



PARTICIPANT NOTES

Unofficial – For participant use only

Increased hybrid threats from state and non-state actors seeking to rewrite international rules and norms have created a need for interregional collaboration on security challenges. Despite the lack of a shared definition for the term “hybrid threats,” the results of these conventional and nonconventional attacks below the threshold of conflict have global implications. Malign actors utilizing these tactics intend to disrupt national governments to support their own agendas. By staying below the threshold of conflict, malign actors undermine conventional frameworks, making it more difficult for target governments to identify threats and formulate appropriate responses. Due to the ubiquitous nature of these hybrid threats, the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI APCSS) and the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies (GCMC) convened a workshop to foster increased collaboration among like-minded partners focused on strengthening collective, whole-of-society resilience to hybrid threats. The workshop achieved the following outcomes:

- Increased participant understanding of the global and interconnected nature of hybrid threats;
- Exchanged lessons learned from Europe and Indo-Pacific regions on building resilience;
- Identified key areas for expanded interregional cooperation on comprehensive resilience;
- Created a framework to guide follow-on collaboration by participant countries based on key areas identified during the workshop (See attachment one).

The event included 31 participants from the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and North America regions, including government, think tank, and research organizations.

These notes are provided to the workshop participants for their use only and are not for publication or general distribution—please respect and protect the non-attribution policy. When combined with the other materials provided before, during, and after the workshop, they summarize key themes and discussion points. All supporting materials and attachments are accessible at <https://dkiapcss.edu/resilience>.

Polling. DKI APCSS used anonymous, non-scientific, electronic polling to generate an initial discussion about malign influence and countering malign influence. In the initial polling, participants identified the top threats as cyber intrusions, disinformation, economic coercion, and political interference. When broken down by sub-region, Indo-Pacific participants viewed cyber intrusions as the most significant threat from a list of options, while European participants identified disinformation as the most significant threat from the same list of options. Participants identified a lack of capability or resources, domestic politics, and lack of awareness as top inhibitors to countering malign influence. Participants also noted the importance of political will

in countering malign influence. DKI APCSS used a second polling session on day two to generate an initial list of priority topics related to resilience to support day three outcomes.

Shared Security Challenges.

Workshop participants spent the first day comparing malign influence and hybrid threats in Europe and the Indo-Pacific. Panelists discussed regional approaches to countering malign influence, including case studies from Ukraine and Taiwan (presentations are posted on the website). Participants also discussed economic based threats to defense priorities.

The discussion found that malign actors generally share a whole-of-government “tool kit” with the ability to mobilize elements of their societies to conduct malign influence activities; however, the application of these tools differs between actors due to their respective cultures and geographies. Commonly used tools include: banning imports, stopping exports, conducting cyber-attacks and intrusions, influencing through media, perpetuating information/disinformation, elite capture to include buying off local officials, leveraging intelligence and security services to conduct clandestine and covert activities, eroding domestic and international trust in government, and attempting to influence, repress/oppress, or cause divisiveness within civil society to include the targeting of immigrant and refugee communities. These activities are not only occurring at the national level, but at the sub-national level, which may be more vulnerable to malign influence effects. Malign actors do not respect international laws and agreements and in some cases are committing war crimes and atrocities.

Participants identified a central theme across both regions (and noted that it also applies to other regions and sub-regions such as Africa, the Pacific Islands, and the Arctic that were not represented at this workshop): authoritarian regimes use malign influence activities to undermine democracies in pursuit of the regimes’ near-term and long-term strategic objectives.

However, target countries struggle to respond effectively to malign influence and hybrid threats because the activities are hard to attribute. Identifying the malign actor and understanding their intentions is difficult for all countries. Additionally, responses are hampered by bureaucratic bottlenecks and stovepipes between relevant ministries, agencies, the business community, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Building Resilience.

On the second day, participants exchanged best practices toward strengthening whole-of-society resilience with panels on resisting economic coercion, protecting critical infrastructure, protecting supply chains, improving civil preparedness and continuation of essential services, countering misinformation/disinformation, and resilience in Ukraine.

