



Policy Brief: Changes of International Relations After the Russian-Ukrainian War

Based on the joint CFS-SSRC seminar on May 25th 2023, Copenhagen

Introduction

In the period 22-25 May 2023, Centre for Stabilization (CFS) at the Royal Danish Defence College's Institute for Strategy and War Studies hosted an Academic Research Course and a joint Seminar in Copenhagen. The program and visit was organized by, CFS in corporation with The Strategic Studies and Research Center (SSRC).

The seminar faced participation from RDDC as well as from SSRC at the Iraqi Defence University for Higher Military Studies (DUHMS). The Iraqi delegation was led by the Dean of SSRC sMG Ahmed Ali Hussein Al-Tamimi. The seminar was one of several initiatives organized by the SSRC and CFS since 2021 financed by the Danish Peace- and Stabilization Fund's Program for Iraq & Syria and supported by NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) and NATO Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP).



The main objective of the seminar was to share knowledge on the consequences of the war in Ukraine and to create an academic platform, to analyze and present “Changes of International Relations after the Russian-Ukrainian War” from different national perspectives. The seminar contained three sections of two speakers, one speaker from both sides, and was conjointly moderated by Mr. David Vestenskov, Director of CFS and Dr. Hayder Taha Askar, Director of Research at SSRC.



Key takeaways from the seminar First Session, “Asymmetric Warfare - Lessons from Ukraine and the Development in Doctrines”

Dr. Ali Hado, researcher at SSRC, held the first presentation of the first session. In his presentation, Mr. Hado argued how war and warfare in particular, can be defined as a social phenomenon. According to Dr. Hado, asymmetric warfare should be viewed in a cultural context, but also as a general concept, influenced by various doctrinal elements and rules. Dr. Hado argued for the importance in developing dynamic doctrines in order to be capable of a continued flexible adjusted strategy in dynamic conflicts. This requires research and cooperation and most importantly knowledge on security strategies on conflicting parties. Furthermore, the concept of war carried out by proxy, is expanding to other areas than armed



resistance groups eg. Cyber and soft power. This put demands on military research center to expand their capacities.

In his presentation on the lessons from Ukraine, the following speaker Major Steen Kjærgaard, Deputy Director Institute for Strategy and War Studies, stressed that Russia’s war strategy was predicated on assumptions that Ukrainian political

opposition would be conventional and minimal. The strategy did not incorporate the asymmetric element and rested on an assumption that ‘decapitation’ of the Ukrainian government in Kiev would lead to a collapse of resistance.

Russia’s move to split a relatively small invasive force on four axes only made sense in the context of an assumed Ukrainian political collapse. Unprepared for a longer conflict, with many soldiers not trained for this type of warfare, the Russians became “bogged down”.

Major Kjærgaard highlighted the following reasons for Russia's failed strategy:

- 1) Misjudging the West’s willingness to provide military assistance to Ukraine assist and a miscalculation of own military capabilities.
- 2) Russia's misguided assumption that Ukraine would fall quickly left the unprepared for the phases in the war
- 3) Poor leadership and lack of a modernized leadership doctrine resulted in flawed operations and inability for Russia not being able to motivate their troops properly.

By analyzing these missteps Major Kjærgaard concluded on the key lessons learned that there is evidence that a centralized leadership doctrine has shortcomings in employment and



the development of flexible mitigations of an operational strategy.

2nd Session, “Evolution in crisis Management post Russian-Ukrainian War – Future Demands for Societies and Command Structures”

Major Alexander Høgsberg opened the second session and presented his analysis on Danish crisis management. Underlining the importance for a small state like Denmark to constantly learn and cooperate with its neighbors – especially the surrounding Scandinavian countries.

Major Tetzlaff stressed, that the world is globally interlinked, so one country's crises can easily emerge and spread to other countries globally, which demands development of global crisis management fora. Examples of such crisis' was the crack of Lehman Brothers in US and COVID-19 in, which began at a long geographical distance from Denmark but had immediate severe consequences for many Danish sectors. Major Tetzlaff concluded that a strategic integration of capacity readiness and security awareness is crucial for enhanced crisis management. He stressed that especially an enhanced organizational crisis management structure is necessary to enable sufficient coordination among various sectors of the society.

The second speaker of the session, Dr. Muthanna Ali Abd al-Sada presented his analysis on various causes of a crisis. According to him, crisis is prone to unfold due to elements such as, “*Misunderstandings*”, “*random management*”, “*the desire for blackmail*” “*rumors*” and “*despair*”.

