REPORT

A ROUTE TO NATIONAL RESILIENCE
BUILDING WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY SECURITY IN UKRAINE

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Cover page photo: People carry national flag on a bridge while forming a human chain across the Dnipro River during celebrations for Unity Day in Kyiv, Ukraine, January 22, 2017 (Reuters / Gleb Garanich).

Other photos used in the report:

Page VI: People carry signs with question marks during a march in central Kyiv on July 20, 2017 to commemorate the death of investigative journalist Pavel Sheremet (AFP / Genya Savilov).
Page 17: A former protester wearing his helmet attends a memorial rally in Kyiv on February 20, 2016 (AFP / Genya Savilov).
Page 28: Workers dismantle Lenin’s monument in city of Zaporizhia, Ukraine on March 17, 2016 (AFP / Oleksandr Prylepa).

Keywords: security, resilience, law enforcement, governance, reforms, civil society, Ukraine, hybrid threats

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Executive Summary

- A strong and active civil society is one of the pillars of national resilience and, therefore, national security. Russia’s ongoing multifaceted aggression against Ukraine, which started with the annexation of Crimea in 2014, tests Ukraine’s national resilience in manifold ways. Having been at the forefront of the response to it from the very start, civil society—volunteer movement and civil society organisations (CSOs)—continues to be a source of strength. Having arisen as a self-help reflex in the face of severe adversity and the weakness of state authorities, its salient role in protecting Ukraine has become better appreciated. However, there is a risk that the positive momentum of building on civil society in strengthening national resilience will be lost in Ukraine as the traditional top-down and state-centric understanding of security remains a dominant paradigm.

- In 2015–2017, the Ukrainian state absorbed some of civil society’s potential by incorporating elements of the volunteer movement into its security structures. In the process of implementing security sector reforms, it sought to draw upon civil society’s ideas and contribution to enhance transparency and ensure stronger democratic control of the state’s security and defence organisations. The legal and regulatory framework also contains various elements that provide a basis for a broader whole-of-society approach to national security. However, all these efforts lack a binding philosophy, coherence and depth. Resilience has not been wholeheartedly endorsed by the state as an overarching concept for building comprehensive security at the national, regional and local levels. Consolidating, institutionalising and promoting civil society’s role is facing some daunting challenges.

- The general public in Ukraine tends to trust the CSOs and volunteer movement more than state authorities, which is evident both nationwide and in the regions most exposed to various forms of Russian aggression—eastern and south-eastern Ukraine. Those state authorities that reformed themselves more successfully and opened themselves up to civil society’s contribution also enjoy higher levels of trust and support from the general public. Although the overall level of participation in civil society activities is not particularly high in Ukraine, there is a high degree of willingness among members of society to contribute, if necessary, to protecting local communities and ensuring their security. This willingness is also very evident in the eastern and south-eastern regions, where acute concerns about the lack of socio-economic development, corruption, crime and the ongoing war in the Donbas prompt grass-roots activism and stimulate society’s self-mobilisation.

- Ukraine’s national security and defence authorities and the CSOs must do more to come together more effectively and build greater synergy across a broad spectrum of national security functions: in ensuring territorial security and law enforcement across local communities; building cognitive resilience in the information domain; protecting the physical safety and well-being of citizens and responding to emergencies; enhancing cyber security; supporting the most vulnerable groups in society; addressing environmental protection issues, etc. This synergy and closer cooperation between the state and civil society are essential if Ukraine is to harness its full resources, skills and talents for greater resilience and security. The sectoral case studies undertaken for this paper in the areas of fire prevention and response, support for
security, defence and law-enforcement authorities, and information operations highlight both the enormous potential of civil society and the need for the state authorities to make better use of it in building national resilience.

- There are considerable gaps between the state and civil society that prevent more effective cooperation between them. Those gaps will eventually diminish Ukraine’s overall resilience to internal and external security challenges. Civil society and the state authorities in Ukraine can be characterised as too divergent in their values, objectives, motivation and capacity, as well as their communication practices, for them to be able to bring their interaction to a new level. Focus groups and in-depth interviews conducted with various national security stakeholders in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kramatorsk, Mariupol, Severodonetsk/Lysychansk and Sumy reveal that such gaps are undermining mutual trust and willingness to work together more closely.

- It is recommended that national security stakeholders in Ukraine—the state authorities at different levels and the CSOs—consciously address the identified gaps. The state must: embrace national resilience as a pivotal concept of national security and understand its “bottom-up” nature; clearly define the role of civil society in building national resilience; create effective platforms for engaging the CSOs in addressing various security issues and needs; and develop the instruments for enabling the growth of civil society’s contribution to national security. It must also do more to ensure transparency and openness to civil society as well as mutual understanding between civil society and the public service. The CSOs must put more effort into enhancing their management capacity; communicating their activities and achievements to the public and the state authorities; and building peer-to-peer support and coordination networks. Some of them also need to insulate themselves better from the political and business interests that may skew their mission and undermine trust in their motives.

- The continuing security-sector reforms and decentralisation of governance in Ukraine offer some excellent opportunities to put relations between civil society and the state on a more sustainable footing and create new synergies needed for resilience and security, especially at the local level. New municipal entities (Hromady) should be incentivised to adopt innovative solutions for harnessing civil society’s potential to address local security challenges. Bringing together a broader spectrum of security-related functions under the umbrella of new Citizen Safety Centres, establishing “resilience incubators” that provide infrastructure and support services to various local CSOs and creating positions of civil society-security cooperation officers in the local administrations are among the innovative measures recommended in this report. Overall, Ukraine must continue to pursue fundamental change in its political, governance, security and organisational cultures and in its society. Continuous positive change and growth are the best antidotes to the negative and destructive agenda of Russia and its proxies and a crucial pathway towards greater national resilience.
# List of Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFU</td>
<td>Armed Forces of Ukraine</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATO</td>
<td>Anti-Terrorist Operation</td>
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<td>CIMIC</td>
<td>Civil-Military Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOI</td>
<td>Ministry of the Interior</td>
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<td>NSDC</td>
<td>National Security and Defence Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>Odnoklassniki</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSINT</td>
<td>Open Source Intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBU</td>
<td>Sluzhba Bezpeki Ukraini (Security Service of Ukraine)</td>
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<td>SESU</td>
<td>State Emergency Service of Ukraine</td>
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<td>VK</td>
<td>VKontakte</td>
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<tr>
<td>VPN</td>
<td>Virtual Private Network</td>
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Civil society is widely acknowledged as an important ingredient of democracy and a bulwark against authoritarianism. Protecting democracy—and the constitutional order and the framework of values that underpin it—is a matter of national security to all democratic nations. An active, vibrant and strong civil society is thereby part of what makes democratic nations more secure. This link is even more pertinent in the era of hybrid threats, which are complex, ambiguous and unpredictable. In the current security environment, states and societies must be resilient to multiple stresses and shocks in order to be able to endure hardship and remain functional under duress. National resilience is currently one of the most popular concepts in national security policymaking, and civil society has rightfully emerged as its pivotal component. As Hanna Hopko, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine, put it, “you cannot have a resilient society without civil society”.

Ukraine is a perfect case study of the role that civil society plays in national resilience and, thus, security. A target of Russia’s multifaceted aggression since early 2014—and of Moscow’s corrosive influence strategy and “active measures” well before that—it overcame the initial shock partly thanks to the rapid and effective self-mobilisation of civil society. Ukraine is now an incubator and a laboratory for innovative ideas and practices that give substance to a whole-of-society approach to security and defence, whereby members of society from all walks of life assume responsibility for and contribute to the nation’s security alongside and in conjunction with the state authorities. However, institutionalising this approach and making the best use of it in bolstering national resilience is running into difficulties due to political, structural, societal and other factors at play in present-day Ukraine. In particular, cooperation and synergy between the state authorities and civil society are hampered by a variety of shortcomings and obstacles. At the same time, the ongoing security sector and governance reforms offer a window of opportunity to promote such synergy and bring national resilience to a new level.

Between 2016 and 2018, ICDS conducted a development cooperation project on Ukraine’s civil society and national security, “Resilient Ukraine”. Its research strand, which combined extensive desk and field research (in-depth interviews, focus groups, sociological surveys, social media monitoring and workshops), sought to understand the evolution, current state of play and future prospects of civil society’s involvement in Ukraine’s national security. Although we did examine developments at the national level, we particularly focused on the regions regarded as most exposed to Russia’s aggression and vulnerable to hybrid threats—in Ukraine’s east and south-east, including in the vicinity of the so-called “line of contact”. This provided an opportunity to understand regional and local layers of security. These layers are often overlooked in the nation’s capital, Kyiv, which often feels somewhat distant—geographically and mentally—from what is happening closer to what is still a war zone.

