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## WAR AND PEACE IN THE 21ST CENTURY A New Era of Geopolitics in Europe: How Can the EU Secure a New Peace in Ukraine?

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*"A New Era of Geopolitics in Europe: How Can the EU Secure a New Peace in Ukraine?" was the subject of the twentieth War and Peace in the 21st Century seminar, held on March 12th 2022. Organised in collaboration with EsadeGeo - Center for Global Economy and Geopolitics and supported by Barcelona City Council and "La Caixa" Foundation, the seminar provided expert insight on the security architecture in Europe following Russia's aggression in Ukraine and the extent to which the EU and other global actors can help secure a new peace on the continent.*



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Russia's aggression against Ukraine has posed an unprecedented threat to Europe and the international order. It has undermined Ukrainian territorial integrity, caused a major humanitarian crisis and brought war back to the European continent. However, the conflict in Ukraine also mirrors the fractures that mark today's world and the contestation of the international norms designed to secure global peace in recent decades.

Structured in two panel discussions, CIDOB's War and Peace conference for 2022 critically reflected upon the implications and consequences of the ongoing war in Ukraine. The first session focused on the impact on the European security architecture and the prospects for European strategic autonomy; while the second panel debate offered an overview of the geopolitical and systemic dimensions of the conflict and provided some insights into the position of some of the main global actors.

In order to obtain an inclusive overview on the issues addressed, the conference brought together academics and analysts from research institutes in countries including France, Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States and China.

In her opening speech, **Laia Bonet** (Third Deputy Mayor of Barcelona City Council) emphasised how the war in Ukraine has shifted policymakers' priorities. After years in which new security challenges (from the economic crisis to climate change and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic) have been at the centre of the policy agenda, the war in Ukraine has forced states to refocus on their primary responsibility: protecting citizens from violence. The Deputy Mayor welcomed the EU's united and unprecedented response but also recalled that, as well as defence cooperation, it is equally important to adopt a collective response to address the socioeconomic challenges the war is already posing to citizens. Because *freedom from fear* is intrinsically and inextricably linked to *freedom from want*.

The floor was then given to **Antoni Segura** (President, CIDOB), who reiterated CIDOB's condemnation of Russia's aggression and the institution's solidarity with the Ukrainian people, in line with the **statement** CIDOB published on February 28<sup>th</sup>. In his view, the war in Ukraine represents an unprecedented challenge for both the European security architecture and the international liberal order that makes EU strategic autonomy even

more imperative. **Javier Solana** (President, ESADEGeo and Honorary President, CIDOB) echoed Segura's words, emphasising how a war on the European continent is an event of exceptional gravity that caught many off guard. Preparing the ground for the panel discussions, Solana said that we should look back to the 2004 Ukrainian elections – won by the pro-Western candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, ahead of the pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovych – and the 2014 Euromaidan protests in order to fully grasp the roots of the struggle over Ukraine's future.

The first panel discussion, chaired and moderated by **Anna Bosch** (Foreign Affairs Correspondent, TVE), reflected upon the implications of the war in Ukraine for Europe and the prospects of European strategic autonomy.

According to **François Heisbourg** (Special Adviser, Foundation pour la Recherche Stratégique), the war in Ukraine represents a strategic turning point for Europe that is no less significant than the end of the Second World War in the 1940s or of the Cold War in the 1990s. The magnitude of the crisis makes it necessary for Europeans

Besides the strong impact on the European security architecture, the war in Ukraine is also having significant economic repercussions, which **André Sapir** (Senior Fellow, Bruegel) addressed in detail. When it comes to trade, Sapir believes that the war is unlikely to have a huge impact on global value chains but will certainly affect sectors like energy and, as a consequence, regions like Europe that are heavily reliant on Russian gas. European states' attempts to cut gas imports from Moscow and diversify energy sources will provide Europe with greater autonomy. However, this will not result in a price reduction, as liquified gas remains much more expensive than pipeline. Rising inflation and the uncertainty surrounding the war's developments are thus likely to pose a tricky challenge for European monetary and fiscal institutions, which will have to find a way to prevent Europe lapsing into stagflation. Along with defence, Sapir sees energy security as another public good on which the EU needs to develop a common long-term strategy and achieve a greater degree of autonomy. Measures like the common debt instruments adopted to counteract the economic

