

ANALYTICAL PAPER

APRIL 2019

Putin's Wars in Eastern Europe: Post-Crimean Reality

After occupation and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and invasion in Donbas, Russia has entered a new level of hybrid aggression aimed not only at Ukraine. In the zone of special danger there were new independent states that arose after the collapse of the USSR, because Russia continues to regard them as a sphere of its influence. First of all, it concerns Belarus and Moldova. This causes an increase of political, economic, energy and information pressure on these states. At the same time, other Eastern European countries that were part of the "socialist camp" during the Cold War, and where Russia can intensify its efforts against the background of the failure of the "Novorossia" project in Ukraine, remain in the zone of potential danger. That is why, in-depth analysis of new directions and forms of the hybrid war of Russia in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe after the annexation of Crimea and the recurrence in Azov is topical issue for modern political discourse.¹

The consequences of Russian aggression against Ukraine for European security, which has been going on for five years, is still not well understood and underestimated. In the post-Crimean period, that is, after occupation of Crimea by Russia, it is necessary to constantly monitor the current situation in Eastern Europe and identify new hybrid threats, identifying possible ways to counter the Russian hybrid war in the region. Russia has become a source of hybrid threats not only for Ukraine but also for Europe as a whole. Therefore, the importance of predicting Russia's subsequent actions both against Ukraine and the countries of Eastern Europe as a whole, was noted by Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs Hanna Hopko, in her opening speech at the international conference "**Putin Wars in Eastern Europe: Post-Crimean Reality**"², which was devoted to the discussion of the mentioned issues. "Fighting for the return of Donbas and Crimea, we fight for the European security architecture," said Member of the Ukrainian Parliament.

¹ Based on the results of the international conference "Putin's Wars in Eastern Europe: Post-Crimean Reality", March 19, 2019, Kyiv.

² On March 19, 2019 Centre for Global Studies "Strategy XXI" and V. I. Vernadskii Taurida National University in partnership and with support of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Office in Ukraine organized the international conference "Putin's Wars in Eastern Europe: Post-Crimean Reality", <https://geostrategy.org.ua/ua/component/k2/item/1564-putinski-viyni-u-shidniy-evropi-post-krimska-realnist>.

Volodymyr Kazarin, Rector of V.I. Vernadskii Tavrida National University, mentioned in his speech that Russia's current conquest policy with regard to the occupied Crimea, has already ceased to be a challenge for Ukraine alone. It was confirmed by Putin's speech in the occupied Simferopol on March 18, 2019. However, such objective awareness has not been adequately reflected in all European countries. For example, in Germany, as noted by Head of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Office in Ukraine Gabriele Baumann, the overall picture and geopolitical threat that comes from Russia is underestimated, since the German politicians are still largely friendly towards Russia, and many of them, especially the elderly ones, are still in captivity of Gorbachev thinking of the late 80's or Putin in early 2000's.

The Russian attack against Ukrainian vessels and the seizure of 24 Ukrainian sailors in November 2018 forced Europe to look at Russian militaristic policy in a different way. Continuing the policy of "collecting lands", according to the estimates of Mykhailo Gonchar, President of the Center for Global Studies "Strategy XXI", the military and political leadership of Russia began to use the terminology of the Cold War, while militaristic rhetoric prevails in official documents of the Russian Federation aimed at further expansion. This is evidenced by recent publications by Assistant of the Russian President V. Surkov and Head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation V. Gerasimov in comparison with their statements in 2013-2014. If, in relation to the post-Soviet states, Russia uses both hybrid and military instruments, then in relation to the EU countries, it acts only through using hybrid instruments.

