

DOI: 10.31648/pw.10868

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SOCIAL COHESION IN HYBRID CONFLICTS. CASES OF MIGRATION CRISIS AT THE POLISH-BELARUSSIAN BORDER AND MIGRATION FLOWS FROM UKRAINE

ABSTRACT: Hybrid threats, which combine disinformation, cyber-attacks, economic pressure, and the use of irregular armed groups and regular forces (NATO), target society as a whole, specific groups and/or individuals in order to destabilize their functioning and undermine their sense of security. The European Union and individual countries recognize societal cohesion as one of the desirable tools to counter complex and interrelated threats, regardless of the category they belong to – hybrid interference, hybrid operations or hybrid warfare (EU). The migration crisis on the eastern border of the EU is analyzed with reference to the NATO framework of 5 elements (core values, common perception of the risk, trust in institutions and their policies and applied law) that can destabilize the coherent society. The conclusions draw attention to the progressive fracturing of society which can be slowed down by building social awareness with national and international law and policies including educational policies.

KEYWORDS: hybrid conflict, social cohesion, border conflict, EU engagement, migration crisis.

Introduction

Today's conflicts and crises are described with a bundle of terms: low-intensity conflict or low-intensity operations, small wars, irregular warfare, asymmetric warfare, military operations other than war (MOOTW), and hybrid conflicts. Yet, all of them include the characteristic of hybridity which in the literature is identified as the predominant but not new in warfare. They target the whole society, particular groups and/or individuals to destabilize their functioning and damage their sense of security. Social cohesion is challenged in the domain of: core values, common perception of the risk, trust to institutions and their policies and law applied. Migration crisis at Polish (UE) and Belarus border can serve as an example of how the NATO and UE cooperate to counter hybrid threat and how cohesion is targeted and how much it is crucial to counter the adversary.

Methods: Case studies on the crises and their impact on social cohesion is analyzed with reference to the NATO framework of 5 elements (defined above) which can destabilize the coherent society: political and economic factors, core values, civil military friction, external risk and lack of common perception of it, targeted propaganda. And how it differs from the migration from Ukraine. The resources for the analysis include: reports, legal acts, literature, media sources, Border Guards information.

1. Hybrid threats

Hybridity is usually defined by relating to *modus operandi* i.e., purposeful, yet with hidden intent and engagement, use of coordinated and synchronized means (military and nonmilitary, kinetic and nonkinetic, regular and irregular) precisely targeting vulnerable elements of the adversary. In practice every threat can be hybrid if not limited to one dimension and form of military operations. There is also a distinction made among hybrid threats, hybrid conflict, hybrid war and hybrid warfare:

- Hybrid threat is a convergence and interconnection of different elements, which together form a more complex and multidimensional threat.
- Hybrid conflict is a situation in which parties refrain from the overt use of armed forces against each other, relying instead on a combination of military intimidation (falling short of an attack), exploitation of economic and political vulnerabilities, and diplomatic or technological means to pursue their objectives.
- Hybrid war is a situation in which a country resorts to overt use of armed forces against another country or a non-state actor, in addition to a mix of other means (i.e., economic, political, and diplomatic) (see Pawlak 2015).
- Hybrid warfare, the most comprehensive concept, refers to: “the use of military and nonmilitary tools in an integrated campaign, designed to achieve surprise, seize the initiative and gain psychological as well as physical advantages utilizing diplomatic means; sophisticated and rapid information, electronic and cyber operations; covert and occasionally overt military and intelligence action; and economic pressure” (Wither 2020, 8).

NATO uses the following definition:

Hybrid threats combine military and non-military as well as covert and overt means, including disinformation, cyberattacks, economic pressure, deployment of irregular armed groups and use of regular forces. Hybrid methods are used to blur the lines between war and peace, and attempt to sow doubt in the minds of target populations. They aim to destabilize and undermine societies¹.

