

THE AGGRESSION WAR OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ON UKRAINE: LESSONS LEARNED. A GENDER ANALYSIS

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Abstract: *It has been more than a year since the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine on a large scale. But the war between the two states did not start in 2022 but is eight years old, when the Russian Federation occupied the Crimean Peninsula, part of Ukraine. One year after the fateful February 24, 2022, the two states have approximately 100,000 casualties and loss of military equipment. Ukraine's economy has shrunk by 30%, and more than 30% of its population has been displaced. 40% of Ukraine's energy capacity was destroyed. Neither side is considering reaching a compromise or negotiating a ceasefire. A year of relentless, horrific war, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, with widespread suffering for the people of both Ukraine and the Russian Federation. In this context, resilience has become a very important term, and a correlation between it and the gender perspective has appeared in the public discourse. What are the lessons learned from this war? Are we able to learn from them?*

Keywords: *war; resilience; the gender perspective; lessons learned*

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been 430 days since the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine on a large scale. But the war between the two states did not start in 2022 but is eight years old, when the Russian Federation occupied the Crimean Peninsula, part of Ukraine. One year after the fateful February 24 (Walt, 2023), 2022, the two states have approximately 100,000 casualties and loss of military equipment. Ukraine's economy has shrunk by 30%, and more than 30% of its population has been displaced. 40% of Ukraine's energy capacity was destroyed. Neither side is considering reaching a compromise or negotiating a ceasefire. A year of relentless, horrific war, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, with widespread suffering for the people of both Ukraine and the Russian Federation (Earth, 2023).

2. RESILIENCE AND LESSONS LEARNED

In commemoration of this date, a series of events were organized, including the first Conference on Security in the Black Sea under the auspices of the Crimea Platform and the symposium on resilience, co-organized by NATO, this year with the theme "Resilience in the age of

disruption". Panelists at both events emphasized the importance of learning from the lessons of this war, about resilience and supporting a neighbor in need. (A friend in need is a friend indeed.) Mr. Mircea Geoană (Geoană, 2023), Deputy Secretary General of NATO, emphasized that the Alliance's commitment to resilience remains firm in the face of Russia's war against Ukraine. Mr. Geoană praised the resilience of Ukraine, which has resisted Russian aggression since 2014. "When President Putin first ordered his tanks to cross the border, he expected Kyiv to fall within days and the rest of the country to follow in a matter of weeks. He was wrong. He underestimated the resilience of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people," adding that building resilience is critical in preventing and recovering from attacks, thereby reducing the likelihood of them occurring in the first place.

The Deputy Secretary-General highlighted recent actions by NATO, including establishing a High Resiliency Committee, the first annual meeting of senior national officials responsible for national resilience, and launching a process to develop collective resilience goals. This framework allows Allies to address their individual needs while addressing strategic vulnerabilities and gaps, strengthening the Alliance's collective resilience.

The Deputy Secretary-General saw the event as an opportunity to reflect "on the lessons learned from Ukraine's resilience, including its resilience, that can inform our preparedness."

For Irene Fellin, the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, one of the key lessons learned from the Russian war is that "women must participate in their societies at all times, whether in war or peacetime". Ms. Fellin added that the use of sexual violence in war underscores the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective in conflict management, resolution, peacebuilding, reconstruction, and defense capacity building. Ms. Fellin believes that new priorities – including counter-terrorism, climate change, cyber security, and resilience – have significantly broadened the Women, Peace, and Security agenda since the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 nearly 23 years ago. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of NATO, Mrs. Fellin emphasized the importance of "equal participation of women in decision-making throughout the war and after the victory of Ukraine" (Fellin, 2023). Also, initiatives funded by NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package "will be gender sensitive and that women's needs are met."

In this context, resilience has become a very important term, and a correlation between it and the gender perspective has appeared in the public discourse. This fact led me to analyze the meaning of the notion of resilience, the lessons learned, and how the gender perspective is a component of the public discourse and analyses carried out on this topic. But what do we mean by resilience? How do we define this concept? The term resilience originated in psychology and refers to both the process and the outcome of successfully adapting to challenging life experiences. This concept was included in a comprehensive approach to national security. In foreign and security policy, resilience (Hedenskog, 2023) means those procedures of immediate cooperation between the state, the army, and civil society, as a single body united in difficult moments and the ability to bounce back. According to DEXONLINE, resilience is one's ability to return to normal after suffering a shock (emotional, economic, etc.). The Cambridge Dictionary defines resilience as the ability to be happy, successful, etc..., after a difficult or bad situation (the ability to be happy, and successful, etc. again after something difficult or bad has happened). Trauma specialists associate the resilience of the human psyche.

The definition of resilience according to the Cambridge Business English Dictionary is the

quality of being able to quickly return to a good state before problems. (The quality of being able to return quickly to a previous good condition after problems).

Definitions of resilience have been formulated for fields as varied as social, environmental, engineering, and biology (Hodicky, 2020).

