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*(Note: the spelling of her first name is correct)*

**Naples Council on World affairs launches 2023-24 distinguished speaker season with compelling perspective on Russia-Ukraine War**

NAPLES, FL. – The U.S. plays a crucial role in maintaining regional security in the Black Sea region, according to Dr. Iulia-Sabina Joja, a renowned expert on the evolving conflict and alliances in the area. Although European countries, led by Germany, are taking increasing responsibility, all eyes are on the U.S. as it navigates its response to two wars – one in Ukraine and a new one between Hamas and Israel, she said.

Dr. Joja kicked off the Naples Council on World Affairs’ 2023-24 lecture series with a wide-ranging presentation that revolved around three themes: First, the outcome of the war in Ukraine will determine continental European security in the future; second, the impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on the region; and third, the essential role of the United States and European allies in the region’s long-term security.

The Romania native is a fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute at Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and an adjunct professor at Georgetown University and George Washington University, former adviser to the Romanian president, and has served in roles at the United Nations and European Parliament.

“None of this would've been possible without the United States. The United States in this conflict has been really central to it. And it's not just about military assistance or humanitarian assistance, it's about political leadership. No country in Europe has either the resources or the clout to be able to compensate or to replace the United States in this context,” she said.

A recurring theme in Dr. Joja's remarks was the indispensable contributions of military and humanitarian aid by the United States. The U.S. has provided unparalleled political leadership and resources, shaping the course of events in the region. This critical aid drives stability and security, and without it, the situation would be far more devastating to Ukraine, and threatening to neighboring countries.

Dr. Joja pointed out that the “waning attention” to the war, due to the rise of the Israel-Hamas War, could have a catastrophic effect. “The United States has, of course, the right and the prerogative to withdraw from this war … and there's nothing one can do about it. It's the United States’ prerogative to do that. But what will happen is that Black Sea security and European security overall will be left in shambles,” she said.

Meanwhile, European nations have stepped up in solidarity with Ukraine and to protect their borders from a possible Russian war expansion.

“I have to give credit to the Europeans overall because they have done something that has surprised me…(Europe) has managed to pull themselves together last year with the help of Americans,” she said. “Germany is the most important player here. It is the largest economy in the European Union. And they have managed in a record time to do something that nobody thought it was possible – to wean themselves off of Russian energy and to impose heavy sanctions as a continent, as a union, onto Russia. They've managed to give military aid for the first time.”

“It goes without saying the outcome of the war in Ukraine will determine the entire regional security as well as a lot of continental European security. So, it really is crucial,” she said.

Dr. Joja highlighted Germany's rising role in the European Union's response of financial and humanitarian support. Germany is playing a pivotal role in the region, coupled with the collective effort across Europe to accept refugees and mitigate the impact of the conflict on neighboring countries. Notably, Poland's initial assistance to Ukraine was impactful, along with their current focus on fortifying their own defenses on its border with Ukraine.

Dr. Joja emphasized the crucial focus on the human toll of war.  In a vivid backdrop to her remarks, she recounted firsthand experiences in conflict zones, notably her recent time spent in flattened battlefields of Ukraine. She described the severe wartime conditions faced by Ukrainians, highlighting the resilience of a community that, despite challenges, has managed to endure and are already attempting to rebuild. She emphasized the resolve of the Ukrainians to live life, with Kiev’s vibrant cafe and restaurant culture thriving despite the looming threats.

For the future, Dr. Joja advocated for driving Black Sea region support by the U.S. and Europe, by envisioning "the kind of world we want to live in” – a liberal world order with U.S. support, with peace and security, versus an authoritarian sphere of influence with conflict and war, she said. She explored the strategic goals of the United States in the region and the impact of their support on the broader geopolitical landscape.

Dr. Joja’s presentation is a part of NCWA’s lecture series, “The Treacherous Road Ahead,” delivering a variety of expert speakers on crucial world affairs topics to NCWA’s more than 1,600 members in the greater Naples area. The series comprises 10 lectures and special events from November 2023 to April 2024, and is the pre-eminent source in the area of the most current information about international affairs and their impact on our lives.

The next lecture will be on “The New Germany,” by Hope Harrison, Ph.D., professor, The Cold War Group, Elliott School, George Washington University, on Monday November 20. For more information on the lecture series, go to [www.ncwa-fl.org](http://www.ncwa-fl.org/) and click on Lectures. Lectures are exclusively available to members. NCWA is accepting members at [www.ncwa-fl.org/membership](http://www.ncwa-fl.org/membership).

**About NCWA**

Over the last 40 years, NCWA has been providing the greater Naples area’s  globally curious full-time and seasonal residents with a complete international affairs experience that is nonpartisan and policy focused. NCWA is a nonprofit that has 1,600+ members from Collier and Lee counties and is a member of  the World Affairs Council of America, which has 93 chapters in 40 states and more than 90,000 members. NCWA’s mission is to educate, inspire and engage our community in international affairs and critical global issues.

Naples Council on World Affairs

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