

BOOK REVIEWS

Cristina Matiuța and Raluca Viman-Miller (Eds.), *The War in Ukraine and its Impact on Global Politics and Security*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2023, 269 pages, ISBN 978-606-37-1958-5

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The War in Ukraine and its Impact on Global Politics and Security is a valuable book that was accomplished under the joint coordination of Cristina Matiuța and Raluca Viman-Miller, associate professors at the University of Oradea and University of North Georgia, respectively. The book masterly reunites the works of eleven academics from Romanian and American universities, mainly from the home universities of the two editors, but also from other three Romanian universities - Babeș-Bolyai University, University of Bucharest and West University Timișoara.

The nine chapters of the book approach, as the editors stated in the *Introduction*, „different perspectives of the impact that the war in Ukraine has on global politics and security issues” (p. 7). Therefore, the chapters deal with topics regarding: the changes in the European security environment as a result of the war in Ukraine; the impact of the war in Ukraine and Russia’s nuclear threats on the proliferation of nuclear weapons; the effective prosecution of the war crimes against Russia, by Ukraine; the European model of national minorities’ protection in the case of Ukraine; the impact of the war on other regions of the world - as East Asia (with reference to the relation between China and Taiwan) and Sub-Saharan Africa (with regard to this region’s reactions towards Russian military aggression against Ukraine); its impact on neighboring countries such as Romania – with reference to the role of Romanian state and non-state actors in protecting the Ukrainian refugees; or the issue of Russian disinformation campaign and the means to combat it.

The analysis of the chapters has illustrated the consistent use of theoretical approaches and their application to significant case studies; of arguments formulation based on evidence and on the comprehensive analysis of the past and present evolutions of an issue, as well as the formulation of viable scenarios; or of different research methods – as the application of semi-structured interviews, all of these being complemented by the solid expertise or by steady research interests of the authors with regard to the topics of the chapters prepared for the present book.

In the first chapter, *The War in Ukraine and the Changes to European Security*, Craig Greathouse examines the changes in the European security environment since the start of the war in Ukraine, having the conviction that „no matter the eventual outcome”, this war „will change the foundations of regional security within the European continent going forward” (p. 13).

In this regard, the author appeals to the systemic elements (the relative material power, the openness of the system, and the clarity of the system for state action) of the neoclassical realism theory to explain the current European security situation and to predict viable outcomes (stalemate, cease fire, victory) going forward. After thoroughly analyzing, from a theoretical perspective (pp. 14-18), the neoclassical realism theory and its three systemic elements (Waltz,

1979; Rose, 1998; Ripsman et al., 2016, etc.), Craig Greathouse applies these systemic elements to the security environment of Europe prior to the start of the Ukrainian war, in 2022 (pp. 18-24), and then up to May 2023 (pp. 24-31). So, along the mentioned period, the security environment of Europe has evolved, according to the author, as follows: regarding the relative material power (in Russia, it can be noticed a shift regarding the military and economic sides, but it still retains its nuclear capacity and holds an economic advantage in the export of energy; Ukraine has also suffered significant damage to its conventional military power, but in the same time it benefited from the support of different states outside of the war – the EU member states, USA, etc. – as regards the military equipment transfers, humanitarian assistance, or economic grants); referring to the issue of permissiveness in the international system (there has been a shift from a more permissive system to a more restrictive strategic environment, as states have clearly taken sides in the conflict whether they are active participants or not; the strengthening solidarity of the NATO and EU membership with Ukraine has caused a deterioration of Russia's position in the balance of power element); and concerning the clarity of the system for state action (Russia established a clear line of what it will not accept from the US and European states, while „NATO and the EU have drawn much more bright lines about what they are willing to do to confront and limit Russian actions”) (p. 30). Therefore, the author states that the outbreak of the Ukrainian war „has clarified the systemic level analysis” that the neoclassical realist model provides, and each „of the three variables has seen an evolution” from the period prior to the war, to spring 2023: rebalancing of the relative material capabilities for most of the states in Europe; the permissiveness of the European region has contracted, and the lines within Europe have been hardened and a more aggressive balance of power engagement by states was underway; the clarity in the region regarding opportunities and limitations has increased (p. 31).