¹ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_156338.htm?selectedLocale=uk (accessed: 19.12.2022).

Hybrid conflict is identified predominantly through the prism of information and psychological warfare. Russia emphasizes risks posed by external manipulation and subversion, utilization of informational and communication technologies to manipulate public awareness and falsify history, the use of economic coercion for geopolitical aims. Likewise, China describes hybrid conflict referring to the use of sanctions, political provocation and cyber-related threats. The US' focuses on cyber conflict, disinformation campaigns and economic coercion as elements of hybrid conflicts, identifying China, Russia and Iran as dangerous protagonists. Germany and the Netherlands emphasize the cyber threats and information warfare as a rising and threatening trend of hybrid conflict. The Dutch define hybrid conflict as threats such as foreign interference through disinformation, cyber espionage, sabotage and foreign funding. The UK indicates hybrid threats in the cyber and political domain, especially with regard to safeguarding electoral systems as powerful (Torossian | Fagliano | Görder 2020). M. Clark emphasizes the different understanding of hybrid war by the USA and Russia:

The Russian hybrid war framework specifically includes the use of conventional military operations and lacks a boundary between “deniable” proxy operations and disinformation on the one hand and conventional conflict on the other. [...] from the Russian perspective, the entire “gray zone” is potentially a component of hybrid war, which additionally includes the use of military forces extending above the upper threshold of the “gray zone” into what the US and China would both regard as conventional war” (Clark 2020, 11). Whereas “Western discussions of the nature of the Russian military threat often split the problem set into two parts. One part is the threat of conventional war against NATO. The other consists of strictly information-focused and subversive Russian actions (Clark 2020, 12).

For Russia hybrid war is a type of conflict rather than the means of waging it as the US sees it. General Valerij Gierasimov in his strategy, although he does not use the term hybrid war, he discusses its six typical elements:

- The line between the war and peace is blurred and operations are not preceded by the formal declaration of war
- The nonmilitary means play a key role, various political, economic and humanitarian instruments are used, the local public opinion is manipulated;
- The nonmilitary actions are supported with military means, mainly information warfare, special operation and terrorist act,
- Military units are used openly, in disguise of peacekeeping or humanitarian actions.

The hybrid conflict has its six consecutive phases: covert origins, escalation, start of the conflict activities, crisis, resolution, restoration of peace. In two first phases differences of interests emerge and are transformed into conflict. Political leaders become aware of that. They escalate to the form of a direct military threat (Gryga 2020).

The use of differences of interests directly strikes social cohesion in the targeted country, yet simultaneously an aggressor focuses on strengthening it in their country preparing and involving its society into the waged conflict, so called the whole-of-society hybrid war. The whole-of-the-society concept focuses on the following aspects of social cohesion:

- enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community. The hybrid war involves armed forces as well as non-state actors and terrorists and still follows the traditional military principles without creating a new intellectual framework;
- improving socio-economic conditions, reducing corruption, and centralizing control of the economy are the factors preventing wear on the economy, minimizing disparities and increasing prosperity;
- developing a community of shared values and norm, creating a sense of belonging, promoting trust to its authorities. Building proper public mood and avoiding weariness of “strategies, concepts, ideologies” requires constant running information campaigns. In 2018 The Russian MoD created the Military-Political Directorate which is responsible for instilling the unified ideology for the need of conducted hybrid wars (Clark 2020).

A hybrid warfare with the information, cognitive and social domains as its core elements constitute a serious threat to the social cohesion both by eroding trust between the state institutions and the people as well as among particular social groups and communities (Bilal, 2021). Consequently, this is a very reason why hybrid conflict is increasingly recognized as a threat to the national security of the states, understood as the preservation of the norms, rules, institutions and values of society” and protection all the institutions, principles and structures associated with society, and its people from “military and non-military threats” (Makinda 1998; Osisanya 2022). Whereby, nonmilitary threats will prevail and grow in their frequency, intensity and range (Kowalkowski 2011, 23). This understanding of hybrid threat is emphasized in the paper.