In extension, Dr. Abd al-Sada argued that effective crisis management requires a



societal focus streamlining bureaucratic procedures and by raising citizens' awareness of crisis. His key recommendations were, that managing crisis, requires a commander/team leader with the capability of combining characteristics and tools at hand in the framework structure and only a team leader which masters these skills and tools, can lead properly during and after a crisis. The recommendation was therefore directed against leadership education and a proper leadership doctrine, which is a vital first step in developing a sound national crisis management capacity.

3rd Session, After the War in Ukraine – Perspectives for International Relations

The last session was initiated by Dr. Fatima Mohamed addressing “The Future of International Relations in the shadow of the Energy Conflict in the wake of the Russian-Ukrainian War”. Dr. Mohamed stressed that the nature of EU and Russia’s relationship is unstable, but not one of “*enemies*”, “*jurors*” or “*traditional adversaries*”. She elaborated that the United States and Russia's mutual increase in pressure on each other and engagement in possible competition and conflict, will lead to geostrategic changes in the global energy sector in the post Russian-Ukrainian war. Furthermore, the raise in energy rates has already changed the EU's consumption of energy resources and independent of the outcome of the war it will



lead to a decline in the EU's interest in fossil energy resources, which naturally will affect the global energy market.

Due to increasing interest in green energy globally, Mrs. Mohammed expects that EU and the US might embargo Russia and raise levels of competition in the Middle East over energy in the near future. Mrs. Mohamed concluded her presentation by highlighting the Russian-Ukrainian war as a “*basis for energy competition in geostrategic areas*”. Here referring to North Africa and the Middle East in particular. She predicted that due to a Western decline in gas and oil demands, America and the Europe will phase out commercial relationship with Russia. This will create a new security situation in the Middle East where oil competition will be less dominating.

The seminar's last speaker, Dr. Niels Bo, Director of the Institute for strategy and warfare presented his analysis on “*War in Ukraine – status, solutions and perspectives*”. Dr. Poulsen stressed that the Russian narrative and belief is that Ukraine is part of Russia, underlining that Russia has not accepted that previous dominated areas, cannot necessarily be domesticated anymore.

Dr. Poulsen concluded that regardless of the outcome of the war, Russia will be economically be weakened. He added that the war in Ukraine is a proxy-war with all major global powers involved one way or the other. One of the being China regardless their public non-interference position, they are anxious about America's role in the war. He added that China is one of the few actors benefitting from the war due to a shift in Western security attention.

The seminar concluded with a joint discussion guided by questions by the audience. The discussion session formed the basis of relevant and interesting exchange of insights.



Throughout the whole seminar, questions were discussed and debated between speakers and participants. For example joint discussions on questions like "what does Putin really want?" or “How conventional warfare can be defined by knowing your own strength // disadvantages” and even “how a theorization of war not necessarily is applicable in practice”. The discussion illuminated the different national perspectives on the war in Ukraine especially the Western security dominated approach towards an Iraqi approach mainly focused on economic growth.

The next joint seminar between the SSRC and RDDC will take place in Dec 2023 in Baghdad.





KEY FINDINGS

First Session:

- Russia was not prepared for a long asymmetric war and is suffering from an outdated leadership doctrine
- Russia underestimated willingness of Western support to Ukraine
- Asymmetric warfare demands flexible research capabilities

Second Session

- A key criteria for predicting crisis, is learning from neighboring countries – Sweden, Norway and Finland in case of Denmark in particular.
- In awareness of its ‘own size’, Denmark prioritizes cooperating with other (bigger) countries in order to prevent crises.
- By looking towards neighboring countries, Denmark managed to adapt and evolve from “reactive” “proactive” in order to brace itself against crisis.
- Crisis can occur due misunderstandings, human errors and opposing objectives and interests.
- In understanding and coping with crisis capacities of a leader is crucial, which calls for an enhanced focused on leadership education
- Time of crisis can be managed with diplomacy, military force or psychological warfare, but all aspects requires a sound and modern leadership doctrine

Third Session

- The U.S and Russia exert more pressure on each other and engage in potential competition and conflict, especially with geostrategic changes of the post Russian –Ukrainian War
- The Russian-Ukrainian War has become the basis for energy competition in geostrategic areas, primarily North Africa and the Middle East, as well as for undermining Russia
- Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a global proxy war involving all states in the world one way or the other
- Putin have done a disservice to Russia by invading Ukraine since they regardless of the wars’ outcome will be greatly weakened Russian economy regardless of the military outcome.
- Russia perceps Ukraine as a vital part of Russia itself, which makes a diplomatic solution highly unlikely at this point