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**UKRAINE IN
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

Kyiv's Foreign Affairs and the
International Relations of the
Post-Communist Region

With a foreword by
Pavlo Klimkin and Andreas Umland

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Preface

Editing a book is always challenging. With this volume, we tried to bring together authors from Ukraine's neighborhood, which has been especially ambitious. I believe that with these contributions, a better understanding of the region and its countries' policies in relation to Ukraine has been achieved. I am well aware of the fact that certain information might already be outdated by the time this book is published. The situation in the shared neighborhood is very volatile and will unfortunately remain so for the foreseeable future. The unprovoked attack of the Russian Federation on Ukraine on February 24, 2022 was and remains a shock for all of us. The idea for this publication derived from an international hybrid conference titled "Ukraine in East-Central Europe: Kyiv's Bilateral Relations and Prospects of Multilateralism in the Region", which was held in Vienna at the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) in September 2020. I would like to thank Andreas Umland for this initiative and am grateful for the support of the Paneuropa-Union, as well as the Ukrainian Institute for the Future, who co-organized this conference.

Bringing experts from the region together was already back then a demanding task, and I am very thankful that many of them have also contributed to this book. Among them are Agnieszka Legucka, who writes together with Daniel Szeligowski about Polish-Ukrainian relations, which have developed intensively in recent years. Many platforms for cooperation exist and also include other neighboring countries, such as the Lublin Triangle (Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine), the "Chişinău Format" (Poland, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine) born in 2021, among others.

Rusif Huseynov, together with Mahammad Mammadov, looks at one of Ukraine's largest trading partners: Azerbaijan has been a large buyer of Ukrainian military supplies and Ukraine supports Azerbaijan's territorial sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh, while Azerbaijan supports Ukraine's territorial integrity vis-à-vis its separatist regions. After 2014, the two countries have had shared concerns about Russia and its support for separatism. Moreover,

Azerbaijan seeks to rejuvenate GUAM and include Poland and Turkey.

Another participant of the conference evaluates the positive Czech-Ukrainian relations. David Stulík argues that Czechia will push for a differentiation in the EaP in favor of the Association Trio (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) during its EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2022.

The neighboring EU Member State, Austria, is tackled by Martin Malek, who has worked with me on this publication but ultimately decided not to function as co-editor. In his article, he believes that Austrian-Ukrainian relations are better viewed through the triangular Austria-Ukraine-Russia relations, as Russia has such a great influence on Austria's policy vis-à-vis Ukraine. At the time the article was written, no help for Ukraine that is detrimental to Russia was to be expected from Vienna.

The importance of the Russian Federation for any discussion is also reflected in the first article of this book. Igor Gretskiy says "the Kremlin constantly emphasizes its continuity with the Soviet Union, and interprets Ukraine's break with Russia as temporary, laying on Kyiv full responsibility for the troubled bilateral relations. President Putin has repeatedly reiterated that Ukraine's true sovereignty is possible only in partnership with Russia."

This is to a certain extent also applicable to Belarus and reflected by Aliaksei Kazharski, Tatsiana Kulakevich, and Katsiaryna Lozka: After independence, Ukraine began a process of contesting its Soviet past and reconceptualizing its own position in Europe. In Belarus, on the other hand, this same process stopped after Aliaksandr Lukashenka came to power in 1994.

Nika Chitadze looks at another country of the former Soviet Union that has been in a violent conflict with the Kremlin. Both Ukraine and Georgia have managed to sign an Association Agreement with the EU and establish Ukraine-NATO, Georgia-NATO Commissions, and U.S.-Ukraine and U.S.-Georgia Charters for strategic partnership. But despite the progress, he discusses in his contribution that there are important challenges which need to be overcome before Ukraine and Georgia can progress further.

We aimed to complete the chapter on the South Caucasus with the relations between Ukraine and Armenia, but especially with such a project, unplanned developments are part of the process. Ultimately and unfortunately, we were not able to include the contribution into the final manuscript.

Sergiu Musteața brings a unique perspective to the discussion from Moldova and completes the countries of the Eastern Partnership: Ukrainian history school textbooks emphasize the ethno-nation and often exclude minorities from their teaching. History textbooks in Ukrainian schools give a mythologized version of the Ukrainian nation's origin and mix up the notions of ethnicity and nation, while references to neighboring countries included in the textbooks are not significant and mostly relate to wars and conflicts.

Further perspectives from EU Member States are also provided. Iryna Bratko and Inna Voroshylova write: "Among the promising mechanisms of cooperation between Ukraine and Bulgaria, it is worth highlighting municipal diplomacy, which provides an opportunity for mutually beneficial projects, as well as regional cooperation within the Black Sea and Danube region, as they have significant, but not yet fully realized potential."

