



Learning Lessons from Putin's War in Ukraine: Introduction from the Editors

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Abstract: This edition of *Connections* explores the defense and security challenges currently faced by Ukraine, NATO, the European Union, and Partners in the Partnership for Peace Consortium, focusing on lessons to be learned from Russia's second invasion of Ukraine. It highlights two-way learning, where Ukraine's resilience, communication strategies, and innovative use of technology provide crucial insights for NATO and its Partners. Key topics include hybrid warfare, personnel management, lifelong learning, and the role of communication in countering security threats. The contributors emphasize the importance of adaptive learning and collaboration in enhancing military effectiveness and security.

Keywords: NATO, European Union, PfP Consortium, Ukraine, Russia, hybrid war, lifelong learning, military education, personnel management, strategic communications, innovation, technology, resilience, two-way learning, hybrid threats.

About this Issue

This issue features articles on lessons to be learned from three different areas of defense and security studies:

- Strategic Communication (Stratcom) and Propaganda in War
- Conflict Dynamics and Technological Adaptation
- Professional Military and Intelligence Education.

The editors are delighted to present the following thought-provoking and insightful articles.

“Communicating (In)Security in Ukraine” by Iryna Lysychkina and Olha Lysychkina describes the strategic communication system that was shaped before the war in Ukraine and has been evolving since February 24, 2022. The article highlights Ukraine’s institutional efforts to develop its capabilities in information warfare and its journey in crafting a wartime strategic narrative. This system encompasses strategic communication with different target audiences, determining the appropriate credible war communicators, communication channels, and strategic narratives to govern the information landscape. The analysis of internal strategic narratives reveals a notable shift from promoting exaggerated myths and comforting messages to highlighting the bravery of both military personnel and civilians. Concurrently, the external narratives directed at the West have evolved from pleading for weapons and aid to conveying proactive messages that emphasize collective engagement for future success.

Isabel Lettner’s “Propaganda in Armed Conflict: Exploring Legal Ambiguities and Civilian Engagement” addresses the question of whether civilians engaged in disseminating propaganda can be construed as direct participants in hostilities. It focuses on the gaps created by a lack of international law provisions governing the use of propaganda during armed conflicts. The research contends that the categorization and classification of propaganda are vital, given the increasing employment of harmful digital information. An example of Ukrainian strategic communication campaigns illustrates the slippery slope created by easily accessible social media platforms and the danger posed by civilians spreading these so-called “strategic communication campaigns.” The study concludes that civilians spreading propaganda do not qualify as directly participating in hostilities, as the three-prong test of the International Committee of the Red Cross is not met.

Authors Svitlana Vlasenko and Liliia Honiukova argue in “Ukraine’s Component in the Platform of European Memory and Conscience” that Ukraine is approaching EU membership, accelerating European integration, participating in international projects, enhancing public policy on national memory, strengthening efforts to overcome the communist totalitarian and Russian imperial past, and forming a cohesive national identity all contribute to Ukraine’s integration into the pan-European humanitarian space and memory policy. The formation of European collective memory involves the participation of many international organizations, including the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, founded in 2011.

Vitalii Kurylo, Svitlana Vovk, Anton Bader, and Olena Karaman in “Armed Violence as a Challenge to National Security: Critical Thinking Perspectives” seek to identify the role and skills of critical thinking in the context of hybrid warfare, as well as to explore ways to develop it. In order to strengthen Ukraine’s national

security, it is crucial to adopt new approaches, particularly those focused on the intellectual potential of society. The study supports the notion that the purposeful development of citizens' critical thinking can play a key role in increasing Ukraine's resilience to the information and psychological threats posed by hybrid warfare. Critical thinking enables individuals to better identify and resist fakes, propaganda, and manipulation.