A Route to National Resilience

The key operating concept in this research was national resilience, defined as the ability of a nation to recover, adapt, function and positively develop while under intense negative influence or crisis. It is regarded as a multi-dimensional concept, mirroring the notion of comprehensive security—encompassing dimensions ranging from political, societal and cognitive aspects to economic, cyber and physical security (e.g. critical infrastructure protection). It requires, among other things, coherence and synergy between its stakeholders, especially the state and civil society. Our hypothesis was that there are gaps between the state and civil society in Ukraine (see Figure 1) that make achieving such coherence and synergy an enormously challenging undertaking, especially as the conflict in the east of the country continues to test Ukraine’s resilience in multiple ways.

In the course of the project, ICDS published several papers analysing various aspects of the ongoing security sector reforms, civil society’s role and national resilience in Ukraine. This report brings together and highlights various findings of the research strand and develops some recommendations on how to eliminate those identified gaps, thereby putting resilience-building efforts on a broader and more sustainable basis at all levels—national, regional and local.


1. Civil Society and National Security in Ukraine

In Ukraine, national resilience is a narrative that is slowly emerging as an alternative to the traditional approach of managing national security in which all threats are clearly identifiable, government is always in charge of responding to them and non-state actors—formal civil-society organisations (CSOs) or informal volunteer movements and networks—have only a minimal role. Although Ukraine’s Constitution (Article 17) emphasises that “protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, ensuring its economic and information security, shall be the most important function of the State”, it also points out that this is “a matter of concern for all the Ukrainian people”. A whole-of-society approach that underpins national resilience is thus a constitutional principle in Ukraine, implementation of which sits uneasily alongside a deeply rooted state-centric national security culture. Meanwhile, the concept of resilience took root only in the financial and economic sectors of Ukraine—as a guiding doctrinal principle in areas such as critical (especially energy) infrastructure protection and stability of the banking system.

Disarray in and weakness of central government left a temporary void which was filled by widespread self-mobilisation of society

In Ukraine, national resilience is a narrative that is slowly emerging as an alternative to the traditional approach of managing national security

This tension between the state-centric traditionalist understanding of managing national security and resilience-focused society-centric approaches is also reflected in various legislation. For instance, the Law on the Defence of Ukraine permits the creation of CSOs in order to contribute to national defence and stipulates state support for such organisations that are involved in enhancing national defence capabilities and educating the public. However, when it comes to implementation, the state is unwilling to consider voluntary territorial security and defence structures like the Estonian Defence League. Similarly, civil society is assigned a role in ensuring civil democratic control of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) and internal security services, as provided by the Law on Democratic Civilian Control of State Military Organisation and Law Enforcement Bodies. At the same time, much of the interaction in this area is reduced to the one-way provision of information to the CSOs about the activities of those organisations and responding to their queries. The Law on the Fundamentals of National Security of Ukraine treats citizens and society as passive objects of security—consumers of state services—first, and regards them as active subjects responsible for their own security only second.

In 2014–2015, the response to Russia’s aggression in the Donbas region was often led by formal and informal voluntary organisations and networks. This response spanned a full range of functions traditionally performed by the state—from gathering actionable intelligence and countering disinformation through conducting military and security operations in the field to supplying materiel and providing medical support. Disarray in and weakness of central government left a temporary void which was filled by widespread self-mobilisation of society as people realised they needed to assume greater responsibility if Russia’s aggression was to be stopped in its tracks.

On the face of it, the development of Ukraine’s civil society seems to have gained new momentum after the Maidan revolution. Sociological research, however, shows that this remains confined to a relatively small proportion of general society. Voluntarism monitors noted a fairly stable—even slightly growing—proportion of the population regularly involved in voluntary activities and projects (14% as of 2016, compared to 10% in 2012). On the other hand, the readiness for intensive voluntarism has seen some decline: for instance, the proportion of those ready to spend a few hours each month for voluntary activities declined from 22.6% in 2015 to just 10.7% in 2016 (with a corresponding increase in readiness to spend a few hours each quarter-year, from 16.7% to 29.8%).

After the initial surge of society into the security void, interaction in security between civil society and the state settled into a pattern with a narrower spectrum of activities, while many voluntary structures were absorbed by the state. It is more or less accepted that the state became quite capable of managing the most serious challenges to national security and that civil society’s role in this area needed to evolve. With some exceptions, its involvement became less direct in delivering security and more focused on specific points of influence on policymaking and on niches such as countering Russian disinformation. Informal volunteer movements and formal CSOs are shifting more attention to providing social, medical and psychological support to veterans of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) and other groups of society affected by the ongoing war or to environmental protection and recovery in the war zone. Representatives of civil society are also found in consultative forums and working groups of the ministries providing advice to and public oversight of reforms and major policy decisions (e.g. in personnel management and procurement). On the other hand, with the sense of acute crisis having subsided, there is a growing risk that civil society will be reduced to the role of observers and ineffectual critics of the government’s policies and actions, instead of constituting a vital pillar of national resilience and a cornerstone of a whole-of-society approach to national security.

A number of factors hamper further progress in civil society development and in enhancing its contribution to national security. Most
prominent among these are: the lack of financial resources and the general economic hardship afflicting much of society; disappointment in the slow progress of political, administrative, judicial and other reforms; and perceived lack of impact on the overall state of affairs in the country, which is further reinforced by widespread corruption and the failure of the political and administrative elites to deliver upon their promises. Some members of civil society—especially among the first wave of volunteers—worry that the Maidan revolution’s ideals have been betrayed by the corrupt elites, which fuels chronic distrust in the political class and state authorities.

According to opinion polls from 2017, only the AFU, the National Guard and the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SESU) had a positive balance of public trust in the security sector, while more respondents distrusted rather than trusted the border guards, police or Security Service of Ukraine (SBU).13 Most notable is that the security sector organisation enjoying society’s highest trust—the AFU—is not only the one that carries the greatest burden of defending sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine but also the one that opened up to participation of volunteers and civil society activists. This helped the positive transformation of many of the old practices of the military organisation and to advance the reform agenda. It is, however, noteworthy that the general public tends to trust CSOs more than the state authorities, including in Ukraine’s eastern regions. For example, according to data from the Razumkov Centre and DCAF, almost 62% of respondents in Donbas express trust in CSOs (compared to around 40-50% trusting various security and defence authorities such as the AFU, National Guard, SBU and SESU).14

Further institutionalisation of civil society’s role in national security has also become problematic. A host of laws, regulations and strategies that attempt to define the relationship between the state and civil society provides a very fragmented framework. Moreover, most of this framework pays only lip service to civil society when it comes to its future contribution to national security. For instance, while the National Strategy for the Development of Civil Society in Ukraine in 2016–2020 acknowledged the impact of the CSOs and volunteer movements in providing support to national security and defence as well as to internally displaced persons (IDPs), it did not even attempt to build upon this antecedent in order to give a further impetus for civil society involvement in this field.15 A new draft Law on the National Security of Ukraine (which will replace the existing Law on the Fundamentals of National Security of Ukraine) barely mentions the CSOs and completely ignores defence and security volunteers, while also failing to articulate any policy principles, establish rights and responsibilities of the CSOs or define mechanisms for their interaction with national security and defence authorities. The very cursory treatment of civil society in national security and defence legislation, as well as policy documents, hardly encourages greater openness in government agencies or their readiness to engage in various practical forms of cooperation with the CSOs (e.g. joint training and exercises, knowledge sharing, and delegation of some functions and responsibilities).

This thin and underdeveloped conceptual, policy and legal framework is accompanied by a lack of mutual understanding between...
The concept of national resilience implies forming a relationship of trust and collaboration between the state authorities and civil society

The concept of national resilience implies forming a relationship of trust and collaboration between the state authorities and civil society, and the lack of mutual awareness and respect is becoming a significant obstacle to achieving this. There are gaps between the state and civil society in Ukraine whose existence in the national security domain is detrimental to national resilience.