Another definition (Ran, 2020) of resilience is the ability of a system, community, or person to prepare for, cope with, recover from, and adapt to unforeseen or unforeseen events. The United Nations (2012) defines resilience as the ability of a system, community, or society exposed to a hazard to withstand, absorb, adapt to, and recover from the effects of the hazard, within an appropriate period and in an effective manner, including through the preservation and restoration of structures and its essential functions.

In the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty, the principle of resilience is introduced and protected in Article 3, supporting the security of the Alliance:

To more effectively achieve the objectives of this treaty, the parties, separately and jointly, through self-help and continuous and effective mutual aid, will maintain and develop the individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.

This echo of this principle resonates through each NATO member nation's commitment to a national responsibility for robust military and civilian preparedness that reduces risk across the Alliance.

Resilience in a NATO context refers to the ability, nationally and collectively, to prepare for, withstand, respond to, and rapidly recover from strategic shocks and disruptions. Resilience is the ability of the Allies individually, the Alliance collectively, and NATO as an organization to withstand disruptions and shocks and continue their activities. NATO needs to be capable of continuous military transformation as well as the interconnectivity of military and non-military capabilities in all member countries to cope with the redistribution of geostrategic and military power. Alliance resilience comes from a combination of civilian preparedness and military capability. In this context, civilian readiness contributes directly to NATO's defense readiness – well-maintained, rapidly recovering, adaptable, sustainable, and ongoing military systems, supported and enabled by civilian capabilities, are required to ensure security and stability throughout the Alliance.

In 2016, NATO members agreed on the seven basic requirements of national resilience (assured

continuity of government and critical government services; resilient energy sources; ability to effectively deal with the uncontrolled movement of people; food and water resources capacity to deal with mass casualties; resilient civilian communications systems; resilient civilian transport systems) (Roepke, 2019) against which Allies can measure their level of readiness, and in 2021, NATO Heads of State and Government agreed on a strengthened commitment to resilience, emphasizing the importance of national and collective resilience against conventional, unconventional and hybrid adversary threats and activities.

As presented above, definitions of resilience have been presented for various domains. I understood that this topic of resilience was in the foreground during the Covid-19 pandemic, before that, in the global financial crisis and various corporate scandals. It has been defined as resistance to shocks, adaptation to change, and more, taking advantage of the opportunity brought by change (Țițirigă, 2023). As early as 2011, a well-known UK association, the Association of Insurance and Risk Managers in Industry and Commerce (AIRMIC) (Țițirigă, 2023) opined that to achieve resilience, an organization must consider the 5 R's (risk radar, resources, relationships organization, rapid response to incidents and review and adaptation of the organizational environment).

They defined the risk radar as the preoccupation with failure, through the permanent focus on detecting errors but also lessons learned from past mistakes. Although it seems simple, many examples have been observed of organizations repeating the same mistakes made by other similar companies before them. From AIRMIC's perspective, resources refer to employees and a company's moral compass.

As for the relations within the organization, this refers to the way of communication within the organization and with external partners. It has been observed that one of the main causes of organizational failure is poor communication, that is, information does not "flow" freely within the organization, and it is not communicated effectively on all levels. At the same time, it can also be deficient as an organization that does not "listen" or pay attention to what is happening inside and outside it.

When an incident occurs, an organization must have a quick response to prevent the incident from turning into a crisis or disaster. For this it is essential to develop an organizational culture in

which the reporting of risks and incidents is encouraged, to enable an immediate reaction. In addition, the continuous review of the organizational environment that requires changes and improvements and immediate adaptation are basic elements in ensuring resilience. Specialists in the field of organizational resilience, following this idea, question whether it is not a mistake when the state of normality is represented by stability and maintaining the status quo. They opine that the secret of a resilient organization could be normality represented by constant change and adaptation, and a period of stability would only be an accident, a short period that should not be deceived. War is a harsh teacher, so it is important that from these sacrifices we focus our attention on the lessons identified and learn from them.

There is great diversity depending on the reference level in lessons learned. Ukrainian resistance up to this point was unexpected. It provides a model for how they have dealt with attacks from a state like Russia. Perhaps one of the most important lessons, not only from this war, given the devastating impact it causes, is that regardless of geopolitical or operational imperatives, war must not be started in vain (Singh, 2023). We can understand that President Putin felt threatened by NATO's expansionist policy, but there was never a real danger of aggression from NATO to justify such a brutal and cruel invasion.

Also, in today's world, the notion of a "short war" (Singh, 2023) is a myth. Starting a war by overestimating your forces and underestimating your opponent is doomed to failure. There were countless examples of hasty preparation and negligence on the part of the Russian Federation. For example, the use of personal mobile phones for conversations with families led to the interception of conversations and the discovery of Russian positions. The same overestimation of own forces but also demonstrating extreme cruelty, including towards the Kremlin's people, led to considerable human losses, due to poor training of the military, with little professional experience in combat missions. In today's interdependent world, when two states compete, the one with stronger relationships has an upper hand, even in the face of an obvious imbalance of capabilities. In modern warfare, a strategy with minimalist expectations appears to be more effective than a maximalist approach, which provokes greater resistance from the adversary (Singh, 2023).