Valeria Chelaru in "Kremlin's 'War on Terrorism' in the Northeastern Caucasus: How Chechnya Still 'Saves' Russia" discusses Russia's goals in the Northeastern Caucasus—one of the country's most turbulent regions in terms of religious extremism, criminal violence, and radically different social processes—in light of its politics in Chechnya. With the beginning of the Second Chechen War (August 1999) and a series of dubious terrorist attacks in Russia in September 1999, Vladimir Putin rose to power, displaying an 'uncompromising' stance against terrorism and post-Soviet fragmentation. While the so-called counterterrorism operation in Chechnya officially ended in the spring of 2009, the power structures responsible for the crackdown on terrorists have not been disbanded to this day, benefiting Moscow-imposed strongman Ramzan Kadyrov and his clan, and Moscow's (nominal) dominance of the region.

Imre Porkoláb, István Lakatos, and Ferenc Dávid in "Innovation and Technology in the Russo-Ukrainian War" propose that technology and innovation have significantly influenced the Russo-Ukrainian war, impacting not only the armed conflict but also the reconstruction of reclaimed territories and the restoration of services. Their article examines how Ukraine, through its ability to embrace technological advancements and apply innovative solutions dwarfing major parts of Western "innovation," has gained a comparatively advantageous position against Russian aggression. The authors focus on the fundamental differences in the early stages of the war, particularly highlighting Ukraine's adept integration of emerging dual-use and advanced Western products and technologies.

Nika Chitadze's "Hybrid Warfare in the Black Sea Region: Russian Information-Psychological Operations in Georgia" analyzes the information-psychological operations employed in the hybrid war conducted by the Russian Federation in the Black Sea and South Caucasus regions, with a specific focus on Georgia. The article presents concrete examples of these operations in Georgia, examining their tactics, methodology, key features, target audiences, and effects. It also evaluates Georgia's position and the outcomes of its responses. The relevance of the issue has increased significantly after Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and the onset of the large-scale war.

Uwe M. Borghoff, Lars Berger, and François Fischer discuss in "The Intelligence College in Europe: An Effort to Create a European Intelligence Community" how actors within the "intelligence community" play a central role in ful-

filling Europe's security commitments by providing political and military decision-makers with critical analyses and information. A collaborative effort between the University of the Bundeswehr Munich and the Department of Intelligence at the Federal University of Administrative Sciences in Berlin, the Intelligence College in Europe (ICE) is the first entity to offer both professional intelligence training and postgraduate-level academic education in intelligence and security studies for officers on a pan-European scale. In this article, the counter-terrorism module is examined as a case study of how postgraduate modules can be tailored to meet the needs of a pan-European audience of intelligence professionals.

Valentyna Kravets's "Quality Assurance in Military Higher Education Institutions: Worldwide Patterns and Trends" explores the multifaceted landscape of quality assurance practices employed by military higher education institutions worldwide. Her findings reveal that internal quality assurance in military higher education institutions typically aligns with national academic requirements, influenced by the political system and participation in regional political associations. Most countries follow a three-level model of quality assurance, encompassing internal procedures, external evaluation by independent or government-controlled agencies, and the quality assurance of accreditation bodies. Despite initial resistance due to corporate culture, the institutionalization of internal quality assurance systems in military higher education institutions is advancing, driven by external pressures.

Andrija Kozina and Jadranka Herceg highlight in "Lifelong Education of Civil-Military Teachers in Higher Education in Croatia" that in the higher education system of the Republic of Croatia, most teachers do not receive specialized training in teaching competencies. While they may possess the necessary professional expertise in their respective subject areas, they often lack the pedagogical and andragogical training required for effective higher education. Hence, the authors aim to demonstrate the necessity of continuous education for civilian-military teachers in a certified program for lifelong development of teaching competencies; continuous education needs to be delivered through specially designed courses and will be a prerequisite for assuming teaching responsibilities and advancing into academic teaching positions.

"Learning Lessons from Putin's War in Ukraine" is an invaluable contribution to military education for the EU, NATO, and our many Partners across the world. At this time of ever-changing threats and challenges, what we learn and how we learn it has become the critical focus of progress. The contributing authors have not only made a significant contribution to academic literature but also to the practice and implementation of military education and learning. This edition of *Connections* will help shape the way in which we address the evolving international landscape over the coming years.

Disclaimer

The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Partnership for Peace Consortium, its participating institutions, or any governmental or international organizations affiliated with its governance structure.

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