However, before turning to those gaps, which were explored through a series of focus groups and in-depth interviews, it is necessary to consider the broader societal context in greater detail. Public opinion is a good guide to understanding the “demand side” of security—especially at the local and regional level—and whether this demand is well catered for, be it by the state, the CSOs, or a combination of both. Furthermore, it is helpful in learning the public perception of the interaction between the state authorities and the CSOs and whether members of the public see themselves as potential active contributors to security.

2. General Society

2.1 What do people think and feel?

As part of the project, we conducted a sociological survey in 20 local communities and municipalities in eastern and south-eastern Ukraine—in Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv Oblasts. In total, 1,835 respondents in the age range of 15 to 80 years responded to a questionnaire that covered the public’s understanding and assessment of security, awareness of threats, trust in public institutions and involvement in ensuring security. Wherever relevant, the results were analysed and compared between three geographical zones: within ten kilometres of the “line of contact” and border with Russia (zone 1); 10–40 km from it (zone 2); and more than 40 km (zone 3) (see Figure 2).

The main highlights of the results are as follows.

- A majority of the public defines security as the absence of external threats (dominant perception in zones 2 and 3) and the protection of basic human needs (dominant in zone 1). The sense of individual security and safety declines towards the edge of urban areas and during the hours of darkness, as well as on public transport and in close proximity to the “line of contact”, security checkpoints or security/military garrisons. Exposure to crime, the possibility of violence and visible signs of the ongoing armed conflict are obviously very unsettling factors in the individual psyche of respondents. It is particularly noteworthy that fears and concerns associated with the ongoing war in the Donbas were expressed by a total of 59% of respondents.

- Socio-economic threats—the rising cost of living, unemployment, delays in wages, pensions or social welfare payments—are of highest concern, followed by fears about a possible intensification of the
armed conflict and rising crime levels. The inaction of the central authorities, Ukraine’s disintegration, its integration into Europe and the so-called “Ukrainisation” of the region appeared as least threatening to the respondents’ sense of security. In general, a majority (54%) of respondents see the overall security situation as having improved compared to 2014–2015. However, in zone 1, only 36% see such an improvement.

- The largest segments of respondents regard the ongoing war in the Donbas as a “new business of oligarchs” (22%, predominantly those identifying themselves as ethnic Russians) and as a hybrid war conducted by Russia against Ukraine (21%, predominantly for independence by the separatists (2%). The narrative about war actively pushed by Moscow’s propaganda has evidently gained very little traction even in the areas most exposed to it, yet this propaganda has succeeded in breeding a high degree of cynicism (and a conspiracy mindset) among ethnic Russians. Nonetheless, 36% of respondents in total consider the conflict a war between Russia and Ukraine rather than an internal conflict. Pro-Ukraine narratives were more likely to be held by those respondents who self-identified as ethnic Ukrainians, spoke Ukrainian, were younger, or were IDPs.

- Respondents obtain most information on possible threats to security from the internet and social media (74%), television (60%), and relatives and friends (49%). The least-used sources are personal contacts in the state authorities (3%) and the civil-society sector (2%).

This makes one of the focus areas of our research—the use of and trends in online social media in eastern and south-

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**Figure 2: The three geographical zones of sociological research**

The narrative about war actively pushed by Moscow’s propaganda has evidently gained very little traction even in the areas most exposed to it.
To a certain extent, even today civil society is seen as carrying greater weight in delivering security than the state authorities.

- Combating corruption at all levels is perceived as a priority in enhancing security by the largest proportion of respondents (33%). Other priorities include measures aimed at increasing citizens’ individual responsibility for their own security (18%) and reforms aimed at modernising the economy and improving society’s well-being (17%). The majority of respondents, however, think that national (57%), regional (57%) and municipal (53%) authorities do not pay sufficient attention to security issues. By comparison, the CSOs and volunteer movements are regarded as paying insufficient attention to security by 39% of respondents. This indicates that, to a certain extent, even today civil society is seen as carrying greater weight in delivering security than the state authorities.

- On average, the most trusted institutions among the respondents were: volunteer movement and CSOs (55%), patrol police (52%), the SESU (52%) and the AFU (49%). The most distrusted were municipal (local) councils (53% expressing distrust) and Oblast administrations (51%). It is noteworthy that the state organisations at the forefront of governance and security sector reform enjoy the highest public trust. However, there is some variance between the three geographical zones (see Figure 3). It is interesting that trust in volunteer movement and the CSOs grows with the increasing distance from the “line of contact”, reaching 67% in zone 3 (which is also the national average, according data from the Razumkov Centre).17

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Among the state authorities, the patrol police was regarded as most open to dialogue with civil society (40% of respondents agreed) and the prosecutor’s office as least open (53%). The poor showing of the prosecutor’s office clearly flows from its abysmal record of failure to reform itself, politicisation and pervasive corruption. In terms of reforms at the national level, respondents saw most visible positive change in the AFU (48%) and National Police (42%), while at the municipal level the patrol police was seen as experiencing the most positive change (51%).

Only 7% of respondents agreed that the CSOs are sufficiently involved in the work of local authorities. Only 5% of respondents agreed that the CSOs are sufficiently involved in ensuring security, while fully 40% find it difficult to answer such a question. The latter finding is clearly indicative of insufficient visibility of the CSOs in providing for society’s security at the local and regional levels. The role of the CSOs in providing security is seen mainly as exercising public oversight of the activities and actions of the state authorities (45% of respondents), work with the youth and socially vulnerable groups (34%) and providing social, psychological and legal support to IDPs, ATO veterans and other vulnerable groups (24%). It is possible that the increasing focus of the CSOs on such issues—and the shift away from direct involvement in or support for security operations—reflects these expectations.

Almost half of respondents (49%) express readiness to contribute to ensuring security in their local community and municipality, while 50% would not be ready to do so. This serves to refute a widespread notion that society in eastern and south-eastern Ukraine is very passive and indifferent. This also constitutes a significant reservoir for a whole-of-society approach to security and, thus, local resilience. On average, individuals more ready to contribute to the security of their local community were male, younger, more educated, higher-earning, and self-identifying as ethnic Ukrainians. Those better aware of the activities of the local CSOs in the security sector and those perceiving security developments in the region as being caused by Russia’s aggression were also more likely to be willing to contribute to security, as were IDPs.

Those willing to contribute see their role predominantly as doing work assigned by the local authorities (35%), collecting charity donations for ATO participants and casualties (25%), assisting medical services (21%), organising leisure activities to ATO participants (19%), countering hostile propaganda in social media (18%) and providing information about separatist or terrorist activity in the area (18%). Joining volunteer (para)military units or entering military service via the mobilisation system were the least popular pursuits (7% and 6% respectively), but 14% expressed readiness to join volunteer firefighting units, while 12% saw themselves doing some work in the territorial defence structures. Interestingly, however, a total of 33% of respondents were ready to perform roles related to carrying and, if necessary, using weapons to protect their local community (e.g. policing, territorial defence, object protection, military and similar tasks). Willingness to follow local authorities’ directions serves as an indicator of the pivotal role that these authorities could and should play in a whole-of-society approach to security.
2.2 What is happening in social media?

Social media have become a pervasive channel for advancing various narratives and shaping perceptions of a society—be it in Ukraine or elsewhere. Trends, developments and behaviour in social media reveal a lot, about both the state of mind of various segments of society and the approaches employed by hostile powers to erode national resilience through the cognitive domain. Russia has become particularly adept at exploiting social media to advance its narratives, conduct disinformation operations, and polarise societies and undermine their trust in democratic institutions and processes. In conjunction with overt military action, clandestine operations, economic pressure and political influence activities, Ukraine also became a target of Moscow’s large-scale information warfare campaign.

As outlined in Section 4, Ukraine’s civil society mounted an impressive response to this campaign and utilised social media sources to expose Russia’s direct military role in the Donbas and Crimea. However, eastern and south-eastern Ukraine remained distinctly vulnerable to Russia’s hostile measures in the cognitive domain, including through the social media environment that shapes public opinion. As part of the ICDS-led research effort, the online behaviour and spread of ideologically-charged pro-Russia content among social media users in Kharkiv, Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts was analysed. This involved employing “big data” analysis instruments and techniques such as information search algorithms; data visualisation; applied linguistic tools; structural network analysis; elements of expert systems theory; trend and opinion analysis; neural networks and machine learning. Data was drawn from the three most popular social networks among users in the geographical catchment area—Vkontakte (VK), Odnoklassniki (OK) and Facebook—from profiles that share their posts publicly. In total, 590 million public posts, made by 2.8 million users from the three Oblasts between January and September 2017, were analysed.