According to Elbridge Colby (Grubii, 2023), a former Pentagon official who led the team that produced the 2018 US National Defense Strategy,

an important lesson is "Don't rely on indirect international pressure. You must be able to defeat the enemy's ability and retain the key territory of your state." From his perspective, countries vulnerable to an attack from Russia must rely on an asymmetric defense, with "decentralized forces, prepared and able to create problems for stronger forces that can execute aggressive military operations."

In this sense, Michele Flournoy (Grubii, 2023), former American undersecretary for defense policy, supports the need for "small, agile units that can sabotage the enemy and then retreat to a safe place." The Atlantic Council (Grubii, 2023) formulated a series of lessons learned addressed to all interested parties in this conflict, among which we, of course, mention Ukraine and the Russian Federation, but also NATO, the USA, China, Germany, and their allies, political and military leaders. This conflict changed the perspective not only of military strategies and operations but also of diplomacy, intelligence, national security, but also energy, economic policies, and many other areas.

The analysis starts from the assumption that the Russian F was considering a short-lived invasion with a quick victory. This is another assumption. The current perception is that this conflict is far from over, becoming a protracted one that will test the resolve of all parties concerned. The first lesson formulated is addressed to Western diplomacy which has learned that Ukrainians are trustworthy. They have proven that their demands on Western weaponry are pertinent, they have learned how to use/maneuver them reasonably, and they are adept at using information from intelligence structures.

The lesson in global diplomacy is that the Putin regime cannot be trusted and must be defeated. From personal experience, I have learned that today's friends can be tomorrow's enemies, and diplomacy disappears when "must" appears. However, some patterns of Russia have been recognized, namely, non-compliance with international rules, treaties, and commitments, and negotiations are not guaranteed. It has been shown that when you compromise with an aggressor state, it will be encouraged to escalate its attacks.

The Atlantic Council believes it would send a strong signal if the US will abandon the strategic ambiguity that only encourages an adventurist adversary. In today's security environment, expressing red lines explicitly and firmly can be considered a deterrent against escalation. Regarding US national security, the adversary is not only Moscow but also Beijing and Tehran.

Likewise, the recommendation to the US is not to ignore the civilian population during these critical times. The information war that Russia is waging with the West is very acute, and to avoid the manipulation of the civilian population, it is necessary to prevent it promptly, with empathy, and openly. Another recommendation was to invest in front-line partners who are fighting Russia and China. Following the model of US assistance to Israel, support for Ukraine is also recommended.

An important lesson identified for the military: "Equipment does not win wars. People do." Investing in the training of the military, in training by encouraging taking the initiative on the battlefield, by delegating command, has proven superior to a pattern of training and centralized command. Also, modern and agile weapons can defeat larger conventional armed forces, especially on the defensive. As Singh also concluded, the war in Ukraine demonstrated that tanks, warships, and fighter jets are more vulnerable than ever to "cheap" defensive systems (Singh, 2023). The effectiveness of artillery when using high-precision munitions, drones, and satellites in modern warfare has been demonstrated. Another lesson Singh drew is the importance of functional logistical support structures. In a war, speed of resupply is vital (Singh, 2023). As for deterrence, the lesson learned is that economic sanctions have not had the desired effect on Russia. A clear signal was sent with the presence of NATO troops on the Eastern flank of the Alliance. For the global economy, the lesson learned was that economic sanctions need time to produce results. That is why they must be included in long-term foreign policy objectives.

Lesson Identified for Wartime Strategic Communications: Influence operations are a daily job. Ukraine's sustained effort to attract international support is appreciated, but also the denigration of Russia's actions by exposing the aggressions and increasing confidence in the Government in Kyiv. Official messages are empathized by presenting direct visual images.

From the perspective of cyber defense, I understood that it is necessary to involve the private sector in operational-military cyberspace. I believe that the organization of military exercises in the field of cyber defense should be considered with the involvement of the private sector active in this field.

Referring to NATO, its importance and special value have been demonstrated. The alliance needs substantial long-term investment, both political and financial. The frequent disputes among its members

regarding the utility of the Alliance induced a message of weakening the commitments of the member states and vulnerability to its opponents. However, in crises, its unity was proven.

On the other hand, however, it is important to remember that, nowadays, after so many political efforts, the regulations of the Hague Convention, regarding the protection of civilians in conflict, are not respected. Moreover, a humanitarian crisis was deliberately created. By destroying infrastructure, post-conflict recovery is slowed, which is more about punishing the enemy than about victory (Resilience First, 2023). In this regard, Dr. Shea (Resilience First, 2023) warns that failure to comply with the Hague Convention in future conflicts could put NATO in a position to face humanitarian problems at the same time as the enemy.

Stephen M. Walt's analysis for Foreign Policy Magazine presents other lessons for political leaders and voters. Starting from the assumption that Vladimir Putin had in mind a short "military action", he misjudged three factors: Russia's military power, Ukraine's resilience, and the ability of Western states to find alternative sources of energy. The first important lesson is that it is very easy for leaders to make wrong decisions. (Lesson No. 1: It is very easy for leaders to miscalculate.) But the West also made mistakes: they did not seriously consider the possibility of a war, overestimating the power of economic sanctions, and underestimating the determination Kremlin to bring Kyiv back under its influence.

