

SYNERGING



ENERGIES

BLACK SEA SECURITY

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IN FOCUS:

CRIMEAN PLATFORM

‘HAMMERHEAD’ IN CRIMEA

HISTORICAL PARALLELS

One of Black Sea Security's editorial board members, Sevastopol journalist **Oleksii Bessarabov** turned 45! But for the 6th year now, he has been a Russian prisoner in the "case of saboteurs," fabricated by the Russian FSB. Arrested on November 9, 2016, on charges of preparing sabotage on the territory of Crimea together with **Dmytro Shtyblykov** and **Volodymyr Dudka**, he is under a sentence of the occupation court, in a maximum-security penal colony in the Stavropol Region.



Oleksii Bessarabov (left) and Vladymyr Dudka (right) were sentenced by a Russian-controlled Sevastopol court to 14 years in prison on a completely fabricated "saboteur case."



Photo of the graduation of the Warsaw Euro-Atlantic Summer Academy of the College of Europe. Fourth from the left, Oleksii Bessarabov holds the Ukrainian flag. July 26, 2013.

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Members of the editorial board Oleksii Bessarabov
and Dmytro Shtyblykov are political prisoners
of the Kremlin. Since 2016 they have been kept
in prison by the FSB on the fabricated charges.

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One of Black Sea Security's editorial board members, Sevastopol journalist Oleksii Bessarabov turned 45!

But for the 6th year now, he has been a Russian prisoner in the "case of saboteurs," fabricated by the Russian FSB. Arrested on November 9, 2016, on charges of preparing sabotage on the territory of Crimea together with Dmytro Shtybylykov and Volodymyr Dudka, he is under a sentence of the occupation court, in a maximum-security penal colony in the Stavropol Region.

The court passed the verdict in a closed session in Sevastopol City on April 4, 2019, on the day of the 70th anniversary of NATO – 14 years in a maximum-security penal colony, a fine of 300 thousand roubles. Russian confines did not break Oleksii. He remains true to his life principles and does not cease fighting for his rights and the release of Ukrainians, who the Putin regime deprived of their freedom in the occupied territories of Ukraine.

In May 2021, on the eve of the visit of the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to Kyiv, Oleksii Bessarabov was able to pass an appeal to him from a maximum-security penal colony. It referred to the issue of the release of Ukrainians deprived of their liberty for political reasons on the occupied Crimean Peninsula and in Russia, falling out of the international agenda. "We are almost forgotten, the problems of Crimea are not discussed," Oleksii wrote in his letter. He suggested that any

negotiations with Russia should be preceded by an exchange of "all for all," Western pressure on Moscow regarding the unconditional release of Ukrainian political prisoners of the Kremlin.

Anthony Blinken heard this appeal from the Russian Mordor and sent a response to Oleksii. The US Secretary of State assured him and other Ukrainians: *"the United States of America has not forgotten about you and dozens of your unjustly convicted fellow citizens...Political persecution of Crimean residents for their political position, ethnic origin, or religious beliefs is absolutely unacceptable,"* the letter reads. Finally, Anthony Blinken stressed: *"Please know that the United States will continue to call upon Russia to release all Ukrainian prisoners it unjustly holds, so that you and your fellow political prisoners may regain your freedom, rejoin your loved ones, and resume your lives in a sovereign and democratic Ukraine."*

Please know that the United States will continue to call upon Russia to release all Ukrainian prisoners it unjustly holds, so that you and your fellow political prisoners may regain your freedom, rejoin your loved ones, and resume your lives in a sovereign and democratic Ukraine.

Sincerely,

Anthony Blinken
Anthony J. Blinken

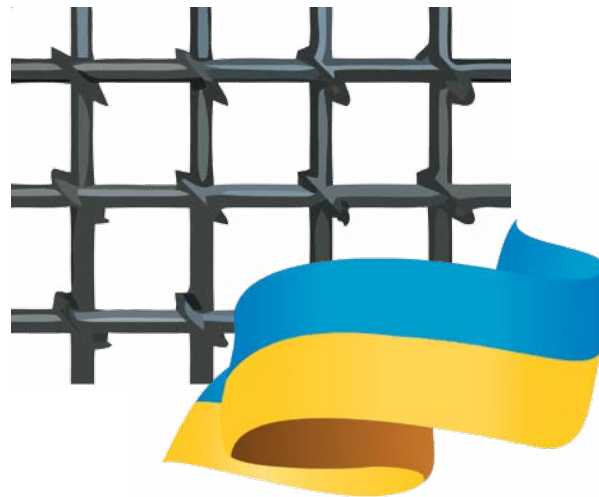
Petro Dudka, the brother of another person involved in the "the case of saboteurs," Volodymyr Dudka, also held in a maximum-security penal colony under a 14-year sentence of the occupation court in Sevastopol, appealed to the President of Ukraine with a demand to "take under personal control not only the issue of the release of CADLR (Certain Areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions) prisoners but also the issue of the release of the Kremlin's political prisoners."

The third person involved in the "case of saboteurs", Dmytro Shtyblykov, whose 5-year prison term was supposed to end in the fall of 2021, after a one-year stay in the FSB Lefortovo pre-trial detention facility, came before the Russian Military Court in Rostov on a new case. He is charged with a "crime" under Article 275 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, "State Treason". Dmytro faces a new sentence of 12 to 20 years. Shtyblykov's case is unprecedented. There is no other case when, at the end of the prisoner's sentence, a new case was quickly falsified against him, in which he would face an even longer sen-

tence. Consequently, the Kremlin is afraid to let Ukrainians go free.

The platform of the former Kremlin prisoners (Oleh Sentsov, Roman Suschenko, Ilmi Umerov, Akhtem Chyigoz, Oleksandr Kolchenko, Mykola Karpyuk, Pavlo Hryb, etc.) appealed to the Ukrainian authorities in their contacts with Western partners (USA, Germany, France, EU) to put forward a clear position of creating solidarity pressure on Russia regarding the unconditional release of Ukrainian political prisoners of the Kremlin as a prerequisite for further negotiations with Russia on any topic. For Russia, the Ukrainian side should also set an appropriate prerequisite – no negotiations without the unconditional release of the prisoners.

Meanwhile, the Putin regime, feeling unpunished, produces more and more cases of Ukrainian "saboteurs", "spies", and "extremists". The list of prisoners is being updated with the new names in the occupied Crimea, and those who, once in Russia, became the FSB victims.



PREFACE

Dear readers,

You are reading the 40th issue of Black Sea Security since its first publication in Sevastopol in 2005. That year, the then Russian President V. Putin called the collapse of the USSR the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the XXI century. The current President of the Russian Federation, still the same V. Putin, goes further and seems to want to revive it in 2022, at least in the basic version of the Slavic-Orthodox unity of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. The creeping Anschluss of Belarus accelerated in 2021. Russia's takeover of Belarus means deterioration in the geostrategic situation of both Ukraine and the centre of the eastern flank of NATO and the EU. Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland see on their borders not only migration waves of hybrid aggression of the Russian Federation performed by the hands of the Belarusian usurper against Europe, but a military threat from the deployment of additional forces and means of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. The latter can be implemented at any time under the false pretext of countering the expansion of NATO's military infrastructure.

In the previous issue of the magazine, we predicted that the trends of 2020 promise only increased turbulence in world politics in 2021. This is what happened and continues. Moreover, the situation is developing according to an escalating scenario, and not only in military terms. There is a multi-frontal offensive of Russia to the West.

The actions of the Russian political leadership in the American, European, and Ukrainian directions recently indicate escalating scenarios, including military ones. Grounds for the Russian Federation (self-) confidence:

- the collective West, able to resist the Russian Federation, as during the Cold War, no longer exists;
- the Biden administration, having stopped resisting Nord Stream 2, showed weakness and allowed the Russian Federation to complete it;
- the United States has undermined its credibility in the world by chaotically fleeing Afghanistan and abandoning the pro-western Afghan government to its fate;
- the Biden administration in 2022 will be more concerned with domestic policy issues, foremost, attempts to avoid the defeat of the Democratic Party in the midterm congressional elections on November 8;
- the United States is afraid of confrontation with Russia, but even more – with China, so they are trying to make Russia an accomplice in its confrontation with The Heavenly Empire, which Russia should take advantage of, demanding from the United States maximum geopolitical favours;
- Russia is successfully reintegrating Belarus without encountering much resistance from the West and using its territory for a hybrid migrants' attack against the EU, observing the helplessness of the European institutions;
- Russia has strengthened its military capabilities in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea basins over the past two years;
- the West (the United States, NATO, and the EU) does not demonstrate readiness for a comprehensive alliance with Ukraine, its integration into the EU and NATO, limiting itself to diplomatic rhetoric of support and the provision of certain financial assistance;
- the political leadership of Ukraine has no authority in the eyes of the leading Western politicians and China, and like previous power teams, it is corrupt, strikingly incompetent, and cowardly;
- the unfolding global energy crisis, the struggle for energy supplies, makes Russia the No. 1 player, which it should immediately take advantage of by setting its conditions for others;
- the EU will not be able to refuse gas supplies from the Russian Federation this winter, and therefore it will be forced to fulfil all Russian requirements and, in particular, those related to Ukraine.

PREFACE

Given this and the reactive, rather than preventive, actions of the West, the Russian Federation believes that the circumstances are favourable for a new Blitzkrieg against Ukraine and a new hybrid attack against Europe.

Events taking place in the European gas market, where Gazprom is the dominant supplier should be evaluated not so much in the system of market coordinates, but in the system of military strategy and hybrid special operations of the Putin regime. Over the past 7 years after the beginning of the aggression against Ukraine, Russia has honed them to a new level of perfection.

The Russian doctrine, known in the West as "escalation for de-escalation," and tied to the limited use of tactical nuclear weapons, is now being demonstrated in a hybrid way in the European gas war theatre.

The price escalation gradually occurred after the July Biden-Merkel agreement on Nord Stream 2, favourable for the Kremlin, and reaching its peak on the spot of almost USD 2,000 per 1 thousand cubic meters in early October. At the end of October 2021, Russia has "suddenly" started to demonstrate "concerns" for Europe. Through the Western media, the thesis was thrown that Russia wants to reduce gas prices in Europe by 60%.

To meet the European demand, Gazprom offered more than fair price discounts. It offered a return to long-term contracts with fixed terms. In fact, this was a mechanism for further market capture. This is done demonstratively on the example of some of Russia's satellites in Europe – Hungary, and Serbia. They have already received cheap gas under the new contracts for refusing transit through Ukraine and switching to the TurkStream infrastructure. Russia is once again helping Orbán and Vučić win the upcoming elections in exchange for their further service as Russia's "Trojan horses" in Europe. And the Kremlin wants more "Trojan horses".

By offering cheaper than spot gas to the European majors, Gazprom intends to further expand its presence, which will deepen the EU's dependence on Russia and not only in the energy sector. Russia's share in gas imports to the EU is already a record

46.8% according to the first half of 2021 statistics. After the price de-escalation and the simultaneous imposition of the new long-term contracts with a cheaper price on the European customers, it may turn out that Gazprom's share in gas imports to the EU will well exceed 50%.

In the context of a natural decline in gas production in Europe, the lack of Norway's and Algeria's technical capacities to significantly increase gas supplies to the EU in the next 10 years, and uncertainty with LNG supplies from the United States, the EU will fall into beyond-critical dependence on Russian supplies with all the political and geopolitical consequences following it.

The growing dependence of the Russian Federation on China and the affinity of the authoritarian regimes in Moscow and Beijing plans for geopolitical and geo-economic expansion lead to the synergy of Russia's and China's efforts. The minimum geopolitical programme is to end with transatlanticism through Europe's energy separation from the United States, and its ultimate switch to Russia. This was greatly facilitated by Merkel's Germany with its active support for NS2.

Gazprom's new mega-project "Power of Siberia-2", related to the combination of the Eastern and Western Gas Transmission Systems in Russia, should be taken into account. So far, Moscow does not have the technical ability to redirect the gas flows from Europe to China, despite the periodic narratives of Russian propaganda about such possibility. However, as soon as the Yamal and East Siberian gas fields are interconnected, such an opportunity will appear. And Russia will take full advantage of this.

Europe will become the object of continuous Russia's blackmail by the threat of redirecting export flows to China. Given that China is the largest foreign investor in Russian LNG Arctic projects; this will essentially be a joint Russian-Chinese gas dictate to Europe.

If Russia, with German assistance, manages to commission NS2, it may resort to unexpected hidden actions to force the EU to stop resisting Russian gas expansion, moreover, to make Europe believe that Russian gas is an uncontested option.

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This means that by acting in covert ways (either cyber interference or sabotage of the RF Defence Ministry Main Directorate of Deep-Sea Research), it can render partially functional or dysfunctional a part of the offshore gas infrastructure of the North Sea, through which Norwegian gas enters the EU.

As soon as this winter, Russia will try to present Europe with a challenge. Its essence is the maximum Russian assistance in resolving the energy and climate issues in Europe with the launch of a new "detente" policy, with the revival of the "Helsinki spirit" in exchange for agreeing with the an-schluss of Belarus, desovereignisation of Ukraine, recognition of Crimea as Russian, suspension of NATO's and the EU's expansion to the East, and lifting sanctions.

In other words, something that fits into Yalta-2, which the Kremlin wanted to so quickly implement back in 2014. In fact, the Putin regime is no longer hiding its intentions. Vladislav Surkov, a leading ideologist of Putinism, openly points out that "another division of the spheres of influence is required and it (sooner or later, formally or informally, secretly or explicitly) will definitely happen."

It is obvious that the Kremlin wants the reincarnation of the USSR in a new form. Ukraine, with its revived statehood and imperfect, but still democracy, stands in its way. The transformation of Ukraine into a non-aligned (con)federal (quasi) state within the new Union of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus is what the Putin regime wants in 2022. This practically means the destruction of Ukraine. If possible, it will be achieved through energy blackmail, blockade, and forced surrender. If these fail, it will be attempted through separate agreements with the United States on the surrender

of Ukraine through "coercion to Minsk" subject to the tacit consent of a gas-deficient Europe. If this fails, the armed intervention, possibly disguised as a peacekeeping operation, will be attempted.

The combination of Russia's gas, military, and political preparations sends the message from the Kremlin to the West: "We are collecting the lost Russian territories. Ukraine and Belarus are not Europe. The Winter War is not your war. Just watch. Do not interfere. Otherwise, you will be left without gas, or it will be too scarce and too expensive. You've already seen how we do this. But we make sure that Europe is warm and comfortable. We are ready for more after the launch of Nord Stream 2. Don't interfere with us. Biden won't help you. Be pragmatic. Russian gas in the European house is better than the American LNG with the summit of Democracies."

The fate of Europe and the Transatlantic world is yet again in the hands of the United States and the non-schrededer part of European politics. The cold winter of 2022 has every reason to become hot and decisive in the struggle of Putin's corrupt aggressive gasocracy against the divided western democracy. Solidarity with Ukraine is not only for the sake of Ukraine; it is primarily a test for the United States and Europe and their ability to defend their principles.

For Ukraine, there is no other choice but to resist Russian aggression and destroy the enemy. For us, this is a matter of preserving the nation and statehood, regardless of the position of the EU, NATO, or the United States. In the event of direct armed intervention, the war should also be taken to the territory of the aggressor.