Following this analysis, Craig Greathouse focuses on three predictions (pp. 31-35), based on the neoclassical realist model: stalemate - considered as a highly plausible outcome in the mid and long term, means that neither Ukraine, nor Russia, will be able to achieve their current objectives, and in the same time it means a continued fighting between them, even if maybe at a reduced level; cease fire - means that neither side is able to win decisively; and victory for one of the sides – the less probable scenario in the mid-term. According to the neoclassical realist model and to its systemic elements, the perspectives for the author's predictions look as follows: the stalemate would bring a degradation of the relative material capabilities of both Ukraine and Russia, a balance of power more defined and less flexible, a permissiveness of the system decreased in terms of strategic options and an increased clarity of the system; while the cease fire – would ease the material demands on both Ukraine, and Russia, and allow them to rebuild military capacity and focus on economic growth, the clarity of a ceasefire would be significant for the system, and both sides would move to balance against incursions into their spheres of influence.

In conclusion, despite its limitations (that regard also its predictive capacity), the neoclassical realist model succeeds in offering very important insights on the causes, the evolution and the impact of the war in Ukraine on the European continent.

The second chapter, *Nuclear Weapons and Russia's War with Ukraine*, deals with the impact of the war in Ukraine and Russia's nuclear threats on the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

After presenting the Russia's modernization process of its strategic and non-strategic nuclear forces started in the early 2000s, that is supposed to reach its completion at the end of 2020s (pp. 42-43), Seyed Hamidreza Serri focuses on Russia's nuclear deterrence policy and, in detail, on the three interpretations of Russia's nuclear doctrine (the escalate to de-escalate

strategy, the traditional deterrence approach, and the escalation management strategy). The first interpretation - the escalate to de-escalate strategy, shared across the political spectrum in the U.S., „relies on the utilization of explicit or implicit threats involving nuclear weapons, including limited use of such weapons, as a means to coerce adversaries into accepting terms favorable to Russia” (p. 44). According to the second interpretation - the traditional deterrence approach, the escalate to de-escalate strategy is considered „wrong and dangerous”, so „Russia's current nuclear strategy largely aligns with its previous nuclear policies” (p. 45). In the same time, the proponents of this approach appeal to the joint statement of the five nuclear-weapon states, from 2022, on preventing the nuclear war. The third interpretation - the escalation management strategy, points out that „even if nuclear weapons play an important role in Russia's deterrence policy, Russia's overreliance on nuclear weapons has significantly decreased during the last decades” (p. 46). Therefore, Russia's use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine is analyzed in relation with the place where the Ukraine conflict falls in the security spectrum: Peacetime, Military Threat, Local War, Regional War, Large-Scale War, and Nuclear War (pp. 46-47).

To the question whether Russia would use nuclear weapons against Ukraine, and if yes, how this will happen, the author appeals to the three interpretations mentioned above. Therefore, according to the escalate to de-escalate strategy, „Russia will be inclined to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine to de-escalate the situation and avert defeat” (p. 47). According to the second interpretation - the traditional deterrence approach, „unless the prospect of a nuclear exchange between Russia and the U.S. and NATO rises, Russia is unlikely to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine” (p. 48), while according to the third interpretation - the escalation management strategy, „Russia will use nuclear weapons if the Ukraine war moves from a local war to a regional or a large-scale war or if the territorial integrity of Russia is threatened” (p. 48).

Stating that „regardless of whether Russia uses nuclear weapons in Ukraine, the mere fact that Russia has repeatedly invoked the threat of nuclear weapons in a conventional war against a nonnuclear-weapon state will contribute to a new drive among non-nuclear-weapon states to reconsider their non-nuclear status”, Seyed Hamidreza Serri analyzes the implications of the disregard of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum by Russia, in the context of the war in Ukraine, for the proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as the nuclear doctrines of Russia and of other nuclear-weapon states – U.S., United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan and North Korea (pp. 50-55).