2. Social cohesion

In a hybrid conflict where the society can be a victim, target, and means used by an adversary to achieve their strategic goals, social cohesion seems to be a key element determining the resilience of the whole society, nation, and state (Parel | Gleason 2018).

X. Fonseca, S. Lukosch and F. Brazier provide the analysis of the term social cohesion and evolution of its understanding. They relate to the first definition for social cohesion coined by Maxwell for the Canadian Policy Research Networks:

Social cohesion involves building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community (Maxwell 1996, 13).

For Alaluf it is a sense of a nation (identity) as a whole (unified), represented by distinctive traditions, culture, and language (Alaluf 1999). Fonseca, Lukosch and Brazier add the role of multiculturalism, values of tolerance, voluntary participation, and diversity in societies that embellish the construct of cohesion for resilient societies of the future, and associates the factor “sense of belonging” with resilient societies, as one of the factors correlated to social mechanisms of inclusion and expansion of systems built against social risk. Eventually, they propose the following definition of social cohesion:

The ongoing process of developing well-being, sense of belonging, and voluntary social participation of the members of society, while developing communities that tolerate and promote a multiplicity of values and cultures, and at the same time, granting equal rights and opportunities in society (Fonseca | Lukosch | Brazier 2019, 246).

For Chan et al. (2006, 290), “social cohesion is a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and the horizontal interactions among members of society”. Thus, social cohesion can be analyzed as a multidimensional phenomenon: on the three levels (the individual, community, and institutions) as well as from the local, state and international perspective. The three levels have the following characteristics:

- Level of the Individual includes the individuals’ intimate face-to-face communication, task competence, degree of like-dislike, initiative, individual behavior, quality of intimate topics shared, sense of belonging, inclusion, individual participation, recognition and legitimacy.
- Level of the Community embraces the shared loyalties, mutual moral support, social capital, strong social bonds, trust, social environment, formal/informal control, overlap of individuals’ friendship networks, pressures for conformity and caring, civic society, reciprocal loyalty and solidarity, strength of social relations, shared values, common goals, moral behavior and norms, values of rewards in groups, and process performance and goal attainment.
- Level of the Institutions consists of social disorganization, lack of social conflict, life satisfaction, voting, social behavior, suicide rates, civic society, trust and multiculturalism, and reduction of inequalities and exclusion (Fonseca | Lukosch | Brazier 2019).

The social cohesion should also be perceived from the local, state and international perspective. From these perspectives the multiculturalism as the element of cohesion gains even bigger importance. The hybrid conflicts which have definitely more extensive range and impact and do not confide to one state or one-to-one relation but

to number of actors in the region or on the globe. Sense of belonging to the common global community sharing common goals then, plays its role. Thus, social cohesion can also be identified by the strength of primary and secondary networks, or primary groups (Cooley) and weak ties (Granovetter) (Lockwood 1999). G. Grimalda, N. Buchan and M. Brewer (2015) study interconnectedness at the individual-level, and its correlation with the willingness to cooperate with global others. Their findings are that participation in global networks enhances propensity to cooperate and the sense of a global social identity is a strong impetus for cooperation.

Generalizing, social cohesion is about connections and relations of individuals, groups and societies and so has multidimensional, network structure. It can be identified and measured by the following cross-sectional (referring to each level separately and all of them) variables: sense of belonging to a group or society, strengthened by respect for diverse systems of values and trust which constitute the very foundations for cooperation towards common goals – development of sustainable, resilient, and so secure environment (local community, society, nation, state, region, and ultimately globe).