The discussion highlighted crucial lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters mirror threats posed by malign actors: pervasive misinformation/disinformation, supply chain disruptions, and eroded trust in government. Participants agreed that COVID-19 case studies on strengthening resilience are useful since countries can use these case studies to find common ground for discussion.

The ability of some countries to incorporate whole-of-society resilience into their national security frameworks is nascent, while others are more advanced. Since countries are at different levels regarding resilience, multilaterals may provide venues for partners to engage at the level they are comfortable with. Indo-Pacific partners could gain insight into resilience best-practices from European organizations like the European Union, NATO, the Hybrid Center-of-Excellence, and other existing structures. Roadblocks to building resilience include a lack of common definitions, lack of popular will, and the absence of metrics with which to measure success.

A key theme during discussions included that while malign actors leverage the private sector effectively to target vulnerable countries, free-market economies struggle to engage the private sector on considerations of geopolitical strategic risk. More effort should be made to communicate and balance national security risks and diplomatic effects when working with private-industry and economic ministries to counter malign economic influence. A collective economic security organization, akin to an economic NATO, could be a potential area for increased exploration.

In addition, democratic societies are in a continuous struggle to balance freedoms, liberties, and protection of rights with security laws and regulations. This creates numerous areas of tension between individuals, communities, government and non-government institutions, the international community, and the business community. Cross communication and honesty are crucial to building trust, increasing transparency and avoiding panic in the population. Unity of the government and society are critical to maintaining whole-of-society resilience. As part of this effort, understanding women's roles in civil society, engaging with indigenous and minority communities, and ensuring that citizens have a personal stake in their own preparedness is critical.

The Ukraine experience highlighted that resilience should be a continuously active mindset; governments should be investing now in resilience and civil preparedness and not waiting for crisis to begin. Democratic countries are continually countering threats rather than taking proactive measures that put malign actors on the defensive. A strong civil society response in Ukraine was instrumental in impeding Russia's invasion. Ukraine utilizes a proactive approach which has been a critical component to their successes thus far—further discussion is required on the interplay between resilience and resistance.

Finally, participants emphasized that a decentralized or “bottom-up” approach to resiliency is critical to success: coordination with private industry, sub-national governments, civic organizations, civil defense volunteer organizations, and traditional NGOs are critical for building whole-of-society resilience. The term “whole-of-society” implies not all solutions require government leadership or involvement.

Framework for Cooperation (See attachment one)

On day three, participants developed a framework for cooperation around three priority areas:

- Strengthening economic resilience through diverse supply chains, public-private partnerships, protecting critical infrastructure, and considering procurement risks

- Ensuring a strong civil society through strengthening institutions (media, universities/academia, think tanks), strengthening NGOs, and encouraging volunteerism
- Strengthening political resilience through training and education, maintaining essential services, recognizing elite capture, and countering political interference (domestic/foreign)

Participants re-emphasized the importance of including the private sector, NGOs, civil society organizations, and other allies and partners in Europe, the Indo-Pacific, as well as other regions in any future discussion on these key areas. Continuously improving knowledge on the threats and broadly disseminating lessons learned are integral to this framework and keys to success. Potential obstacles to future collective resilience efforts include cultural and historical diversity/differences among nations and regions, non-standardized approaches to resiliency, unequal resources, and the potential lack of political will for change.

Way Ahead (See attachment one).

The workshop concluded with the participants proposing future engagements on resilience starting with building a “community of interest” (COI) to foster collaboration after the conclusion of the workshop. Participants agreed to use the COI for future coordination, sharing of best practices, and to help build a “good guy playbook” for countering malign influence. From the COI, organic subgroups will convene to address specific, prioritized resilience topics. These subgroups will bring in all relevant stakeholders, including civil-society, private industry, and NGOs, as appropriate. COI members agreed to address resilience topics through a mix of existing and/or new workshops, courses, papers, training and education, exercises, and diplomatic engagements. The COI will also continue to share information toward the development of a common understanding of the interregional threat environment.