In conclusion, the author states that, in the coming decades, the nuclear-weapon states' reliance on nuclear weapons will increase and the international system will likely transition to a multipolar world. Also, in case that Russia will use nuclear weapons against Ukraine, „the world will likely witness a new wave of nuclear proliferation. The more nuclear-weapon states use force and threats against non-nuclear-weapon countries, the more justifiable nuclear weapons will become for non-nuclear-weapon states” (pp. 57-58).

In the third chapter, *Effective Prosecutions of War Crimes in Domestic Courts: Prospects for Transitional Justice in Ukraine*, Jonathan S. Mine aims to answer the question whether Ukraine will succeed in effectively prosecuting the war crimes against Russia. Therefore, in his endeavour, the author applies a set of six domestic factors to the case of Ukraine: the continuing power of the perpetrators, the institutional and governmental support for prosecution, the legitimacy and independence of the instances responsible for prosecution and trial, the role of agency of victims and human rights organizations, the social attitudes towards accountability, and the passage of time, to whom he adds two international factors: the international cooperation in the development and use of legal tools, and the systemic and structural gaps of the international legal system (p. 69).

The application of these domestic and international factors to the Ukraine case, has led to the following conclusions (pp. 69-84): in Ukraine, it can be noticed an effort to remove the politicians and oligarchs who might be seen as perpetrators, and the country manifests an adherence to the constitution and rule of law (first domestic factor); both at internal and international levels, the Ukrainian politicians and leaders of the legal system express support for domestic prosecution of war crimes against Russia (second domestic factor); in Ukraine it can be noticed a positive trend regarding the legitimacy and independence of the bodies responsible for prosecution and trial (third domestic factor); the victims' groups and international human rights organizations are bringing attention to crimes being committed in Ukraine (fourth domestic factor); the public opinion polls show that social attitudes towards Ukrainian nationalism and accountability for crimes against its citizens is on the rise (fifth domestic factor); the sixth factor is not a current issue for Ukraine, but the author states that „the sensitivity of these issues and the difficulties in gathering evidence, witnesses, and broaching issues of accountability with the population at large are common reasons for a significant passage of time before trials are conducted” (p. 79); Ukraine benefits of international political support, assistance in gathering evidence, and coordination in prosecution with international courts, from IGOs, NGOs and states with expertise in these matters, to prosecute war crimes against Russia (first international factor); the systemic and structural gaps of the international legal system are a successful tool used by the Russian Federation to avoid accountability (second international factor).

After this in-depth analysis of the eight domestic and international factors, applied to the case of Ukraine, Jonathan S. Mine declares that “Ukraine possesses a favorable chance of fair and successful prosecution of Russian war crimes” (p. 69).

The fourth chapter, *Cross-Strait Tensions in the Shadow of Global Conflict: Mainland China, Taiwan, and Lessons from the Ukraine Invasion*, is opened with Laurel Wei's inquiry whether the Russian invasion of Ukraine will cause a similar action from China against Taiwan, in the coming years.

With a national reunification plan (of integrating Taiwan into the People's Republic of China's territory) - aimed to be realized by 2049, by China, and with an increasing inclination towards autonomy in recent years, by Taiwan, the perspectives of their relations are analyzed through a combined theoretical approach of Realism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism.

After an overview on China's positioning in the Russian – Ukrainian war, by Russia's side, and on this conflict's implications for the China – Taiwan relations, the author is approaching the differing attitudes towards the ongoing war, held by China and Taiwan. China's international partnerships, its alignment with Russia, its readiness to facilitate peace negotiations while concurrently providing de facto economic and diplomatic support to Russia, its refrain from drawing parallels between Ukraine and Taiwan, its opposition to unilateral Western sanctions against Russia, its desire to inhibit NATO's continued expansion, its geostrategic rivalry with the U.S., or the Chinese citizens' perspectives on the conflict echoing China's official position, are some of the aspects that benefit of an in-depth analysis by the author (pp. 97-102). On the other side, opposite to China's attitude and actions, Taiwan has maintained a more explicit position towards the war, from its government to civil society, consistently standing firmly with Ukraine, it has provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine, it has been manifesting profound concern about a potential Chinese invasion of the island, but also determination to defend its autonomy, freedom, and democracy (pp. 102-105).