1. Hybrid threats of the Russian post-Crimean policy for new independent states

Focusing on the hybrid threats of the post-Crimean policy of Russia and the peculiarities of the new stage of the Putin's wars, speakers of the first discussion panel "Hybrid threats of the post-Crimean policy of Russia for new independent states" drew attention to the situation in Belarus and Moldova. The situation in the occupied Crimean Peninsula was also highlighted. In particular, political analyst Lidiia Smola, Professor of Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, pointed to a new stage in the hybrid war of Russia – conduct of information measures of weak intensity directed against Ukraine, which has the following features: avoiding sharp statements and direct aggression; involvement of "soft power" subjects in influencing public opinion in Ukraine (scholars, cultural or religious figures); using any occasion for "reconciliation of peoples"; dissemination in the information space of the views on "corrupt Ukraine" and the refusal of the West from Ukraine as "a failed state"; activation of Western agents to form the idea of the "fatigue" of the West and return of Ukraine to the zone of influence of Russia; accusation of Ukraine about the loss of Crimea. Among the topical hybrid threats, she called the following: receiving by the citizens of post-Soviet countries information about neighboring states through the "Russian propaganda filter"; the effectiveness of "BotFarms" and "trolls" as an instrument of destructive information influence; controlled chaos technology; pro-Russian European politicians and "sleeping" agents without diplomatic immunity; prevalence of business interests over values (Realpolitik). In response to these threats, Lidiia Smola proposed to resort to the strategy of "active defense" or "strategy of indirect actions" for development and dissemination of the Ukrainian narrative.

Eskander Bariev, Member of Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, told about the continuance of numerous violations and crimes against the Crimean Tatar people, the Ukrainian citizens of the peninsula and all those, who disagree with the Kremlin's policy, by the Russian occupation authorities. He noted that Crimean issues were not sufficiently present in the election programs of presidential candidates.

According to Rosian Vasiloi, security analyst of the Moldovan Institute for Development and Social Initiatives Viitorul, the occupation and annexation of Crimea worsened the situation in Transnistria and removed the possibility of settling this conflict, because this region again began to talk about joining Russia. Meanwhile, Russian troops that are illegally present in Transnistria continue to increase their capabilities - in 2016 they conducted 48 exercises, in 2017 - 150 exercises, in 2018 - about 250 exercises, and only from the beginning of 2019 - already 37 military exercises and 56 other preparatory events. In addition, separatist formations are de facto part of the armed forces of

the Russian Federation. One of the challenges for Moldova, according to Rosian Vasiloï, is that the Moldovan leadership has not officially called the Russian units in Transnistria by the occupation forces and taken appropriate steps to replace them with genuine United Nations peacekeepers. Another hybrid challenge for Moldova is the use of voters from Transnistria in the elections in Moldova. Thus, in the presidential elections of 2016, 16 thousand people from Transnistria took part in the vote, and in the 2019 parliamentary elections, their number increased to 40 thousand people, which affected their results. However, he described the weak state administration as the greatest threat to Moldova, which the Kremlin uses. That is also relevant for Ukraine and Georgia.

Andrei Parotnikov, Head of the Analytical Project “Belarus Security Blog”, pointed to inability of the expert community in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia to overcome the legacy of imperial unification in their thinking, go beyond the limits of the “triune people” and consider each other, taking into account modern peculiarities as all three states have many strategic differences. According to him, Ukraine should not consider Belarus as “almost Crimea”, “almost Donbas” or “almost Russia”, since objective historical processes work to strengthen the independence of the Belarusian state and there is a complete consolidation of the Belarusian elites in relation to national sovereignty. Meanwhile, the Kremlin uses the mistakes and failures and goes as far as it is allowed, and often retreats when faced with a rigid and strong resistance.

The real positions of the world countries regarding the Russian war against Ukraine are demonstrated in the UN General Assembly. Thus, Igor Todorov, Professor of Uzhhorod National University, noted that the voting in the UN General Assembly on the resolutions on the Crimea in December 2018 and the inappropriateness, in this context, of the link between Belarus and Kazakhstan on treaties with the Russian Federation, which oblige them to reach a common position in international organizations.

2. The power aspect of the Russian policy in Crimea

The speakers of the second discussion panel “The power aspect of Russian politics in the Azov – Black Sea region”, outlined the military aspects of the Russian hybrid aggression with an emphasis on the Black Sea region. Thus, Admiral Ihor Kabanenko, President of the Ukrainian Agency for Advanced Scientific Research, noted that important security events always occur in the region, and Russia considered it the center of gravity. Therefore, during its history, Russia has tried to establish its dominance in the Black Sea region with the use of military force and to secure access to the Mediterranean region. In Russian strategic documents, according to him, the Black Sea region takes the first place and here the main resources and military force of the Russian Federation are directed. The power component of Russian politics in the region is a key, as evidenced by the development and modernization of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, and it already threatens not only the Black Sea countries but also far more distant European countries. Russia is already planning to destabilize not only the Black Sea region but the Balkan region as well, including through construction of the TurkStream pipeline. The deterioration of the situation there directly threatens the security of Europe.

