics and speakers offered a new perspective to the audience along with the opportunity to scrutinize the subjects that are considered to be burning issues for some countries.

Lastly, enabling networking and creating opportunities for participants to share their national and individual concerns represents RACVIAC commitment to fulfill its mission.

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