A special attention is given to China's national reunification main objective, unequivocal since 1949. According to this doctrine, there is only one China, the People's Republic of China

(P.R.C.), with Taiwan as an integral part of its sovereign territory, so China has made of the recognition of this principle the precondition of all its diplomatic relations (p. 106). The author focused, in detail, on the evolution and the current state of the cross-strait relations, presently China employing a comprehensive strategy prioritizing cooperation and dialogue, and ensuring preparedness for potential military conflict if deemed necessary (p. 109), while Taiwan is making significant steps towards democratic consolidation and expresses a lack of desire to join P.R.C. The impact of China's 2023 military exercises around Taiwan, Taiwan's relations with U.S. – its most crucial international partner and collaborator, the asymmetric economic interdependence between China and Taiwan, or the nature of their diplomatic relations (pp. 112-116) are also topics that have been thoroughly analyzed with regard to the development of the cross-strait relations.

Three main scenarios - military conflict, political coercion and peaceful integration – are used to illustrate the possible future of China-Taiwan bilateral relations. The first scenario – the military conflict, could take the form of a comprehensive military invasion of Taiwan, by China, intended to compel the island's reunification with mainland China, invasion that – by drawing in the U.S. and its allies (as Japan and Australia), is considered to generate a significant regional conflict with potentially catastrophic outcomes (p. 117); or of limited military actions – that, over the last decades, China has routinely engaged in (missile tests, extended military drills), in order to intimidate Taiwan (p. 119). The second scenario – the political coercion, China might opt to persist with its present strategy, gradually eroding Taiwan's sovereignty through military, economic, diplomatic, and political pressure (p. 121); to China, pursuing the strategy of political coercion featuring isolation through a blockade, diplomacy, and disinformation would undermine the chances of an immediate escalation to a full-scale invasion (p. 123). Regarding the third scenario – the peaceful integration, although highly unlikely, remains the ideal outcome for China, as it would avoid using force and escalating regional tension, and would make it the option with the lowest risks and costs (p. 124). In the end, the author states that „these scenarios are not mutually exclusive”, and the future of China - Taiwan relations could embody elements of each (p. 126).

In conclusion, Laurel Wei points out aspects as: it is in China's best interest to discourage comparisons between Taiwan and Ukraine, as this would imply acknowledging the island's sovereign status, and to continue to treat the Taiwan issue as Chinese domestic politics (p. 127); that Russia's war in Ukraine offers to China offers a more realistic preview of the costs China could likely incur if it were to resort to war against Taiwan; or that, in order to avoid war, China should act cautiously and tactically, by utilizing a hybrid approach involving limited military actions, political coercion, and persuasion (negotiation) (pp. 128-129).

In the fifth chapter, *My Enemy's Enemy is (Likely to Become) My Friend: Perceptions of the Russian War in Ukraine in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Marius-Mircea Mitrache and Sergiu Mişcoiu examine the reactions in Sub-Saharan Africa towards Russian military aggression against Ukraine.

To the reserved attitude of the Sub-Saharan countries towards the war contributed both the increase of Russia's presence and involvement in African internal affairs, and a growing anti-West (and especially anti-French) sentiment in the region (p. 137). But as the official reaction of the Sub-Saharan countries to the Russian - Ukrainian war was displayed publicly during the five major votes of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on this issue (during March 2022 and February 2023), the authors scrutinize the voting pattern of the African countries on the five votes and affirm that the UNGA votes showed „that Russia was neither isolated, nor unanimously condemned, as the West had claimed” (pp. 138-139). In this regard, the evolution of Russia's

involvement in Africa, since the Cold War up to nowadays, is carefully analyzed through: the focus on Russia's support for the liberation movements of the African nations (during the '50s); Russia's efforts „to educate a Soviet-friendly intelligentsia and foster a Soviet-Third World alliance” at Patrice Lumumba University (starting from the '60s); its change of approach towards the region by favoring a more realist policy, based on economic and geopolitical interests, that implied also support for politically and military pro-Soviet governments (during the '70s); the exploitation and fueling of the instability of the African continent, from the mid-'70s; a disengagement from African continent, and even a lack of interest towards it, after the coming to power of Gorbachev; the dissolution of the U.S.S.R. and the presidency of Boris Yeltsin that marked the vanishment of Russia's presence and influence in Africa (pp. 143-146). Russia's return on the African continent in the first decade of the 2000s, was justified by Putin's desire to project there „military power and diplomatic influence, through various, political, economic, security, bilateral, and informational instruments of its foreign policy” (p. 147).