Using keywords from a list of topics related to security, defence, conflict, war and politics and filtered following the research methodology, the research efforts focused on ideologically charged public posts that expressed pro-Russia and/or anti-Ukraine positions or that echoed narratives promoted by Russia. It was found that about 20% of all analysed public posts could be defined as ideologically charged, but that only 4.5% of the users could be characterised as ideologically active (i.e. public profiles that produced, distributed or accessed ideologically charged content). There were clear temporal correlations between real events and the intensity in circulation of ideological posts. Real events were used as pretexts for a massive and, for the most part, unnatural push of various topics into public debate, employing hyperbole and dramatic language. Pro-Kremlin rhetoric was most evident in discussing topics such as the Second World War, the Soviet Union, the ATO, Crimea and the war in the Donbas. Other popular ideologically charged themes included whitewashing the situation in present-day Russia and presenting an extremely negative coverage of the situation, especially various reforms, in Ukraine.

There was no major difference in the extent to which ideologically charged posts were circulating in the three Oblasts analysed. What made a huge difference was the official ban on the use of VK and OK (i.e. Russia-based and controlled) social media platforms in Ukraine, enacted by the Ukrainian authorities in May 2017. As a result, circulation of ideologically charged content among, and by, VK and OK users based in Kharkiv, Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts collapsed in volume and intensity. This can be explained by the lack of skills in employing virtual private networks (VPNs) by the vast majority of users in order to continue accessing and using the banned platforms. On the face of it, such an outcome provides cause
for the Ukrainian government to celebrate the state authorities’ success in preventing corrosive Russian propaganda from reaching its target audiences via a popular channel. On the other hand, in all likelihood this only means that Russia’s efforts will switch to other social media platforms, such as Facebook. The ban on Russia-based social media platforms in Ukraine seems to have worked, but its effect may not last.

To stay abreast of developments on social media and ensure it does not remain a source of vulnerability in terms of national resilience, Ukraine’s government would have to step up its efforts.

3. The Gaps

By means of focus groups and in-depth interviews conducted in Kramatorsk, Severodonetsk/Lysychansk, Mariupol, Sumy, Kharkiv and Kyiv, we investigated five major gaps between the state authorities and civil society—in values, objectives, capacities, motivation and communication. These gaps make it extremely difficult to achieve greater unity of effort, synergy and critical mass required to cope with hybrid threats to Ukraine’s national security. At the same time, it became clear that, to some extent, different parts of eastern Ukraine require different solutions and approaches to enhancing resilience that cannot and should not be imposed from the centre, i.e. the government in Kyiv. This means investing in the development of social and human capital as well as developing “grass roots” leadership and a web of collaboration between the authorities and the CSOs at the local and regional levels.

3.1 Values gap

The present-day values gap between the state and civil society in Ukraine is the result of, on the one hand, a radical break with the post-Soviet era by the most active parts of Ukrainian society that culminated in the events on Maidan Square in Kyiv in 2013–2014 and, on the other, of the slow pace of governance reforms in the country. Large segments of the administrative elite at the national and local levels, including in the security sector, are still composed of post-Soviet cadres, with the corresponding set of values and ethos: loyalty to the chain of command rather than to the nation; service to the interests of the institution and superiors rather than of the public; and preservation of institutional traditions and honour rather than adherence to human rights and democratic principles or the pursuit of social justice. (Indeed, prior to 2014, the notions of patriotism and human rights were completely out of circulation in the security establishment, and Russian citizens were even being appointed to key positions in the sector). Civil society activists, by contrast, are driven by genuine patriotism, concerns for national security and democratic constitutional order and a desire for stronger human rights and liberties, greater social justice, the material and psychological well-being of the citizenry and environmental sustainability.
Governance reforms have so far failed to spread a new public service ethos that would make state authorities more trusted and effective partners of the CSOs in strengthening national resilience and, thus, security. Examples such as a brand-new patrol police force, established from scratch, are strong indicators of how creating a new service ethos based on the values of a democratic society and the rule of law can become attractive to civil society—as a partner of the state authorities and as a recruitment pool. However, such examples are few and far between, at the national level but also at the local, where administrations are only slowly taking on a new generation of staff representing the values of civil society. Activists note that, by and large, most of the state apparatus engaged in rebranding itself and began to profess declaratory patriotism and an ethos of public service while remaining attached to the old Soviet practices and resisting deeper change. Reforms in the security sector were often too chaotic and shallow to deliver an effective framework of new service values, with image-oriented PR often being more important than actual substance and real practice.

The picture is further complicated by another gap—between civil society and the rest of the population. Ukraine’s general society can still be described as post-Soviet and exhibits traits such as a fear of change, inability to accept responsibility and carry the burden of decisions, a cynical world-view and the pursuit of self-realisation through power, status and wealth. The idealism and activism of civil society sometimes jar with these traits and thus irk wider society, which enables the political and administrative elites to reject calls for reform and change on the basis of “public opinion”. Thus, civil society, which already acts as a critical voice of opposition—particularly in local administrations—needs to direct more of its efforts towards promoting change not only in the public sector and government but also in society in general. Participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews noted, for instance, the need to reform school programmes and advance formal and informal youth education that promotes Ukrainian national identity and civic values as well as imparts the critical-thinking skills required for a resilient society.

3.2 Objectives gap

The values gap inevitably translates into the objectives gap: the state authorities and the CSOs diverge in how they frame their objectives in the domain of Ukraine’s national security and how those objectives emerge. The CSOs seek to contribute actively for the public good and to channel society’s enormous and diverse potential into countering threats to national security. They often perceive their purpose as substituting or complementing the state wherever and whenever the latter lacks the willpower or capacity to act. Their objectives often emerge “bottom-up”, from the pressure of circumstances and from the local initiative of activists. In the meantime, the state agencies—in a typical post-Soviet approach—often seek simply to maintain and enhance their authority, exercise greater...
top-down control and follow bureaucratic procedures for the sake of it. This top-down directive and authoritarian approach seems to echo general society’s preference for a strong, authoritative leader at the helm—a preference which appears to be growing despite general adoption of European integration as the nation’s course.

No issue of security-sector development captures this gap better than the ongoing dispute over the territorial defence model: from the civil society side, there is considerable pressure to adopt a model similar to the Baltic states (e.g. the Estonian Defence League), whereby territorial defence and security relies on a continuously functioning independent organisation staffed by volunteers. The authorities, however, prefer to maintain the model of mobilising members of society through military mobilisation centres, and only after a state of war has been declared. The latter ensures full control but is hardly able to harness society’s potential and knowledge of local security conditions, especially in circumstances that fall short of war.

It must be noted, however, that there is currently considerable fluidity in respect of the objectives. As Ukraine’s government sector undergoes various reforms—including decentralisation—the mandates and functions of various agencies and authorities are being constantly altered. This makes it difficult to define their own needs and meet the expectations of the CSOs. Incessant change—even if often superficial—distracts and makes public service inward-looking, preoccupied with internal processes and, thus, unresponsive. In a similar vein, the non-governmental sector has also been continuously evolving: as pointed out in Section 1, Ukrainian civil society’s focus has been shifting away from direct support to and involvement in security operations towards a variety of other niches. Some movements started formalising themselves as registered CSOs, while others remained mere informal networks of volunteers.

Perfect alignment and synergy of objectives is therefore difficult to achieve, especially with the values gap still separating civil society and state authorities. On the other hand, civil society’s great advantage is that it is nimble and highly adaptable, so it is possible for the CSOs to adjust or change their objectives as circumstances demand. This is not the case with the state authorities, which are constrained by their legal mandates and, frequently, political directives. However, it is difficult to draw upon these qualities while the Ukrainian state authorities often view the CSOs as competitors, at best, or as a disruptive and opposing force, perhaps even directed by political and business interest groups.