Borys BABIN

Professor,

Expert of the Association of Reintegration of Crimea

Attempted Crimea Annexation and International Legal Practice

The issues of the international legal dimension of the annexation, components, and signs of this phenomenon became acute for Ukraine after the outburst of the Ukrainian-Russian armed conflict in February 2014, the component of which was the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation (RF), the subsequent proclamation of the Russian Federation's own "sovereignty" over Crimea, by approving federal and other laws and by-laws, introducing amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, through the extension of its own managerial, financial, and legal mechanisms to Crimea. An element of such actions of the Russian Federation were consistent attempts to "justify" these actions as the alleged "reunification" of Crimea with the Russian Federation, at the diplomatic, political, and scientific-doctrinal levels [1].

These illegal actions of the Russian Federation in the plane of encroachment on the territorial integrity of Ukraine have become the subject of research and evaluation at the level of international institutions, statements of the foreign countries, the laws of Ukraine, and legal doctrine. At the same time, the illegality of these actions of the Russian Federation as a violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and its treaties is indisputable and does not become the subject of discussion (except for tendentious and biased works of Russian authors) [2]. However, an issue of correct qualification and definition of these illegal actions of the Russian Federation on the actual seizure of Crimea, in particular in the international legal dimension, arises. After all, the laws of Ukraine apply the category of "temporarily occupied territories" to Crimea; at the same time, in the legal doctrine and the statements of individual officials, the term "annexation" is used occasionally.

At the same time, the actual official statement of the Ministry for the Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, announced in November 2020, indicated that the term "annexation" is erroneous regarding Crimea and contradicts the Ukrainian law [3]. Therefore, it is worth studying the historical experience and international practice of applying this category to the territories of the world's states.

The term "annexation" itself comes from the Latin "annexio" ("ad" means "to something" and "nexus" means "entry, inclusion") and produced a well-known English term "annex", i.e., "attachment". Therefore, this category itself for a long time did not contain any direct criminal narrative and stood for, first of all, conquest, which leads to control over the territory. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines annexation as "possession taken of a piece of land or a country, usually by force or without permission" [4], similar definitions of the category are found in most open sources.

The Charter of the United Nations and other modern universal international-law treaties do not allow us speaking about the existence of a contractual definition of annexation. At the same time, the Resolution 3314 (XXIX) of 1974 of the UN General Assembly states that any forced annexation of the territory of another state or part of it is an act of aggression. From this thesis, it should be concluded that annexation can be carried out with or without the use of force; moreover, the force can be used against various subjects of international law that have rights to the territory (states, peoples fighting for self-determination, and other peoples) [5]. Annexation can also be directed to the territory of the entire state (complete annexation) or its parts (partial annexation).

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It is noteworthy that this thesis given in Resolution 3314 (XXIX) was reproduced almost verbatim in resolution RC/Res.6 date of 2010, which amended the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Article 8 bis, "Crime of Aggression"), which entered into force in 2017 [6]. This means that in the absence of a contractual definition of annexation, this exact qualification of annexation as a component of the international crime of aggression (on the grounds of using force for such annexation) is now seen as permanent and uncontested.

At the same time, these provisions disclose nothing about when the annexation begins and when it ends. Additionally, it is not clear how to qualify an annexation that occurred without the use of force (for example, of the uninhabited territories), and annexation with the use of force against a third state. International practice shows the steady use of the term "annexation" at the level of doctrine, statements of individual states, and relevant political and legal documents to several situations that occurred after the approval of the UN Charter and the final prohibition (and then criminalisation) of aggressive war and prohibition of war as a means of interstate disputes' resolution.

In particular, this is the seizure and incorporation of the territories of Portugal (Goa, Damau, Diu, and others) by the Republic of India in 1961. It is characteristic that this seizure of the territory, which was preceded by an interstate armed conflict, did not lead to the decision of the UN Security Council to initiate a draft resolution of December 18, 1961, blocked by the USSR. The term "annexation" was not used in this draft resolution [7]. For a long time, the relevant actual territorial changes were not recognised by both Portugal and several countries around the world. At the same time, Portugal and India in 1974 signed and then ratified a bilateral treaty, by which Portugal recognised the annexation of its territories by India. In Article 1 of this Treaty, Portugal recognises that these territories "have already become parts of India" and "hereby fully recognises India's full sovereignty over these territories from the dates when they became parts of India according to the Constitution of India" [8].

Thus, it can be seen that for the completion of the annexation and international legal recognition of India's acquisition of these territories, it was

necessary to obtain the legitimate, contractual consent of the victim country to do so. At the same time, such completion can actually be retroactive, as can be seen in the example of Goa. At the same time, this example is not typical, as it concerns the partial occupation and annexation of a fully recognised state. Other annexation situations relate to the seizure of certain territories that at the time of the seizure had an ambiguous legal status, which they received due to decolonisation. The main examples are Israel's attempted annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, Morocco's attempted annexation of Western Sahara, and Indonesia's attempted annexation of East Timor. Certain situations of effective control and de facto annexation attempts are qualified by the doctrine and international law in a slightly different dimension, usually within the framework of decolonisation or the implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples [9].

Regarding these situations, the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council have adopted a large number of declarations and resolutions that mostly bypass the adoption of the "annexation" category, recognising the obligations of the respective countries as an occupying state, in particular, taking into account the requirements of the IV Geneva Convention. Examples include resolutions of the UN Security Council No. 478 of 1980, No. 2334 (2016) of 2016 on Jerusalem [10]; [11], Resolution of UN Security Council No. 389 dated of on East Timor [12], and Resolution of UN Security Council No. 1056 of 1996 on Western Sahara [13]. Similarly, the use of the "annexation" category was not detected in numerous UN General Assembly resolutions on these conflicts (including the most recent ones, such as resolutions 74/89 [14], 74/90 [15], or 74/97 [16] of 2019).

It is characteristic that concerning these conflicts, regional international organisations also try to avoid the "annexation" term, trampling on numerous political statements [17], a vivid example of which should be considered the discussion of the Western Sahara issue in the European Parliament [18].

We should add that these situations have had different international legal developments. East Timor gained independence through a referendum in 1999, and the treaties with Indonesia and the UN Resolution on such a referendum, the recognition

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of East Timor's independence by Indonesia in the next one, indicate that the annexation of this territory by Indonesia has never occurred. Mostly, the states of the world did not recognise East Timor as part of Indonesia; they recognised the newly formed Timorese state, and Indonesia's possession of East Timor was not considered legitimate. The situation in Jerusalem and Western Sahara is still unresolved.

At the same time, the absolute majority of the countries in the world do not recognise the sovereignty of Israel and Morocco, respectively, over these territories. However, in December 2020, in the last days of the presidency of Donald Trump, the United States recognised the annexation of Western Sahara (previously, the United States also recognised Israeli "sovereignty" over Jerusalem). It is noteworthy that in January 2020, Morocco, by a Resolution of the Parliament, declared the extension of its sovereignty over the sea areas of Western Sahara in the Atlantic Ocean [19].

The only exception to this systematic UN evasion from adopting the "annexation" category should be considered the situation of the attempted annexation of Kuwait by Iraq, which led to several resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council. It is noteworthy that initially the word "annexation", contained in the draft resolutions [20], was removed from their final text during approvals [21], but was still reflected in UN Security Council Resolution 662 (1990) dated 1990. In Article 1 of this act, the UN Security Council pointed to its resolution, according to which "annexation of Kuwait by Iraq under any form and whatever pretext has no legal validity, and is considered null and void", and Article 2 of this Resolution "calls upon all States, international organisations and specialised agencies not to recognise that annexation" [22]. States that commit annexation or attempted annexation themselves generally do not use the term "annexation" concerning their actions. The only exception found is Norway's attempted annexation of Queen Maud Land and other territories in Antarctica. As the Norwegian government pointed out in the official White Paper 32 (2014-2015) [23] regarding Norway's possessions in this region, Norway "annexed" Bouvetøya in 1928, Peter I Øy in 1931, and Queen Maud Land in 1939.

It is noteworthy that Norway's sovereignty over the uninhabited island of Bouvetøya is not disputed by other states and international organisations, and other territorial claims of Norway are rejected due to their coverage by the 1959 Antarctic Treaty. However, this did not stop Norway from announcing on June 12, 2015, a new extension of its territorial claims in Antarctica, which now cover not only the claimed Queen Maud Land in 1939 but also the territory (sector) from this claim to the South Pole. [24] These territorial claims of Norway, i.e. its attempted annexation, are recognised, among other things, by Australia, France, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. This example shows that there are situations of annexation or its attempts without the use of force or the threat of force (Norway seeks to annex *terra nullius*), and therefore, in addition to assessing their legitimacy, it is not an international crime, because it is not aggression.

Under such conditions, the non-adoption of the term "annexation" in relation to Crimea in a number of the documents of the international organisations, primarily the UN, should not be considered something specific at all; such non-adoption does not affect the assessment of the actions of the Russian Federation and even more so the status of Crimea as the territory of Ukraine. In particular, UN General Assembly resolution 68/262 of 2014 "Territorial Integrity of Ukraine" does not contain such a mention [25], thematic annual resolutions of the UN General Assembly on the Problem of the militarisation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, 73/194 dated 2018 and 74/17 dated 2019 respectively, do not use the "annexation" term [26]. Thus, it was UN General Assembly resolutions 71/205 dated 2016 [27] and 72/190 dated 2017 [28] on the Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea that did not use the term "annexation".

At the same time, the situation changed after the inclusion of this term in the next annual UN General Assembly Resolution on the Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea 73/263 dated 2018, in Article 3 of which the UN General Assembly "condemns all attempts by the Russian Federation to legitimise or normalise its attempted annexation of Crimea, including the automatic imposition of Russian citizenship and illegal election campaigns" [29].

A similar norm was contained in the following UN General Assembly resolution on Human Rights in Crimea 74/168 dated 2019, which in Article 3 "condemns all attempts by the Russian Federation to legitimise or normalise its attempted annexation of Crimea", including the "change of the demographic structure of the population of Crimea" [30]. At the same time, these resolutions used the term "occupation of Crimea" and "occupying state" in relation to the Russian Federation, stating that "seizure of Crimea by force is illegal and a violation of international law, and affirming also that those territories must be immediately returned." UN General Assembly Resolution 75/192 2020 contains similar theses [31].

Therefore, the UN General Assembly resolutions on Crimea primarily use the category of occupied territory. At the same time, since 2018, these documents have mentioned an attempt (attempts) to annex Crimea. If we classify these acts of the Russian Federation in relation to the forms of annexation analysed above, we should unequivocally state that this can only be an attempted annexation, and not annexation as such, because the non-existing "sovereignty" of the Russian Federation over Crimea is not recognised by international organisations, States of the world and Ukraine. Therefore, the desired "annexation" of Crimea to the Russian Federation, and therefore the alleged "annexation of Crimea", did not take place. At the same time, these actions of the Russian Federation can then only be an attempted partial annexation and simultaneously an attempted annexation by force.

Since the use of force against Ukraine during such an attempted annexation and its being illegal, such an attempted annexation by the Russian Federation is an element (component) of the international crime of aggression, reflected in the aforementioned UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 (XXIX) dated 1974 (also referred to by the "Crimean" UN General Assembly resolutions) and, accordingly, in the new version of the Rome Statute. Therefore, such an attempted annexation is an integral part of an international crime; therefore, in Ukrainian, considering the traditional criminal law terminology, it is appropriate to use the "attempted annexation" category in relation to the assessment of the actions of the Russian Federation in relation to Crimea.

Such adoption is possible not so much in relation to the legal regime of Crimea, which, according to international law and national legislation, is the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, but first of all in relation to the characteristics of elements of the actions of the Russian Federation in relation to Crimea. Using for the actions of the Russian Federation in relation to Crimea of the "annexation" category (and not "attempted annexation") is unacceptable both under the international laws and by-laws, and political statements or doctrine. The issue of using the "attempted annexation" term in the rulings of international courts, arbitrations, and tribunals on Crimea should become the subject of the new research.

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Overview of the Crimean Platform: Did the Summit Manage to Return Crimea to the World's Agenda and What Will Happen Next?

Over the last seven years, the issue of deoccupation has been considered in fragments, and has mostly found its way into the texts of resolutions and statements of leading international organizations, which had a limited range of action. The Crimean Platform has become an effective platform for raising the issue on the international agenda, but the process of developing long-term strategies for deoccupation and coordinating the efforts of Ukraine and the international community should be more systematic. At the moment, our main achievement is that over the years the subjectivity of Crimea, its belonging to the territory of the aggressor's country has not become a *fait accompli*.



*Fig. Inaugural Summit of the Crimea Platform.
Source: Official website of the Crimea Platform*

The Crimea Platform Summit held in Kyiv on August 23 was the largest international event in 30 years of Ukraine's independence. The statistics look nice, as the Conference was attended by government delegations from 45 countries: the United States, all EU members, Georgia, Moldova, Turkey, North Macedonia, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, and Iceland, including nine presidents, four prime ministers, 14 foreign affairs ministers, and other politicians and ambassadors. Thus, the Summit was attended by all EU and NATO countries, all G7 countries, and the

Normandy format countries except for the Russian Federation [1]. Certainly, the Summit managed to capture the attention of the international community to the problem of the occupied Crimea and become an effective communication platform, which was the stated objective, but the definition of the parameters of the International de-occupation policy is exclusively declarative in nature, which is in general accordant with the official policy of Ukraine regarding the exclusively diplomatic path of liberation of the occupied territories.

The result of the Summit was the Declaration of the Crimea Platform adopted by all participants [2], in which they, guided by the provisions of the Resolutions of the UN General Assembly and leading European institutions, and the principles of international law, emphasised the non-recognition of the temporary occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea, condemned the ongoing militarisation of the Peninsula and changes in the demographic structure of the population, repression and illegal restrictions on Human Rights and fundamental freedoms experienced by residents of Crimea. Additionally, the Declaration of the Crimea Platform contains a clause on the need to consider the introduction of additional sanctions against the Russian Federation in the event of further aggression [3].

The level of presentation, the statements made by the representatives, and international reactions together became the main indicators for assessing the success of the Summit. The highlights are given below.

President Joe Biden's representative, Energy Secretary Jennifer M. Granholm represented the **USA** at the Summit. After the agreement concluded with Germany in July of the last year, a month before the Summit, in which the United States gave the green light for Nord Stream 2, the speech of the US Energy Secretary at the Crimea Platform Summit was supposed to demonstrate Ukraine a signal that despite unfavourable agreements, the United States is ready to support Ukraine in the energy sector, at least at the level of statements and declarations. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs George Kent during a live broadcast noted that the United States condemns the forced passport registration of Crimeans, and stressed that sanctions against the Russian Federation should last until complete de-occupation.

The speech made by **Mircea Geoană, Deputy Secretary-General of NATO** was important. He expressed confidence that Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO, and noted that the Black Sea region is critical for the Alliance, whereas the illegal annexation forced NATO to increase its presence. He added that NATO will continue to support the reforms of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Secretary-General of the European Council Marija Pejčinović Burić in her speech noted that the European Council supports the "Minsk Agreements" and the "Normandy Format" on the settlement of the situation in the Donbas. "We stand on a strong position that the Russian Federation must end the occupation. It is also important that our organisation can monitor the observance of human rights on the peninsula. And the implementation of this goal has already begun: recently, the PA of the European Council, PACE, adopted a resolution on the situation and the rights of Crimean Tatars. We have condemned the violations of human rights, including the killing of activists... Of course, no one can promise a quick solution to the situation, but the European Council will do everything to make sure that Ukrainians can live in peace and security with respect for their rights."

The Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian was supposed to represent **France at the Crimea Platform Summit**, but he never participated, and the official explanation was the crisis in Afghanistan. The Minister of Trade was present instead. Le Drian's official visit to Kyiv took place the next day, and the Minister participated in celebrations dedicated to the Independence Day of Ukraine. The effectiveness of France's further involvement in the Crimea Platform should be assessed through the prism of its involvement in the Normandy format, which has proved fruitless over the years. The "Crimean platform" as an international event was given little attention in the French media; rather, the French were inclined to once again informatively highlight Russian provocations on the front pages [4], such as the incident with the deployment of a huge Russian flag on the border with the occupied peninsula.

On the Crimean Platform **Germany** was represented by the Minister of Economy and Energy Peter Altmaier. During his speech, he stated: "*Germany has not recognised and will not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia. The annexation created many problems, so the EU imposed sanctions and extended them many times. We will not allow Crimea to be turned into a blind spot on the map. And gas transit through Ukraine will continue after 2024. After all, we understand you; the Germans were also once divided. We support you in the fight for the future you deserve*". However, apart from loud statements on the issue of de-oc-

cupation of Crimea, separate diplomatic and political initiatives should not be expected from Germany. In fact, immediately, a day after the meeting with Putin, Angela Merkel flew to Kyiv and met Volodymyr Zelensky. This happened on the eve of the Crimea Platform Summit, and the Chancellor did not stay for the event itself [5]. Political experts agree that the next German Chancellor will continue Merkel's policy towards Crimea.

A month after the Crimea Platform Summit, on September 21 in New York, several events were held, including **the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly**, during which the world leaders expressed support for the de-occupation of Crimea, and the Crimea Platform. **President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** during his speech at the UN stated [6] that he does not recognise the annexation of Crimea and supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The Turkish Foreign Ministry earlier refused to recognise the elections to the State Duma of Russia, which Moscow held on the territory of the occupied Crimea. The results of these "elections" have no legal force for Ankara, as it considers the annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula to Russia illegal, the Ministry stressed.

On October 7, 2021, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu paid a working visit to Lviv. During the visit, it was said at the official level that Turkey will not only remain one of the most active participants in the Crimea Platform but will also make efforts to convince the governments of the countries that have not yet joined to support the Crimea Platform.

Obviously, the factor of the Crimean Tatars and the long history of the struggle for the Crimean peninsula between the Ottoman and Russian Empires do not allow Turkey to stay away from the Crimean issues, and force it to take an active part both in the issue of the Crimean Tatars – the release of political prisoners A. Chygoza and I. Umerov in 2018 with the direct mediation of R. Erdoğan, and force Turkey to not directly recognise the annexation of Crimea by Russia. However, it cannot be said that Turkey's participation in the Crimea Platform goes further than the general international concept of the annexation non-recognition, which other countries adhere to. Being dependent on gas supplies from Russia, developing other critical energy

infrastructure projects such as the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant project with Rosatom power units, negotiating with Russia on control over the territories in Syria, and Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey cannot afford to be more active in Crimea than it is now.

The Presidents of Lithuania and Poland expressed their unwavering support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine during the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly. **Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda** called for "strengthening the policy of non-recognition of the occupation and annexation of Crimea." "We have seen the continuation, now in its seventh year, of military aggression against Ukraine, and the illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea. These actions violate international law, the Charter of the United Nations, and the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act...It is also extremely important to protect the rights and freedoms of local civilians. I highly appreciate Ukraine's efforts to keep this issue on the agenda by creating an international Crimea Platform," Nausėda said [7]. **Andrzej Duda, President of Poland**, drew attention to the absence of those who approved the Nord Stream 2 Project at the Crimea Platform Summit, drawing geopolitical parallels between the seizure of Crimea and the undermining of European solidarity and the surrender of the national interests of individual European countries.

The real practical value may be the creation of **the expert network of the Crimea Platform**. On July 29, a month before the Summit, the topic of de-occupation of Crimea united the largest global expert network of analysts and scientists in the history of Ukraine. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Charity Organisation "Eastern Europe Foundation" signed a memorandum of cooperation to support the expert network of the Crimea Platform, which has already been joined by 180 experts from 33 countries. The memorandum provides for the launch of a separate program by the Foundation that will support research projects by the independent analytical centres from many world countries and civil society; provide information support to the Crimea Platform, support events, conferences, workshops, and round tables within its framework. The initiative is extremely important, as such expert diplomacy will help keep Crimea in the focus of the international community's attention, and the more analytical

materials appear, the longer Crimea will be on the international policy agenda during a time full of global events, and the consolidation of efforts of the state and civil society will contribute to better awareness of the world community about the events in Crimea.

The Kremlin's reaction cannot be ignored as well. After all, as many journalists have said that by the hysterical reaction “from behind the kerbstone” we can judge the success of the Ukrainian Crimea Summit. The comment of the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry published on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [8] immediately after the Crimea Platform read: “We will be forced to consider the participation of individual countries, international organisations and their representatives in the Crimea Platform an encroachment on the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, which will inevitably and accordingly affect our relations.”

The sad consequence of the Summit was an **increased occupiers' repression** in relation to the Summit participants and the Crimean Tatars. Immediately after the Crimea Platform Summit, a wave of repression swept through Crimea. In early September, Nariman Dzhelal, Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis, an online speaker on the Crimea Platform, and four other Crimean Tatars were jailed for sabotage of the gas pipeline. In fact, the new wave of arrests was revenge for the participation of Crimean Tatars in the Crimea Platform. Refat Chubarov, Mejlis Leader, commented on the imprisonment as follows: “After the blackmail and ultimatums used by the Kremlin on the eve of the Inaugural Summit of the Crimea Platform miserably failed, Moscow began to embody the threats against its participants... Mass searches and detentions, performed on September 3-4, and were camouflaged by the Russian occupiers as sabotage, allegedly performed by the group of Crimean Tatars through the mediation of the Deputy Mejlis Leader Nariman Dzhelyalov... It is clear that the “terrorist” article incriminated to him, along with the reprisal for his principled, honest, and unbreakable position, which he openly defends throughout the entire period of the Russian occupation of Crimea, is also aimed at another Kremlin's attempt to discredit the representative body of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people – the Mejlis.”

It is noteworthy, that the charges of sabotage on the energy infrastructure themselves are hastily fabricated, and have already been applied to Oleksiy Bessarabov, Dmytro Shtyblykov, and Volodymyr Dudka, employees of the NOMOS Centre, imprisoned in 2016, during the so-called first wave of saboteurs' detentions. Mykhaylo Gonchar, President of the Centre for Global Studies Strategy XXI on his FB page comments on the new wave of imprisonments: “The FSB version on the new “case of “saboteurs” looks as stupid as the previous ones. Do you remember how the “saboteur” Shtyblykov in 2016 found Kalashnikov assault rifles, which turned out to be paintball dummies? FSB “ideators” came up with a legend of sabotage preparation for him, Bessarabov and Dudka, for which they received 5, 14, and 14 years, respectively, in a maximum-security penal colony. The new FSB case against a new group of “saboteurs” led by Dzhelyalov already involves sabotage, not preparation for it. The entire legend looks void, as the gas pipeline to Perevalne is not the main; it is a typical low-pressure gas pipeline of the local gas distribution network. The consequences of such “sabotage” will have a very local significance – for one particular rural settlement – a short-term interruption of gas supplies without fatal consequences for anyone. Elimination of the “sabotage” consequences will take at most a couple of days. That means, this “sabotage” looks ridiculous and it is obvious that it was quickly “forged” on the move on the task from the top when the “ideators” did not have time to develop a “fact sheet” for “strategic sabotage”.

Therefore, we note that indeed, over the past seven years, the issue of de-occupation has been considered fragmentarily, and mainly found its way out in the texts of resolutions and statements of the leading international organisations that had a limited range of actions. The Crimea Platform has become an effective means for increasing the level of mainstreaming the issue on the international agenda, but the process of developing long-term de-occupation strategies and coordinating the efforts of Ukraine and the international community should be more systematic. At the moment, our main achievement is that over the years, the subjectivity of Crimea, its belonging to the territory of the aggressor country has not become a fait accompli.

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Southern Military District of Russia: Under the Banner of Offensive Preparation

In the eighth year of Russian aggression against Ukraine, under the lulling mantras of the Ukrainian authorities on a “comprehensive truce” at the front, society is agitated: is the aggressor preparing a new offensive? And if so, where will the main strike come from: from the East – the occupied Donbas, from the South – Crimea, rushing to the Dnieper waters, or from the North – Belarus, which illegitimate government opened a direct path for Russian forces to Kyiv? Will we be able to survive a new wave of aggression? While the President is trying to “look into Putin’s eyes” to no avail, let us try to find answers to these and other questions analytically.

A key indicator of the state’s military plans, which cannot be hidden, is the nature of the combat exercises of its armed forces. If a country is preparing to defend itself – the armed forces are exercising to defend, if the state is trying to attack – the troops are practicing the offensive. An invasion should be expected where the enemy’s “hammerhead” is formed.

Experts of the Centre for Global Studies Strategy XXI have repeatedly noted the inconsistency of the military potentials of Ukraine and Russia. We also emphasised that this is not a sufficient reason to believe that we will not be able to fight back against the enemy in a large-scale attack on Ukraine. However, to assess Russia’s military plans for Ukraine, it is not necessary to study the nature of the activity of the entire Russian army – it is enough to analyse the changes in the combat exercises system of its strategic groups, in which “zone of responsibility” we are located. And these are the Southern and partly Western Military Districts. The greatest threat to us is the Southern Military District of the Russian Armed Forces, which we will focus on assessing its activity.

Southern Military District: preparations for an offensive in the Black Sea region

The area of responsibility of the troops of the Southern Military District of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation is the South-Western strategic direction, which includes the territories of the Rostov, Volgograd, and Astrakhan regions, Krasnodar and Stavropol Territories, the Republic of the North Caucasus of the Russian Federation; the south-eastern part of Ukraine – the temporarily occupied territories of Donbas and Crimea; the South Caucasus; the waters of the Black and Caspian Seas and the Sea of Azov. In their geographical conditions, the nature of the operational equipment of the territories, the location of the troops and forces, and critical facilities, the specified territories are divided into five operational areas – Don, Crimean, Azov-Black Sea, Vladikavkaz and Caspian, and the general operational area of the possible use of the District troops is even larger.

In 2020-2021, the troops of the Southern Military District increased their combat capabilities, improved field training, and upgraded weapons and equipment. The measures of operational and combat exercises of the District this year were aimed at ensuring such a level of combat capability



The Commander of the Southern Military District is Army General Oleksandr Dvornikov and the Commander of the Russian Black Sea Fleet is Vice-Admiral Ihor Osipov.

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of the troops and forces' grouping in the entire area of responsibility of the Southern Military District, including the occupied Peninsula of Crimea, which allows at any time to quickly create a powerful grouping in any operational direction, capable of offensive and defensive operations, including in the Black Sea region, including Crimea and adjacent territories ("adjacent to Crimean territories" shall mean nothing more than the south of Ukraine).

During the winter exercises period of 2020, about 60 tactical exercises of various levels were held by the District groups. All exercises from the squadron to the divisional level were bilateral, which is currently one of the main requirements for combat exercises of the Russian Armed Forces. The Command of the Russian army considers the development of joint-force interaction within the framework of the planned training activities one of the main tasks of combat exercises. By the nature of the exercises, the main efforts were focused on overcoming the enemy's manoeuvrable defence.

at the operational and tactical level has changed. From the previous primary preparation for the actions of the Navy as part of the joint-naval grouping of the forces on the ocean operational theatre, the Russians focused their main efforts on the participation of the naval formations and units in the joint-force operations of the Southern Military District, according to its plan and tasks assigned to it.

Even though the command of the District and Navy annually reports on an increase in the intensity of combat exercises and the total number of training activities carried out by the forces, in fact, since 2018, after the completion of the main organisational and staff activities for the formation of a strike group in the south-western direction and their combat coordination, the intensity and combat exercises have reached an optimal level and have not changed significantly (*please, refer to the infographics*). However, at the same time, the organisation of events is changing in terms of joint-force interaction, and the

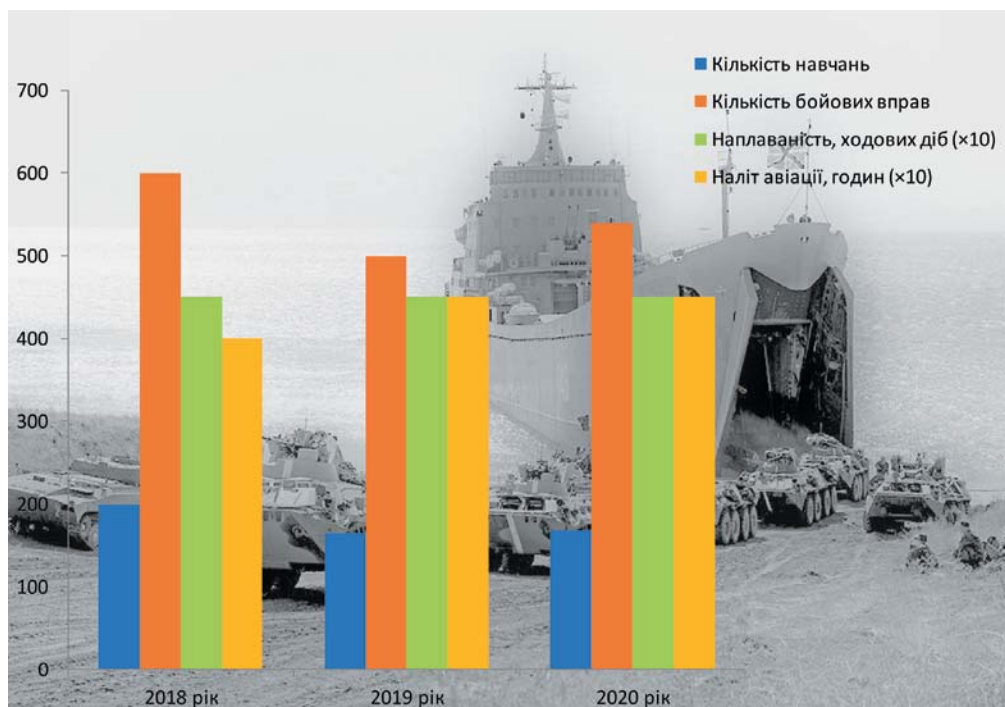


Figure 1. The intensity of combat exercises of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in 2018-2020

Blue – quantity of military drills; orange – quantity of military exercises; green – floating, running days (*10); yellow – aviation flights, hours (*10)

After the transition of the Russian Armed Forces to the district organisational structure in 2010 and the inclusion of the Black Sea Fleet (as well as the Caspian Flotilla) in the Southern Military District system, the nature of the naval combat exercises

forces involved, primarily concerning the involvement of units of other districts, units of central subordination, an increase in the share of strike units – tank, army aircraft, operational-tactical and tactical missile systems, and artillery.