The originality of the paper is increased by the empirical research through semi-direct interviews carried out by the authors with 23 officials from all the major regions of Sub-Saharan Africa. Built around three main arguments (a nuanced reading of the war in Ukraine, rejecting the narrative of the North, and the enemies of the enemies becoming friends?), the answers provided by the African officials (pp. 155-159) show that „many of these officials assert or endorse talking points from the Russian narrative of the unfolding events” (p. 161).

The sixth chapter, *The European model of national minorities' protection in the case of Ukraine - Romania as a kin-state*, begins with Radu Carp's affirmation that „The issue of national minorities was, since 1991, one of the most difficult that Ukraine was confronted with” (p. 157).

The protection of national minorities, in Ukraine, is regulated by the Constitution, by different laws and Ukraine is part of the Council of Europe instruments in this area. The beginning of war in Ukraine and the independence of the Donetsk and Lugansk republics showed the consequences of the lack of solutions for identity related problems for a long period (p. 169); in the same time, it is affirmed that Ukraine still considers that the national minorities are influenced more by their kin-states than by Ukraine (p. 170). Therefore, Ukraine's objective after the war will be the formation of a new civic identity, less based on the affirmation of national identities. But, the author states that the reality contradicts this purpose, as there is a gap between the „optimistic statements of President Zelensky on the fate of national minorities after the war and the concrete steps in the direction of harmonizing the legislation of Ukraine with the European model on the protection of national minorities” (p.170). The kin-states and those where kin minorities live are encouraged to conclude bilateral treaties for the protection of national minorities (p. 179). As a consequence, one of the biggest challenges of Ukraine right now is to find the fairest report to all its citizens, in order to prove that it fulfils the same democratic standards as any EU Member State (p. 179).

The seventh chapter, *Human security in times of war: The role of the state and non-state actors in protecting the Ukrainian refugees in Romania*, deals with the role of state and non-state actors in protecting the war refugees, with a focus on the case of Ukrainian refugees from Romania.

For the beginning, Cristina Matiuța and Raluca Viman-Miller approach the subject of human security in the context of war, from a theoretical perspective, with respect to: the actors that provide or destroy human security – at different levels of analysis; the need of collaboration between security providers at all levels; the constitutive elements for achieving human security; the differences between concepts as national security, global security, and human security.

Concepts like 'asylum seekers', 'refugees' and 'migrants' are carefully defined, while the term 'refugee' is going to be used in the authors' research, as the Ukrainian population displaced abroad by the Russian invasion is supported by the international community with an emergency legal framework meant to give them the best available support (pp. 185-188).

In order to attain the objective of analyzing the development of cooperation between the state and non-state actors in Romania, with respect to the Ukrainian refugees, two main directions have been put under analysis: Romanian state authority response to the Ukrainian crisis, and the role of non-state actors in the Ukrainian refugee's crisis. Regarding the first direction, at the very beginning, a decision-making task force under the coordination of the prime minister was established within the Romanian government from the first day of the conflict, necessary normative acts have been adopted by the Romanian government, then a second phase of medium-to long-term response has focused on the protection and inclusion of refugees who planned to remain in Romania (pp. 190-194). As regards the second direction, the non-state actors play a pivotal role in implementing governmental policies at ground level, a fact proved also in the case of Ukrainian refugees in Romania, when all the actors – individuals, NGOs, state structures, IGOs, international community formed a chain of support. Therefore, despite the fact that the Romanian civil society was able to accelerate its processes to address the influx of people, the Romanian government, although a bit slower than the civil society, proved much faster than expected in reacting to the emergency (pp. 194-195).

Combining content analysis and qualitative analysis (semi-structured interview), the research developed by the two authors represents an original endeavour that was carried on with the representatives from seven diverse NGOs from Romania. The topics tackled during the nine questions of the interview cover issues as: the organization's role in supporting refugees from Ukraine; the types and extent of support provided; the extent of experience the organization has collaborating with state actors and non-state actors (for example, citizens, volunteers and other NGOs); sources of financing and the difficulty to access such funding faced by the organization; and the organization's perception of what should be improved to make things work better (p. 190).