The second lesson is that states must act unitedly to fight against aggressors (Lesson No. 2: States united to counter aggression.) This is a lesson that Vladimir Putin did not take into account, namely the premise that Ukraine is supported by a coalition with an economic power 20 times greater than its own, determined to find solutions to Russian energy dependence. So instead of facing an inferior enemy, he faces a coalition-backed opponent with the most sophisticated weaponry.

Lesson No. 3: "It isn't over till it's over.", that is, we must not lose focus, even in the case of winning some battles. We do not consider the conflict ended until the signing of the Peace Treaty, but even then, I would say, in certain contexts, with certain opponents, vigilance is a permanent mandatory state. That's why Wait believes that dreaming about the recovery of Crimea by Ukraine or the change of the Putin regime is far too early and counterproductive. Russia is still a great power with a population three times that of Ukraine, a large arms industry, and a large arms stockpile. Also, both sides are looking for ways to put

pressure on the opponent, and the threat of a nuclear weapon cannot be completely ruled out (back to lesson #1).

War is a time when the stakes are very high, and rational thinking and careful calculation are often replaced by bluster, extremist speech, and hard opinions (Lesson No. 4: War empowers extremists and makes compromise harder.). That's why compromise is hard to accept, even if neither side has a real chance of victory. Here's Walt asking himself if all the voices who rule out peace negotiations and are in favor of continuing the war until Ukraine wins (because it can't be otherwise, can it?) have done an exercise in introspection and come to the conclusion that they are right. It has as its starting point this question, otherwise legitimate, from the lessons learned from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, which generous foreign support, moreover, sustained this conflict, and in the end, the countries were not in a better situation. Indeed, we are far from envisioning a ceasefire, but given the loss of life, the wounded, and the destruction that has been caused, which now seems unachievable, perhaps it should be thought of somehow or built, rational and calculated.

Walt's fifth lesson, and in his opinion, the most important, is that a more restrained NATO open-door policy and the intention to include Ukraine in Western economic and security institutions could have prevented this escalation war (Lesson No. 5: A strategy of restraint would have reduced the risk of war.). I do not share this opinion precisely because of the virulence with which Putin publicly expressed himself about the consequences of NATO's expansion in Eastern Europe. In my opinion, this arrogance of his did not offer any room for negotiation, he did not accept any explanation because I believe that this escalation of the conflict was premeditated and long-planned.

As an additional lesson, actually, as a reinforcement of the first lesson (Lesson No. 1: It is very easy for leaders to miscalculate.), he emphasizes that leader's matter (Bonus Lesson: Leaders matter). Although the messages about NATO's open-door policy were a well-known topic to the Russian elite, the question arises if Russia had a different president, how he would have positioned himself. Would he have done the same as Vladimir Putin? Or if there had been a different administration in the White House, would they have defused this crisis before it got rolling? Or how would this war have looked if the elections in Ukraine had been won by Petro Poroshenko, would it have had the same result in terms of international support? Of course not.

President Volodymyr Zelensky is a very important part of this story because his words and actions galvanized not only the Ukrainian people but the entire world (Custer, 2023). National leaders are the ones who decide how to react to the circumstances they face, so we cannot say that they are not responsible for the consequences of those decisions. As we also observe from the lesson learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, what seems appropriate, bold, and effective during the crisis, once the ceasefire and costs are finalized, can look the complete opposite.

Another perspective of the lessons learned from this war highlighted the fact that not everyone learned the same lessons from history (Everyone Learned the Wrong Lessons Last Time (Earth, 2023)). After the first invasion in 2014, Russia thought that it could grab a piece of Ukraine, slowing down its Euro-Atlantic course, and thought that if it had interests, which it considered justified, it could do the same. Europe considered the Minsk Agreement to be the end of the conflict. There was a general understanding that Ukraine had to accept the loss of Crimea and much of Donbas as a condition of peace. Consequently, Russia has learned that through military action it can interfere in the interests of another state, and many of the Western states believe that Russia's wish must be met.

After this conflict, Russia should learn that the rhetoric of nuclear weapons is not very useful in the conflict zone (Nuclear Weapons Are Not Useful on the Battlefield (Earth, 2023)) instead they are very useful as an advantage in deterrence (Nuclear Weapons Are Useful for Deterrence (Earth, 2023)). Given that the conflict zone is on Russian territory, according to Moscow's belief, it is unlikely that a decision will be made to use it. Russia used this rhetoric because it knew the importance the West placed on not using it. Thus, there were several actions, which in the process of deterrence, were successful for Russia, namely, its suspension from the New START Treaty, thus emphasizing the increase in nuclear risk, thus limiting the support offered to Ukraine but also reducing the risk of NATO involvement in the conflict. If, at the end of this conflict, Russia gains a territorial advantage using nuclear weapon rhetoric, it will learn the lesson that there are other uses for nuclear capabilities, namely to coerce adversaries against their interests.