For NATO cohesion means “synergy and the ability of NATO nations to think and act together. That is, to develop shared interests, values, and common standards and rules, and to respond to problems as a united group”. Relying on mutual trust, cohesion is “doing what is best for the community” and looking beyond self-interests” (Bazin | Kunertova 2018, 84). The alliance cohesion can be affected or fractured by variety of factors: (1) external risks, especially multiplication of external threats and a lack of common perception of those threats (2) political and economic factors, populist leaders who prefer narrow, short-term political gains at home and who are prepared to “undermine an international institution to gain consensus internally”, concerns over sovereignty could override the relative value of the Alliance’s collective good and make governments pull limited funds away from NATO, demographic shifts changing the socioeconomic and cultural fabric of nations, such as an aging population and migration, will drive differences in fiscal priorities, which could result in decreasing national defense spending. (3) organizational structures and processes, bureaucracy, civil-military frictions on both NATO and national levels could negatively affect readiness of the forces. (4) technology advances, ever-evolving communication technology can facilitate the spread of risks coming from outside of the Alliance, targeted propaganda against NATO nations, alternative media and miscommunication and (5) core values and common purpose; intangibility of the common good that NATO produces, uncontrolled mass migration changing the fabric of societies and their values. Hybrid threats with psychological and information warfare can imperil allies’ cohesion in all five identified areas.

Migration crisis at Polish (UE) and Belarus border can serve as an example of how the NATO and UE cooperate to counter hybrid threat and how cohesion

is targeted and how much it is crucial to counter the adversary. The crisis is analyzed with reference to the NATO framework of 5 elements (defined above) which can destabilize the coherent society: political and economic factors, core values, civil military friction, external risk and lack of common perception of it, targeted propaganda. The resources for the analysis include: reports, legal acts, literature, media sources, Border Guards information.

3. Migration crisis at the east European Union border

Since June 2021, thousands of people – mainly from Iraq, but also from Syria, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon tried to reach the European Union (EU) via Belarus. When Belarus eased the migration flows, political leaders from Poland and Lithuania accused the Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko of deliberate facilitating migrants and asylum seekers to cross EU borders. The influx of migrants is treated as a “hybrid attack” or a well-organized, cynical, hybrid operation as Gabrieliūš Landsbergis calls it (Seputyte | Follain 2021), to put pressure on the EU to lift sanctions on the Belarus. Charles Michel, the European Council president, called the crisis a “brutal, hybrid attack on our EU borders” and NATO claimed the “irregular migration artificially created by Belarus as part of hybrid actions” to target the EU (Scheglov 2020). The EU countries built fences, increased border patrols and declared a state of emergency along the border areas (Poland on 2 Sept. 2021, Lithuania on 9 Nov.2021).

Then, “Why can’t they simply open their borders like Germany did in 2015?”, asked rhetorically Elisabeth Braw. At the same time recalling the migration statistics of 2015-2016, she explains that there is not a migration crisis at the EU – Belarus border but a geopolitical crisis and border-violation crisis with migrants exploited as geopolitical pawns². The goal of propaganda was to convince the citizens of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland their governments are not able to safeguard their borders. Belarusian security forces provided migrants with instructions on crossing the borders and tools like wire cutters and axes to break down border fences. Moreover, on 13th November 2021 Belarusian forces attempted to destroy fencing at the Polish border and used lasers and flashing lights to temporarily blind and confuse Polish soldiers to help migrants cross the border (Ioanes 2021). So far, the border

² Start with the numbers. According to the United Nations, 26.6 million people worldwide are currently considered refugees. (Another 51 million are internally displaced.) Turkey hosts the largest number, 3.7 million, followed by Colombia, Uganda, Pakistan and Germany; while Aruba, Curacao, Lebanon and Turkey host the highest number of refugees per 1,000 local residents. During the 2015-2016 refugee crisis, a total of 2.5 million people applied for asylum in the EU. at Belarus’ European borders: By late August, some 4,000 migrants had illegally entered Lithuania from Belarus; 2,100 had entered Poland and the following month, Latvia’s government reported that more than 1,000 migrants had attempted to illegally enter the country.

