



Europe's External Action and the Dual Challenges  
of Limited Statehood and Contested Orders

# D7.12 Virtual Regional Forum East D7.13 Virtual Regional Forum South

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EU-LISTCO's regional forums, namely the *Regional Forum East* and the *Regional Forum South* took place on September 22-23 and October 21-22, 2020, respectively. Each forum was split into two sessions: a public 60-minutes panel at 4:00 p.m. CEST on the first day and a private 90-minute roundtable at 11:30 a.m. on the second day. They were hosted virtually by the Carnegie Europe Foundation (hereinafter referred to as Carnegie). In addition to the working sessions, after each forum the Carnegie Europe Foundation released a short video interview to a key regional player on the topics of societal resilience and human security. The interviews were conducted by Judy Dempsey.

The goal of the regional forums was to take stock of societies in Europe's East and South, discussing the key problems dominating the respective agendas and the role the European Union (EU) could have in supporting positive change across these regions. Societal resilience remained the primary focus of the Forum's conversations. Specific attention was devoted to local approaches to human security, accounting for the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on local governments and populations. By convening separate public and private events it was possible to engage in public outreach as well as engage in more targeted discussions with local policymakers.

Panellists debated the multiplicity of risks in Europe's Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods from Belarus to Lebanon, and acknowledged the increased focus on human security across Europe's Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the internal crises hindering progress on external action. Panellists agreed that any EU foreign policy regarding the Union's borderlands would need to take place in an inclusive manner and with a better strategic basis.

The forums were designed to mirror each other's concept and to put a similar focus on different regions. They were attended by a range of high-level participants – including MEPs, diplomats, policymakers, think tankers, journalists, and academics. The events successfully served as platforms to promote and raise awareness of the EU-LISTCO project amongst key audiences in European capitals and across Europe's neighbourhoods, with panellists taking the opportunity to integrate (or challenge) EU-LISTCO research findings into their discussion points.



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This report summarises the major discussions, findings, and insights generated at the Regional Forum East and the Regional Forum South.

## 2. REGIONAL FORUM EAST

### 2.1 TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The *Regional Forum East* was hosted online and consisted of three separate elements: one public virtual discussion, one private virtual roundtable, and one video interview.

The first session was a public virtual panel discussion entitled *Human Security in Europe's Eastern Neighbourhood*. The public discussion was convened on Zoom and live streamed to [YouTube](#) on September 22, 2020 from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. CEST.

**Judy Dempsey**, senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation and editor-in-chief of Carnegie's *Strategic Europe* blog, moderated the panel of experts. The participating panellists were: **Kornely Kakachia**, Director of the Georgian Institute of Politics in Tbilisi, Georgia; **Artyom Shraibman**, journalist and political commentator, as well as contributor to Carnegie.ru, based in Moscow; and **Kateryna Zarembo**, associate fellow at the New Europe Center in Kyiv, Ukraine.

In order to promote the event in Brussels and especially Europe's East, Carnegie created a dedicated events webpage, which was accompanied by an announcement mailing targeting some 10,000 recipients; an EU-LISTCO event on Facebook, which reached over 3,100 individuals, 15.8% of which are located in Tbilisi, Georgia, and gained 59 responses; and tweets from EU-LISTCO's and Carnegie's account to promote the event. EU-LISTCO members were encouraged to share the event within their networks. Furthermore, the Carnegie Europe Foundation cooperated with local partners such as the Ukrainian Institute of Public Policy and the New Europe Center (NEC) in Ukraine to expand the promotion of this event into Europe's East. NEC promoted the event on their Facebook and Twitter pages and reached 2,207 and 1,393 people, respectively.

The virtual panel was streamed on the Carnegie Europe YouTube channel and proved to be most popular in Belgium, the United States and Ukraine. It was live streamed by 59 unique viewers, while gaining more than 2,800 impressions and 214 total views at time of writing (October 22, 2020).



The second session was a private virtual roundtable entitled *Is Donbas Lost?*. The off-the-record discussion was held on Zoom on September 23, 2020 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. CEST.