One lesson that I find particularly important is that EXPERTS CAN BE WRONG, TOO. The assessments presented by various analysts, both political and military, in the initial phase of the

conflict, did not take into account the lessons learned by Ukraine in 2014. They considered that the Russian Federation would emerge victorious, due to its size. The army of the Russian Federation, numerically, is considerably larger, as is the technical endowment. The element of surprise was the human factor, the determination, and the determination of Ukrainians to defend their country when their sovereignty and existence as a Ukrainian people were threatened. Not counted were the number of volunteers, women, and men, who joined the army supporting it in any way they could. Their determination (Bejan, 2023, 10'43"-11'52") to raise funds to buy military equipment, yes, from private funds, in addition to those received from the West. How they survived this time of war, some of them reopened their small businesses and adapted to the existing conditions. The change of the political class also contributed to this resistance, as corrupt leaders were eliminated.

To deceive us as little as possible, instead, it is mandatory to understand the enemy's strategy (Understand the Strategy). Experts believe that Putin (Earth, 2023) thought he would have a quick victory, remove the current Government from power and replace it with a pro-Russian one. When it was obvious that the element of surprise had been missed, the Kremlin used the strategy of exhaustion, which could lead Ukraine and its supporters to seek ways to end the war by accepting Russia's terms. He thus used the threat of nuclear weapons, attacks on civilians, and propaganda. Through this strategy, Russia has ensured that this conflict will not end soon or easily, while the cost will be ever higher. As part of the strategy, Russia wants to make Ukraine think that it is paying too high a price for the recovery of the territories. The lesson of Crimea 2014 should be clear: freezing a conflict with Russia that remains with the gains intact does not resolve the issues that led to Russia's aggression in 2022, and there will be no resolution in 2023 either. Russia's long-term strategy appears to be to win now as much as he can, the regrouping, and when he has a favorable situation, they will try again to change the regime in Kyiv.

Regarding the effectiveness of the sanctions imposed on Russia, they do not have such a quick and strong effect (We Don't Have Sanctions Right). We have even noted the existing difference between European leaders regarding their application. Europe's dependence on Russian energy has led to a delay in their application, we have also found that the application of these economic measures does not change behaviors.

Given the success of relative independence from Russian energy, perhaps it would be opportune to rethink them to strengthen their effectiveness.

The lessons learned from the perspective of political, strategic, or international organizations are particularly important and, without unnecessary arrogance, it is necessary to be not only learned but also studied by the younger generation, to have an overview of the world and its characteristics. These lessons will appear periodically until they are learned. From a humanitarian perspective, the lessons are catastrophic and seemingly hopeless. A regime of a country that claimed to be modern uses war tactics that we considered to be long outdated. We found that no lessons were learned from the war in the former Yugoslavia. The same old and yet so effective tactic of terrorizing civilians and forced migration. This tactic of Putin's to evict the civilian population from the areas he controls to be replaced by ethnic Russians, and then use the rhetoric of their defense, is not new. 40% of Ukraine's population has migrated (Brookings, 2023). A significant part, abroad, and another part inside the country where there is no fighting. With rhetoric to justify the "special military operation" that led to the de-Nazification of Ukraine, the so-called "filtration camps" were discovered in the cities occupied by the Russian forces, in fact, a place of mass incarceration. The illegal deportation of children, either orphaned or separated from their families, should also be mentioned here.

All these tactics of reprisals against civil society, which contravene all international humanitarian laws regarding the protection of civilians in conflict zones, have been used by the Kremlin (Brookings, 2023) regime, including in Syria, alongside the Assad regime, as a means of pressure on international opponents.

However, one aspect not taken into account is the resistance and determination of Ukrainians to defend their country. This bravery and heroism of the Ukrainian people, contrary to Putin's expectations, caused a movement to support them, both from civil society and Western states, and not only. Ukrainians do not need any additional motivation to join the fight against those who kill and terrorize their children, women, and the elderly, who attack civilians and destroy civilian buildings, hospitals, kindergartens, and schools. Putin and the Russians motivate them enough (Sommerville, 2023, 9'58").

It is important to understand how this resilience was built, and what was their moment of awakening. This was after the failure of 2014 (Hubali, 2022) when the annexation of Crimea was

made possible with the complicity of some Ukrainian army generals who colluded with the Russian special forces to be appointed to leadership positions. Then, 75% of the Ukrainian Black Sea Naval Forces defected to the Russian Black Sea Forces.

As I said before, after this humiliation, there followed a process of internal cleaning and strengthening of the army. Kyiv (Hedenskog, 2023) has reformed its armed forces, uniting them under a single command, and improving its logistics and communications, under the control of mid-level commanders, and cyber defense. It was supported by the West to implement these modernizations, using their practices as a model.