In the 2020 exercise year, the Black Sea Fleet conducted 168 command and staff, tactical, tactical and special, and other exercises, and performed about 540 combat ones. The ships of the Crimean and Novorossiysk Naval Bases, the 30th division of surface ships, worked out and performed over 160 course tasks. Increased attention during the combat exercises of the Black Sea Naval Forces in 2020, as in the previous 2019, was primarily paid to the development of joint actions and joint-force operations.

The total flight hours of the Black Sea Fleet aircraft in 2020 was about 4.5 thousand, 10 tactical flight exercises were conducted with squadrons and aviation regiments of the Black Sea Fleet. The current features of combat exercises was the use of a Ka-31P radar patrol helicopter in the 25th separate ship anti-submarine air regiment of the Black Sea Navy for the first time during the exercises, which is important. This year, they also mastered the combat use of the modernised Ka-27M helicopters to perform tasks of searching for submarines, landing on ships, and bombing independently and in tactical groups. Ship strike groups that perform tasks as part of the Russian Navy Group in the Mediterranean Sea now simultaneously have two aviation groups of the 25th separate ASW helicopter regiment.

The intensity of combat exercises of the Twenty-Second Army Corps of the Black Sea Fleet has slightly increased compared to 2019. First of all, due to an increase in the number of firing from the armament of combat vehicles and tanks, anti-tank grenade launchers, and small arms, as well as exercises in driving armoured vehicles and cars in the 126th Separate Coastal Defence Brigade. In total, the Coastal Forces of the Black Sea Fleet conducted almost 2,600 fire exercises during 2020. In motorised rifle squadrons and Marine Corps squadrons, all live firing and tactical exercises were conducted in the form of bilateral exercises; such techniques and methods of combat operations as vertical coverage were practiced, when tactical airborne groups were used to capture and hold vantage lines and areas. Last summer, military personnel of the Marine Corps and Coastal Defence Brigades participated in bilateral brigade tactical exercises at the Opuk training ground. At the see exercises, special attention was paid to the development of an airborne operation and, at the same time, the actions of anti-airborne defence troops.

Recently, all activities of the Southern Military District have been carried out in close cooperation with the aviation of the Fourth Army of the Air Forces and Air Defence. This applies not only to Combined Arms armies but, especially since 2018, to the Black Sea Fleet. Working out the organisation of joint-force interaction within the framework of planned combat exercises' activities of troops is now considered one of the important tasks of the District – the units of the ground forces, ship groups, aviation, and air-defence systems work out tasks according to a single tactical plan, acting both in interaction and as a simulated enemy for each other. In 2020, the operational and tactical aviation of the Fourth Air Army and the Army Aviation of the Southern Military District performed over 500 sorties during joint training, which is almost three times more than in the same period last year.

As part of the control inspection for the winter training period in April 2020, the Su-25SM3 attack aircraft squadron of the Seventh Aerospace Defence Brigade of the Fourth Air Force and Air Defence Army, based in Budyonnovsk airfield in the Stavropol Territory, made a flight to the operational airfields of the Crimea, and the Grach Squadron from the newly formed at the Crimean airfield Gvardeyskoye Thirty-Seventh Mixed Aviation Regiment of the Twenty-Seventh Air Division was relocated to Astrakhan region to the Ashuluk ground. At the same time, during the exercises, attack aircraft of both aviation units of the Fourth Air Army practiced landing and take-off at a dirt airfield in the Rostov region, followed by bombing at aviation training grounds. In total, over 50 aircraft of operational and tactical aviation of the Fourth Army of the Air Force and Air Defence and Naval Aviation of the Black Sea Fleet were involved in combat exercises activities.

Ground forces were also regularly relocated, which strengthened groups in important areas, in particular in the north of the Crimean Peninsula. The transfer of the combined-arms formations and marine units as part of unscheduled combat readiness inspection was promptly carried out by landing ships of the Black Sea Fleet, specially involved large landing ships of other fleets, and Il-76MD military transport aircraft from the Sixty-First Air Army. During joint exercises with the troops of the Central and Western Military Districts, elements

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of mutual redeployment of their formations and units to various operational areas to cover threatening areas will be worked out in practice, which is also impossible without an established system of interaction.

Caucasus-2020 Strategic Exercises – war rehearsal

The main intermediate result of combat exercises of the Southern Military District in 2020 was the Caucasus-2020 Strategic Command and Staff Exercises, held every four years. The main phase of SCSE was carried out at the training grounds of the Southern Military District, including on the coast of Crimea.

During the Caucasus-2020 SCSE, the management bodies of the Southern Military District practiced performing tasks of direct control of the troops in the course of joint combat operations of a variety of troop groups (forces), including actions of ground groups, aviation and air defence groups, forces of the Black Sea Fleet, and the Caspian Flotilla. In addition, during the exercises, practical

activities of the troops were carried out aimed at practicing the deployment of an offensive group of forces in the south-western operational direction. In the waters of the Black and Caspian Seas, the rehearsals of the actions of groups of the Black Sea Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla, including with the participation of ships of the Iranian Navy (it is noteworthy that the Naval Forces of other Caspian countries were not invited to the exercises) were held.

One hundred percent of the combat-ready ship-boat crews and Army Aviation, and all formations and units of the coastal forces were involved in practical actions at the Caucasus-2020 Strategic Command and Staff Exercises. In total, about 120 thousand military personnel were involved. Up to 80 thousand personnel, 250 tanks, 450 infantry fighting vehicles, and armoured personnel carriers, 200 artillery systems, and multiple missile systems, up to 300 combat aircraft, and about 250 Army Aviation helicopters, 20 war-ships, and support vessels participated in practical actions at the training grounds. For comparison, about 120 thousand people also took part in

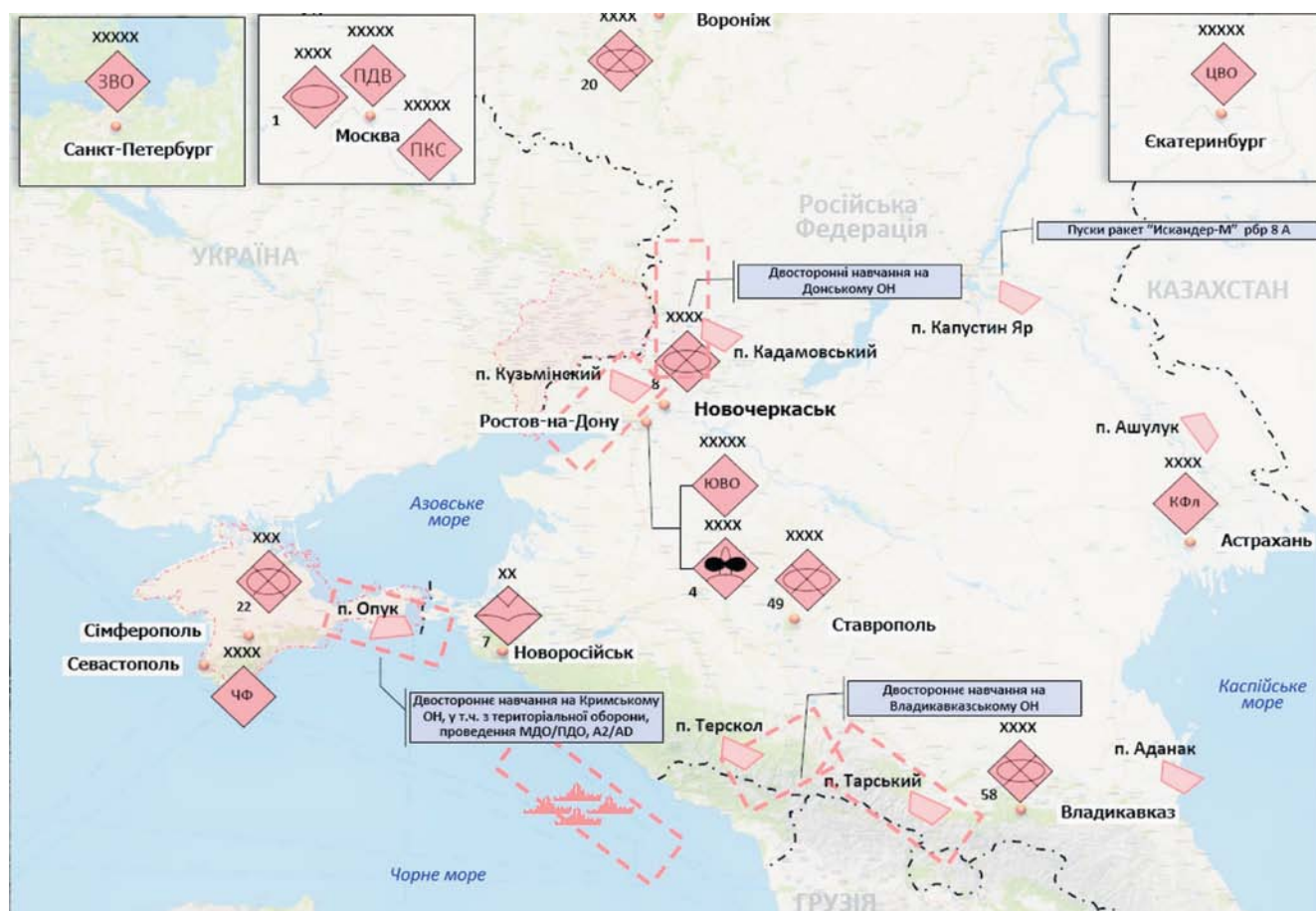


Diagram. Map of the Caucasus-2020 Strategic Command and Staff Exercises

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the Caucasus-2020 Exercises. At the same time, no more than 12.5 thousand military personnel, up to 60 aircraft and helicopters, about 400 units of military equipment, including 90 tanks,

15 warships, and vessels of the Black Sea Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla were simultaneously involved in practical actions at the training grounds. *(Please, refer to the infographics).*



Diagram. 2 The forces involved in the Caucasus-2016 and Caucasus-2020 Exercises

Russians are carefully studying the experience of the armed conflicts, including the methods of the armed struggle in Syria and Eastern Ukraine. The most successful tactical techniques are included in the methodology of combat exercises and then practiced during numerous tactical exercises and field classes. It should be noted that the Caucasus-2020 SCSE was designed under a textbook developed based on practical experience in Syria and Eastern Ukraine. It is based on the principle of integrated use of groups of forces of the Navy, naval aviation, the Air Forces and Air Defence, coastal missile systems, air defence, and electronic warfare systems in a single control circuit with the development of non-standard tactical techniques. This approach aims to increase coherence in the combat operations of all armed forces' branches, work out joint-force interaction and increase the effectiveness of the use of weapons.

Considering the experience gained during the combat operations of the Russian army in modern armed conflicts, special attention was paid to the fight against cruise missiles and unmanned aerial

vehicles, fire and electronic impact at the entire depth of the enemy battle formations, the use of its vertical coverage by tactical air landing forces. Battalion tactical groups with reinforcements, as the main tactical units, conducted combat exercises operations independently, in isolation from the main forces, making deep raids, coverage, and detours. To disclose the enemy's defence system and hit ground facilities, correct strikes on detected targets, and for electronic warfare, in joint-force groups the unmanned aircraft were used at altitudes from 100 to 5,000 metres.

Much attention was paid to combating the threat of the enemy's use of the UAV, not only for reconnaissance, but also for fire damage, "terrorist attacks, and sabotage." In the Southern zone of responsibility, the fight against UAVs is carried out in the general air defence system of the Russian Armed Forces. However, for its better functioning in terms of combating drones, subsystems for controlling, detecting, and alerting troops, UAVs fire, and electronic destruction have been developed. To detect unmanned aerial vehicles, a comprehensive application of visual, sound, radar,

radio, and radio engineering intelligence was arranged. Fire damage to UAVs is carried out in a complex way by anti-aircraft missile, anti-aircraft artillery, and man portable air defence systems, MANPADs. Electronic warfare equipment that detects and suppresses satellite navigation system receivers is also used for electronic destruction (suppression) of the drones. A single control subsystem ensures maximum efficiency of all forces and means allocated to UAVs combat. This tactic is considered by the Russians the most effective today.

Given the geography and nature of the tasks performed at the Caucasus-2020 SCSE, their orientation against Ukraine and NATO member states – its closest partners in the Black Sea region – is obvious. The operational situation at the exercises was closely linked to the current development of the military-political situation in the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and Caspian regions and, above all, around Ukraine, where the Russian Federation has priority interests. At the same time, the demonstration component of the exercise was determined by the desire of the Russian Federation to “get on the nerves” of neighbouring states and show that only Russia is the real “master” in the Black Sea-Azov-Caspian regional triangle with a projection on the Mediterranean. At the same time – through pressure and blackmail – it strives to strengthen the negotiating positions, to force Ukraine and key Western players to be more compliant with Russian hybrid aggression.

It affects the direction of combat exercises of the Naval Forces and the nature of the tasks that the crews of ships and submarines of the Black Sea Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla perform in the far sea zone, including in the Permanent Grouping of the Russian Navy in the Mediterranean Sea. Last year, 15 warships and support vessels of the Black Sea Fleet completed more than 40 long-distance campaigns, including some in the waters of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. In total, the Navy ships covered over 255 thousand nautical miles, made about 30 business calls to the ports of the foreign countries.

With the emphasis on the Black Sea Fleet on organising actions in part of the joint-force grouping of the Southern District, attention to the organisation of joint-force operations of the

Russian Navy does not decrease – the work-out of the joint passages of warships and support vessels continued throughout the year. What is important, this also applies to ships of the Caspian Flotilla – in March-April 2020, small missile ships of the 250th Division of the surface ships of the Caspian Flotilla Grad Sviyazhsk and Veliky Ustyug for the second time since 2018 made the transition from the Caspian Sea to the Sea of Azov along the Volga and Don, and then, bypassing the Black Sea and the Strait zone, joined the Permanent Grouping of the Russian Navy in the Mediterranean Sea. In 2021, during a control inspection of the Southern Region, an entire whole detachment of the Caspian Flotilla warships and boats, including a dozen amphibious and artillery boats, entered the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea from the Caspian Sea.

April 2021 – is Russia within an ace of bloodshed?

The final result of the combat exercises of the Southern Military District for 2020-2021 was summed up by the control inspection of the District troops in March-April 2021. The unscheduled inspection of the troops of the Southern Military District for the winter period was carried out according to the approved 2021 exercises plan. It was attended by the troops of all District associations, including the Black Sea Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla. Mainly the stages of the exercises were conducted in the occupied Crimea – the units of the Fifty-Eighth Combined Arms Army, Fourth Army of the Air Forces and Air Defence, ships and vessels, parts of the coastal troops of the Black Sea Fleet, part of the forces of the Caspian Flotilla, and the units of the airborne forces from the Seventh and Seventy-Sixth Airborne Assault Divisions, Ninety-Eighth Airborne Division (all these units participated in hybrid combat operations in the East of Ukraine) were assembled for the main stage of the exercises on the Peninsula. According to a single tactical plan, aviation, air defence, ship groups, and ground forces units performed tasks, acting both in cooperation and as a simulated enemy – most of the troops practiced invasion, the rest – defence.