**Judy Dempsey**, senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation and editor-in-chief of Carnegie's *Strategic Europe* blog, gave opening remarks. The invited speakers were: **Sokol Bega**, head of Regional Issues at the Permanent Mission of Albania to International Organizations in Vienna, Austria; **Agnieszka Legucka**, senior research fellow at the Polish Institute of International Affairs in Warsaw, Poland; **Leonid Litra**, senior research fellow at the New Europe Center in Kyiv, Ukraine; **Gwendolyn Sasse**, director at the Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS) in Berlin, Germany. The roundtable was moderated by **Thomas de Waal**, senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation in Brussels, Belgium.

In order to promote the event in Brussels and capitals around the European Union, the Carnegie Europe Foundation sent out around 300 personalised invitations to leading voices in academia, consortium members and EU and national government officials. Furthermore, the Carnegie Europe Foundation cooperated with the New Europe Center (NEC) in Ukraine to specifically target Ukrainian policy makers and experts which made up around half of the 46 confirmed participants.

The last element of the Regional Forum East was an interview between **Judy Dempsey**, senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation and editor-in-chief of Carnegie's *Strategic Europe* blog and **Matti Maasikas**, Ambassador and Head of the European Union Delegation to Ukraine. The video interview of approx. 5 minutes was released on September 24 via Twitter and Facebook. The video was posted on EU-LISTCO's Facebook page and shared widely on Twitter, where it received 831 views and 8,575 impressions at time of writing (October 22, 2020).

## 2.2 DISCUSSION

### Public Virtual Session: "Human Security in Europe's Eastern Neighbourhood"

The virtual private roundtable panel kicked-off with welcome remarks by Judy Dempsey and an introduction of the individual panellists based in Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia.



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All panellists highlighted the importance of human security – especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. While the first wave of the pandemic has not hit Ukraine and Georgia too hard, the fact that the Belarusian regime mishandled the country’s outbreak led to a loss of trust in state institutions. This culminated in the wave of protests of August 2020, their subsequent violent crackdown, and a deep political and societal crisis still unfolding.

The panellists expressed concern that neither Georgia nor Ukraine are infrastructurally equipped to confront a harder, second wave of the pandemic. Georgia’s approach of having medical experts lead the fight against the pandemic has worked well for the governing party but holding elections on October 30 under these circumstances will be an unprecedented challenge. State institutions are not strong enough to postpone the elections. In Ukraine the public has been progressively losing trust in government institutions following the pandemic’s outbreak in March. Panellist suggested, however, that this low level of trust might prove to be a consolidating factor for civil society.

The panellists also discussed the implications and scope of different security challenges across the Eastern neighbourhood. It was observed that Belarus, whose population is rather ethnically and religiously coherent, is less likely to develop areas of limited statehood and contested order similar to those in Georgia and Ukraine. However, the recent outbreak of protest may be pointing the country in another direction – and will have direct consequences in the region. Ukraine is vocal in advocating a democratic transition governed by rule of law – but also sees in Lukashenko an ally who will not let Russian forces in its territory. In a similar manner, Georgians see the present Belarusian regime as strategically important because of its non-recognition of the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

A third and final item of discussion was the role of the EU in supporting societal resilience and human security in its Eastern neighbourhood. The discussants emphasised that the EU is viewed generally positively across the region, despite the fact that it lacks a clear long-term strategy for regional engagement. In Ukraine, the EU’s approach to financial assistance has led to the paradox that the local public does not see EU assistance positively because trust in state institutions using the funds properly is low. Nevertheless, the threat of withdrawing funding has enhanced the government’s anti-corruption efforts. The EU role is perceived as weaker in Georgia, where the Union is lacking concrete proposals and initiatives to strengthen state institutions as well as enhancing human security. The current crisis in Belarus has exposed the



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weak links between this country and the EU, which has never meaningfully engaged with a neighbour that has no intention of following the path towards EU integration. Tellingly, even the Belarusian opposition refused to receive EU financial assistance as it would have been negatively perceived on the local stage. The EU will need to scale up its engagement in the country to support the transformative process current underway and the society's growing desire for a strong and independent civil society.