3.3 CAPACITY GAP

It goes without saying that the state and civil society are on different levels when it comes to knowledge, competence, skills and human and financial resources. In Ukraine, the paradox of 2014–2015 was that, due to civil society’s self-mobilisation to defend the country against Russia’s aggression and the disarray of the state security apparatus, the former generated and deployed greater capacity than the latter could muster at the time. Despite the absence of elaborate mechanisms, procedures and skills for planning, procuring and utilising resources necessary for defence and security, volunteer movement and various CSOs were able to deliver a decisive impact in the conflict with Russia and its proxies. Since then, the state has stepped up and regained its footing—including by means of absorbing some of the potential of the volunteer movement (e.g. integrating some volunteer units into the newly formed National Guard). However, it did so without any substantive rethinking of how the entire potential of civil society could be harnessed in the future and without a corresponding development of internal arrangements and mechanisms for cooperation with the CSOs.
Ukraine’s vibrant civil society possesses a wide variety of skills and a very diverse knowledge base relevant to many aspects of ensuring national security and defence. Furthermore, its members are willing and have strong motivation to invest their time, energy and other resources to support Ukraine’s national security. Equally important is that they demonstrate a remarkable ability to improvise, innovate and adapt—qualities critical in fast-evolving crisis situations with a high degree of uncertainty. As their work is now becoming more routine and less driven by crisis-response imperatives, the CSOs are hampered by a lack of individual and organisational skills and competences related to setting objectives, conducting planning, influencing policymaking, managing complex projects, communicating their work and cooperating with other organisations in a structured and systematic way. Professionalisation of the “third sector”—a necessary condition for improving its reputation in the eyes of the state authorities and for creating a stable basis for cooperation with them—will require sustained investment in enhancing such skills and competences.

The state often fares no better when it comes to the ability of public services to manage complex strategic long-term planning and then turn those plans into reality on the ground. The latter aspect is where the CSOs could step in to deliver the results, but the mechanisms for employing them to such ends are often missing or underdeveloped. Government organisations also frequently have little skill in or willingness to reach out to the CSOs for fresh ideas and then translate those ideas into policies, programmes and projects. Advisory and consultative forums often end up being pro forma gatherings, while the push of ideas from civil society gets entangled in formal correspondence without gaining much traction with the authorities. Furthermore, as the pace and nature of public-service reform continues to disappoint, younger employees or those more open to new ideas begin to leave the public service in droves, thus depriving it of already scarce high-quality human resources.

While the enhancement of capacities of both the CSOs and the state authorities is often addressed by support from international donors, not much is done to promote common approaches and synergies between them. Civil society has a diverse and motivated human resource base with a strong focus on making an impact on the ground; the state authorities possess financial resources and the ability to shape the legal and policy environment as well as a strategic vision for national security. However, the two sides are chronically unable to come together in a systematic and effective manner. There are no common platforms for sharing knowledge, cross-fertilisation of ideas, or building trust and developing skills and competences relevant both to the CSOs and state organisations.

Decentralisation reforms offer a unique opportunity to reconfigure relations between civil society and state authorities, including in national security and resilience, and particularly at the local and regional levels. As new territorial entities—Hromady—begin to emerge and the concept of Citizen Safety Centres gains traction, there will be a need to
harness civil society’s potential to compensate for the gaps in what the state can deliver. Collaborative approaches—between the local authorities themselves and between them and the CSOs—will need to become a “new normal” underpinning resilience-building. The question is whether all parties will be sufficiently motivated to bring about this “new normal”.

3.4 MOTIVATION GAP

Civil society activists included in the focus groups and in-depth interviews acknowledge a growing sense of fatigue and frustration in trying to engage with the state authorities. Unresponsive and unreceptive—even confrontational—state officials act as a force discouraging the CSOs from seeking further opportunities for cooperation. For the activists, acknowledgement of their role and contribution by the state and the general public is an important motivating factor propelling them forward. In many instances, this recognition does not materialise, which dampens the enthusiasm of those activists. Granted, external motivation is less important to civil society than the internal variety, whereby the desire to see a prosperous, secure and democratic Ukraine well integrated with Europe is a powerful motivating force to act against all odds. In this respect, the slow pace and inadequacy of many reforms, pervasive corruption and a lack of effective instruments to promote change within the state apparatus from outside frustrate civil society representatives the most.

The blame for the motivation gap should not be ascribed solely to the state authorities and a lack of motivation among public servants. As was pointed out earlier, if CSOs come across as unprofessional or are suspected of being proxies for political or business interests, the state authorities’ motivation to engage with them diminishes. In addition, material aspects sometimes supersede idealistic notions of contributing to Ukraine’s security or resilience: the growth of an institutionalised and more professional CSO “industry” is accompanied by the relentless pursuit of material (financial) rewards and grants by some of the CSOs at the expense of their primary mission and purpose (thereby earning them the derogatory moniker “grant-eaters”, or grantoyedy).

On the other hand, representatives of CSOs operating near the war zone or in environments where there are risks to volunteers’ health and lives point out that the absence of social, medical and financial guarantees in the event of injury, incapacitation or death make their involvement in dangerous functions alongside (or instead of) the state authorities less appealing. Those situations might not necessarily be related to security emergencies or disasters: in Ukraine’s east and south-east, in the areas next to the “line of contact”, merely supporting Ukraine’s government and
its security efforts puts civic activists at risk of physical attacks and even assassination by Russia’s agents or proxies. This persistent risk to and the absence of any “safety net” for these activists and their families provided by the state is one of the factors prompting many to abandon their cause or even to flee the region.

### 3.5 Communication Gap

Many of the issues discussed earlier feed into the final gap—that of communication between the state authorities and civil society. In the post-Soviet paradigm of officialdom, public servants are supposed to remain inaccessible to members of society, while modern European principles of public service call for openness, transparency and accessibility, as well as active and clear communication. The Ukrainian public service is still too attached to the post-Soviet style of interaction with society, thus diminishing the flow of information with national security stakeholders who are not part of the state apparatus. Official documents intended to communicate the state’s policy often represent a combination of poetic Ukrainian language and post-Soviet bureaucratic jargon that is incomprehensible to anyone outside the state authorities and does not provide good guidance for action. Combined with the confrontational and suspicious attitudes towards civic activists, this creates serious obstacles to developing cooperation and synergy. This was particularly noted in relation to local and regional administrations in the areas covered by our research.

The picture is brighter when it comes to communication between the security authorities and the CSOs and volunteer networks on the ground in the ATO zone. War conditions often force all those involved in managing the security situation to continuously exchange information and maintain contact. This was noted in the focus groups and during the in-depth interviews conducted in areas such as Mariupol, Severodonetsk/Lysychansk and Kramatorsk—contrary to, for instance, Kharkiv, Sumy or Kyiv. It was also pointed out that the security situation, maintenance of law and order, organisation of volunteers and functioning of local administrations were more successful where such constant communication and cooperation took place. Similarly, wherever the security and military authorities adopted an attitude of “do not disturb our work”, the security situation remained fragile and contained more opportunities for the adversary to exploit.

Even when communication between the CSOs, volunteers and the security authorities was successfully established, it did not rest on any formal and institutionalised procedural framework or clear communication protocols and established principles. Rather, it was the result of interpersonal relationships based on trust and confidence, often forged during the most intensive period of war (i.e. tested in extreme circumstances). Personnel rotation and staff turnover will eventually disrupt these informal communication networks. Furthermore, even near the “line of contact”, it was acknowledged that both the authorities and the CSOs had limited awareness of all the relevant actors and their capabilities and activities. In some cases, the focus groups conducted by the ICDS brought them into contact for the first time and spurred mutual familiarisation and relationship-building. This clearly points to the need for platforms (hubs) to build awareness and establish communication channels among all security and resilience stakeholders.
4. Sectoral Case Studies

In addition to the focus groups and in-depth interviews exploring the aforementioned gaps, we also carried out three sectoral case studies to capture the experience and perspectives of civil society activists and state officials working in specific areas of security. These were: fire prevention and response; support for state security, military and law-enforcement forces; and information operations. The results illustrated very well the gaps discussed earlier and provided valuable additional insights.

4.1 Fire prevention and response

Volunteer firefighting units are not a novelty in Ukraine. Some of the most widely known “best practice” examples—such as the Dertsen village team in western Ukraine—have existed since the mid-2000s. A number of informal initiatives that sprang up across the country illustrate the present-day reality in Ukraine—the inability of the state authorities to ensure an adequate level of service. It is estimated that to fulfil the function in accordance with the currently established response standards, the system requires at least 300,000 personnel nationwide, while the SESU has only 40,000 and is unable to recruit and retain more. This situation prompted civic activists to take responsibility for local fire safety and response into their own hands, and the state authorities eventually recognised that this was the only way forward in order to deal with the chronic lack of capacity. In 2017, the Strategy for the Reform of the SESU envisaged a significant expansion in the role of local communities in preventing and responding to fire emergencies. An important strand of this reform is the formation of volunteer fire response units, the training and certification of volunteer firefighters, and their inclusion in the state emergency response system.19 In the framework of the reform, pilot projects were launched in seven of Ukraine’s Oblasts—Ternopol, Vinnitsa, Poltava, Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk and Kyiv—building on the successful examples of state–civil society cooperation such as the “Storm” team established in Borispol (Kyiv Oblast) in 2014.