During the exercise, the readiness of the troops and forces for the invasion of Southern Ukraine, as one of the options for strategic use of the Southern Military District, was actually checked. Meanwhile, official statements of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation emphasised

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that for the inspection, “a conditional situation has been created that allows the troops and forces of the military district working out the range of combat exercises’ tasks for the defence of the Russian Black Sea region, including Crimea.” Among the main elements of the inspection is the ability of the strike and to quickly transfer (up to a week) amphibious assault units and formations to a considerable distance from their permanent locations. Commissions of the highest military administration bodies of the Russian Federation checked the staffing and supply of the troops, their ability to meet the operational and tactical standards provided for in the plans. Much attention was paid to the organisation of joint-force operations, increasing the share of aviation participation in the combat operations of the ground units and coastal troops, ship groups, in combination with the use of acquired combat experience.

After the regrouping of the troops in the occupied Crimea, in the Volgograd and Rostov regions, over a dozen bilateral tactical exercises of motorized rifle companies, airborne, and marine units were held. A key element of the inspection was a bilateral joint-force operational and tactical exercise with the performance of the combined airborne operations, held on April 22 in the Crimea at the Opuk training ground.

During the exercise, three parties of troops were landed in different ways:

- helicopter landing party – battalion tactical group of the Airmobile Battalion of the Fifty-Sixth Separate Airborne Assault Brigade from Kamyshin and two company tactical groups of the Seventieth Motorised Rifle Regiment, stationed in Shala, Chechen Republic, on Mi-8AMTSh helicopters of the Thirty-Ninth Helicopter Regiment (Dzhankoy);
- air parachute landing – four battalion tactical groups from the Ivanovo Ninety-Eighth Airborne Division. The landing was carried out by 40 Il-76MD military transport aircraft of the Russian Air Forces – almost half of the total fleet of the Russian MTA;
- marine combined landing – two battalion tactical groups from the 810th Separate Marine Brigade of the Black Sea Fleet (including the 387th SBMI from Temryuk) and a company tactical group from the 177th Separate Marine Regiment of the Caspian Flotilla. The landing was carried out from seven large landing ships (four of which came to the Black Sea from the Baltic and Northern Fleets during the exercise); the Caspian landed from the landing boats of the Serna type, which had previously made the transition from the Caspian Sea to the Sea of Azov and then to the Black Sea.



Fig. 1. Testing of amphibious landings at the Opuk training ground in Crimea on April 22, 2021. In the background are the large landing ships of the Black Sea, Baltic and Northern Fleets. On the fore, high-speed landing boats of the Caspian Flotilla land the first landing party.

With the total number of troops comparable to a wartime division, it should be noted separately that the number of air troops was almost twice as high as the forces involved in the naval amphibious operation.

Combat exercises activities under the exercise plan were carried out not only in Crimea but also in the Don operational area. In the Stavropol Territory, the units of the Forty-Ninth Combined Arms Army of the Southern District, including tank ones, were trained on a single tactical background and practiced offensive during the day and at night, and in Kuban, in particular, night exercises were held to launch strikes with Iskander operational and tactical complexes.

After the exercise was completed, Russian Defence Minister General Shoigu said at a meeting in Crimea that he was satisfied with the results of the inspection. "I believe that the goals of the unscheduled inspection have been fully achieved. The troops have demonstrated their ability to ensure the reliable defence of the country," he said. After the exercises were completed and the military leadership announced that the forces involved were returning to their permanent locations, the observers noted only the withdrawal of a small part of the forces involved in the exercises from the Crimean Peninsula. It is already summer, and most of the units deployed to combat exercises areas in the occupied Crimea and on the border with Ukraine remain in their deployment sites. With them, Russia can start escalating military operations unexpectedly, at any time, without long-term preparation for the offensive.

Therefore, an unbiased analysis shows that, contrary to the statements of the Russian military and political leadership, Russia has been actively preparing for an aggressive offensive war on our

south-eastern borders for more than a year. And, most likely, in April of this year, we were one step away from the "Great War at Sea". And only powerful consolidated international pressure kept the "Kremlin dwarf" from an adventure that would have cost dearly not only regional security but also the system of maintaining peace in the world in general. However, it is too early to relax – the invasion troops are prepared, they are ready to implement Putin's bloody plan to plant the "Russian world" at any time. And whether this will happen and when only Putin himself knows. However, most importantly, we also know about their plans. *Praemonitus praemonitus* – Forewarned, fore-armed!

"The militarisation of the Crimea is definitely not an internal problem of Ukraine, the First Deputy Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Emine Dzhaparova comments on the security situation in the Black Sea region: – It is clear that we are the most interested country in restoring the status quo, returning the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, restoring sovereignty and control over territories, but the fact that today the Russian Federation also uses Crimea as a projection of its aggressive ambitions on, for example, the Middle East region, an outpost, from which Russia continues to provoke the world, is something that should put at least all Black Sea countries in tone mode, and at most, NATO member countries and the West. Our argument is that there should be a different system for responding to these provocations; there should be a better system for coordinating joint efforts, and the Crimea Platform is aimed at these tasks precisely."

Serhiy MUKHRYNSKY,
Captain 1st Rank (retired),
Military Expert
Centre for Global Studies Strategy XXI

The “Unsinkable” Russian Aircraft Carrier in Crimea. The Russian Navy is Preparing for Dominance in the Black Sea and Projection of Power on the Mediterranean

After the occupation of Crimea by Russia, its Black Sea Fleet began to play not only a military-strategic role in the Black Sea region but also gained geopolitical significance. The naval forces of the Russian Federation in the Black Sea has become a demonstration of Russia’s ambition to dominance in the region, and the formations in Crimea also became a symbol of a hammer-head against NATO.

The rearmament of the Russian Black Sea Fleet began before 2014 and was one of the most ambitious elements of the state arms procurement program for 2011-2020. It was planned to build 18 new combat units and modernise the Fleet’s infrastructure. The main goal was to create a group of heterogeneous forces that can not only prevent NATO

forces from entering the Black Sea, but also project forces to the Mediterranean Sea and the Middle East – Russia considers the Black Sea region not as a separate theatre of military operations, but as part of the Black Sea-Mediterranean. Therefore, the grouping of the Russian armed forces, formed in recent years in and around Crimea, is directed not only against the states of the Black Sea region but also, according to the plan of the Kremlin strategists, should become the basis for the projection of the Russian naval power in the Mediterranean. Thus, the state of affairs in the Russian Black Sea Navy requires careful analysis and assessment.

Quantitative and qualitative indicators of the ship composition of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation



Fig. 1. Tapir Project 1171 large landing ship Orsk. This project ships are the basis of the Russian amphibious fleet and are designed for landing amphibious troops on an unequipped coast and transferring troops and cargo by sea.

Photo: Yoruk Is?k / Twitter

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During 2020, the ship composition of the Russian Black Sea Fleet decreased by eight units: as of the end of 2020, the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation had 219 units of watercraft (in 2019 – 227). In particular, these are 71 pennants of warships and boats (in 2019 there were 74 of them), or 32.6% of the total ship composition. Among them, 48 (or 21.9%) are warships of 1-3 ranks. The number of support vessels decreased from 153 to 148 units compared to the year before last and accounts for 67.6% of the fleet. The average age of all watercraft is 30.5 years. Warships “became younger” by a year; their average was 19.2 years. The ratio of combat units (ships and boats) and support watercraft – 3.08 support units per combat unit (in 2019 – 2.07).

During the year, several warships and other watercraft were excluded from the fleet, in particular, the Navy veteran Smetlivy Project 61 patrol ship, built in 1967, the last small missile Project 1234.1 ships on the Black Sea Styl and Mirage (in total, a dozen such ships remained in the Russian fleet, mainly in the Pacific and Baltic Fleets), the res-

cue tug Orion (built in 1963), a large Project 1896 hydrographic boat BGK-244 (1971), Project 771 floating crane PK-12050 (1960), and several support and off-shore raiding boats were scrapped.

It is also necessary to pay attention to the fact that in 2020, the 5th group of the 205th Support Fleet Management Detachment was completely withdrawn from the fleet – these are the “mobilised”, or rather purchased, for the Navy in 2014-2015, old dry cargo ships Kyzyl-60 (former Turkish Smyrna), Vologda-50 (Turkish Dadali), Dvinitsa-50 (Turkish Alican Deval) and the former Ukrainian Georgy Agafonov – Kazan-60. Since 2015, these vessels have been actively used “for special transportation in the interests of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation” (in other words, they performed the function of the notorious Syrian Express). Now cargo transportation for the Russian military base and the Assad regime from Novorossiysk to Tartus is carried out only by amphibious combat ships of the Black Sea and other fleets of the Russian Navy.

Table. 1. Age structure of Black Sea Fleet watercraft of the Russian Federation

All watercraft (units)		Warships and boats (units)	
2020	2019	2020	2019
219	227	71	74

Age of watercraft (years)	Quantity		%	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
1 - 10	72	75	31,7	34,24
11 - 15	4	6	1,76	2,73
16 - 20	3	2	1,32	0,9
21 - 25	1	1	0,44	0,45
26 - 30	12	4	5,29	1,83
31 - 35	33	27	14,53	12,3
36 - 40	22	24	9,7	10,95
41 - 45	20	12	8,81	5,47
46 - 50	21	28	9,25	12,79
51 - 55	17	16	7,49	7,3
56 - 60	6	6	2,64	2,73
61 - 65	10	10	4,41	4,56
66 - 70	4	6	1,76	2,73
71 - 75	1	1	0,44	0,45
76 - 80	1	1	0,44	0,45

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Age ratios of warships of rank 1-3

Age (years)	2020		2019	
	Quantity	%	Quantity	%
1-10	19	39,6	16	33,3
11-15	1	2,08	1	2,08
16-20	1	2,08	2	4,16
21-25	1	2,08	0	0
26-30	0	0	2	4,16
31-35	13	27,1	14	29,16
36-40	7	14,6	6	12,5
41-45	0	0	2	4,16
46-50	4	8,33	2	4,16
51-55	2	4,17	3	6,25

***Note.** The analysis did not take into account watercraft such as a floating warehouse, a garbage collector, target shields, and did not consider the age of the rescue vessel Kommuna (built in 1915), which do not affect the actual combat readiness but would distort the objective picture of the actual fleet condition.*

The weak link of the Black Sea Fleet is an insufficiently developed support fleet, in particular, the tanker fleet, which, with the existing logistics system in the Russian Navy, works at the limit of its capabilities in conditions of intensive combat exercises and combat service tasks. Therefore, in 2021, the fleet included a new modern Project 03182 small sea tanker Vice-Admiral Paromov. The vessel has expanded capabilities as compared to its predecessors – it can move in difficult weather conditions (the tanker was built in general as an ice-class vessel), fuel and lubricants can be

pumped from it to other ships. It can also transfer cargo. In addition, the tanker can perform a wide range of emergency rescue operations from searching to repairing and towing emergency watercraft.

In 2021-2022, the replenishment of the Black Sea Fleet, contrary to the expectations of the Russian Navy Command, will not occur as intensively as in previous years, but the decline in the fleet's combat capabilities due to the write-off of the outdated warships will be partially compensated by the new ships of the near sea zone..

Table 2. Planned for the integration into the fleet in 2021

Type, Project	Title	Scheduled deadline	Status
Project 20380 Corvette	Retivy	December 2021	The crew formed, mooring tests
Project 22800 small rocket ship	Cyclone	July 2021	The crew formed, mooring tests
	Askold	December 2021	Preparing for launch
Project 12700 basic minesweeper	Georgy Kurbatov	July 2021	The crew formed, mooring tests
Sea tug	Andrey Stepanov	It was built for the Black Sea Fleet but was transferred to the Pacific Fleet	

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An important characteristic of the fleet’s combat capability remains data on the total weight of a missile salvo, artillery, torpedo weapons, and air defence systems. The total fleet salvo is now

301.481 (in 2019 – 298.268) tons. The structure of the salvo by type of weapon, range, and years is given below (see Table 3).

Table 3. Structure of the Black Sea Fleet fire salvo of the Russian Federation

Range, km	Missile weapons		Artillery armament		Anti-aircraft armament		Torpedo armament	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
3,5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	-	-	15,389	15,098	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-	0,601	0,631	-	-
10	-	-	110,75	110,75	-	-	-	-
15	-	-	1,152	0,576	9,48	7,92	32,4	31,2
20	6,27	6,27	42,087	43,647	-	-	-	-
50	-	-	-	-	4,464	4,464	-	-
75	-	-	-	-	8,96	8,96	-	-
90	1,96	1,96	-	-	-	-	-	-
130	1,16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
150	4,8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
250	10,8	10,8	-	-	-	-	-	-
700	8,0	8,0	-	-	-	-	-	-
1400	40,0	51,2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Разом	72,99	78,23	169,378	170,071	23,5	21,98	32,4	31,2

Last year, the ships of the Black Sea Fleet continued to actively exercise mine laying in the areas of submarines displacement and the possible mine blockade of the ports, torrents, shallow sea areas, including in the far sea zone. Changes in minefields are not marked; the ships of the fleet can simultaneously lay 443 sea mines and, observing the minimum mine interval, create a mine line of 53 km.

For reference. Minimum mine interval – the dis-

tance between neighbouring mines in the line – determines the probability of blowing up a ship on a mine. The shorter the mine interval is, the higher is the probability of blowing up the ship on the mine line. Reducing the minefield is acceptable to a certain limit. This limit is the minimum mine interval, at which the explosion of one mine does not disable the neighbouring ones. The minimum mine interval for stationary mines in the Russian Navy is defined as 60-120 m, and for mines with a mobile warhead – from 100 to 2000 m.

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Table. 4. Mine laying capabilities

Ship type and Project	Ship name	Number of units	Number of mines per unit	Total number of mines
Pr. 1124 ASW	Alexandrovets Suzdalets Muromets Povorino Aysk Kasimov	6	18	108
Pr. 266M OMS	Ivan Golubets Kovrov Turbinist Valentin Pikul Vice Admiral Zakharyev	5	7	35
Pr. 12660 OMS	Zheleznyakov	1	16	16
Pr. 12700 OMS	Ivan Antonov Vladimir Yemelyanov	2	7	14
Pr. 636.3 Submarine	Krasnodar Rostov-na-Donu Stary Oskol Novorossiysk Veliky Novgorod Kolpino	6	24	144
Pr. 877B Submarine	Alrosa	1	24	24
Pr. 1171 LLS	Orsk Saratov Nikolay Filchenkov	3	30?	90?
Pr. 02510 (BK-16) AAB		3	4	12
Total number of the single mine laying				443 units.

The offensive capabilities of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation are determined not only by the salvo power but also by the ability to ground forces and equipment on the territory of a likely

enemy. The amphibious capabilities of the fleet have not significantly decreased, by one Project 1176 amphibious boat, and are given in the table below (see Table 5.).