#### Private Virtual Session: "Is Donbas Lost?"

The virtual private roundtable panel kicked-off with welcome remarks by Judy Dempsey and an introduction of the individual panellists.

Focused on the questions "Is Donbas Lost?" the panellists jumped straight into discussing a concrete example of an area of limited statehood and contested order in Europe's Eastern neighbourhood. After analysing the current situation on the ground in the Ukrainian region as well as the outlook of the conflict, it was highlighted the stark contrast between president Zelenskyi's emphasis on a soft re-integration of Donbas into the Ukrainian state and new opinion poll data showing a weakening in public support for complete re-integration.

While advances in settling the conflict remain highly dependent on Russia's engagement, speakers pointed at the lessons learned by Russia in the Ukrainian context. Specifically, the uncertainty and unpredictability of the situation on the ground in areas of limited statehood and contested order, such as Donbas, has already led to a partial rethinking of Russian foreign policy objectives with its immediate neighbours (Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus).

The discussion then explored how the Covid-19 pandemic has shifted the focus of the public debate in the EU as well as in Ukraine. It was highlighted how travel restrictions and public health measures have impacted the access of ceasefire monitoring missions. Furthermore, the impossibility of in-person meetings – as well as tensions in Belarus – are undermining the progress of peace negotiations hosted in Minsk.

Reflecting on the role of the EU in the conflict, panellists contended that European leaders need to change their outlook on the conflict and accept the unattainability of the 2014 Minsk Protocol. The agreement had served as a specific tool at a specific time, but it will need to be updated in





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order to achieve any form of a temporary status for the separatist-held areas of Donbas and Luhansk that is acceptable to Russia and Ukraine. The panellist agreed that for negotiations on this topic to move forward, Russia would have to change its strategy, something that appears unlikely in the near future.

This wide and varied debate was animated by several questions and comments from the audience. It was pointed out that President Zelensky has been keen on withdrawing Ukrainian soldiers from the contact line which theoretically opens a window of opportunity for a diplomatic solution as Ukraine is willing to make concessions towards a settlement solution – a trajectory that remains unlikely to be embraced by Moscow. Towards the end of the event, the discussion circled back to the EU's potential role in stabilising the region, focusing on informal diplomatic efforts aimed at reframing this issue and keeping it on the agenda of EU policymakers.

#### Interview with EU Ambassador to Ukraine Matti Maasikas

Judy Dempsey hosted a conversation with Matti Maasikas, Ambassador and head of the European Union Delegation to Ukraine. Dempsey and Ambassador Maasikas discussed the latest development in Kyiv while reflecting on the EU's role in promoting a positive agenda of reforms in the country. Ambassador Maasikas offered thoughts on the many positive advances made in the fight against corruption, including the creation of anti-corruption courts not afraid of taking up corruption charges against high-level policymakers (e.g. MPs from the ruling party). The Ambassador cautioned that these institutions need political continuity to continue their work. He then highlighted the different challenges faced by Ukrainian President Zelensky, ranging from Russian aggression to the domestic economic agenda, underscoring his optimism with regard to the future of Ukraine in light of the steady positive transformation over the last few years.

### **2.3 FOLLOW-UP**

Before, during, and after the event, members of the EU-LISTCO consortium made sure that the Regional Forum East reached a wide audience of international and local policymakers. Information on the public event was shared and publicised to the public through multiple channels before and after the event. As the first session of the forum was held virtually and on-the-record, a copy of it was retained on Carnegie's YouTube channel, available to the public. Carnegie live-



tweeted the event from the EU-LISTCO project account (@eulistco) selecting and promoting key discussion points from the panel, as well as photos of the event.

All related items to the EU-LISTCO Regional Forum East were collected and combined on the [EU-LISTCO website](#) where they remain available for the public.



