

PATHWAYS TO PEACE IN UKRAINE

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After hundreds of years of political union with Russia and 23 years of independence, the recent breakdown of Russo-Ukrainian relations has escalated into a geopolitical crisis that has created a rift within Ukrainian society. Local communities have been destroyed and several thousand have been killed. The conflict has created more than 1.5 million displaced families and individuals. The scope of the social, cultural and psychological consequences is impossible to comprehend. Particularly those regions of Ukraine with large Russian-speaking populations and close ties to Russia have been under pressure to choose sides and have become the centre of armed conflict. The challenge to be addressed is how to make sense of what is happening in Ukraine – a fragile nation experiencing a dynamic context of change and transition. What prospect pathways to peace in Ukraine?

Our inaugural SCISA seminar brought together academics, diplomats and civil society to discuss conflict drivers and assess key issues influencing conflict resolution in Ukraine. In discussion, it became quite apparent that there is no single cause for the conflict, instead numerous factors have created the situation that exists today in Russian and Ukrainian relations. Our seminar drew attention to the importance of Track 2 diplomacy as it allows for open dialogue, which is removed from complex political constraints.

Towards the end of the day, our deliberations were focused through brainstorming in small groups. The following provides an outline of our reflections on pathways to peace in Ukraine. There are obviously many issues not covered in depth or in deed at all. However, we submit these initial considerations as a contribution towards further formal and informal discussions on peace-building in Ukraine.

Pathways to Peace: Principles emerging from SCISA Seminar

1. Pursue multi-cultural, multi-national policies that include interested neighbouring countries.

- Continue and develop negotiations that include all interested neighbouring countries, as well as international actors such as the UN and EU.
- Create a group of empathetic international NGOs with the capacity to function as a non-biased, objective mediator.
- Build trust within Ukraine on a local and national level.
- Advisory support should be provided to facilitate local dialogue and encourage Ukrainian local authorities to institutionalise multi-stakeholder dialogue as part of an inclusive decision-making approach on community planning in Ukraine.
- Ukrainian Parliamentarians and local government elected members should be provided with the opportunity to learn more about dialogue as a tool to merge efficient and better decision making with confidence building.
- Commission key individuals who have connections in Ukraine, who are familiar with Western democratic processes and considerations, to champion outlined pathways to peace within their local communities.

2. Research and critically reflect on successful peacebuilding measures taken in other countries to address conflict and disputes. Consider how these may be implemented in Ukraine.

- Explore current models in other countries and contexts adopting Truth Commission processes and procedures.
- Reflect on the learning from other national contexts about social and political settlements and connectedness in post conflict contexts.
- Start independent and objective investigation of war crimes and atrocities committed in Ukraine.
- Sharpen the focus of dialogue by developing and enabling neutral platforms to foster and increase dialogue between civil society and politicians. Ensure that platforms are facilitated and led by actors who are not tarnished by political activity or corrupt allegations.

3. Regional development reform

- Prioritise decentralisation and recognition of political structures operating across Ukraine
- The pursuit of conflict sensitive reforms should be supported in various sectors in Ukraine, e.g. governance, administrative reform etc. in such a way that existing divisions are not reinforced and new divisions are now create
- Explore nations and contexts adopting federal structures and their effectiveness
- Further reform measures and legislature about election and democratic processes
- Build national solutions from local initiatives: Recognising that national solutions are highly complex, citizens of the country should be supported in designing and implementing local programmes which adopt a tolerant, inclusive, multicultural and transparently accountable approach to building the capacity of individuals and institutions. A patchwork quilt of such local initiatives could help build a sustainable future at the national and regional level.

4. Diversification of the media and freedom of speech

- Encourage further anti-corruption reform
- Extension and implementation of Human Rights legislation and practice
- Invest in the development of active citizenship and unbiased educational programmes.

5. Promote economic and social inclusion

- Facilitate humanitarian aid and post conflict relief operations.
- Urge the international community to address the significant funding gap to help Ukraine prosper and not merely survive.
- Identify and reflect on landscapes of inequality and the impact of current policies and practices.
- Reflect on ways to promote economic and social inclusion.
- Develop national income support structures and enhance pension reform.
- Improve processes and procedures regarding public procurement and devise transparent mechanisms for state expenditure.

This report is also available via www.unhscotland.org.uk/scottish-centre-for-international-affairs/peace-and-reconciliation-series/