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Табл. 5. Десантовисадочні можливості ЧФ

Ship type and Project	Quantity	Landing capacity of the unit		Total landing capacity		Draft, m
		Crew composition (persons)	Equipment	Crew composition (persons)	Equipment	
Pr. 1171 LLS	3	300-400	20 tanks or 45 armoured personnel carriers or 50 vehicles	900-1200	60 tanks or 135 armoured personnel carriers or 150 vehicles	4.5
Pr.775 LLS	4	340	10 medium tanks	1360	40 medium tanks	3.7
		340	12 armoured vehicles	1360	48 armoured vehicles	
		313	3 medium tanks 3 SPAV2S9 Nona-S MPAPC 4 trucks	1252	12 medium tanks 12 SPAV2S9 Nona-S 4 MPAPC 12 trucks	
Pr. 11770 landing Boat	2	92 or	or 1 main tank or 2 armoured personnel carriers or 45 tons of cargo	184 or	or 2 main tanks or 4 armoured personnel carriers or 90 tons of cargo	1.52
Pr. 1176 landing Boat	1	20 or	1 main tank or 2 GAZ-66 or 5 tons of cargo	40 or	2 main tanks or 4 GAZ-66 or 10 tons of cargo	1.5
Pr. 02510 (BK-16) assault landing craft	3	19	-	57	-	0.9
Pr. 03160 high-speed patrol boat	7	20	-	140	-	0.9
Pr.1415 counter-terror boat	2	27	-	54	-	1.24
Counter-terror boat type 1C16MII	2	8	-	16	-	?
Total	24			5343-5643	ACV-314 (armoured combat vehicle) Motor – 164 Cargo – 95 tons	

Analysis of combat exercises and activities of the Black Sea Navy in 2020

In 2020, the military administration bodies, forces, and troops of the Russian Black Sea Fleet continued combat exercises to maintain the Fleet's ability to perform tasks as intended – during the year, the Black Sea Fleet conducted 168 exercises of various levels and directions, including live firing, about 540 combat exercises, and applications.

A special feature of combat exercises in 2020 is that the main focus was on performing practical tasks, working out joint actions, and joint-force operations. Thus, out of 190 artillery attacks by ship forces on air, sea, and land targets, a significant part was carried out by ship crews together. Of the 34 missile firing conducted by anti-aircraft guided and cruise missiles, the number of joint firing doubled compared to 2019.

Last year, the plan of combat exercises with the use of submarine weapons was completed by 109%, and the number of weapons used increased by 1.2 times. During the anti-submarine training of surface ships and submarines, 28 special tasks were completed, and 39 combat exercises were performed. Anti-sabotage forces and means have completed 600 combat and special exercises. Combat swimmers spent a total of 9.5 thousand hours under water, which is three times higher than the annual norm.

In the far sea zone, 15 ships and support vessels performed over 40 long-distance sea trips in the Mediterranean Sea, Atlantic and Indian Oceans, made 30 business calls to ports of the foreign countries, including Tartus, Latakia (Syria), Limassol (Cyprus), Bizerta (Tunisia), Colombo (Sri Lanka), the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Bahrain.

In general, the passage time of ships, boats, and submarines increased in each ship fleet and its indicator increased by an average of 36% compared to 2019 and amounted to 3,500 sea days, during which over 225 thousand nautical miles were covered. The increase in this indicator is associated with an increase in the intensity of combat exercises' activities, as well as the inclusion of new ships in the permanent readiness forces – the Ingushetia Project 21631 small missile ship, the Vladimir Yemelyanov Project 12700 base minesweeper, the

Project 22160 patrol ships Pavel Derzhavin and Sergey Kotov.

The Crimean naval base, which area of responsibility included the north-western part of the Black Sea from the border with Ukraine in the West and to the Kerch Strait in the East, composed of the Forty-First Brigade of missile boats, the Sixty-Eighth brigade of ships protecting the water area and the 19 Seventh brigade of landing ships, as well as the formation of combat and combat service support (together over 2500 military personnel) in 2020 handed over more than 60 course tasks of ship composition units, conducted 280 different firings, including 90 missile-artillery. The cruise missile firing plan is 200% complete. The intensity of combat exercises as part of warships groups increased by 40%.

This year, the mobile coastal air and surface Monolit-B reconnaissance complex was commissioned.

The plan of combat exercises of Naval Aviation of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in 2020 has been fulfilled by 113%. The total flight time of the Black Sea Fleet aviation was 4.5 thousand hours. During the year, over 4 thousand tasks of naval aviation were implemented. During the live-fire exercise, the crews of Su-24M aircraft launched air-to-ground and air-to-air guided missiles. During the year, the combat use of the upgraded Ka-27M helicopter, which is in pilot operation on the Black Sea Fleet, alone and as part of tactical groups, was worked out – during the flight-tactical exercises, pilot checks were carried out on the preparation and use of the Ka-27M aviation anti-submarine complex, as well as the issues of interaction of the Ka-31R helicopter with surface ships, in particular with the Admiral Makarov frigate. A separate squadron of unmanned aerial vehicles formed at the Black Sea Fleet, in addition to the previously available Forpost and Orlan-10 drones, received small T-23 Eleron and Tachyon UAVs.

More than 50% of the fleet's aviation flight staff are pilots under the age of 30. All pilots have air-refuelling experience.

In addition to training flights, the Russian Black Sea Fleet aviation was actively used to monitor and escort ships and aircraft of the joint NATO forces in the Black Sea zone.

In the Twenty-Second Army Corps of the Black Sea Fleet, which is the basis of the ground component of the Black Sea Fleet, the number of firings performed from the armament of combat vehicles and tanks, anti-tank grenade launchers, and small arms, as well as driving armoured vehicles and cars training has increased. In motorised rifle companies and Marine Corps companies, all live firing and tactical exercises were conducted as two-way exercises. Outside of the combat exercises plan, practical small arms shooting was tested, for which specialised training places were equipped at the fleet's training grounds.

Compared to 2019, the number of amphibious training held was doubled, and the number of tactical exercises and drills with amphibious ships increased from 15 in 2019 to 45 in 2020. 15 practical exercises on driving combat vehicles afloat were held.

Tank units of the Army Corps are completely re-equipped with T-72B3 tanks. The tank battalion of the 126th separate coastal defence brigade, during joint brigade exercises with the 810th Marine Brigade, held in August 2020 at the Opuk training ground, practiced shooting from closed positions using UAVs at a maximum distance of 9,700 meters. Based on 810 separate marine infantry detachment this year, joint actions of marines and air paratroopers, when they simultaneously landed on the bridgehead, and new BMP-3F equipment, were tested. The brigade was additionally equipped with new APC-82 and APC-82AM.

In 2020, the fleet received 50 units of modern engineering weapons, in particular, the multifunctional robotic mine clearance complex Uran-6, a universal landing bay for setting the floating berths on an unequipped coast, and an engineering landing boat.

15th separate coastal artillery missile brigade. During the year, the units of the 3K60 Bal and 3K55 Bastion coastal missile systems were faced with the task of continuous monitoring of the NATO ships that entered the Black Sea – nine times the brigade units were involved in special tasks, during which they conducted 700 conditional electronic launches at real targets (ships of NATO states in the Black Sea). 46 tactical exercises were held. Stationary Utes CMS, near Balaklava, in 2020

launched four Progres 3M44 missiles as part of the combat exercises tasks of the fleet, which should indicate the restoration of combat readiness of the division. The intensity of training of the drivers and machine operators of the mobile complexes has increased. The mileage of each driver of the Bal CMS unit was 560 km (in 2019 – 360 km), Bastion CMS – 370 km (in 2019 – 275 km), of the transport vehicles' drivers – 390 km (in 2019 – 280 km).

In 2020, the Black Sea Fleet Fuel Service delivered over 51 thousand tons of fuel and lubricants (in 2019 – 58 thousand tons), including 0.6 thousand tons of automobile gasoline, 17.3 thousand tons of aviation kerosene, and 34 thousand tons of diesel fuel.

In the interests of the fleet, 47 military echelons were transported by rail according to operational transportation plans – almost 125 thousand tons of material values, which is 45% more than in 2019. Military passenger transportation consisted of 194 crews, 3,307 people, including 2,146 conscripts. 164 ship sails were performed using the Port of Kerch-Port of Kavkaz railway and ferry line, and 1,442 wagons were transported. 102.6 thousand tons of military cargo was transported by road to Crimea (in 2019 – 70 thousand tons) and over 49 thousand personnel (in 2019 – 32 thousand people).

Support service vessels of the Fleet delivered more than 22 thousand tons of material resources in the near sea zone and bases, carried out 35 ship-towing operations at sea and 1,906 at the base, transported 7,565 passengers, removed 3,500 tons of wastewater from ships and vessels, carried out 167 measurements of the physical ship fields, and repaired 137 km of underwater cables. Ivan Bubnov and Iman tankers of the Black Sea Fleet, and floating workshops PM-56 and PM-138 performed tasks within the operational group of the Russian Navy in the Mediterranean Sea, where they supplied 8,500 tons of diesel fuel (in 2019 – over 9 thousand tons) and 19 tons of oil to combat service ships, equal to 2019 volumes. In the absence of weapons in the fleet transport means in 2020, for the first time, the transfer of torpedoes by a sea tug to a small anti-submarine ship was practiced at sea. Also, for the first time, fuel and lubricants were replenished on a ship at sea using an auto-fuel tanker delivered from the coast by an amphibious boat

IN FOCUS: “HAMMERHEAD” IN CRIMEA

(in 2019, fuel and lubricants were delivered from a tanker to sea by a truck tanker on an amphibious boat to the coast). Sergey Balk sea tug worked out the transfer of food to a helicopter without its landing on board for transfer to another ship at sea.

On the territory of the fuel base of the Logistics Centre in Inkerman in 2020, design and survey works were completed to create Sevastopol production and logistics complex of the central subordination to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. Sovfracht Company, a subsidiary of Sovfracht Holding, will build the complex in Sevastopol. It is planned that the facility will be able to store about 141 thousand tons of material and technical support equipment and materials, including fuel, armoured vehicles, communications equipment, food, etc. The declared completion date is the end of 2022.

Summing up, our Western partners are mistaken when they see only a desire to dominate the “zone of Russian national interests” in Russia’s actions in the Black Sea. Despite and contrary to the sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation for the occupation of Crimea and inciting war in the Black Sea Region, Russians are actively preparing for expansion into the Mediterranean. More precisely, they have already started it, and will only increase their efforts. Putin’s KGB logic is simple – to quietly “knock over the chessboard”, deliver an unexpected hybrid strike, and destabilise the situation in the enemy’s rear. Does Kremlin offer to exchange security in the Black Sea region for stability in the Mediterranean?

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Security Risks in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov in 2021



1. The militarisation of the Crimean Peninsula and the Black Sea: the main trends of the 8th year of occupation

Since the first days of the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula, there was no doubt that the main goal of Putin's special operation was to preserve and expand the Russian military base, designed to radically change the geopolitical, military, and strategic balance in Europe and the Mediterranean.

However, in the first year of occupation – by about mid-2015 – the Russian Federation tried to “sell” to the stunned world and its population a whole bunch of ultra-modern ideas not of the military, but tourism, investment, and technological develop-

ment of its war trophy – in other words, the “new showcase of Russia”, supposed to be even better than Olympic Sochi. And it should be said that not only Russia, but some in the world, believed this smoke-screen.

In fact, just from the first days of the occupation, the Russian Federation consistently implemented only one target programme – the “military development” of Crimea.

A marker of this was the fact that the Russian “Ministry of Crimean Affairs,” established two weeks after the illegal annexation, was liquidated in July 2015. A year later, in July 2016, the status of Crimea and Sevastopol as part of Russia was

lowered – the Crimean Federal District was liquidated. The so-called “Federation subjects” – the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol – were included in the Southern Federal District with the centre in Rostov-on-Don. Thus, political and administrative management was unified with the military, especially since all military units of the Russian Federation in Crimea were initially part of the Southern Military District with headquarters in Rostov-on-Don.

The militarisation of Crimea has become not just the main content of the Crimean policy of the Russian Federation, but the main driver of the Peninsula's economy. As a result, during the seven occupation years, the most striking “success story” of the Russian Federation in Crimea was the “military development” of its territory:

- the largest grouping of Russian troops in Europe has been created and is growing rapidly on the Peninsula;
- from the first days of the occupation, only the new and the cutting-edge military equipment and weapons were sent to Crimea (compared to other military districts of the Russian Federation) on prioritised grounds;
- all numerous military airfields (about 10), missile launch sites, air defence facilities, radar systems, and Soviet nuclear weapons storage bases that existed during the Soviet Era are being restored;
- a new fortified area has been created in the north of Crimea;
- new military camps, housing for military personnel, and their infrastructure are being built and reconstructed to deploy new military units;
- the number of the military personnel and various special services is increasing;
- through targeted military orders, the work of military industry enterprises (military instrumentation, shipbuilding, and ship repair) has resumed. These enterprises are already included in the structure of the state concerns of the Russian Federation;

All other spheres of life – the economy, social sphere, human rights, information space, and national politics – are subject to the ideology of the military staging area.

The “military development” of Crimea started from the first days of the Peninsula occupation. On May 9, 2014, the Bal and Bastion-P mobile coastal missile systems already participated in the Parade in Sevastopol.

In May-June 2014, S-400 mobile air and missile defence systems were deployed near Feodosia. In November 2014, the first Iskander-M operational and tactical missile systems appeared. Immediately in 2014, the captured mothballed Utes coastal missile system near Sevastopol was commissioned.

In 2021, the radical quantitative and qualitative strengthening of the Russian Black Sea Fleet is almost completed. During this time, 13 new missile ships and submarines were integrated into the Black Sea Fleet (the salvo capacity exceeds 100 cruise missiles), and by the end of 2022, their number will increase to 18.

In addition, it is possible to install modular containerised armament – the cruise missiles – on 6 new patrol ships. In August 2020, such modules have already been tested. In this case, the number of missile ships will increase by another 6 units, and the missile salvo power – to 192 missiles. These are Kalibr cruise missiles that were used against targets in Syria in 2015 and stirred up the entire military and political community in the West. In terms of the firing range at land targets, they are capable of reaching the British Isles and Spain and can carry a nuclear warhead.

The availability of nuclear warheads on the territory of Crimea for sea and coastal missile systems since 2015-2016 is very likely.

Back in March-May 2014, the Russian military took control over and inspected one of the central bases for storing and servicing nuclear weapons in the USSR – the Feodosia-13 facility. In January 2015, the Crimean Territorial Body of the 12th Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation was formed. It ensures the storage, transportation,

and disposal of nuclear warheads for tactical and ballistic missiles. Back in April 2015, cars with the “Nuclear Hazard” sign were observed moving towards the Crimean Peninsula from Rostov-on-Don. Earlier, the similar cargo was repeatedly seen near the city of Sudak.

Reference. The Feodosia-13 facility in the village of Kyzyltash (Krasnokamenka) in the mountain tract between Sudak and Koktebel has been operating since 1955 and was used to store nuclear ammunition for aviation, artillery, and missiles, including warships of the Black Sea Fleet of the USSR. The facility was used to collect atomic bombs that were used in September 1956 at exercises at the Semipalatinsk training ground. In 1959, the first nuclear warheads were sent from Kyzyltash to East Germany (Fürstenberg). In September 1962, on the eve of the Caribbean Crisis, six aerial bombs assembled in Kyzyltash were sent to Cuba. Before the occupation of Crimea, the complex of buildings and structures was used as a permanent deployment point for the Special Operations Regiment of the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and a depot the Ukrainian Naval Forces.

The Russian Federation has also completed **transformation of Crimea into a significant military-industrial and service base** – shipbuilding, ship repair, aircraft repair, and missile.

9 missile ships have already been built or are being completed at the captured Ukrainian yards on the Peninsula, and construction of two large amphibious assault ships, unique to the Russian Federation, with helicopters, UAVs, and vertical take-off and landing aircraft has begun in Kerch and will last until 2028. The secrecy of the project suggests that the Russian Federation actually plans to build something bigger than amphibious helicopter carriers. Most likely, we are talking about medium-sized aircraft carriers.