*Judy Dempsey, Kornely Kakachia, Kateryna Zarembo and Artyom Shraibman on the panel at “Human Security in Europe’s Eastern Neighbourhood” September 22, 2020. Photo shared on the EU-LISTCO Twitter account*



*Example of live tweeting from the EU-LISTCO Twitter account*

## EU-LISTCO Regional Forum East

Tuesday, 22 September 2020, 16:00 –  
Wednesday, 23 September 2020, 12:30



Amid prolonged tensions in Ukraine, civil unrest in Belarus, and rising infection rates across the region, what are the elements needed to build strong and accountable institutions in Europe's east? And how can the European Union play a role in supporting a shift towards a human-centric approach to security?

To answer these and other questions, the Carnegie Europe Foundation convened the EU LISTCO Regional Forum East. Hosted over two days, the Forum brought together European and local analysts and policymakers to share the latest insights and recommendations from EU-LISTCO's research.

In the margins of the Forum, the Carnegie Europe Foundation also released a short interview with Matti Maasilas, Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation to Ukraine.

- **Day 1: Virtual Public Event**

*Human Security in Europe's Eastern Neighbourhood*

Tuesday, September 22, 2020, 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

- **Day 2: Virtual Private Roundtable**

*Is Donbas Lost?*

Wednesday, September 23, 2020, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

- **Interview: What Holds Ukraine's Future?**

As part of the Regional Forum East, Carnegie Europe Foundation's senior fellow **Judy Dempsey** sat down virtually with Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation to Ukraine **Matti Maasilas**.

*Screenshot of the event page on eu-listco.net, includes photo and event description above, an embedded version of the video interview, an embedded recording of the public event and descriptions of both separate sessions below.*

Watch the interview here:



## Day 1:

Human Security in Europe's Eastern Neighbourhood



The coronavirus pandemic has revived demands for a human-centric approach to security. In Europe's eastern neighbourhood, this means strengthening healthcare systems and building more resilient societies while managing existing threats such as geopolitical rivalries, conflicts in areas of limited statehood, and cyber and hybrid warfare.

Amid prolonged tensions in Ukraine, civil unrest in Belarus, and rising infection rates across the region, the Carnegie Europe Foundation hosted a public discussion to take stock of the elements needed to build strong and accountable institutions in Europe's east.

Re-watch the public virtual event here:



### Panelists

- Kornely Kakachia, director, Georgian Institute of Politics, Tbilisi
- Artyom Shraibman, journalist and political commentator; contributor to Carnegie.ru, Moscow
- Kateryna Zarembo, associate fellow, New Europe Center, Kyiv

### Moderated by

- Judy Dempsey, senior fellow, Carnegie Europe Foundation; editor in chief, Strategic Europe, Brussels

## Day 2:

Is Donbas Lost?



Following the outbreak of war between Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists in 2014, the Donbas region became another area of limited statehood and contested order within Europe's eastern neighbourhood. Six years later, with regular attacks on the frontline, a death toll of over 13,000, and over one million people internally displaced, any breakthrough in ending this conflict in Ukraine's east remains elusive.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has made headway on campaign promises to end the conflict and bring peace to eastern Ukraine. But with few steps being taken to reintegrate the self-declared people's republics of Donetsk and Luhansk (DNR/LNR) back into Ukraine, and Russia showing no signs of withdrawing from the region, what can break the deadlock?

### Panelists

- **Sokol Bega**, head of Regional Issues, Permanent Mission of Albania to International Organizations, Vienna
- **Agnieszka Legucka**, senior research fellow, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw
- **Leonid Litra**, senior research fellow, New Europe Center, Kyiv
- **Gwendolyn Sasse**, director, Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOIS), Berlin

### Moderated by

- **Thomas de Waal**, senior fellow, Carnegie Europe Foundation, Brussels





## 3. REGIONAL FORUM SOUTH

### 3.1 TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The *Regional Forum South* was hosted online and consisted of three separate elements: one public virtual discussion, one private virtual roundtable, and one interview.

The first session was a public virtual panel discussion entitled *Societal Resilience in Europe's Southern Neighbourhood*. The public discussion was convened on Zoom and live streamed to [YouTube](#) on October 21, 2020 from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. CEST.