István Gyarmati describes the diplomatic point of view from Hungary: The previous approaches to conflict resolution in Ukraine have sought to "put an end to bloodshed", which has involved granting concessions to the other side and, conversely, resulted in the prolongation of these territorial conflicts. The distinction between victim and aggressor needs to be taken into account during conflict resolution. They need to be resolved before any long-term Ukraine-wide democratic and rule-of-law reforms can be implemented.

From the neighboring country, Juraj Marušiak deals with the relations between Ukraine and Slovakia and characterizes them as "often complicated and conflicting processes after the fall of communism and forming a political and national state. At the same time, both countries are trying to identify their position on the international stage."

The ongoing debate about sanctions, and especially the controversial role that has gained momentum regarding Germany at

the beginning of 2022, has brought another division into the foreign policy capacities of the EU. Andre Härtel argues that the EU's common approach to Russia is unsustainable. Germany's surprising leadership role during the crisis can be understood by personal, learning-based and normative factors, while Italy and Austria, in comparison, have not changed their own national policy toward Russia. They have given "critical consent" to EU sanctions based on their firm but increasingly fragile commitment to the European project.

A format of regional cooperation gaining more momentum recently is the so-called Intermarium. Kostiantyn Fedorenko, Vasile Rotaru, and Andreas Umland argue that a non-NATO security alliance between East European NATO members and GUAM members could provide an alternative security deterrent for Russia while not jeopardizing NATO. Similar to the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance, it would be flexible and obligations would be interpreted differently by each country. Such alliances include the Bucharest 9 and Trimarium already – just extended to the Association Trio or GUAM.

Last but not least, Ostap Kushnir also deals with the idealism and ambiguity of the Intermarium and provides a historical and contemporary geopolitical perspective. He has also edited a book with Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2019 called "The Intermarium as the Polish-Ukrainian Linchpin of Baltic-Black Sea Cooperation".

The book concludes with Federica Mangiameli, who discusses together with me the prospect of Ukrainian EU membership, which represents a great challenge for the EU. Brussels is caught up in the delicate process of supporting Ukraine's path towards Europe, the resolution of its internal conflict, and keeping its relations with the Kremlin open. Of course, here especially the current developments with Ukraine and Moldova becoming candidates for EU accession have changed the trajectory. We nevertheless decided not to change the content, as it would have also been unfair to the other authors, who almost certainly would have evaluated some aspects differently.

In their foreword, Pavlo Klimkin and Andreas Umland deal with the notion of Central Europe (as opposed to “Middle Europe”) and postulate that it is changing and moving eastward to encompass all the peoples who were dominated and colonized by the great empires of Austria, Germany, Russia, and the Ottomans. By broadening the meaning of “Central Europe”, even to include the South Caucasus, the authors are trying to provide an inclusive, post-colonial and political meaning: all the smaller countries between Russia and Germany and Austria, who can (and should) be more integrated.

This was also more or less the framework for the above-mentioned conference. Back then, the ongoing pandemic situation made it impossible for everyone to be physically present in Vienna. At IDM, as well as other institutions, that meant rapidly adapting to the new normal. While there have been several new formats established, this was the first conference for us to be held in a hybrid setting, streaming live for more than five hours. To be perfectly honest, it was not clear if this would be (technically) possible until it was implemented. That it ultimately could be done successfully was only possible due to the hard work of several people behind the screen and I would also like to thank them. With the lessons learned, it has been repeated in various settings since.

I am also very grateful to Oksana Ukrainets, who took the picture on the cover of this volume during the Euromaidan protests in 2014 and gave me permission to use it. Anton Lisnychenko recommended her to me and is a very dear friend.

Last but not least, I owe my gratitude to Jack Gill, who has been proofreading the articles and tremendously supported the compilation of the final manuscript. Without his continued efforts, this book would not have been ready to be published in this still relatively short period of time. I could not have found a better colleague to work together with, as he is not only experienced in editing but also has the necessary knowledge about the wider European neighborhood covered in this volume. In spite of the hardships that inevitably come with such an endeavor, the extended collaboration required to prepare this book had a welcome side-effect, namely the continuation of our cooperation beyond the book.

There are many things I have learned in the process, and one thing that was confirmed: I can always rely on Iris Rehklau, who has immensely supported me in finalizing the manuscript.

Despite all the circumstances, I hope that this book will nevertheless contribute to further regional cooperation!

Sebastian Schäffer
Vienna, October 2022