Andrii Ryzhenko, 1st Rank Captain of the Navy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, stressed that Russia considers its dominance in the Black Sea region as a tool for projecting power in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. According to his estimates, Russia's current goals are as follows: legalization of occupation of the territorial sea around the occupied Crimea; establishment of military dominance in the Black Sea region; putting pressure on the Ukrainian economy through the blockade of ports. For example, the delay of vessels on the transition to the Sea of Azov led to the decline of the economy of Mariupol and Berdyansk ports by 40%, although Ukraine and other countries have the right of unimpeded access through the Kerch Strait and the freedom of navigation in the Sea of Azov in accordance with the international agreements.

According to Mykhailo Samus, Deputy Director of the Centre for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies, Russia has already been using “the military fist” formed in Crimea against Ukraine and other countries of the Black Sea region, that was evidenced by the unhidden act of military aggression against Ukrainian vessels near the Kerch Strait on November 25, 2018. The

Kremlin is not going to stop there - in the plans of the Russian Ministry of Defense by 2020 is to place in Crimea up to 24 units of surface and submarine carriers of Kalibr cruise missiles totaling 168 units. Thus, as the expert pointed out, Russia creates a relatively inexpensive and effective attack "sea fist", which will control the Black Sea and threaten the territory of Ukraine and NATO countries. In spite of the lack of short-term prospects to change the balance in favor of Ukraine and NATO, Mykhailo Samus pointed out that the following steps need to be taken: rapid and consolidated development of the Alliance's naval capabilities in the Black Sea; significant increase of the presence of the Naval Forces of NATO partner countries of Ukraine in the region; maximum activation of Ukraine-Romania security and defense contacts at all levels with a special emphasis on building naval capabilities; creation of conditions for the Navy to be strengthened in the military and technical sphere in Ukraine, including the acquisition of surface ships from partners (the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, the EU countries); obtaining new autonomous surface and submarine platforms for the Navy; use of the capabilities of the defense industry of Ukraine for the construction of the Navy; the introduction of real sanctions to deter the militarization of the Black Sea region by Russia.

In the context of increasing military presence of Russia in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov, Mark Voyger, Senior Lecturer of Russian and Eastern European Studies in the Baltic Defence College, paid attention to the very important component of the Russian hybrid warfare – a lawfare. Under this notion, he understood the practice of distorting interpretation of international law by Russia for the advantageous presentation of the course of events in order to justify its aggressive actions. The lawfare is gaining momentum. Russia conducts it in various spheres - diplomatic, military, economic, energy, informational, socio-cultural, and others. He cited such examples of the lawfare of the Russian Federation: approval by the Russian State Duma a law to grant permission to use Russian troops abroad; imitation of the referendum in Crimea; granting citizenship of the Russian Federation to the inhabitants of Crimea in violation of the laws of Ukraine; passportization of the residents of the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions using fictitious passports of illegal formations; fixing in the UN of Russian actions, aimed at improving the humanitarian situation in the so-called "DPR/LPR" (Russian humanitarian convoys) and counteracting "Nazism." To counteract Russian lawfare, Mark Voyger proposes creation of special groups for its study and counteraction, for example, the Lawfare Center of Excellence, which would be supported by NATO and the EU.

3. Regional peculiarities of the Russian hybrid aggression

In the course of the third discussion panel, great importance was paid to the regional peculiarities of the Russian hybrid aggression, mechanisms and technologies to conduct information warfare and propaganda dissemination, Russian influences to political establishment and societies of Belarus, the Czech Republic, Serbia and other states of the Balkan region.