Such areas of Crimean specialisation as repair and maintenance of military aircraft, helicopters, air defence missile systems, and coastal cruise missiles located not only in Crimea, but also in

Syria, have already become smaller in volume, but no less important.

In 2014-2021, the military and strategic importance of Crimea for the Russian Federation has increased abruptly, and this process continues.

The missile strike capabilities concentrated in the occupied Crimea led to **the absolute military-strategic advantage of the Russian Federation in the Black Sea Region with its projection on the South Caucasus, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean Sea.**

Militarised Crimea has already become a threat not only to the entire Black Sea Coast, but entire Europe, and especially its southern flank.

Since the end of 2015, Crimea has become one of the main staging areas of the Russian Federation in the Syrian war and remains such to this day. The Black Sea Fleet is one of the main participants in the military operations in Syria: of the 100 sea-launched Kalibr cruise missiles fired at Syria, 56 belonged to the ships of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. In addition to cruise missile strikes, military and other equipment, and ammunition – the so-called Syrian Express – are supplied from Sevastopol and Novorossiysk on the Russian Black Sea Fleet ships from the occupied Crimea to the Syrian Assad regime and the Russian military bases Tartus and Khmeimim.

These processes have significantly accelerated after the construction of the completion of the Kerch Bridge. Now equipment and troops can be very quickly relocated by railway and instead of sea ferries across the Kerch Strait, as in March-April 2021 during the escalation of the military threat to Ukraine in the South and East.

The presence of a powerful military potential created during the years of occupation in Crimea has led to the following actions of the Russian Federation, which we are already seeing:

- continuous military threat of further aggression against Ukraine;
- the de facto occupation of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov;

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- the obstacles to the freedom of commercial navigation;
- an abrupt increase in naval exercises with live firing;
- a hazardous increase in the number of incidents at sea that can lead to armed clashes.

Since 2018, not only the actual events on the occupied Peninsula has become increasingly important, but the exact ways the Russian Federation uses Crimea, which, in addition to the global problem, has become a military threat.

It should be stated that no one can reliably predict what scenarios the Russian Federation will use having its military capabilities on the occupied Peninsula.

It is only possible to say that the Russian Federation has not and will not stop. That the threat of war and

the actual “hot” war on the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, relying on the Crimean Peninsula as a base region for military operations against the coastal regions of Ukraine, against Georgia and Moldova, are absolutely real scenarios that should be “on the agenda” for the diplomats and the military.

NATO and the EU have already realised the threats of militarisation of the Peninsula to international security and have begun a corresponding restructuring of their plans and actions. However, today they have not yet found a final solution to the problem of the required deterrence of Russia in the Black Sea.

2. The Situation in the Sea of Azov

2.1. The Kerch Strait, the situation with forced delay of merchant ships heading to/ from the Ukrainian ports of the Sea of Azov by the Coast Guard of the FSB Border Service of the Russian Federation

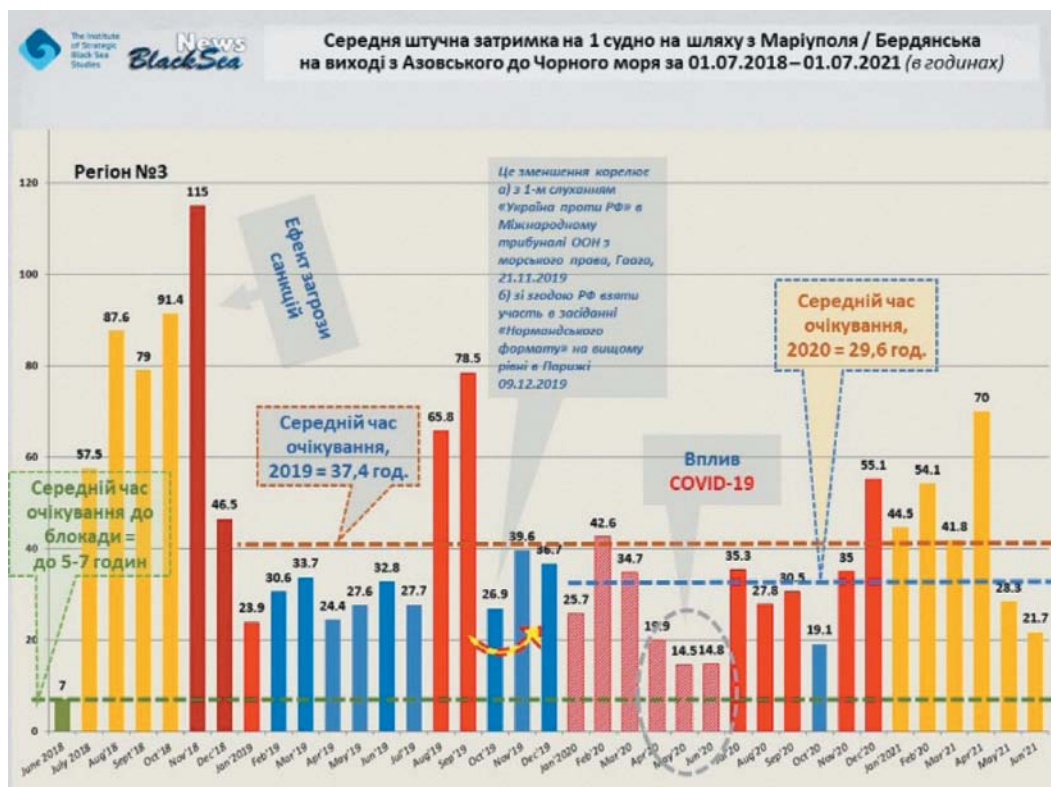


Figure 1. Average forced delay per 1 vessel on the way from Mariupol/Berdyansk at the exit from the Sea of Azov to the Black Sea for 01.07.2018-01.07.2021 (in hours)

In November 2020-April 2021, there was a significant increase in the time of forced delay of ships at the exit from the Sea of Azov (those that sail with Ukrainian export cargo, mainly to the EU, Turkey, and North Africa).

This figure for 6 months exceeded the average for 2020, i.e. 29.6 hours on average per 1 vessel, including 35 hours in November 2020; 55.1 hours in December 2020; 44.5 hours in January 2021; 54.1 hours in February 2021; 41.8 hours in March 2021; 70 hours in April 2021 on average per 1 vessel.

Reference. Before the de facto blockade of Ukrainian ports in May 2018, the average wait time for permission to pass through the Kerch Strait was 5-7 hours; in the second half of 2018, this figure reached 80-115 hours (this situation was eased due to the political and diplomatic pressure of Western countries on the Russian Federation);

These obstacles to navigation were already considered as part of Russian demands on other issues – for example, probing the possibility of resuming the supply of Dnieper water to the occupied Crimea.

The drop in the time of forced delay of the ships in the Kerch Strait since December 2018 was conditioned by the immediate threat of introducing the “Azov package” of international sanctions against the Russian ports of the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. In addition, this decrease was a consequence of linking the Azov problem with the EU decisions on permits to continue the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. We even called this decrease the “Merkel-Macron ratio”:

- in 2019, this figure was 37.4 hours;
- in 2020, the average duration of forced delay per vessel was 29.6 hours (a decrease due to the fright of Russian border guards from the FSB Coast Guard with the possibility of contracting COVID-19, since up to half of the vessels that were subject to inspection left the ports of Italy and other European countries, where in the spring of 2020 there was a significant surge in the pandemic);
- in November 2020-April 2021, there was a significant increase – an average of 53 hours.

The maximum average duration of forced delay of the ships leaving the Sea of Azov in 2021 was observed in April and amounted to 70 hours. The highest delay rates of individual vessels leaving the Sea of Azov (compared to the delay time at the entrance to the Sea of Azov) were observed in the first half of April 2021; they were up to 220 hours or almost 10 days.

This coincided with the transfer of a significant number of Russian military contingents and equipment to the occupied Crimea during the “spring military escalation”, including a group of 15 warships of the Caspian Flotilla of the Russian Federation across the Sea of Azov to the occupied Crimea.

Later, in May-June 2014, these indicators returned to the average values of the previous year and exceeded 20 hours.

It was related to a seasonal increase in Russian sea grain exports due to off-shore transshipment in the Kerch Strait (during this period, a very significant number of merchant ships accumulate in the Kerch Strait, which bring grain from Russian regions on the Volga River through the Sea of Azov and grain transshipment in the Kerch Strait to large foreign vessels). Stated differently, the forced delay of a large number of Mariupol and Berdyansk vessels in the Kerch Strait interferes with the off-shore transshipment of Russian grain.

On average, about 60-70 vessels go to/from the Ukrainian ports of the Sea of Azov per month. About 50% of them are in some way related to the EU (flag, ship owner, port of cargo destination, or a combination of the above).

They provide 5-7% of Ukraine’s exports (mainly metal and grain). The number of vessels sailing through the Kerch Strait to/from the Russian ports of the Sea of Azov and the ports of the Don and Volga is measured in hundreds per month. This river-marine route is used by the Russian Federation for significant grain exports (in this sense, keeping Ukrainian grain cargo waiting, creates obstacles to a competitor in the world grain market). In addition, it is one of the main ways of sea export of the Russian petroleum products through off-shore transshipment in the Kerch Strait.

Reference. Long-term inspections were initiated by the Russian Federation in May-June 2018 – after the Kerch bridge was commissioned. The “Legend” of the reasons for such inspections is the possible presence of sabotage groups and explosives aboard the ships coming from Ukrainian ports to destroy the Kerch Bridge (a favourite project of V. Putin). This, by the way, explains the fact that vessels that go for cargo to the Ukrain-

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ian ports of the Sea of Azov are delayed in the Kerch Strait for a shorter time (in March 2021, the average duration of forced delay by the Russian Federation of the vessels going to Mariupol and Berdyansk was 14.3 hours, and on the way back – 41.8 hours).

From May to October 2018, we also recorded detentions of commercial vessels (going to/from Mariupol and Berdyansk) sailing at sea by

the ships and boats of the Coast Guard of the FSB Border Guard Service of the Russian Federation for “security” inspections. In total, there were 110 such detentions at sea; including 56 of vessels related to the EU countries. A significant part of such detentions demonstratively occurred 5-7 miles from the Port of Mariupol.

These delays stopped in October 2018.



Figure 2. Delays at sea, 17.05.2018-01.07.2021 (entire period)

The reason for at-sea delays during the sailing was 2 factors:

- The first factor is the appearance on the Sea of Azov of 2 small armoured artillery boats of the Ukrainian Navy (SAAS, Gyurza-M, Project 58155 Gyurza-M class), patrolling the sea route on the Kerch Strait-Berdyansk-Mariupol section. At the end of October 2018, there were 2 incidents when Ukrainian boats prevented the Coast Guard boats of the FSB of the Russian Federation from stopping commercial

vessels (including a warning about the use of weapons);

- The second factor is political and diplomatic pressure on the Russian Federation from Western countries, wide coverage of these events in the Western media.

2.2 An incident in the Sea of Azov involving gun boats of the Ukrainian Navy and boats and a ship of FSB Coast Guard of the Russian Federation on April 14-15, 2021

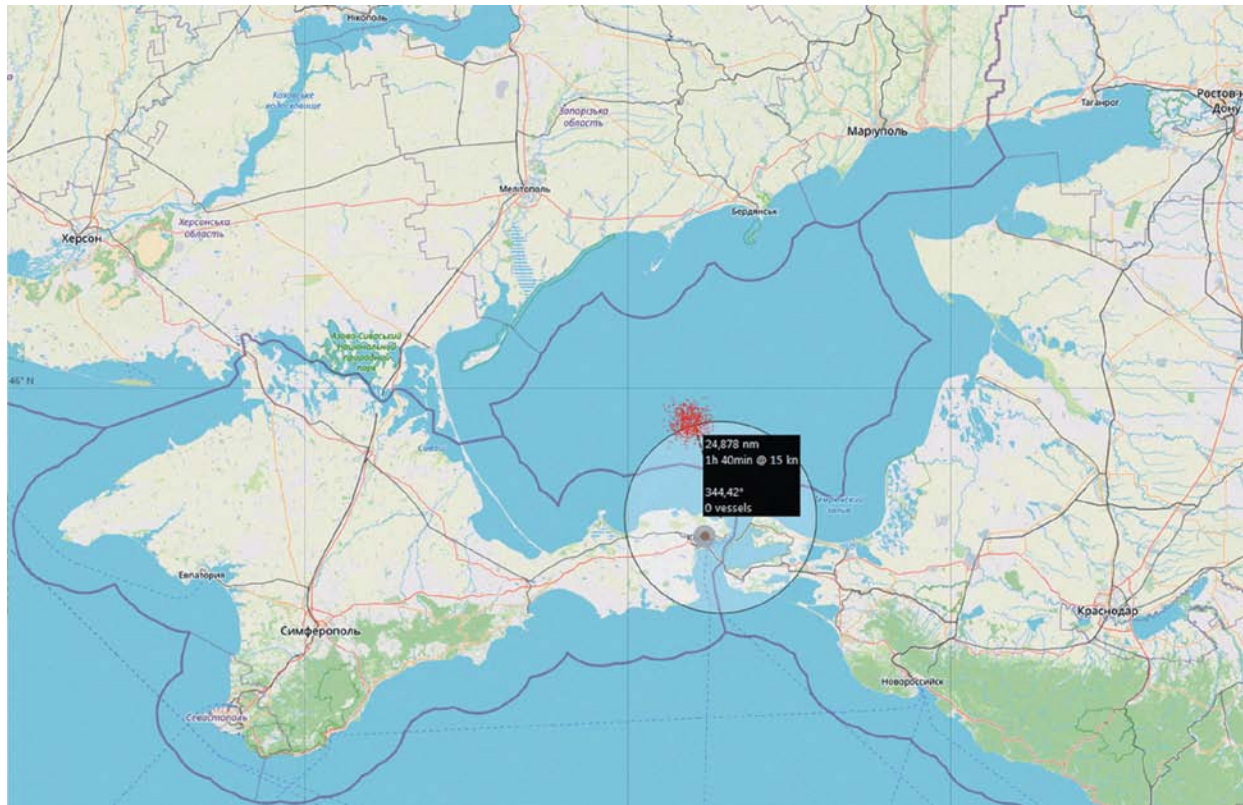


Figure 3. The incident in the Sea of Azov between three small armoured artillery boats

The incident in the Sea of Azov involving three small armoured gun boats (SAAS Gyurza-M) of the Ukrainian Navy and 5 boats and a ship of the Coast Guard of the FSB Border Service of the Russian Federation with N 734 call sign occurred on the night of April 14-15, 2021.

Sources of the BlaskSeaNews monitoring group reported from the Sea of Azov: “The night was hot. At least 5 FSB boats carried out coordinated provocative exercises against Ukrainian 3 small armoured gunboats. Commands were given by the Russian coast guard ship N 734. In the morning, the Ukrainian boats returned to Mariupol.”

According to our sources, at night, in response to the threats of the Russian ship, Ukrainian sailors had to warn about their readiness to use weapons.” The incident occurred 25 miles from the Kerch Strait, the map is given below. Ukrainian boats, as usual, patrolled the route between the Kerch Strait and Ukrainian ports and escorted commercial vessels.