In this modernization process, the Ukrainian military has demonstrated a great capacity to absorb new and complex knowledge and technology. Another success was the creation of a complex network of reservists and the involvement of civil society in a unique movement of volunteer forces, which sometimes acted in place of the state. The policies adopted after 2014 increased trust in regional leaders, giving them financial advantages, which were used to increase the quality of life in the region. Russia could no longer recruit important political leaders in the occupied zones, having to recruit obscure pro-Russian individuals with little influence to appoint them to key positions. Ukraine also invested in the modernization of the army, adopted in 2021, a military and security strategy that replaced the one of 2015, developed during the 2014 conflict with Russia.

Resilience has been the red thread in cooperation with NATO, even adopting a National Resilience System in line with NATO's requirements for resilience. Compared to the areas identified by NATO as important for a resilient society, Ukraine has identified two more areas that it has included in this System (informational influence/manipulation and the financial and economic area). Ukraine (Rybachok, 2023) has already implemented over 300 NATO standards, more than some NATO member states.

Another change was to decentralize the decision-making process by creating middle leaders in the officer corps who were encouraged to develop initiative and responsibility. Ultimately, this was the weak link in Crimea when the troops waited for direct orders from the highest level. This was one of the characteristics that made the difference between the Ukraine of 2014 and that of 2022, but also from Russia, which remained strongly centralized.

In addition, a big difference between Ukraine and Russia is the morale and motivation of both

soldiers and citizens. Some are motivated to defend their country and others were incorporated against their will, expecting to be welcomed as liberators, instead, they found themselves in a hostile environment, often without understanding the reason. Volunteers have played and still play a very important role in Ukraine's resistance, from large-scale fundraising to individual initiatives, purchasing weapons, equipment, food, and uniforms, all to support those on the front lines.

Resistance also meant people's attempt to continue their daily lives, to go to work, to school, even in conditions where alarms are heard at night, or everything around is barricaded with sandbags, under the threat of rockets falling on civilian buildings, hospitals, schools, kindergartens, apartment blocks, commercial complexes. What in peacetime is normality, these days in Kyiv (Bejan, 2023) means heroism. Civil society mobilized and they adapted, fended for themselves, did not freeze this winter, and stayed, more willing to fight for their country. Heroism in seemingly small deeds, from rebuilding a bombed mall last year to adapting to keep small businesses alive. A cafe, and a stand-up comedy club, seem banal and there seems to be no absolute need for them, but in the dynamics of mental health, they have their purpose (We Ukrainians, all together, went through this period - Anastasia, manager of the cafe). Slava Romania! voiced by a Ukrainian had a special resonance for me (Bejan, 2023, 12'36"). Performing for free to send money to the military, here's another heroic deed. Another very important role (Information Defense Hub, 2023) of civil society, in addition to providing humanitarian aid to war-affected civilians and organizing fundraising, is to document war crimes (Ukraine's Data Battalion, 2023). All silent, empathetic, and patient testimonies will be useful in judging the perpetrators because the atrocities committed by them must not be forgotten (Bejan, 2023, 16'44"-22'30"). We must not forget or forgive the war waged on women's bodies. The most silent battle, which must be carefully and gently documented and punished (Bejan, 2023, 20'31"-23'59").

It is important to mention the exceptional cooperation between IT companies for military purposes. Volunteers created a simple app that allowed civilians to report the approach of Russian drones and missiles, increasing the possibility of destroying them before impact (Hedenskog, 2023).

Another lesson learned by Ukraine is the importance of cyber defense. Thus, as on the battlefield, a country exposed to large-scale cyberattacks by a larger and more resourceful adversary

needs help from the outside world. In addition to the support received from friendly states, Ukrainian companies in the field of IT and cyber security, with headquarters abroad, began to cooperate with national authorities. But perhaps the most important lesson Ukraine has learned in the field of cyber defense is that no matter how strong the cyber defense is, at some point, there is a possibility that it will be penetrated. Since the start of the war, 550 repulsed attacks have been reported. Investing in cyber security is a vital action for the future, given the fact that cyberattacks will continue long after the ceasefire.

Nevertheless, the main lesson learned by Ukraine about resilience, even before investments in defense capabilities or cyber security, is the strengthening of national identity in the country. Based on the known pro-Russian preference for eastern and southern Ukraine, in 2014 Russian television was banned, social media pages were blocked, and the use of the Russian language in the media was banned. All these changes were made in parallel with the banning of communist and even Nazi symbols and doctrine, the demolition of communist monuments and statues, and the removal of all such symbols from public institutions.

The early investment in a robust civil society is not just an optional "extra" but is fundamental to a society's ability to deter, resist, and repel the destructive intent of an external aggressor in peacetime and wartime (Custer, 2023).

The total invasion of 2022 was a turning point in which Ukrainian identity was strengthened, leading to the elimination of the Russian language from everyday communication. The number of the population using only Russian, or almost only Russian, decreased to a single digit only in 2022, even in the eastern or southern areas. Practically, there was no longer any identity difference in Ukraine, the only difference being the regions under the influence of Kyiv and those under Russian occupation.