**Judy Dempsey**, senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation and editor-in-chief of Carnegie's *Strategic Europe* blog, moderated the panel of experts. The participating panellists were: **Mark Daou**, a Lebanese political, social, and environmental activist; **Pol Morillas**, director, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB), Barcelona; **Saime Özçürümez**, associate professor, Bilkent University, Ankara; **Maha Yahya**, director, Carnegie Middle East Center, Beirut.

In order to promote the event, Carnegie created a dedicated event webpage, which was accompanied by an announcement mailing targeting some 14,000 relevant contacts in Europe and the Middle East as well as tweets from EU-LISTCO's and Carnegie's account. To promote the event especially in Europe's South, Carnegie launched a twitter-add campaign which gained over 60,000 impressions, the majority of which came from Turkey (10,136). EU-LISTCO members were encouraged to share the event within their networks.

The virtual panel was streamed on the Carnegie Europe YouTube channel. It was live streamed by 55 unique viewers, while gaining more than 1,100 impressions and 109 total views at time of writing (October 23, 2020).

The second session was a private virtual roundtable entitled *Quo Vadis, Lebanon?*. The off-the-record discussion was held on Zoom on October 22, 2020 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. CEST.

**Judy Dempsey**, senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation and editor-in-chief of Carnegie's *Strategic Europe* blog, gave the opening remarks. The invited speakers were: **Georges Fahmi**, research fellow, Middle East Directions Programme, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence; **Tamirace Fakhoury**, associate



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professor, Lebanese American University, Beirut; and **Eduard Soler i Lecha**, senior research fellow at the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB), Barcelona. The roundtable was moderated by **Rym Momtaz**, France correspondent of POLITICO Europe in Paris.

In order to promote the event in Brussels and capitals around the European Union, the Carnegie Europe Foundation sent out around 300 personalised invitations to leading voices in academia, consortium members and EU and national government officials. Furthermore, the Carnegie Europe Foundation cooperated with the Carnegie Middle East Center in Lebanon to specifically target Lebanese policy experts and members of civil society. In total, 38 invitees confirmed their attendance.

The last element of the Regional Forum South was an interview between **Judy Dempsey**, senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation and editor-in-chief of Carnegie's *Strategic Europe* blog and **Tarek Mitri** former special representative and head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. This video interview of approx. 5 minutes was published on October 28, 2020, on EU-LISTCO's twitter account and Facebook page. It totalled over 200 views in the first three hours online.

## 3.2 DISCUSSION

### Public Virtual Session: "Societal Resilience in Europe's Southern Neighbourhood"

The event kicked-off with welcome remarks by Judy Dempsey and an introduction of the individual panellists.

The panellists jumped straight into the first discussion topic: the concept of resilience. An academic perspective was provided, referring to the framing of the concept in the EU Global Strategy and underscoring that a stronger definition of resilience, in particular societal resilience, is required for a clear-defined EU foreign policy.

The discussion then moved to the exploration of resilience at the societal and political level in the Southern neighbourhood. All panellists concurred that the considerable entrenchment of authoritarian practices in regions points to an unexpected level of resilience of the political leadership in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. This notwithstanding, the structural weaknesses



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that stirred people into action in 2011 are still present today, especially after a decade spent by most regime in the region weakening the social fabric of their nations. This has been especially true after the region has been put to the test of responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A second discussion point has been the assessment of the EU's role and profile in the region. Even if improving societies has historically been at the core of relations between the EU and the Southern neighbourhood, panellists discussed whether resilience is the best concept to defend EU's interests and to align its instruments. On one hand, it was suggested that the EU should practice soft power in the region (i.e. engage with the media, support culture). On the other hand, it was argued that the region ought to become more stable before the EU can push its resilience agenda.

The focus of the discussion then shifted to the role of external actors. Considerable challenges in building societal resilience in the region derive from the involvement of external actors and proxies. This in turn generates threats to European security. Despite widespread agreement on the panel that external challenges stemming from the Southern neighbourhood have impacted European foreign policy decision-making, other panellists stressed that many difficulties currently facing the Union stem from internal crises. The multiplicity of visions within the EU on how to deal with external powers and the divergent internal interests make the EU's instruments increasingly fragmented and less effective. If the EU wants to gain a more active and sustainable role in the region, it must find local allies and partners and be a negotiator with local power and societal forces.