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to reconsider existing institutions, frameworks and setups. The events have made the concept of strategic autonomy, often framed in recent years in terms of an EU–NATO dichotomy, appear somewhat outdated. What matters now is to invest more in defence. NATO and the United States are essential to providing strong (nuclear) deterrence. However, the uncertainty surrounding the future of Washington's foreign policy requires a more proactive Europe. In Heisbourg's view, greater investment in defence is a win–win solution for Europeans that will prove wise if NATO and the United States remain involved in European security and vital if they do not.

**Jeremy Shapiro** (Research Director, European Council on Foreign Relations) agreed with this argument. Europe needs to reflect critically on the capabilities it will require in order to be able to formulate its own policies in the light of deteriorating geopolitical conditions. In particular, European states should focus on those capabilities – such as intelligence, surveillance, readiness and preparedness and mobility – where they clearly fall short. Despite Russia's aggression against Ukraine, East Asia is likely to remain the United States' top foreign policy priority and Washington will thus keep asking Europe to take increasing responsibility for the security of its continent.

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic should therefore be considered for tackling the challenges emerging in the energy / climate field.

While traditionally associated with defence, the concept of strategic autonomy actually encompasses a much broader set of policies. The war in Ukraine has clearly shown that energy is an area where the EU would highly benefit from greater autonomy. However, according to **François Heisbourg**, another field should also be at the centre of the long-term EU strategic autonomy agenda: technology. The United States – the leader in the field – and the European Union, with its ability to set global standards, should work together in order to jointly counter growing Chinese power. Because if, in strategic terms, Russia is today's weather, China is climate change.

Digital transformation plays a major role in the contemporary world and is expected to have important repercussions on future power distribution dynamics. The current technological revolution has profoundly transformed modern warfare and, in turn, influenced strategic decision-making in foreign and defence policy. Nonetheless, what has puzzled many is that the current war in Ukraine seems to be very “old-fashioned”. **Heli Tiirmaa-Klaar** (Director of Digital Society Institute, European School of Management and Technology of

Berlin) confirmed that cyber-attacks have not played a major role in Ukraine thus far, and advanced some potential explanations: little coordination between Russian intelligence services and military forces, sound preparedness on the Ukrainian side, and the fact that pre-planned conventional attacks on critical infrastructure simply make cyber-attacks pointless. Nonetheless, Tiirmaa-Klaar highlighted the ways Russia has been using cyber capabilities in its information warfare. Domestically, it has targeted its population with strong pro-war propaganda, while internationally it has sought to interfere in foreign elections and affairs on several occasions over the years.

Tiirmaa-Klaar actually affirmed that, within the cyber domain, a “new Cold War” began a decade ago. However, **François Heisbourg** did not fully agree with this interpretation of the current landscape, stressing that what we are witnessing is not a cold but a real war. Unlike the Soviet Union, which had a clear interest in preserving the empire it had created over the years, modern Russia is a revisionist power that is seeking to change the current status quo.

## The war in Ukraine is both a conflict with case-specific features and dynamics and a reflection of the broader divisions and fractures that mark the current international order

The second panel, chaired by **Judy Dempsey** (Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe), focused on the geopolitical and systemic dimensions of the conflict in Ukraine and offered an overview of the position of some of the major global players.

In his speech, **John Ikenberry** (Albert G. Milbank Professor of Politics and International Affairs, Princeton University) argued that the Ukrainian crisis is a proxy for a more fundamental struggle between two models of world order. On the one hand, the Western liberal model, based on multilateralism and democracy and anchored in institutions like the EU and NATO. On the other hand, the order that Russia is attempting to create and which would instead build on autocratic governance at home and spheres of influence abroad. In Ikenberry’s view, what we are witnessing in Ukraine is an autocratic state that does not accept the independence of a neighbour democracy and its closeness to the West out of fear of the potential consequences for its own system of government.

