

EVENT REPORT

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

SOUTH AFRICA

KIM SCHUMANN

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RUSSIA, UKRAINE AND HYBRID WARFARE

SAIIA WC SPEAKERS MEETING WITH DR. EUGENE CZOLIJ

On 30th October 2018, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in partnership with the Western Cape branch of the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA WC) hosted a Speakers Meeting at the SA Mountain Club in Cape Town on the topic: "Russia, Ukraine and Hybrid Warfare" with Dr. Eugene Czolij, President of the Ukrainian World Congress as the guest speaker and Dr. Sara Pienaar, former National Director of SAI-IA, as the respondent.

The opening remarks by Sheila Camerer, Chair of SAIIA WC, were followed by Christina Teichmann, KAS Project Manager, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the Foundation and explained why KAS as a German political Foundation supports these kinds of events.

Dr. Pinaar then introduced the keynote speaker Dr. Eugene Czolij. Dr. Czolij is the President of the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) which represents an international coordinating body for Ukrainian communities in 53 countries and features the interests of over 20 million Ukrainians.

Ukrainian's Independence and the Euromaidan Revolution

Czolij started his presentation by providing some historical background information. In his opinion, the beginning of Russia's hybrid warfare against Ukraine can be traced back to Ukraine's Independence in December 1991. In general, the term hybrid warfare refers to a set of hostile actions and methods at different levels of war that seek to undermine the opponents through various

operations and create a situation where the population of a country feels constant fear and insecurity. Such operations can include economic pressure, threat to energy supply, proxy insurgency, cyber-attacks, intelligence operations and disinformation campaigns. Since the Ukrainian national referendum in 1991, where all regions voted in favor of independence with a vast majority its governments sought to establish a closer relationship with the European Union (EU). One of the measures meant to achieve this was an association agreement with the EU. The negotiations lasted for several years. However, in 2014 former Ukrainian president Yanukovich, a close ally of Russian President Putin, ultimately refused to sign the agreement and instead declared to seek closer ties with the Russian Federation. This decision sparked a wave of protests among Ukrainians culminating in the so-called "Euromaidan" revolution¹. The aim of the protests was to get rid of the authoritarian regime, confirm the pro-European course and democratization and last but not least leave its Soviet past behind. In the end, the demonstrators overthrew the authoritarian government in 2014 and the newly elected Ukrainian parliament set on a clear pro-European course.

Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation

Even though the demonstrations achieved their goal, they also provoked an opposite

¹ The term "Euromaidan" is composed of the words Europe and Maidan. Nesalesschnosti. Maidan Nesalesschnosti, literally meaning "Independence Square", is Kiev's central square and the place where most of the demonstrations took place.

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reaction from pro-Russian citizens in the eastern part of Ukraine and Crimea. According to Czolij, Russia took the confusing situation after the victory of Euromaidan as an opportunity to illegally annex the Crimea in February 2014, which is mostly populated by ethnic Russians. Czolij stressed that at the moment of invasion Ukrainian authorities were not able to defend the Crimea. These developments led to the formation of a separatism movement in parts of Eastern Ukraine which ultimately led to a controversial referendum on the status of Crimea that was held in March 2014 by different local governments in Eastern Ukraine. Following the referendum, the responsible councils declared the independence of the Republic of Crimea. While the Ukrainian government and a number of other nations, such as the United States, Canada and most members of the EU, deemed the referendum as illegitimate, the Russian Federation formally recognized Crimea as a sovereign state. Furthermore, the Russian Federation financially and militarily supported the separation movement in the Donbass region in Eastern Ukraine. Thereby, Russia used means of hybrid warfare to create a feeling of instability and fear amongst ethnic Russians living in Ukraine. According to Czolij, the Russian Federation still makes use of various forms of aggression, whereby massive disinformation campaigns display a common method. In this way, so Czolij, Russia tries to prevent Ukraine's integration into the West and Europeanisation.

The Involvement of the International Community

In the following, Czolij pointed out that the international community in response to the illegal occupation of Crimea and the military aggression in Eastern Ukraine took concrete actions and imposed various sanctions, such as suspending Russia from the G8 or targeting financial dealings and travel bans. In addition, Ukraine and Russia with support from France and Germany agreed in the so-called Minsk Agreements (2014; 2015) to a package of measures to alleviate the ongoing war in eastern Ukraine, among them an immediate cease fire. However, according to Czolij, Russian aggression and non-

compliance of the agreement continued and the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine has led to one of the greatest humanitarian crises, albeit mostly unnoticed by the international community.

Czolij stated that nowadays, 4.4 million people are affected by the Russian aggression and actions in Eastern Ukraine and the region counts 2 million displaced people. Moreover, 3.4 million people are affected in terms of humanitarian assistance, 2.2 million need assistance with health care and 1.2 million need help with food supply.

Russian-Ukrainian conflict a global concern

After presenting these figures, Czolij addressed the question of why this troubling situation in Ukraine should matter to the international community. He pointed out that Russia has in the past repeatedly tried to destabilize neighboring countries in order to expand its reach of influence. In the UWCs' perspective, Ukraine's authorities with the support of the international community urgently need to stop Russia at its border. Otherwise, so Czolij's prediction, the Russian Federation will go further west and in doing so try to provoke Article 5 of the NATO convention in Poland or the Baltic states. This article comprises the principle of collective defense by all NATO member states meaning that an attack against one member is considered as an attack against all member states. According to Czolij, two options would remain if this point was reached: Either the Alliance of NATO member states will be dissolved if the NATO is not willing to invoke Article 5 and risk a Third World War or "we will be witnessing the Third World War". Czolij argued that, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is not only of regional concern but a global concern as well.

Secure peace and stability

At the end of his keynote address, Czolij called the international authorities to take note of this situation and to act in a manner that clearly demonstrates the desire to overcome this conflict and secure peace and

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stability. In this regard, Czolij drew attention to Russian interferences in the U.S. and various European elections, by financing political parties or through cyber-attacks and disinformation. Finally, he highlighted that even though Ukraine is the target of Russian hybrid warfare, the country has made notable progress by implementing several reforms in terms of Anti-Corruption measures, Good Governance, Health Care and Education. He went further to state that the conflict with Russia and the illegal annexion of Crimea have pushed Ukrainians even further towards the West and democracy in general.

Strong actions needed

Before the audience had the opportunity to ask questions, Pinaar responded to Czolij address and firstly picked up the term "hybrid warfare" once again by stating that it was already common in the past to adopt more than one type of strategy in a conflict. However, due to today's various Information and Communication Technologies Moscow is able to undermine Ukraine in an extremely effective way. Furthermore, Ukraine still depends on Russia in terms of energy supply which is, according to Pinaar, one of the most powerful tools in hybrid warfare. In the end, Pinaar referred back to the association agreement with the EU and stated that strong actions will be needed to overcome the current situation. She set out that by taking the Copenhagen Criteria into consideration, thus the rules that define whether or not a country is eligible to become a member of the EU, there is no serious chance for Ukraine to join the EU as long as Russia besieges its eastern border.



Impressum

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Zusammenarbeit

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