#### Private Virtual Session: "Quo Vadis, Lebanon?"

The event kicked-off with welcome remarks by Judy Dempsey and an introduction of the individual panellists.

The discussion kicked off with speakers assessing the current situation in Lebanon. Panellists gave a critical account of the recent wave of protest movements in the country, challenging both overly positive (uprisings instigated profound symbolic change and given rise to alternative political associations) and negative (protests have contracted due to the pandemic) interpretations. They all agreed that the blast of August 4 epitomized the failure of the Lebanese ruling class. And it was pointed out that no one has been held accountable still for the blast.





The discussion then took a step back to place Lebanon in the broader regional picture. Here, common themes are the failure of state institutions and corruption. Lebanon distinguishes itself by being a sectarian political regime, whose vast array of centres of power makes it impossible to target just the head of the regime. The sectarian regime will be challenged only by coalescing legitimate voices within different religious communities can join the cause for reform.

Panellist delved into the second theme of the discussion: how can the EU foster resilience in Lebanon? Lebanon holds a strategic importance to the EU: it is a close neighbour; it hosts 1 million Syrian refugees. From a politico-institutional perspective, Lebanon is perceived as a fragile country at risk of becoming a failing state. The EU must balance its role. On the one hand, it has the knowledge and capacity to be a transformative force and build resilience in Lebanon. On the other hand, the aid it distributes to alleviate the dire socio-economic situation must not preserve the status quo and the clientelist relations. On the ground, the EU must take great care of being perceived as a unifying actor, not a divisive one – this is especially important at a time when fields of France and Turkey supporters are already delineating themselves in the country.

The point on France's role proved to be a controversial one. The panellists concurred that French-Lebanese relations needed to be reconciled in the framework of a common EU approach. Their views diverged when assessing the role played by France – some argued that French genuine solidarity should not be confused with neo-colonial rhetoric, others underscored that parts of the Lebanese society were disappointed at France not freezing the assets of some politicians and accused President Macron of colluding with the sectarian political elite.

This vast array of perspectives enabled a lively discussion among panellists and the audience. The possibility of reforming the current Lebanese political system was questioned. Here, a potential contradiction emerged between the need to holding politicians accountable and the need for shifting from a sectarian to a pluralistic political system. Both options were discussed, stressing that only a comprehensive reform would move the country in the direction of a more resilient social and political system. Another point of discussion was the reform of the current electoral law: here again, the debate did not focus on the law itself, but on the patronage network underpinning large parts of the Lebanese society: only by addressing these root issues will the Lebanese system become more resilient.



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## Interview with Tarek Mitri, former Special Representative for Libya of the UN Secretary General

Judy Dempsey hosted a conversation with Tarek Mitri, a former Special Representative for Libya of the UN Secretary General. Dempsey and Mitri took stock of the current situation in Libya, discussing ways to break the present deadlock and to promote meaningful dialogue between the parties. Mitri stressed that there are two preconditions for a durable truce: the rebuilding of functioning state institutions and the dismantlement of the armed factions currently operating in the country. The role of external powers will be crucial to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The EU should find its central focus to create a coherent Libya policy amid conflicting external interests – and interventions. Such policy should reconcile the different positions of EU member states. Mitri underscored that the union did not take advantage of several favourable moments for positioning itself as a positive and decisive actor in the truce negotiations, not last after the Berlin conference where the agreement on an arms embargo was a remarkable achievement and a first step towards a normalization of the situation in the country.

### **3.3 FOLLOW-UP**

Before, during, and after the event, members of the EU-LISTCO consortium made sure that the Regional Forum South reached a wide audience of international and local policymakers. Information on the public event was shared and publicised to the public through multiple channels before and after the event, also leveraging Carnegie's network and its presence in Beirut. As the first session of the forum was held virtually and on-the-record, a copy of it was retained on Carnegie's YouTube channel, available to the public. Carnegie live-tweeted the event from the EU-LISTCO project account (@eulistco) selecting and promoting key discussion points from the panel, as well as photos of the event.