had been open but secure, authorities were managing the cross – border mobility rather than defending the border itself. Yet, the new situation and consequently security measures alerted citizens to risks and threats and thus increases subjective insecurity. Heighten awareness of risk and threat compound levels of fear and ever-higher security measures will not satisfy any fear: fear of death, fear of ‘the other’, fear of losing social or economic status. This state caused the shift of the public perception of a border from the open one (liquid) to the solid border as a protection from threat in the traditional reasoning (Marciso | Varzi 2015), evoking at the same time expectations that the authorities would meet the challenge. The external threats creating the possibility of losing certain aspects of national or local identity have consequences for the individuals and societies. “If the three countries signaled to their citizens – and thus to Belarus and to the rest of the world – that they’re not in command of their own borders, it would be an open invitation for Belarus to attack these borders using not just more migrants but various other tools as well” (Braw 2021).

There is also another side of a propaganda coin – fracturing the society by targeting at its values and trust to institutions: “The community is once again divided into those who are happy with the services that defend the border and those who cannot remain indifferent,” says one of the residents of a village in the restricted zone³. Crisis situation evokes the need to help and sense of solidarity with the disadvantaged. Social solidarity is the cohesion between individuals, builds the interdependence between members of a society, and a sense of collective responsibility for supporting members of the group and community at large but also emphasizes need to provide help to the underprivileged members of the local, national or global community (Mishra| Rath 2020). There is one of many stories happening at the border:

Kurnyta [...] used to work in construction, but he now works full-time with the Wolno Nam Foundation and its subsidiary, Podlaskie Voluntary Humanitarian Rescue, the latter of which sprung up as a result of the wave of migration on the border. He has received awards in Poland for helping dehydrated, exhausted refugees. Earlier this summer, Podlaskie Voluntary Humanitarian Rescue got a WhatsApp message from a woman in Syria. She hadn’t heard from her husband, Tarek, for nine days since crossing the border into Poland. The last dropped pin he had sent her from his phone was still deep in the Polish side of the woods. Kurnyta hadn’t eaten lunch yet. He grabbed an energy bar and headed out with his friends. But he was not optimistic. “You can’t last out there more than a week without water,” he said. Kurnyta followed the trail from that dropped pin to find Tarek lying in tall thickets of wet grass. In several days, he had only managed to move 260 feet from his last location (Toth 2023).

³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/poland-belarus-border-crisis-we-don-t-want-people-die-forest> (accessed: 11.12.2022).

The migration and humanitarian crisis falsely created at the border aims at arousing remorse and moral dilemmas and consequently tensions in cross-border locals but also national and international community.

[T]he forests between Belarus and Poland have become the arena of what can at times resemble a nightmarish survival test: Thousands of people trying to cross find themselves trapped between Polish border guards stopping their entry and Belarusian security forces blocking their retreat. The result is people find themselves stranded in the forests, without food or shelter, often for weeks (Reevel 2021).

The reaction of Polish authorities and local cross-border communities toward illegal migrants from Belarus can be also analyzed in relation to the events of the Russia – Ukrainian war 2022. Polish government and the whole Polish society welcome openly the refugees from Ukraine. The Border Guards accept about 30 thousand Ukrainians daily on average. From the 24th Feb. 2022, i.e., the beginning of the war 6.03 mil. Ukrainians crossed the Polish border, mainly women and children. As of the 3rd Sept. 4.239 mil. came back to Ukraine, which means that circa 1.95 ml. Ukrainians are staying in Poland⁴. They receive support from Polish authorities and people who host them in their homes. On 6th on March the new simplified border crossing procedures at Korczowa and Dorohuskto borders were issued to improve humanitarian aid transport⁵ on 12th of March 2022 the President of the Republic of Poland signed the Act on assistance for Ukrainian nationals (JL 2022 p. 583). It regulates the legal status and the rights of the Ukrainian citizens on the territory of Poland, employment, financial and material aid, education, nursery and health services. Generally, financial help for Ukraine from the Polish society equals 10 bn PLN (2140 000 000 EUR) and military help equals 7 bn PLN (1 500 000 000 EUR) (Polska pomoc... 2022). These actions definitely contribute to inclusion. Humanitarian aid was provided by government, public institutions, business, NGOs and individuals (Zwolak 2020). Polish organizations that help in Ukraine are: Polish Humanitarian Action (food delivery), Polish Medical Mission (medical equipment and supplies) Polish Center for Humanitarian Aid (evacuation of people and psychological aid), Emergency Services Fundation (supporting international medical services). Caritas Polska cooperates with Caritas-SPES and Caritas Ukraine helping refugees directly at the border⁶.