According to Hryhorii Perepelytsia, Director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute, the change in the balance of power in favor of Russia and the revision of the results of the Cold War with the further restoration of the Yalta-Potsdam system in Europe constitute the goal of the Russian hybrid war in the regional dimension. To this end, Russia seeks to undermine the existing security architecture in Europe formed on the basis of the OSCE, NATO, and the EU. He estimated the international consequences of Russian hybrid aggression against Ukraine: violation of the global balance of power and an attempt to redistribute the spheres of influence; growing helplessness of the old European and world security structures; creation of a precedent for Russia - the contenders for the status of world and regional powers will no longer be able to rely on international standards of conduct but on force in pursuit of their ambitious goals; the West's compliance with the policy of dialogue will further convince Russia of its weakness and reinforce the desire of Russia to change the balance of power in its favor. Opposing to the West, according to Hrygorii Perepelytsia, Russia gives priority to the means of information warfare.

Vladimir Barbashov, civic expert in information warfare, noted that today Russia uses a wide range of dangerous weapons of mass mental destruction, using media, cinema, music, sports, culture, etc.

The most effective such activity of the Russian Federation is in countries where Russian ethnic groups live, which easily perceive messages that produce Russian propaganda, and are subjected to manipulations. Therefore, recipients perceive artificial messages from Russia as real, and thus the reality is replaced by imaginary situation. This is precisely the main danger of linguistic manipulation used in the information warfare conducted by Russia.

Natalia Ishchenko, Deputy Director of the Institute for World Policy, said that the methods of hybrid warfare were changed in the post-Crimean period, but its core essence remains invariable. The informational component, that is the war of narratives and senses, and not only disinformation, came to the foreground and is aimed at gaining control over the population without direct occupation of the territory in which it resides. Such methods are used by political technologists during election campaigns, influencing people's minds and choices. To control the Balkan region, Russia uses narratives of Orthodoxy, Slavic brotherhood and anti-fascism, which are common for both Ukraine and the Balkan region. A striking example of Russia's influence in the Balkans is the development and demonstration in the Balkan countries, starting with Serbia, of the film "Balkanskii rubezh" devoted to the 20th anniversary of the "NATO bombing", with which Russia wants to change the perception of the Russian participation in the Kosovo conflict by the Serbs who are offended on Russian inactivity of that time. Russia exploits a distorted interpretation of historical events or a reminder of the shared historical success for its influence in the Balkans.

Vencislav Bujic, Director of NGO Serbian-Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, noted that Russia is already resorting to large-scale non-military means in Belarus according to the model of those used by the Kremlin in Ukraine. Regarding the situation in Serbia, the expert called the ongoing protests as a way of pressure by the Kremlin to Serbian President A. Vucic. In Serbia, Russia is actively using a variety of pro-Russian organizations that disseminate messages of the Kremlin. Meanwhile, according to the Serbian expert, the Serbs, in their majority, are not Russophiles and have predominantly Western-style sentiments that creates positive conditions to strengthen position of the West in Serbia. He suggested that the EU and NATO should rely more on the "fifth element" - Serbia and Ukraine - in countering the Russian hybrid threat.

Despite the fact that the Russian aggression is aimed at the whole Europe, Jan Sir, Assistant Professor of Department of Russian and East European Studies in the Institute of International Studies of the Charles University, noted that in the Czech Republic they are not talking about Russian hybrid aggression, but only about certain attacks by the Russian Federation to expand its influence, that is a weakness in countering such an aggression. Meanwhile, the Czech Republic is in the very center of Russia's hostile influences, as Russia has created a network of agents of influence there. Jan Sir gave two great examples of Russian influence in the Czech Republic: in 2008 - when plans to deploy elements of the missile defense system on the Czech territory were disrupted with the use of the groups of ecologists and pacifists; in 2013 - when in the presidential election Milos Seman, one of the biggest supporters of the Kremlin in Europe, won, and the Russian company Lukoil was a sponsor of his presidential campaign. However, Russia's most active steps in expanding Russian influence began in 2014, after the Crimean occupation by Russia. Currently, Russia uses Pan-Slavism, historical narratives and manipulations of historical memory (militarization of history) in its efforts to discredit and isolate Ukraine in the international arena.

4. Humanitarian tools and consequences of the Russian hybrid aggression

During the discussion panel on the humanitarian instruments and effects of Russian hybrid aggression, the topic of long-term exploitation of religion by the Russian special services and the situation with education in occupied Crimea and temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions were highlighted.