All related items to the EU-LISTCO Regional Forum South were collected and combined on the [EU-LISTCO website](#) where they remain available for the public.



*Judy Dempsey, Pol Morillas, Saime Özçürümez and Maha Yahya on the panel at “Societal Resilience in Europe’s Southern Neighbourhood” October 21, 2020. Mark Daou was temporarily disconnected for technical reasons. Photo shared on the EU-LISTCO Twitter account.*



*Example of live tweeting from the EU-LISTCO Twitter account*

## EU-LISTCO Regional Forum South

Wednesday, 21 October 2020, 16:00

Thursday, 22 October 2020, 12:30



What are the elements needed to strengthen societal resilience to internal and external challenges in Europe's South?

To answer this and other questions, the Carnegie Europe Foundation convened the EU-LISTCO Regional Forum South. Hosted over two days, the forum brought together European and local analysts and policymakers to share the latest insights and recommendations from EU-LISTCO's research.

- **Day 1: Virtual Public Event**

*Societal Resilience in Europe's Southern Neighbourhood*

Wednesday, October 21, 2020, 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

- **Day 2: Virtual Private Roundtable**

*Quo Vadis, Lebanon?*

Thursday, October 22, 2020, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

- **Interview: Is Peace in Libya Attainable?**

As part of the Regional Forum South, Carnegie Europe Foundation's senior fellow **Judy Dempsey** sat down virtually with **Tarek Mitri**, the former UN special envoy to Libya and director of the Issam Fares Institute on Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut.

*Screenshot of the event page on eu-listco.net, includes photo and event description above, an embedded version of the video interview, an embedded recording of the public event and descriptions of both separate sessions below.*

Watch the interview here:



## Day 1:

Societal Resilience in Europe's Southern Neighbourhood



Europe's Southern neighbourhood is in turmoil. Libya is engulfed in civil war, Egypt faces growing anti-government protests, and Lebanon is mired in a deep, multifaceted crisis. The war in Syria nears its endgame with the Assad regime still in power, and the normalisation of ties between Israel and some Gulf states—while historic—is unlikely to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace.

The region's societal struggles, historic animosities, and religious confrontations—not to mention the coronavirus pandemic and the uncertain prospects facing youths—could threaten Europe's security. The Carnegie Europe Foundation will host a discussion on the elements needed to strengthen societal resilience in the Southern neighbourhood.

Re-watch the public virtual event here:



WATCH ON YOUTUBE

### Panelists

- **Mark Daou** is a political, social, and environmental activist in Beirut.
- **Pol Morillas** is the director of the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) in Barcelona.
- **Salme Özçiftürmez** is an associate professor at Bilkent University in Ankara.
- **Maha Yahya** is the director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut.

### Moderated by

- **Judy Dempsey** is a senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation in Brussels and the editor in chief of *Strategic Europe*.



## Day 2:

Quo Vadis, Lebanon?



The huge explosion in Beirut's port on August 4 has aggravated the already dire situation in Lebanon. The government is still in crisis. The economy is in shatters. There is the threat of more violence. Add to these woes, the breakdown of Beirut's trash collection system and the poor response to the coronavirus crisis have shown how Lebanon's societal resilience is ill-equipped to deal with current and future challenges.

With few clear solutions in sight, the Carnegie Europe Foundation will host a private roundtable to discuss what steps are needed to unite the country and protect its people, while also reflecting on how the European Union – and its member states – can support the rebuilding of a functioning state in Lebanon.

### Panelists

- **Georges Fahmi** is a research fellow with the Middle East Directions Programme at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute in Florence.
- **Tamirace Fakhoury** is an associate professor at the Lebanese American University in Beirut.
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### Moderated by

- **Rym Momtaz** is the France foreign policy correspondent for POLITICO in Paris.