F. G. Morales, the Special UN Rapporteur conducted an official visit to Poland and Belarus from 12 to 25 July 2022. The visit concerned the situation at the Polish-Belarus border. In his final statement he concludes:

⁴ <https://300gospodarka.pl/news/uchodzcy-z-ukrainy-w-polsce-liczba> (accessed: 11.12.2022).

⁵ <https://rzeszow.uw.gov.pl/aktualnosci/latwiejsze-przekraczanie-granicy-polsko-ukrainskiej-dla-ciezarowek-z-pomoca-humanitarna/> (accessed: 11.12.2022).

⁶ <https://caritas.pl/ukraina/> (accessed: 11.12.2022).

I am impressed by the Government of Poland for providing significant support to a huge number of refugees fleeing Ukraine in such an intense period. At the same time, we must pay tribute to Polish citizens who have shown solidarity and generosity to Ukrainian refugees”. However, the situation on the Polish-Belarus border is different: on the Belarusian side, migrants are subject to detention at the already closed Temporary Logistical Centre whereas on the Polish side, migrant children and their families, and pregnant women are sheltered in closed immigration facilities. Therefore, he urges Belarus, Poland and the EU to open dialogue on the situation at their common border. “Most importantly, they must avoid any further loss of life, stop pushbacks, and protect the human rights of migrants⁷.

Thus, why is it different? Marta Bivand Erdal, co-director of the Migration Centre at the Peace Research Institute Oslo, believes that this difference is made by proximity and shared historical grievances towards Russia. These feelings decided about the generous welcome Ukrainians have received in Poland. Also, a “high sense that we might be next” accompanies the Poles. Lieutenant Anna Michalska, the Polish Border Guard spokesperson, explains that the migrants coming via Belarus are “illegal immigrants”, whereas all Ukrainians are refugees, which is the reason for their different treatment:

On the Ukrainian border, people are evacuating and running away from war. They ask Polish border guards for help and feel happy they are safe. But on the Poland-Belarus border, immigrants try to avoid us because they do not want to stay in Poland,” she says (Adler 2022).

The case of the Jemen 16-year-old migrant unconscious, lying at the border and in need for medical help is an example of how migrants are exploited as a tool of information warfare. After the Border Group activists addressed to Polish authorities accusation for not providing help, the Polish security services in cooperation with Belarusian ones controlled the situation. When they arrived at the scene the migrant betook himself off. Migrants⁸.

Belarus is also engaging in “lawfare” by forcing EU states to break international and EU law by stopping migrants and returning them to Belarus. This violates the principle of non-refoulement under international law, which prohibits the sending of refugees back to countries where they might get harmed (Scheglov 2021). Migration and humanitarian crisis at the border although politically motivated prove there is an urgent need for an international law for protection of migrants,

⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/07/un-expert-praises-generosity-towards-ukrainian-refugees-poland-and-urges> (accessed: 11.12.2022).