Lana Samokhvalova, observer of Ukrinform, noted that "Ruskii mir" entered Ukraine through seven ways of the religious front. The first one lied through establishment of various "Orthodox centers", "Orthodox unions" and "Orthodox brotherhoods", which were used for events to destabilize the situation. The second way, one of the most serious, was ascetics, through which a complete subordination to the priests was imposed with the aim to kill any civic position and social activity.

The Russian Orthodox Church uses fear as an instrument of influence on Ukrainians, trying to prevent transition of the parishes of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. The third way was the use of diplomats for spreading pseudo-information that "Ukrainian people do not want a separate church". The fourth way supposed using of the so-called think-tanks and historians who received the money from Russia to spread narratives to prevent the formation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. The fifth way concerns the involvement of Ukrainian politicians in the implementation of pro-Russian policy in the field of Orthodoxy. The sixth way was a powerful one and dealt with the creation of paramilitary organizations, mainly Cossack ones, by the church. The essence of the seventh way was to use media for pro-Russian propaganda using the theme of Orthodoxy.

His Beatitude Bishop of Simferopol and Crimea Klyment called granting the Tomos to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine a geopolitical issue, which completed the previous page and launched a new page in the history of modern Ukraine. However, there is still a lot of work for the Ukrainian society, since the Tomos of autocephaly itself does not consolidate society but created a new fundamental thing – now in Ukraine there is a branch of Orthodoxy, which is an integral part of the Ecumenical Orthodoxy. Independence of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine promotes the strengthening of Ukraine. In the Moscow-imposed idea of "three fraternal peoples", the dominant role is always assigned to the Russian people, but such relations should be equal. The presence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate (herein after UOC-KP), and now Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), in Crimea has always been under pressure from the Moscow Patriarchate. By 2014, the UOC-KP created 50 religious communities there, despite the impediments by the Crimean authorities and the silent consent of the central government from Kyiv. After 2014, the UOC-KP managed to keep 9 religious centers based on the property acquired by the church, while in the remaining centers the Crimean authorities took away the property that was transferred to the UOC-KP for rent. Now, in Crimea there are no churches of the Russian Orthodox Church, since such churches belong to the UOC-MP. The reason for this is that the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) cannot be registered in Crimea, because this will violate international law, and the ROC and Patriarch Kirill himself can get sanctions. Therefore, Patriarch Kirill and the bishopric of the Russian Orthodox Church have never been to Crimea since 2014. Summing up, Bishop Klyment noted that the state should pay more attention to the Ukrainian church in order to strengthen independence of Ukraine.

Russia uses education and culture as tools of information warfare in the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and in Crimea. Yevheniia Horiunova, Associate Professor of the V.I. Vernadskii Taurida National University, Director of the Center for Political Studies at TNU, noted that the main directions of Russia's educational policy in Crimea are destruction of secondary education in Ukrainian language and the pro-Russian "patriotic" education of Crimean children through the militarization of their consciousness. She reported that for the years of annexation, the number of children studying in Ukrainian language has decreased by 98% in Crimea, but demand for the Ukrainian language exists. Thus, in the 2016/17 academic year, almost 13,000 Crimean children were studying it optionally. In order to accelerate the patriotic upbringing of future soldiers, Russia uses a variety of militaristic measures in Crimea, starting with kindergarten. In the educational process, military and physical training, teaching history in the Russian vision and military cadet classes play the main role. In extra-curricular activities, there are regular meetings with participants of combat operations, military performances, training of children to deal with weapons from the young age, military camps, etc.

Yurii Temirov, Dean of the Historical Faculty of Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University, stressed that the problems of Donbas are a concentrated format of problems of Ukraine, and therefore it is necessary to carry out de-occupation of Ukraine from Russia in the broadest sense. He called imposed collectivism the main inheritance of the USSR for Ukraine that became more concentrated in the urbanized areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which are occupied now, where it was easier to impose the system of such values, in which education played a key role. In fact, with the consent of the state leadership of Ukraine, in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the value basis after the independence of Ukraine did not change, which allowed to quickly recreate the mini-USSR within the occupied territories after 2014. Y. Temirov said that the Ukrainian-language education does not

exist at all there, and there is no Ukrainian department in Donetsk university and the Ukrainian language is not taught, as well as there is no education about Ukraine. Instead, there is a distortion of educational programs, as in the occupied Donetsk the "history of the Donetsk region" is taught and the "Donetsk language" is studied. Yuriy Temirov pointed out the need to determine what to do with teachers from the occupied territories after their de-occupation and proposed to consider a prohibition on them for further teaching in Ukraine. In general, the state leadership should more strategically approach the situation in the temporarily occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and contribute to the increase in the number of students from the occupied territories in Ukrainian universities.