We can say that Ukraine's resilience is due to political pluralism, decentralization of decision-making, encouragement of individual initiative, an active civil society, strong national unity, and a sense of purpose to fight for. On the other hand, the Russian problem is caused by a dictatorial political system and a repressive society, a lack of a free press, growing corruption, and a permanent state of terror.

Another area from which we have lessons was the migration movement of civilians in Ukraine. As we already know, the declaration of a state of emergency in Ukraine activated the ban on men

aged 18-60 leaving the country. Women, children, and men over 60 are the ones who were able to leave the country. More than 70% of those who left the country at the beginning of the war are women, who take care of minors and/or elderly people.

In the first phase, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, in cooperation with international organizations (Globsec, 2023), provided aid to migrants. Municipalities, along with Ukrainian-led organizations, have been involved in humanitarian support for them. In all this endeavor (Globsec, 2023), challenges were found both from a legislative perspective and from the perspective of the needs and vulnerabilities faced by this type of migrants, among which we mention: the issue of the language barrier, and day-to-day integration, care services for minor children, obtaining positions with flexible programs and according to their training, obtaining housing, first of all, safe but also at affordable prices, preventing gender violence, the possibility of easily finding psychological support and combating labor exploitation and human trafficking. The last year is a source of learning for the actors involved. Thus, the European Union (Globsec, 2023) should consider strengthening the Directive on the temporary protection of Persons (TPD), to ensure fair guarantees to all member states. Also, coordinate a monitoring system focused on achieving the objectives of the Directive and collect detailed data for this purpose. These will be necessary for the creation of data-based policies. The European Union (Globsec, 2023) must ensure better coordination, cooperation, and exchange of information between member states regarding the challenges and good practices identified throughout this period. To support Ukrainian displaced persons, from a gender perspective, it is necessary to identify strategic communication.

The lessons learned at the government (Globsec, 2023) level are focused on facilitating access to labor markets but also on the implementation of affirmative policies to encourage the employment of displaced persons. At the same time, given the breakdown of families and the majority existence of only one parent, a better childcare service system is needed, as well as ensuring full access to the state health system for all categories of displaced persons from Ukraine. Given the fact that the majority of migrants are women, it is necessary to apply mechanisms to prevent sexual and labor exploitation.

The lessons identified for state and non-state actors (Globsec, 2023) are to employ as many Ukrainian speakers as possible for helplines and

train them to provide psychological support at least at the primary level. Also, all the people who provide help services should be trained including for services specific to war trauma. Sustained efforts are also needed for the social inclusion of Ukrainian children as well as systemic efforts for temporarily displaced persons. These actions can be supported by overcoming the language barrier, in both directions. To eliminate gender-based violence and human trafficking, concerted efforts of all actors involved (governments, international organizations, and specialized NGOs) are needed.

3. AN ANALYSIS FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

To resume what has been presented, I can say that lessons have been identified for all levels and in all phases; from the international level, at the state level, and the diplomatic, military, and civil level. We learned that what we cannot change, we must accept, and we cannot change geography. Neighbors, in these periods, are the same, and you have to know their strengths and weaknesses. We always prepare for the worst, even if it is peace.

Alliances are important, but also the existence of red, principled lines that we must not cross. This somehow goes against diplomacy. If we have learned that Putin is not trustworthy, what will the likely peace negotiations look like? Can we assume the isolation of Russia? Is this what we want? Or only Putin's. But how effective is it if his family and loved ones are free citizens to live anywhere in the world?

I learned that without leaders and managers who think about the people of the country, democracy, and freedom, we cannot have a healthy and resilient society. Corruption and centralization are factors of weakness. There are no areas that are more important and others less important. All are necessary for healthy systemic functioning. I learned that civilian training is important and you can do it with great effect in peacetime. For this, depending on gender and age, it is important to ask the right questions. Women and men are equally important, they should be treated seriously, but they have different needs. That is why we need to ask them to be properly prepared.

What Ukraine understood after 2014 was the willingness of women to participate in the struggle. Women have been accepted into the armed forces since 1993. During the invasion of Donbas in 2014, 257 women were decorated, nine of them posthumously (Security Women, 2023). Thus, all positions were opened for the participation of

women. After the total invasion of February 2022, there are 50,000 women in the Ukrainian army, of which 38,000 are in combat units, working as paramedics or snipers, and volunteers supporting behind the front, in logistics. Everyone helps as they can. Of these, 8,000 women are officers (Mathers, 2023). Also, a deputy minister in the Ministry of Defense is a woman.

The presence of women in the armed forces was not an action without controversy. Their presence together with men, in the front line, did not mean that they enjoyed the same rights as men. Female soldiers in Ukraine and beyond still have to overcome skepticism from commanders and fellow soldiers about their commitment and abilities, obstacles to promotion and career development, and difficulties related to practical - and vitally important - matters such as getting the right uniforms, body armor, and boots (Mathers, 2023). Military women from Ukraine paid the ultimate ransom, along with their colleagues, they were taken prisoner by the Russians, and they received specific treatments (Hinnant, 2023)

Even if Ukraine is a country with a strong patriarchal tradition, especially in the field of defense, since the beginning of this war, important steps have been taken to accept women in the armed forces, both at the societal level and at the level of political leaders.