In a research interview, Viktor Popruga, the deputy head of a civil protection and safety training and methodology centre in Poltava Oblast, defined volunteers as people driven by a higher purpose of providing help in the hour of need, serving society by ensuring its daily safety and security and putting others’ lives, health and well-being above their own self-interest. Another interviewee, Vasily Kundryk, a former Ministry of the Interior (MOI) official who was in charge of SESU reform at the time of the interviews, distinguished two volunteer profiles—in urban and rural communities. The former typically come from the middle class—mostly entrepreneurs or individuals with flexible work schedules—and do not expect the state to be in an active leading role at all times and choose volunteering as a form of charitable work and a way of contributing to society’s safety. Rural volunteers step in because the state authorities are absent and because they have realised that self-organisation is the only way of protecting people and property in their community. They often expect only token monetary incentives from the local authorities to remain involved, and are usually driven, rather, by a strong sense

of belonging to a particular community. At the same time, professional firefighters are mostly motivated by such aspects as pay, career opportunities and job security. This highlights the motivation gap between civil society and the state authorities discussed earlier.

The ongoing reform is perhaps one of the few in the security sector to enjoy the strong support of state authorities at the national level, eager to create synergy between civil society and the SESU. However, judging from the opinions voiced by the professional firefighter teams at the local level, volunteer units are often perceived as the first line of response and a measure to contain an emergency situation until professional units are deployed and take over—that is, not as equal and capable partners trusted to handle all but the most extreme situations. As one interviewed activist pointed out, “unfortunately, the reason local SESU structures seek volunteers is that this is the objective set by the high command, but they themselves do not believe in the future viability of this approach in Ukraine”. There seems to be an inherent doubt within state structures that safety and security can be delegated to local communities, which translates into a gap in how the objectives of civil society and state authorities are perceived at the local level. On the other hand, the CSOs and volunteer units could assume additional roles such as raising fire protection awareness and education among the population and businesses, civil defence training and community outreach that the SESU is not always able or willing to perform or does not regard as a high priority.

Although the reforms address some pertinent issues—such as training and certification of volunteers and their legal status—they do not address a range of other important aspects. For instance, it remains unclear how volunteer units and the state authorities should interact in emergency situations, or how equipment procurement and support for the volunteer units should work. Responsibility for the latter seems to be pushed to the local communities, but it might be necessary for the SESU to provide a standard template and consulting services—something that the reforms do not yet attempt. Current communication formats—occasional meetings between the local administrative authorities, SESU units, MOI representatives and volunteer units—will also prove inadequate and unsustainable as the volunteer component grows in scale. Similarly, motivation and retention issues—both of the volunteers and of full-time professionals—are not considered by the reform architects. It is evident that the reform must go further in order fully to address the gaps discussed in Section 3.

According to the experts we interviewed, the feedback of quitting volunteers shows that excessive demands by the state for bureaucratisation of the CSOs’ work, regulatory barriers, the lack of social protections, and low interest in their activities by the state act as demotivating factors. On top of a host of individual factors such as low income, change of family circumstances or lack of time, Kundryk adds such systemic demotivating factors as the lack of interest—and sometimes even unfounded criticism—from the general public; distrust from professional full-time service members; insufficient resources for quality performance of duties; the monotony of voluntary work; and the absence of professional growth and development. The latter is emerging as a particular issue to be addressed in the future: having taken personal responsibility for the safety of the community, civic activists involved in volunteer fire prevention feel that this commitment has to be matched by the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Among such skills is the management of teamwork, human resources, public relations and similar aspects that help to maintain effective functioning and attractiveness of any CSO, not only in fire
prevention and response. However, after initial training courses offered by the SESU, there are no further programmes that would provide for such continuous development. Filling the motivation and capacity gaps will prove very difficult without designing programmes and platforms that allow serving volunteers to continue learning and to be proud of their abilities.

4.2 SUPPORT FOR SECURITY, MILITARY AND LAW-ENFORCEMENT FORCES

At the sharp end of civil society’s contribution to Ukraine’s security lies the involvement of activists and CSOs in supporting security, military and law-enforcement authorities in the country’s east and south-east—particularly in the municipalities and communities in or adjacent to the ATO zone. This involvement manifests itself in many forms—from providing open source intelligence (OSINT) and conducting information operations through organising and conducting patrols to ensuring the provision of supplies and maintaining equipment. Hardly any aspect of state security and defence efforts directed at stemming Russia’s direct and indirect forms of aggression did not have the imprint of civil society. However, after four years of war, as one civic activist noted, “volunteers are receding into the background and trying to refocus on other pursuits” as the effects of fatigue and lack of resources set in. A particularly acute problem is that, after a period of integrating parts of volunteer movements into official structures, the rest of civil society is struggling to find and cultivate effective forms of collaboration with both national (security, defence, law-enforcement) and local authorities. As there is no clear overall policy direction—either from Kyiv or from local authorities—the CSOs find it difficult to come up with initiatives that would make sense and produce a greater positive impact on the security situation.

Just as in the case of volunteer firefighter organisations presented above, there is also a sense that opportunities for self-development and increasing skills and competences outside the state sector are very limited. With authorities such as the National Guard or territorial military headquarters being ungenerous in providing infrastructure, materiel or advice in developing new skills among volunteers and CSOs, civil society has to fall back, yet again, on its own—often scarce—resources to maintain at least some skills relevant to security and defence. This scarcity of material and financial resources—which by now could be offset by state assistance—is beginning to turn volunteers away from the CSOs. As one activist put it, “there is no shortage of patriotic people who could be attracted to our organisation, but without greater financial support, especially from local government, we are not able to scale up our activities and thus create incentive to stay with us”.

Results-oriented civic activists are disillusioned with the empty talk and bureaucratic formalism of state and local officials that does not lead to any practical outcomes. There is also a high degree of passivity at the local level of the state apparatus if there are no instructions from above, i.e. Kyiv, or if cooperation with civil society is not included among the formal priorities of a particular state organisation.
Representatives of the authorities, on the other hand, see civil society—although driven by a genuine desire for positive change in local security conditions—as capable only of raising problems but not proposing specific solutions. This is considerably aggravated by the concerns of civic activists that some local municipal administrations in Ukraine’s east and south-east are not really interested in any cooperation primarily because they have been penetrated by pro-Russia sentiment and therefore tacitly or even overtly support Moscow’s rather than Kyiv’s political agenda.

A telling example of absent appreciation and support from the local authorities is the work of civic activist Olga Boyko in the town of Lysychansk, where she runs a production line of camouflage nets which are then supplied, free of charge, to frontline units of the AFU and to the border guard. In four years of operation, this activity has never been able to obtain a permanent facility, sometimes having to relocate every few weeks. Neither the local administration nor the military and security authorities have ever shown any interest in providing workspace or any other form of support for this work by volunteers, sustained only by private donations. Being also involved in countering Russia’s disinformation and other hostile influence activities, Boyko noted that, although initially the political situation in the area improved after liberation from the “separatist authorities”, pro-Russian forces have recently been in the ascendant. CSO activities become ever more complicated, and even dangerous, in an environment in which significant segments of the population and representatives of the municipal authorities support pro-Russia positions.

Developments in Kharkiv illustrate a loss of momentum in cooperation between civil society and the authorities further away from the ATO zone. Local activists complain that the coordination structures created by the local authorities proved a disappointment and give, as an example, the coordination group at the Kharkiv Oblast territorial defence headquarters. As one of the activists said, “after half a year of its operation, I realised this was more imitation than real work, and distanced myself from it”. The authorities became clearly stressed by the greater transparency and scrutiny that accompanies sharing information with CSOs. Once the latter had begun to question the wisdom of some items of expenditure for territorial defence, the coordination group was dissolved. The values gap between the state authorities and civil society translated into a communication gap that hampers their cooperation.

