Civil resilience in crisis situations

North Atlantic Council (NAC)

Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Definition of key terms 3

Annexation 3

Sovereignty 3

Hybrid warfare 3

POWs 3

Sanctions 3

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) 3

General Overview 4

Major parties involved 5

Arbitrary major party in alphabetical order 5

Timeline of events 6

Possible solutions 7

Bibliography 8

Introduction

In an age of growing geopolitical instability, hybrid warfare, climate change, and pandemics, the resilience of civilian populations has become a cornerstone of national and collective security. Civil resilience refers to the capacity of societies to withstand, adapt, and recover from crises such as natural disasters, cyberattacks, terrorism, and military conflict. Unlike traditional defence, which is primarily military in nature, civil resilience involves safeguarding essential services, protecting critical infrastructure, and maintaining public trust. The importance of civil resilience has been highlighted by recent crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, cyberattacks on European infrastructure, and the ongoing war in Ukraine. In these situations, governments, private actors, and international organisations must cooperate to ensure that societies can continue functioning under extreme stress. Strengthening civil resilience is therefore not only a matter of national security but also of social stability and democratic legitimacy

Definition of key terms

Civil Resilience

The resilience in case of a society to survive all the crises (natural disasters, conflicts, pandemics, cyberattacks, and others) and live with the preservation of the necessary functions and the integrity of society.

Crisis

Any event or series of events that poses a danger to a community and the way it functions

Mitigation

Ways to reduce the impact of a crisis. Note that mitigation is not the solution to ending it is the solution to keeping it stable

Adaptation

The ability of a community to change their behaviour and routines to adjust to a new environment.

Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

When a government institution and private sector actors work together to strengthen public resilience before/during times of crisis

Early Warning System (EWS)

A mechanism to alert citizens of a community prior to a crisis such as natural disasters.

General Overview

Civil resilience has become a central element of NATO and EU security doctrines in the past decade. After the 2014 annexation of Crimea, NATO identified the protection of critical infrastructure, energy security, and robust communications systems as essential for collective defence. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chains, healthcare capacity, and public trust in government responses. These experiences demonstrated that modern security threats extend far beyond traditional battlefield dynamics.

Resilience strategies generally focus on three key areas. First, critical infrastructure protection, ensuring energy grids, transport networks, and digital systems remain operational during crises. Second, societal preparedness, which includes public awareness campaigns, civil defence training, and coordinated emergency responses. Third, government continuity, making sure that political institutions, legal frameworks, and essential public services continue to function even under hostile pressure.

Different nations approach civil resilience in distinct ways. The Nordic countries, for example, maintain long traditions of total defence, where civilian and military efforts are integrated, and the entire society is mobilised in times of crisis. The Baltic states emphasise resilience against hybrid threats, such as disinformation and cyberattacks, due to their proximity to Russia. Western European countries increasingly focus on protecting digital infrastructure, countering misinformation, and strengthening healthcare systems.

At the international level, NATO has adopted baseline requirements for national resilience, while the European Union promotes initiatives such as the RescEU mechanism for disaster response. However, challenges remain. Coordinating between national and supranational levels can be politically sensitive, especially when it comes to sharing critical resources. Moreover, maintaining resilience requires sustained investment, which is often difficult during times of budgetary pressure.

Ultimately, building civil resilience is about more than physical security. It is about ensuring that democratic societies remain functional, adaptable, and united when faced with disruptions — whether natural, technological, or man-made.

Major parties involved

United States of America

The USA is one of the biggest nations when it comes to enhancing civil resilience in times of crisis. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) ("FEMA, Home, 2025") and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are government agencies which provide a lot of funding, technology and support in response to crises and disaster. The USA has provided a lot of financial support to nations like the UK, Japan, Somalia and most recently Ukraine. They have also received aid from Mexico and many EU nations.

Republic of Türkiye

Turkey being a NATO member and in the middle of Asia, Europe and Africa plays a huge role in civil resilience. Turkey is a hotspot for earthquakes and various natural disasters meaning it is very well-equipped with institutions such as AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Authority). Turkey also assists other countries by allowing millions of refugees for safety.

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

The UNDRR is a part of the UN whose primary goal is to promote international cooperation in times of crises. They oversee the Sendai framework ("What Is the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction?") and cooperate with various nations and multinational alliances like NATO.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

The IFRC is the world's largest humanitarian NGO. It is stationed in all NATO nations, 191 nations in total and have around 16 million volunteers worldwide to aid and support people in need of help in times of crises. They have emergency response programs on a local, national and global level and this complements NATO's resilience-oriented civil-military coordination very well

Timeline of events

April 4, 1949	Washington treaty is signed leading to the formation of NATO
December 22, 1989	UN GA Resolution 44/236 is passed which established the international decade for natural disaster reduction.
December 26, 2004	Indian ocean tsunami killed around 230 thousand people which lead to the creation of EWS systems globally
August 29, 2005	Hurricane Katrina destroys New Orleans and Gulf coast which exposes the weaknesses and negatives in FEMA and US disaster management
January 12, 2010	Haiti earthquake leads to one of the largest humanitarian operations in history and proves effectiveness of NGOs and global cooperation
March 14, 2015	Sendai framework for Disaster Risk Reduction is adapted in the 3rd UN world conference in Japan
June 29, 2022	A NATO summit took place in Madrid which revised the Resilience Baseline Requirements

Possible solutions

Civil resilience in crisis situations is unlike most issues discussed in MUNs is more directly related to the civilian population for a solution. Possible solutions are to increase/raise awareness by creating programs and classes for what to do in certain scenarios. An effective way could be to incorporate certain scenerios and what to do in them into education systems to educate the future generation in this topic as well. Another solution could be supporting NGOs and providing funds to help them increase their impact nationally and globally. Some more straight forward solutions could include funding defense systems against natural disasters and technology development. Delegates must ensure their resolution cover both basic, staright forward solutions as well as more creative and indirect solutions to this issue.

Bibliography

- Afad.gov.tr, 2017, en.afad.gov.tr/about-us. Accessed 22 Aug. 2025.
- BBC News. (2022, February 24). *Ukraine conflict: Russia launches full-scale invasion*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60503037
- Council on Foreign Relations. (2024). *Ukraine: Conflict at a crossroads*. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-crossroads
- for, Agency. "U.S. Agency for International Development." *Usaid.gov*, 2025, www.usaid.gov/. Accessed 22 Aug. 2025.
- "Home." *Fema.gov*, 2025, www.fema.gov/. Accessed 22 Aug. 2025.
- Reuters. (2023, March 15). *Ukraine-Russia peace talks stall amid continued fighting*. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-russia-peace-talks-stall-2023-03-15/
- Sasse, G. (2022). Russia's war against Ukraine: Origins, dynamics, and international response. *Journal of Democracy, 33*(2), 45–60. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2022.0023
- UNHCR. (2025). *Ukraine emergency situation update*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. https://www.unhcr.org/ukraine-emergency
- World Bank. (2023). *Impact of the war in Ukraine on global food security*. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2023/04/10/impact-of-war-in-ukraine
-