To recognize the merits of women in the army, National Defenders Day was renamed Defenders and Defendresses of Ukraine Day (Office Holidays, 2023). Likewise, images of military personnel are constant presences on the website of the Ministry of Defense and on social media recounting their experiences. Another lesson that leaders from various fields should learn is to start programs to update legislation, implementing rules or any procedure, documented through studies. Thus, to draw attention to the condition of women in the Ukrainian army, they started a project called the Invisible Battalion (Mathers, 2023) through which legislative barriers were identified that prevented them from engaging in the fields of defense and security, accessing training courses training, impediments to being able to apply for specialized or leadership positions.

The positions of gender advisors, as well as auditors in military institutions, were established, which led to the removal of legislative barriers and improved social attitudes towards female soldiers. Thus, from 53%, in 2018, who agreed that women should be given equal opportunities in the military, to an increase of 80% in 2022 (Mathers, 2023). In families where both partners serve in the Armed

Forces, parental leave is granted to both mothers and fathers.

These are just a few examples of what Ukraine has done in the field of gender equality in the military. What the Invisible Battalion (Lischinska, 2017) study demonstrated is the fact that women veterans fought for the recognition of the veteran status both with the military and civilian authorities, a fact that made it difficult for them to access public services for veterans and the transition to civilian life (Mathers, 2023). It will be interesting to see how gender relations will evolve after the end of the war in Ukraine. Will women be recognized for their rights gained during this period of conflict? We must highlight that women have gained equal access rights in all fields during difficult times such as wars. Upon their completion, and the men returning home, the women were dismissed, including those from the army. In favor of this period, there are commitments assumed by Ukraine. In 2022, the national strategy regarding the equality of women and men was adopted, valid until 2030 (Ukrainian National Strategy, 2022) which gives a certain certainty regarding the preservation of the rights won, at least at the formal level. One must look at how these laws are enforced and what their effects are on women and men.

In 2020, the second National Action Plan for the implementation of the UN CRS was approved, valid until 2025, which included measures to improve the conditions of military women and ensure the necessary support for women veterans. Also included was the obligation to equip women who are part of the defense system, public order, and national security, with uniforms and protective equipment that take into account the conformation of women (Ukraine NAP 2, 2022), as well as providing veterans and their families with free legal advice. I believe that the awareness of women's different needs in terms of equipment and its inclusion in the NAP is a big step forward and is lacking all over the world. For example, Romania has, since 2017, a ballistic vest prototype for women, which has not yet been approved due to a very complicated procedure with diverging interests.

4. CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion, gender roles are constantly changing. As a rule, this does not happen in peace. In the absence of men, women, as always, ensure the functioning of vital services. Here is a reason to have a unified education for girls and boys, starting from the family. We have the opportunity to grow a

resilient society by providing them with knowledge from all fields. Also, ensuring diverse participation, at all levels, so that in times of need, the provision of vital services would continue to be problematic. Here is one of the parameters of resilience.

I would emphasize the importance of focusing attention and formulating a peace negotiation plan. Given the fact that now the hot topic is Ukraine's counteroffensive, it is too early to consider the timing of peace negotiations. And yet... Lessons learned from the conflict in the Balkans have shown us that healing is hard, lasting, and honest. As in the conflict in Ukraine, rape was used as a tactic of ethnic cleansing. The women hardly spoke, and the healing process hardly began (Baftiu, 2022). The perpetrators were not punished. As we can see from the recent movements in Kosovo, the Western Balkans is still a region where peace has not settled, and the atmosphere is very tense where the leaders of the two belligerents accuse each other. More than 30 years have passed and no notable developments are recorded. But we must learn to observe those around us, understand their needs, and include them in society, and these are invisible children resulting from war rapes (Haxhijaj, 2020).

What did I learn after writing this material?

- Leaders matter! This means that we must invest in the education of the younger generation to prepare them for voting.

- Experts can be wrong too. That is why it is important to develop critical thinking. Let's learn to look around us and ask ourselves questions, to verify from several sources what we hear.

- Within the armed forces, let's develop diversity and flexibility. Let's prepare including role exchanges.

- To invest in people's training. No crisis is like another, and in this era, gender roles have changed. It is important to understand the needs of women to actively participate in the defense of the homeland, the values they believe in, and freedom. It is important to take into account their specific needs.

- No matter how modern we consider ourselves, in war situations, civilians are ALWAYS victims, but not only collateral. No matter how many international conventions exist, their observance is not a certain fact. That is why the preparation of the armed forces for missions that are not specific to it, such as assisting migrants, detaining and processing, at least for certain periods, prisoners of war, ensuring the administrative management of an area where local authorities can no longer debt, is worthy of consideration.

- Safeguarding a peace plan. How will this be achieved? What is the best plan? It is important to learn from the lessons of other conflicts in the region. Women matter, abusers must be punished. We cannot change geography. The neighbors are the same and the so-called frozen conflicts are latent and will erupt at some point.

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