While some other coordination platforms, such as the Civic Headquarters of Kharkiv Defence, continue to function, the CSOs involved in supporting national security authorities often find it difficult to coordinate even among themselves—a phenomenon not confined to Kharkiv. The problem is caused by the fragmentation of the sector, competition between the organisations and ambitions of individual activists, as well as an inherent lack of trust in society. Some argue that such coordination is not really necessary, since fluid, non-hierarchical networks of security...
actors are more difficult to disrupt and thus are inherently more resilient. Others, however, argue that some degree of structured coordination is necessary—at least to collate all projects and initiatives in one database—but doubt that it should be provided by the local authorities or could emerge from civil society itself.

On the other hand, a municipality on the “line of contact”, Mariupol, provides examples of very successful cooperation between civil society and local authorities, particularly the local police force. One interviewed local activist brought up cases such as forming patrols to identify and prevent incursions by hostile groups from Russian-controlled territory seeking to destabilise the security situation in the city on specific occasions (e.g. significant days such as 9 May). Sensing a constant and acute security threat, civil society and the authorities—municipal, security and law enforcement—began to coalesce into collaborative networks capable of mounting a very effective response. Even here, however, there seems to be a somewhat limited understanding of who is, or could be, contributing to improving security conditions on the ground, and how. Closing capacity and communication gaps on the ground requires greater awareness and possibilities for CSOs to come together for mutual familiarisation and trust-building.

4.3 Information operations

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine revealed the unpreparedness of the Ukrainian state to counter it in the information domain. While this domain plays a crucial role in Russia’s hybrid warfare approach, Ukraine has scrambled to organise itself and mount a credible and effective response. The authorities began to modify the legislative basis regulating the information space, rushed to rebuild broadcasting and communication infrastructure destroyed in the war zone, and created new institutions such as the Ministry of Information Policy. However, as Dmytro Zolotukhin, Deputy Minister of Information Policy, noted in an interview for this research project, the state security apparatus was ill-equipped to deal with the fluidity and dynamism of the new security environment. Its operation was and remains based on the traditional understanding of security, where threats can be clearly identified and response measures prescribed by laws and policy directives. However, information warfare combines multiple domains—affecting political, economic, societal, cultural, diplomatic and military aspects of security, often in unpredictable ways—leaving much of the state security apparatus unsure how to act (and whether to act at all) within the confines of their organisational mandates and functions.

Thus, much of the actual response to Russia’s propaganda, disinformation and other forms of exploiting the information domain came from civil society. Within a short period—February–March 2014—thanks to the collective effort of media experts, journalists, software programmers, retired military officers, students and other activists, a host of online groups countering Russia’s hostile information operations sprang up. Among them were now well-known groups such as InformNapalm, StopFake.org, “Information Resistance”, FakeControl.org, Ukraine Crisis Media Centre, Euromaidan Press and “Mirotvorets”. They focused on identifying and rebutting falsehoods spread by Russia and its proxies, as well as providing verified facts and quality analysis of the ongoing war. Some of them remained confined to social media (e.g. Facebook) and Ukrainian audiences, while others—essentially non-profit news agencies—became trusted sources not only in Ukraine but also internationally, with content produced in many languages and with foreign volunteers contributing to its production. Organisations such as Ukraine Crisis Media Centre became hubs not only for volunteers’ work but also for the state authorities (e.g. the ATO command) for conducting strategic communication activities.
InformNapalm is one of the most visible CSOs in this field and provided an illuminating case to study. Dedicated to gathering, analysing and publishing OSINT on Russia’s military activities in Ukraine, Georgia and Syria, this organisation became an authoritative source of material on Moscow’s military modus operandi. Its website publishes 20–40 investigative articles every month and attracts around four million visitors a year from audiences in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, the US, Germany, France and Czechia. During periods of the most intensive fighting in the Donbas, the number of website visits could reach 100,000 per day. Thanks to the involvement of foreign volunteers, articles exposing Russia’s direct role in the war—including its responsibility for shooting down flight MH17 in July 2014—were translated into more than 20 languages.

These achievements and this reputation would have been impossible without the ability to mobilise volunteers and harness their investigative, analytical and communication skills. The professional backgrounds of contributing volunteers are very diverse: from software programmers and IT specialists to accountants and business managers; from film directors and designers to librarians and translators. As one of the founders of InformNapalm, Roman Burko, put it,

> for every one of us, InformNapalm is part of an active—and, in cases of operating in the occupied territories—dangerous hobby that is useful to society, but also something about which everyone has the sense of a higher purpose. We are united in the pursuit of truth and justice; we seek to make a positive impact on the course of history and make the world a safer and better place for future generations.

Many of the volunteers were spurred to action after going through individual or collective trauma caused by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. Influxes of new members are, however, offset by periods of outflow, as confrontation with Russia in the information space ebbs and flows.

Instead of the hierarchical, top-down approach inherent to bureaucratic state organisations, this CSO relies on bottom-up initiatives and ideas within the broad scope of its mission—“a beehive that buzzes on the same wavelength”, in Burko’s words. In contrast to the state authorities and, sometimes, even other, less agile CSOs, InformNapalm quickly and flexibly adapts to constantly changing circumstances and can therefore respond to them with great speed. On the one hand, it does not believe in its own ability to train members of other organisations in its approaches and techniques, as there is no formal doctrine. This is due partly to the lack of time to systematically capture and generalise its experience, and partly to the belief that the approach of each individual volunteer is personal and cannot be squeezed into doctrinal templates. On the other hand, as InformNapalm has emerged as a trendsetter in the field of information operations, even the state authorities occasionally attempt to imitate its initiatives.

Professing a lack of confidence that they would be able to change the state apparatus from within, InformNapalm sought to remain an independent organisation and avoided jumping on the bandwagon of integrating various volunteer movements into governmental security and defence structures. The organisation remains very open to cooperation with Ukrainian and foreign partners—governmental and non-governmental—yet it demonstrates that a lot can be achieved without relying on the state for resources and help. InformNapalm and other CSOs working in the field of information operations are evidence that a vibrant civil society can fill the void if the state is ineffective, act as a catalyst for change in the state, and inject substance into national security policy.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Civil society has made a considerable contribution to strengthening the national security of Ukraine over the last few years—both as a “first responder” to Russia’s aggression and as a source of resilience to hybrid threats that continue to emanate from Russia and to threaten Ukraine, especially in its east and south-east. However, further consolidation of its role and continued progress in applying a whole-of-society approach towards national resilience require bringing civil society and the state closer together at the national, regional and local levels. Our research shows that gaps in values, objectives, capacity, motivation and communication between them present significant obstacles. Without addressing those gaps—consciously and systematically—Ukraine risks losing momentum and seeing national resilience become yet another empty slogan fostering cynicism and disillusionment in society, rather than being a strategy to “immunise” it against hybrid threats. In the current and foreseeable geopolitical environment, there can only be one winner from such an outcome: Russia.

In essence, Ukraine must continue to pursue fundamental change in its political, governance, security and organisational cultures and also in its society, because continuous positive change and growth are the best antidotes to the negative and destructive agenda of Russia and its proxies.

The identified gaps must be closed through state governance and security sector reforms, bridged by mutual awareness and trust-building, and filled through joined-up efforts that develop and build upon the strengths of both the state and civil society. In essence, Ukraine must continue to pursue fundamental change in its political, governance, security and organisational cultures and also in its society, because continuous positive change and growth are the best antidotes to the negative and destructive agenda of Russia and its proxies. Below, we provide some recommendations—of both conceptual and practical nature—whose implementation would go a long way towards a more coherent, harmonious and effective relationship between the Ukrainian state and civil society, for the overall benefit of greater national resilience and security.

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

• At the national level, it is necessary to reach a broad consensus on the definition of national resilience, its role in national security and Ukraine’s vision for it. This consensus should be reflected in relevant national security policy documents such as the National Security Strategy. Achieving it should be a broad and inclusive effort, involving representatives of government, public, civil society and private-sector stakeholders. The National Security and Defence Council (NSDC) should take a lead in such an effort and ensure its successful outcomes.

• National security strategy and policy documents should clarify the role of CSOs in building national resilience and contributing to national security and defence. Laws (e.g. the new Law on the National Security of Ukraine), other legislation and regulations should provide a more comprehensive, transparent and clear framework for their relationship with the state as well as cooperation and financing mechanisms in national security and defence. Ukraine’s Strategy for the Development of Civil Society should include measures aimed at the CSOs involved in national security and defence as a separate—and special—category.