Exploring in greater detail the causes of Moscow’s action, **Andrey Makarychev** (Professor of Government and Politics, University of Tartu) argued that the underlying reason for the military intervention in Ukraine lies in the fact that Russia is very weak where Europe is strong: normative power. Unable to compete on this playing field,

Putin decided to change the rules of the game and to resort to hard military power. However, Makarychev believes that Russia will pay a high price for its adventurism in Ukraine. Not only in economic, financial and technological terms, but also because of the long-term implications of greater reliance on China.

An overview of the role and position of Beijing was provided by **Lanxin Xiang** (Director, Institute of Security Policy of Shanghai). Xiang argued that China has a fundamental interest in a prompt resolution of the war in Ukraine and speculated that, given the good relations it has developed with both parties, Beijing could also be a good candidate for the role of mediator. Yet, the definition of what is happening in Ukraine opened up a lively discussion. While moderator **Judy Dempsey** and the other panellists referred to it as an “invasion”, Xiang claimed that the Chinese would define it as a “badly managed international relationship that ended up in a humanitarian crisis”. Xiang also clarified that, from a Chinese point of view, what is happening in Ukraine is not very dissimilar from what occurred in Vietnam or, more

recently, in Iraq, and that China’s guiding foreign policy is driven by the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The role of NATO was also the subject of dispute. **Lanxin Xiang** asserted that the Atlantic Alliance’s eastward expansion had certainly played a major role in the Ukrainian crisis. China, he affirmed, is not interested in alliances like NATO, including with Russia, because of a certain scepticism about military compromises and obligations. While recognising that in analytical terms it is possible to affirm that NATO’s expansion has unsettled Russia’s attitude toward the West, **Leslie Vinjamuri** defended NATO’s open-door policy, arguing that access to an alliance that offers restraint and protection cannot be denied to people. **Andrey Makarychev**, meanwhile, recalled that NATO’s enlargement was not the result of the imperialism of its member states but of the free choice of the countries involved.

The different views that emerged during the panel discussion mirror the divisions we are witnessing in global affairs. In this regard, **Leslie Vinjamuri** (Director of the US and Americans Programme, Chatham House) noted that, regardless of whether this newly rediscovered Western unity holds, the broader international community remains very divided. This was evident at UNGA vote on the resolution demanding the immediate withdrawal of Russia military forces from Ukraine on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022. Although the text

was eventually adopted thanks to the vote in favour by as many as 141 countries, the latter only represent about 40% of the world's population, while the 35 states that abstained from voting account for half of the total.

From both panel discussions it clearly emerged that the war in Ukraine is both a conflict with case-specific features and dynamics and a reflection of the broader divisions and fractures that mark the current international order. In his concluding remarks, **Pol Morillas (Director, CIDOB)** underlined that the conflict in Ukraine is the result of the transitional phase we are experiencing. When the old order is highly contested and a new one has not yet emerged, conflicts and disputes are likely to arise. There is great uncertainty surrounding the nature of the emerging order but, in Morillas's view, it will be even more strongly shaped by dynamics of power politics and great power rivalry than what went before. Nonetheless, today's world is much more interconnected than previously, and major challenges are increasingly transnational in nature. The contestation of existing norms and institutions in a world shaped by growing interdependence requires the creation of new frameworks and setups that will certainly need to be more inclusive. More states should be involved and other actors – from cities to civil society and international organisations – should have a say. **Javier Solana** echoed Morillas's words, saying that in these challenging circumstances safeguarding global public goods remains fundamental and that only dialogue platforms, where all parties have a voice regardless of ideology or system of government, can bring common solutions to the challenges of today and tomorrow.