⁸ <https://www.tvp.info/59608982/straz-graniczna-imigrant-z-jemenu-na-granicy-polsko-bialoruskiej-nie-wymagal-interwencji-medycznej-niesprawdzone-i-nieprawdziwe-informacje-aktywistow-grupy-granica-oraz-janiny-ochojskiej> (accessed: 11.12.2022).

refugees and asylum seekers. (The Lancet Regional Health – Europe 11 (2021) 100285) The Geneva Convention on humanitarian aid could be extended or revised in face of the new threats and challenges, when migration is instrumentalized in hybrid conflicts.

In spite of the fact that the attack came at a difficult moment for the EU as the bloc struggles with internal tensions of its own, it unified the EU to response. The statement of *Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy* is as follows:

The EU stands united in facing this challenge and is using all the tools at its disposal to push back against attempts to create a crisis at EU borders. We continue to stand in solidarity with the people of Belarus. This fifth round of sanctions is another example of our determination to act when human rights are violated (Council of the EU PRESS EN PRESS RELEASE 925/21 02/12/2021).

In November 2021, the EU allocated altogether 700 000 EUR in humanitarian assistance to support vulnerable people stranded at the Belarus border: 200 000 EUR for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and a further 500 000 EUR in humanitarian funding. The EU was monitoring spending these funds. Yet, the media was spreading information about the limited or none access and help for the migrants.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg presented a united front at the joint conference in Vilnius on 28th Nov 2021. “It is important that the European Union and NATO work hand in hand” said Ursula von der Leyen, likewise Jens Stoltenberg: “We are stronger and safer when we work together” (Ames 2021).

On 2 December 2021, the Council introduced the fifth package of sanctions over continued human rights abuses and the instrumentalization of migrants. Consequently, the Council imposed restrictive measures targeting prominent members of the judicial branch and propaganda outlets that contribute to the continued repression of civil society, democratic opposition, independent media outlets and journalists, and high-ranking political officials and companies (Belavia Airlines, tour operators and hotels) that have helped incite or organize illegal border crossing for political purposes.

Migration crisis at the East EU (Polish-Belarus) border proved to be regional, border-violation crisis provoked with the full hybrid toolkit at Belarus disposal: misled by Belarus forces migrants directed towards the Polish border and instructed to cross it forcefully, lawfare: forcing the EU states to brake the international law, information warfare: propaganda to convince nations their authorities and armies are not able to defend the borders, psychological warfare: dividing communities by creating conflict of values upon humanitarian aid, targeting social cohesion at the

local, national and international level as the natural sense of solidarity with the underprivileged was confronted with luring fear and insecurity fed by the attempts at braking the border being the physical and psychological base of order and stability.

Conclusion

Migration crisis at Polish (UE East border) and Belarus border can serve as an example of how the NATO and UE cooperate to counter hybrid threat and how much cohesion is crucial to succeed. In spite of the fact that the attack came at a difficult moment for the EU as the bloc struggles with internal tensions of its own, it unified the EU to response. Charles Michel, the European Council president, called the crisis a “brutal, hybrid attack on our EU borders” and NATO claimed the “irregular migration artificially created by Belarus as part of hybrid actions” to target the EU. This attack challenged the social cohesion on all levels (local communities, national and regional) in all 5 areas defined by NATO: purposefully created an external risk, lack of the common perception of the situation as politically motivated, instrumentalized migration cannot be managed in the same way as the war migration for national and regional security reasons and eventually disturbed the system of core values creating moral and legal dilemmas. The goal of propaganda was to convince the citizens of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland their governments are not able to safeguard their borders. Belarus used also “lawfare” by forcing EU states to break international and EU law by stopping migrants and returning them to Belarus. Migration and humanitarian crisis at the border although politically motivated prove there is an urgent need for an international law for protection of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Responding to a hybrid attack requires the heterogenous tools to be employed from legal steps like Article 4 and Article 5 of the Washington Treaty (Poland, Lithuania and Latvia considered triggering NATO’s Article 4), sanctions to the expulsion of diplomats but also all soft instruments that could build solidarity and cohesion of society and global community and so resilience to future incidents and threats.

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