• To maintain, at the legislative level, the continuous focus on and attention to national resilience development and civil society’s contribution to it, the Verkhovna Rada’s National Defence Committee should
consider establishing a subcommittee on national resilience and civil society. The NSDC, in the meantime, should create a permanent platform—an annual forum on national resilience—for engaging security and defence CSOs as well as local communities (Hromady) in a regular dialogue, exchange of knowledge, trust-building and development of common understanding and vision.

- To increase mutual awareness between the government sector and CSOs in the security and defence sector, a dedicated training and education course similar to Estonia’s Higher National Defence Course should be created under NSDC auspices. This course could help to manage CSOs’ expectations regarding “the art of the possible” when interacting with state authorities within the existing administrative and legislative framework; it would also help to foster greater appreciation among the representatives of the state administration with regard to the added value of cooperation with CSOs in strengthening national resilience.

- To continuously appraise the state of play in the development of civil society and national resilience, the government should commission from leading research organisations a regular voluntarism and civil society monitor. This should include systematic assessment of civil society’s contribution to security and defence—sector by sector—as well as of the performance of state policies and authorities in relation to the CSOs and volunteer movement at different levels (national, regional, local). Presentations and discussion by this monitor could become one of the highlights of the annual national resilience forum recommended above.

- Once a clear vision for national resilience and the role of CSOs is in place, the government—particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—should communicate this to foreign partners who support the development of Ukraine’s civil society in order to guide and encourage them to include such CSOs in their support programmes. Support for CSOs working to strengthen national security should be clearly understood by those partners as a priority for Ukraine.

AT THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

- Ukraine’s decentralisation reforms should include, by design and from the outset, measures required to build national resilience through the involvement of security and defence CSOs at the regional and local levels. However, these measures should avoid a “one size fits all” approach. Instead, they should only provide a generic template to guide and encourage local and regional authorities in designing their own solutions and approaches which best reflect local realities and specifics. This will help to create the requisite variety in the overall national security system, which will make it more resilient and more difficult for an adversary to bring down by employing the same means and methods across the entire territory of Ukraine.

- National authorities—particularly the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff of the AFU, but also the MOI—should reconsider the territorial defence and security organisation model. A narrow focus by territorial mobilisation centres (voeynnkomaty) on mobilising individual reservists in wartime is insufficient to involve all citizens and CSOs in times of crisis. There should be an additional layer of territorial security and defence organisation—along the lines of the Estonian Defence League, for instance—which provides a framework for voluntary participation, both in military and non-military aspects of security and resilience-building. Territorial defence, security and administrative structures should be geographically better aligned.

- Communities should receive support and work to enable their Citizen Safety Centres to become small coordination hubs for CSOs’ activities in crisis situations, including by coordinating support to the general population and interaction with security and defence authorities operating in the municipal area as well as organising and directing volunteers. Working
arrangements and protocols, as well as the infrastructure of such centres, should be designed not only to cope with the capacity surge but also to plug in the CSOs that work in the fields but are not routinely included in the daily operation of the Citizen Safety Centres (e.g. information operations, cyber security, OSINT). Local authorities should possess continuously updated lists of CSOs working on various aspects of resilience in a particular area and be able to direct individual volunteers to join those CSOs.

- As CSOs frequently lack physical space to establish themselves, grow their operations and come together for discussions—to maintain common situational awareness, raise issues, coordinate or combine activities—individual communities, or their coalitions, should consider establishing such spaces for them. Mimicking the concept from the entrepreneurship promotion field (“start-up incubators”), these could be called “national resilience incubators” and could include support services for CSOs such as legal advice, accounting and IT, as well as various competence-enhancement courses by visiting experts. Bringing many diverse and growing CSOs under one roof would facilitate their operations, networking and capacity growth. Support from national government, regional authorities and foreign donors would be necessary to enable this concept in practice.

- Communities, regional authorities and security and safety agencies should also consider adopting a particular practice of military organisations: imitating the concept of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), they should establish positions of civil society-security cooperation officers in their administrations, to act as points of contact and go-betweens for various CSOs and the state authorities. It would be important to develop a separate set of rules and procedures for such officials in order to provide for the greater openness and flexibility required in working with the CSOs. (Their ethos should be built around the engagement of civil society, not bureaucratic “gatekeeping”.) These officers could also be responsible for bringing CSO-led education, training and awareness-raising on national resilience to education programmes for the general population (e.g. at schools and/or through informal learning programmes, seminars and youth camps).

**ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

- As various aspects of national resilience are becoming intertwined with the impact of social media, the government of Ukraine must become more methodical and evidence-driven in social media exploitation. The government must budget for systematic monitoring and analysis of social media and develop a deeper understanding of trends in it that could affect national security. It should also work to improve the state’s competence in using this knowledge in communication strategies and high-level activities, particularly in promoting awareness of and critical debate about security sector reforms. The Ministry of Information Policy should take a lead in this effort.

- The government should become more adept at leveraging the flexibility and agility of CSOs—as well as trust in them shown by the general public to improve society’s cognitive resilience. The CSOs—not only individual citizens, as currently allowed by law—should become involved in implementing national policies for cognitive resilience-building. CSOs need to focus not only on “scouting” social media space to detect and debunk disinformation, but also on raising the general public’s awareness of how social media are exploited by hostile actors to undermine national resilience and in promoting responsible use of social media platforms.

**IN ADDRESSING THE SPECIFIC GAPS**

- As the values gap results primarily from the obsolete, post-Soviet organisational culture in state structures, fundamental reform of state administration at all levels is a prerequisite for further substantive progress. Imparting strong civic democratic values through the education of the current
and future leadership and personnel in security and defence structures is of key importance. This is a very long-term undertaking, but some measures could be instituted in the shorter term. Civic education initiatives—for instance, summer schools under the auspices of the NSDC—could be conducted, targeting a specially selected cohort of personnel from security and defence (national as well as territorial) structures. The career paths of such personnel could also include—and reward—secondments to CSOs to enhance qualifications and gain experience of a different organisational ethos.

- Establishing the role of the CSOs in security and defence through formal legal and policy instruments and then empowering and resourcing them to deliver on that role through a transparent and objective framework of grant allocation would go a long way to address the objectives gap, as well as the capacity gap pertaining to the government’s inability to deliver some services. However, one of the principle means in this regard is also to ensure that political and commercial interests do not infiltrate and taint the CSOs. It might be necessary to institute a requirement for an annual declaration of the political and commercial interests of their founders, stakeholders and managers.

- The motivation gap should be addressed by increasing visibility and recognition—by both the state and the general public—of CSOs’ activities and their contribution to national resilience. An important element of this could be awareness-raising about CSOs through the public relations and communication activities of communities and regional administrations. Another—more symbolic—element could be recognition of work by CSOs at Volunteer Day events and the annual national resilience forum. It is also important that the CSOs receive effective and substantive feedback from state, regional and local authorities—not just symbolic recognition—and are included in such activities as training and exercises run by authorities at different levels (especially by the communities and their Citizen Safety Centres). Last but not least, a package of social guarantees and protections (e.g. in the event of accidents and injuries) for members of CSOs supporting security and defence authorities is needed to ensure that “no one is left behind” in difficult circumstances.

- To address capacity issues, national “umbrella” associations (e.g. in law enforcement, OSINT, cyber security, counter-disinformation, rescue and safety, psychological and social support services) should be formed as “communities of practice” that develop a common doctrine, provide training, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practice and enable peer-to-peer support. To increase trust by the state authorities in the competence of CSOs and their ability to deliver results, such associations should consider running programmes that evaluate and certify the competence and capability of individual CSOs. Involvement of trusted foreign partners—in forming such “communities of practice”, training their coordinators and setting up the certification programmes—would be necessary to overcome barriers resulting from high levels of mistrust currently afflicting even relations between various CSOs.

- Closing the communication gap requires platforms that regularly (at least monthly) bring together security and defence stakeholders—representatives of state authorities, local communities, CSOs, private-sector organisations and even private individuals (volunteers, activists), as well as foreign partners if necessary (the existing “Bastion” network being a good model). Depending on the security circumstances of a particular locality, either the communities and regional administrations or the territorial defence/security headquarters, as well as the “national resilience incubators” recommended above, could serve as organising vehicles and hosts of such platforms. Civil society-security cooperation officers, as recommended above, could play an important role in facilitating routine communication as well as organising regular meetings.


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