The answers to the semi-structured interviews highlighted good collaboration and a partnership between the two types of actors; the Romanian state and non-state actors' collaboration managed to provide the human security needed in this crisis despite low expectations from both sides; and the state authorities supported the NGOs to fulfill their role in assisting and protecting refugees, managing the crisis beyond expectations. Looking to the future, the authors conclude that a collaboration of state and non-state actors is needed to further sensitize and mobilize public opinion and to combat populist discourses resulting from the continuation of war (pp. 206-207).

In the eighth chapter, *Disinformation, Narratives and Discourses about the War*, Nathan Price focuses, firstly, on the evolution of the Russian disinformation campaign about the war - for example, the promotion of a false equivalency between the conflict and World War II, the appeal to the Russkiy mir concept, the "denazification" of Ukraine is mentioned to be one of the primary goals of the conflict, etc. (pp. 212-214). But the dissemination of Kremlin's propaganda wouldn't be possible without the assistance of the Russian media; in these conditions, the Russian independent media becomes marginalized not only by the government – through a series of laws, but also by the Russian people (pp. 215-223). On the opposite side, as regards the Ukrainian narrative about the war, it is focused on presenting accounts of the bravery of Ukraine's military or of ordinary Ukrainian citizens, etc. (pp. 223-225). A particular attention is given also to the populist far-right in Europe, that has continued to enjoy electoral success in the wake of Russia's

invasion of Ukraine, while the mainstream political parties seized on populist parties' ongoing affinity for Russia (pp. 234-235). In conclusion, Nathan Price states that despite a massive campaign of disinformation targeting support for Ukraine, public opinion remained generally stable and in strong support of continued economic assistance to Ukraine and continuing sanctions against Russia, a situation that brings into discussion democracy's resilience (p. 236).

In the ninth chapter, *The disinformation in the case of the Ukraine war*, Dan Apăteanu acknowledges that the war in Ukraine has been a source of widespread disinformation, with numerous false narratives and propaganda being spread through traditional and social media (p. 241), so his paper's aim is to analyze how disinformation has been used to create confusion, spread fear, and manipulate public opinion, and how it has contributed to the escalation of the conflict. In the same time, increased media literacy and critical thinking are necessary in order to counter the effects of disinformation and promote a more accurate understanding of the situation in Ukraine (p. 241).

The definition of disinformation, its classification, the role of technology and social media in spreading disinformation, all contribute to a better understanding of the concept and its impact. The disinformation campaigns related to the Ukraine War is analyzed taking into consideration the actions or reactions of each of the two countries: while Russia was using various tactics like deepfakes, manipulated images, forged documents, and targeted propaganda to spread false narratives, sow doubt, and weaken support for Ukraine (pp. 247-251), Ukraine took measures to counter disinformation and maintain credibility, particularly in the digital realm. In the same time, in collaboration with Ukraine, the European Commission has implemented various initiatives to combat disinformation and to foster a safer digital environment.

In conclusion, Dan Apăteanu states that combating disinformation requires international cooperation, information sharing, and the involvement of various stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, media outlets, and technology companies (p. 263).

After the succinct presentation of the nine chapters of the book, we may say that *The War in Ukraine and its Impact on Global Politics and Security* has achieved its goal. The *impact* of the war in Ukraine has been, indeed, projected along the book in an original and consistent way, through the different topics and domains tackled, but also through the different analyzed states and international organizations, from different geographical areas. In times of uncertainty regarding the future development of the war in Ukraine, the prominent contributors to this book have applied the theoretical knowledge to specific case studies so that, through different scenarios, to deliver some „probable” or „improbable” situations for the medium and long term.

Therefore, the actuality and relevance of the topic – the war in Ukraine, and the authors' endeavour to approach its different facets, challenges and perspectives, has made the book an invaluable instrument for academics, researchers or students from different specializations – such as Political Science, International Relations, etc, but also for the specific research area of identity and migration issues.