5. Conclusions and recommendations concerning counteraction to Putin's wars in post-Crimean period

The post-Crimean period of the Russian hybrid aggression started from the occupation of part of the territory of the sovereign state - Ukraine, the intensification of the Russian Federation's activities in Europe, the more active involvement of the military forces and bringing of the information component of the hybrid warfare to the fore.

From the speeches and discussions in the framework of the international conference "Putin's Wars in Eastern Europe: Post-Crimean reality", we can draw the following conclusions:

1. In the post-Crimean period, after occupation of Crimea by Russia, Russian hybrid aggression has come to a new level, and its objects are not only Ukraine but also other countries of Europe and the EU.
2. Russia conducts a lawfare against the civilized world through deformation of the international law and interpretation of it for its own benefits.
3. The aggressiveness of Russia is growing not because it is strong, but because the West is weak and deconsolidated.
4. In Europe, they still do not realize that Russia is waging a hybrid war against them, as they are talking only about certain attacks by the Russian Federation.
5. The Russian attack against Ukrainian vessels in November 2018 made Europe to look at the Russian policy in a different way.
6. In counteraction to the West, Russia predominantly uses the means of information warfare, whereas it threatens to post-Soviet countries both by hybrid and military means.
7. At the current stage, Russia is increasingly resorting to information tools, trying to change the perception of the situation in the countries where it applies aggression, but does not refuse to use military means that began to sound more and more in the rhetoric of the Russian political establishment.
8. In its global hybression, Russia acts mostly from within Ukraine, the EU and the USA.
9. The Kremlin uses vulnerabilities, mistakes and failures of a country, where the Russian policy is applied, and goes as far as it is allowed.
10. Occupation and annexation of Crimea by Russia has worsened the situation in Transnistria and removed the possibility of settling this conflict.
11. Russia considers the Black Sea region as the center of gravity, and therefore seeks to establish its dominance there for secure access to the Mediterranean region.
12. In the occupied Crimea, Russia has assembled a "military fist", by which it threatens to all the countries of Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean.
13. Granting the Tomos to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine is a geopolitical issue that marked the end of the previous history and opened a new page in the history of modern Ukraine.

14. Russia uses education and religion as the instruments of information warfare in the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and in Crimea.

Participants of the international conference proposed the **following measures** to counteract Russian hybrid aggression:

1. To unite the efforts of European countries and use the tools of asymmetric actions to counter Putin's regime outside and inside Russia, by resorting to the strategy of "active defense" or "strategy of indirect actions" as well as to development and dissemination of the Ukrainian narrative.
2. To create a special group for study and countering Russian lawfare, for example – a Lawfare Center of Excellence, which would be supported by NATO and the EU.
3. Political and expert community of Ukraine and Belarus should get rids of the inheritance of the imperial unification and consider the post-Soviet states from the perspective of today's peculiarities and differences.
4. In counteraction to the Russian hybrid threat, the EU and NATO should rely more on the “fifth element” – Serbia and Ukraine.
5. In order to restore the military balance of forces in the Black Sea region, the Alliance must develop its own naval capabilities, strengthen its presence and provide maximum assistance to the development of the Navy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including by intensifying the appropriate cooperation between Ukraine and Romania.
6. As a response on the violent actions by Russia in the Black Sea region, real sanctions should be imposed against Russia that will have an impact on it and will restrict the militarization throughout the region.
7. The leadership of Ukraine should more strategically approach the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and favor increasing the number of students from the occupied territories in Ukrainian universities, as well as develop a clear policy regarding those who directly assisted the occupation forces.

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Views and opinions of this publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.