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## 4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: REGIONAL FORUM EAST AND SOUTH

The issues that were raised and the approaches that were discussed at the two Forums made it possible to draw conclusions and observe similarities between the challenges facing Europe's Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods. While some of these topics will be addressed at large in one of the project's upcoming newsletters, curated by the Carnegie Europe Foundation, it is possible to already outline here some preliminary findings.

The eastern region, once part of the Soviet Union, is making the immensely complex transition from authoritarian-ruled regimes to democracy. In Ukraine, the transformation has been plagued by corruption but also the continuing power wielded by the oligarchs. They have their own interests in preserving the status quo or else hindering the establishment of strong institutions that would increase accountability, the rule of law, and good governance.

Georgia risks becoming polarized – which would damage further reforms. As for Belarus, the peaceful demonstrations that began in early August aimed at overturning the rigged presidential vote, calling for new and fair elections and the release of all detainees, have broken the monopoly of power held by the regime. There is no going back to the status quo ante. But the transformation to democracy is going to be long. The ruling elite is not prepared to cede power, let alone share it. For now, the Lukashenko regime seems to believe that the unremitting use of force by the security apparatuses will eventually quash the protests. Even if they do, the regime's reaction to the demonstrations and the increasing use of force against young and old, workers and students, teenagers and the elderly means that it has lost all semblance of legitimacy.

The southern region, which erupted during the Arab Spring of 2011, had historically been the subject of colonial competition, later replaced by authoritarian regimes. Dissent was not tolerated. Politics was exclusively in the hands of the regime's elites. Since 2011, transformation has generally, in most cases, given way to disappointment. More importantly, some countries, such as Egypt, have become repressive to the extent that any kind of independent opposition is either banned or intimidated and its leaders imprisoned. The idea of Syria being able to embrace some kind of democratic principles once the war ends is unrealistic. In other countries in the region, Lebanon for example, corruption, the weak rule of law, shattered economies – made weaker by Covid-19 – are potent ingredients for instability.



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In this context, the east and the south share a few common problems.

First, they share corruption, weak economies and fragile infrastructures confirmed by Covid-19.

Second is the meddling by outside powers, whether it is Russia in Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus, or Russia along with Turkey and other players perpetuating the war in Syria.

Third is the role of the European Union and, depending on the country, its inability to push forward the political, economic, and social transformation of the region. Indeed, in the case of Egypt and Lebanon and in the east, its role in Belarus and Georgia, the EU has lacked a clear strategy on how it would like to see its neighbours develop.

Fourth, the east and the south are subject to the same weaknesses that prevent the EU from adopting clear and sustained strategic policies towards these regions. As we heard during the two forums, the EU member states are divided over how they see the two regions. They are also divided over the nature of the threats and the scope of the challenges.

In a nutshell, the Eastern and Baltic EU member states see Russia as a major threat. They also support much stronger engagement with Ukraine and Belarus. Precisely because of the geographical location of the east and its history, these EU countries have a much closer affinity with their eastern neighbours. The southern region seems a long way off.

For the EU's southern neighbours, it is the other side of the Mediterranean, not the eastern region, that is their preoccupation. It is the continuing wars in Libya and Syria, the demographics that offer the ever-growing number of young people few prospects, climate change and corruption that pose major challenges. For France, it is terrorism and the instability in the Sahel.

None of these problems are new. Yet the EU is unable to make a difference in tackling these issues either in the short term or the long term. The debilitating aspect of EU foreign policy is hampered by the basic point that there are too many differences inside the Union. Even the refugee crisis of 2015 which affected every single EU member state did not lead to a more coherent policy towards the region. All the above issues beg the question of the EU's level of ambition as a player globally or regionally. If the EU wants to be bolder and have a clear strategy, it has to be united. The latter remains elusive. The EU's voice will only become clearer and more





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convincing when consensus gives way to a voting system among the member states that adopts a method based on qualified majority. That might give the EU the strong voice and credibility that is so sorely lacking. After all, despite all the Union's shortcomings, its attractiveness to non-EU countries remains strong. That is why it is time to find ways to channel such attraction into a coherent strategy for the east and the south. It surely should be doable.