It is noteworthy, that on 14.04.2021, the Monitoring Group recorded that the ships’ formation of the Caspian Flotilla of the Russian Federation – am-

phibious and artillery boats (8 Serna type and 3 Shmel type, respectively) accompanied by 2 hydrographic vessels approximately at 5 pm left the Taganrog Bay of the Sea of Azov on course 201 (Kerch), at the speed of 7 knots. They were supposed to be in the Kerch area approximately at 3-4 am on 15.04.2021.

That is, the attempt to oust the boats of the Ukrainian Navy from the course was caused to prevent them from getting closer to the boats of the Caspian Flotilla, heading to the Crimea.

2.3. An Incident in the Sea of Azov involving the gun boats of the Ukrainian Navy and the boats and a ship of FSB Coast Guard of the Russian Federation on May 22, 2021

At the beginning of the 3rd decade of May 2021, the Ukrainian Navy, in cooperation with the Maritime Guard, conducted tactical exercises in the Sea of Azov.

In total, up to ten boats of the Ukrainian Navy and Marine Guard were involved in exercises in the Sea of Azov, including two SAAS (Gyurza-M) of the Ukrainian Navy – Vyshgorod, and Akerman.

The tasks that were worked out during the exercise were the search and rescue operations, covering the landing of an amphibious assault group from a helicopter at sea, and naval combat with enemy ships.

The area that was designated for combat exercises activities was closed to navigation, and the Russian side, warned about the Ukrainian Navy in advance, but deliberately ignored this message.

Three ships of the FSB Coast Guard of the Russian Federation attempted to prevent the training

of Ukrainian sailors.

One of them went straight to the course of the boats of the Ukrainian Navy, trying to force them to exercise and deviate from the course, ignoring all the warnings of the boat commander.

However, later, seeing that the Ukrainian artillery boats were rapidly approaching, the Russian ship came on the radio and informed that they understood the warning and would comply with the requirement to leave the area of exercise.



Figure 4. Large landing ships of the Baltic and Northern Navies of the Russian Federation together with the BDC of the Black Sea Fleet at the landing exercises in the occupied Crimea, Opuk training ground on the Kerch Peninsula, April 2021

3. The situation in the Black Sea

3.1. Increase in the Russian naval force in the Black Sea during the general military escalation in March-April 2021

At the end of March 2021, along the Ukrainian-Russian border in the Bryansk, Voronezh, Rostov regions of the Russian Federation and the occupied territories of Donbas and Crimea, under the guise of preparing for the Zakhid 2021 exercises to be held in September, Russia concentrated a huge number of troops, including those from the Navy.

At that time, the Russian Federation gathered almost all the ships of the Black Sea Fleet in the Black Sea – that is, it reduced the number of Warships traditionally located in Syria and off the coast of Syria – as part of the Mediterranean Squadron

of the Russian Navy. Usually, in the Mediterranean Sea, there are (on the principle of rotation) 5-7 warships of the Russian Federation (not including submarines and support vessels), and in mid-April 2021 there were only 2 warships left.

On April 15, 2021, a group of 15 ships of the Caspian flotilla arrived at the Crimean Peninsula via the Volga-Don Canal and the Sea of Azov, including:

- 8 high-speed landing boats: 6 Serna Project 11770 vessels (the Serna class, or Project 11770), speed of up to 30 knots, landing capacity of 1 main tank or 2 armoured personnel carriers, or 92 landing members; 1 Project 1176 (code Akula, according to the NATO classification Ondatra class) vessel with the landing capacity of 1 main tank or 2 armoured personnel carriers;

or 92 landing members; 1 Project 21820 vessel (Dyugon, according to the NATO classification Dyugon/Ataman Platov) with the landing capacity of 2 main tanks or 4 infantry fighting vehicles/APCs, or 90 paratroopers;

- 3 Pr. 1204 artillery boats (code Shmel, NATO reporting name: Shmel – class River gunboat);
- as well as 3 tugboats and a hydrographic vessel.

This flotilla participated in exercises of the Black Sea Fleet and then stayed in the Kerch Strait area. On April 17, 2021, at the height of the Russian escalation, 4 large landing ships (LLS) of other fleets of the Russian Federation entered the Black Sea in one day:

- 2 – from the Northern Fleet, (031) Alexander Otrakovsky, (027) Kondopoga);
- 2 – from the Baltic Fleet: (130) Korolev, (102) Kaliningrad,

They took part in training on loading and disembarking troops at the Opuk training ground near Feodosia in the occupied Crimea.

That is, since April 17, 2021, there have been 11 airborne corps in the Black Sea (7 from the Black Sea Fleet, 2 from the Baltic Fleet, and 2 from the Northern Fleet). Of these, three airborne corps of the Black Sea Fleet Project 1171 (Tapir class) landing ship (NATO reporting name: Alligator) – can accommodate up to 20 main battle tanks, or 45 armoured personnel carriers, or 50 trucks, and 300-400 landing personnel; the remaining 8 Project 775 landing assault ships (NATO reporting name: the Ropucha class) – assault forces' capacity: 10 medium tanks or 12 armoured personnel carriers and 340 people.

The concentration of such a group of landing ships (which can take on board several amphibious battalions with equipment) indicated the possibility of large amphibious operations on the Black Sea coast of Ukraine.

Only on July 6-7, 2021, 8 landing boats of the Caspian Flotilla left Kerch for the Caspian Sea. During the same period – July 7-11, 2021 – amphibious ships of the Baltic and Northern Fleet left the Black Sea. But 3 artillery boats and 2 auxiliary vessels remained in the Sea of Azov.

3.2. “War of Exercises” on the eve of Sea Breeze-2021

In the summer of 2021 – for the second year in a row – a situation when the Ukrainian Navy, in simple terms, “books” the areas of the Black Sea in advance for international Sea Breeze-21 exercises, developed¹. And also for the second year in a row, the Spanish Hydrographic Institute, responsible for publishing the navigation warnings about the closure of Black Sea areas, stubbornly “ignores” the messages from the Ukrainian Navy.² Meanwhile, it publishes warnings from the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation, issued much later.

As a result, there are situations when warring states conduct naval exercises in the same areas.

Recall that the closure of the sea sections is carried out via NAVTEX messages (NAVTEX – “NAVigational TELeX”), an international automated notification system. The technical solution is telex. In shipping navigation, it is used to receive navigation and meteorological safety information (Maritime Safety Information) and serves as a component of the International Maritime Organization's Global Maritime Distress and Safety System under the SOLAS-74/88 Convention.

The Command of the Navy requested Coastal Warning as early as 04.04.21, and Ukrderzhhydrography (national official coordinator) issued Coastal Warning No. 245, 246, 247 and distributed it via NAVTEX as early as 05.06.21 – these areas are marked on the map in gray with yellow text – see the map below, Figure 5:

1 Sea Breeze 2021 was held on June 28-July 10, 2021.

2 We wrote about the history of the war of exercises in the previous years here: "The «War of Exercises» in the Black Sea: A New Very Dangerous Stage that Cannot Be Ignored." <https://www.blackseanews.net/read/166696>

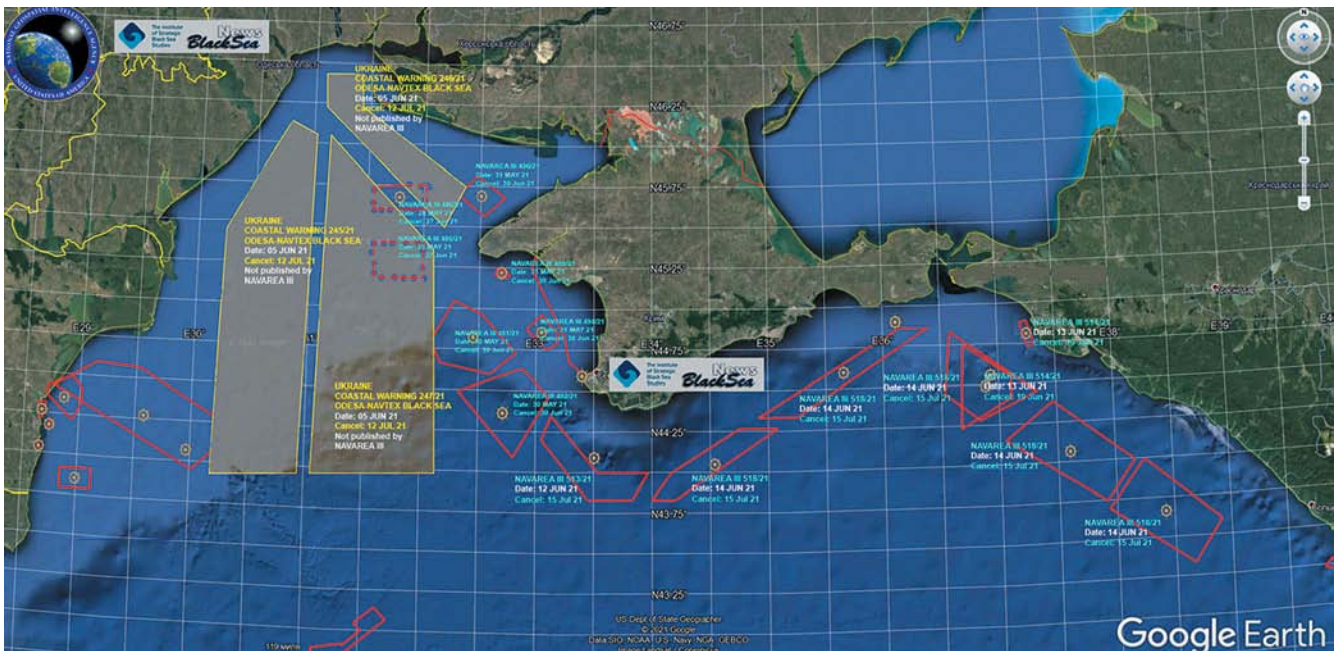


Figure 5. The Spanish coordinator NAVAREA-III ignored the areas marked for closure under warnings from the Ukrainian national coordinator Ukrderzhhydrography (Coastal Warning No. 245, 246, 247).

The coordinator of NAVAREA-III (the government of Spain represented by Instituto Hidrográfico de la Marina, Cádiz city) did not publish these Ukrainian warnings on its website for 20 days (from 5 June to 24 June 2021). However, during this period, the Spanish coordinator did publish warnings from the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation about the closure of 8 areas of the Black Sea, which were issued on 12, 13, and 14 June 2021 (marked with red lines on the map).

The problem was solved only after the intervention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and the Embassy of Ukraine in Spain.

There is information that **the Russian Federation is currently trying to resolve with the NAVAR-**

EA III coordinator the issue of the de facto recognition of the occupation of Crimea. The current distribution of areas of responsibility among the countries (NAVAREA stations) in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov is shown in Figure below.

But this is how the Russian Federation wants to see the distribution of areas of responsibility between the countries – the map below represents the offers of the Russian Federation received by the NAVAREA-III coordinator:

The Hydrographic Bureau of the Spanish Navy, in response to a request from DW, said that it had published the Russian message, guided solely by considerations of navigation safety. “The messages transmitted by different countries are published



Figure 6. Distribution of areas of responsibility between countries (NAVAREA stations) in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov



Figure 7. Russian Federation's proposals on the redistribution of areas of responsibility between the countries (NAVAREA stations) in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, taking into account the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula

based on these considerations and do not take into account various regional conflicts between countries,” the NAVTEX Regional Coordination Office in Cadiz said.

Why only one of the three Russian messages was made public and what this means for the future in terms of the responsibility of stations in Berdyansk and Odesa is still unclear. It is also unclear how to avoid dangerous situations in the future if Ukrainian and Russian stations send different signals simultaneously. (For more information, see here: “How Russia legalises annexation in the Black Sea” – <https://www.dw.com/uk/yak-rosiia-lehalizuie-aneksiiu-u-chornomu-mori/a-57316338>)

3.3. Another manifestation of the Russian hybrid war in the Black Sea is GPS spoofing on the eve of Sea Breeze 2021

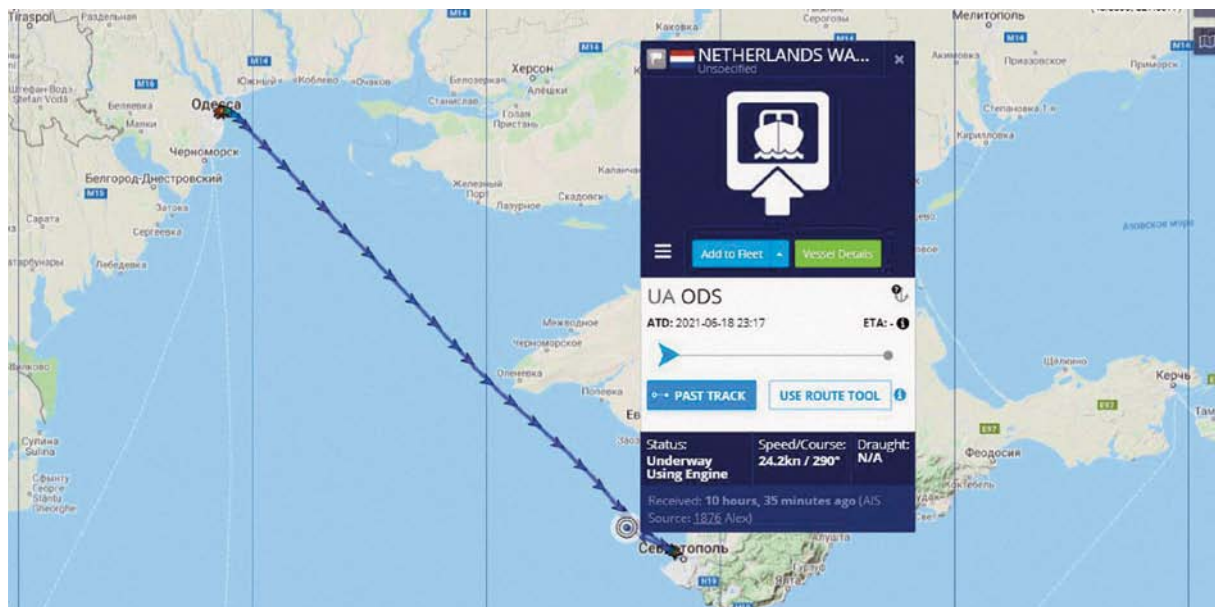


Figure 8. Track of the Royal Dutch Navy missile frigate HNLMS Evertsen (F 805)
Source: marinetraffic.com

The image below shows the track of the Missile Destroyer of the Royal Navy HMS Defender (D 36). According to the track, it also left Odesa on 18.06.2021 at 23-28, together with the Evertsen

HNLMS Evertsen and HMS Defender left Odesa for Sevastopol on 18-19.06. 2021 and are already returning... But the American missile destroyer USS Laboon (DDG58) passed through the Kerch Strait under the bridge on the same night... This is exactly what GPS spoofing is all about.

The picture below shows the track of a missile frigate of the Royal Dutch Navy **HNLMS Evertsen (F 805)** – according to the track from the site marinetraffic.com the frigate left Odesa on 18.06.2021 at 23:17 (Kyiv time), reached... Sevastopol and returned to Odesa...

frigate (F 805), and also reached... Sevastopol. However, for some reason, the hackers who created this virtual voyage failed to capture both ships near Sevastopol at the same time.

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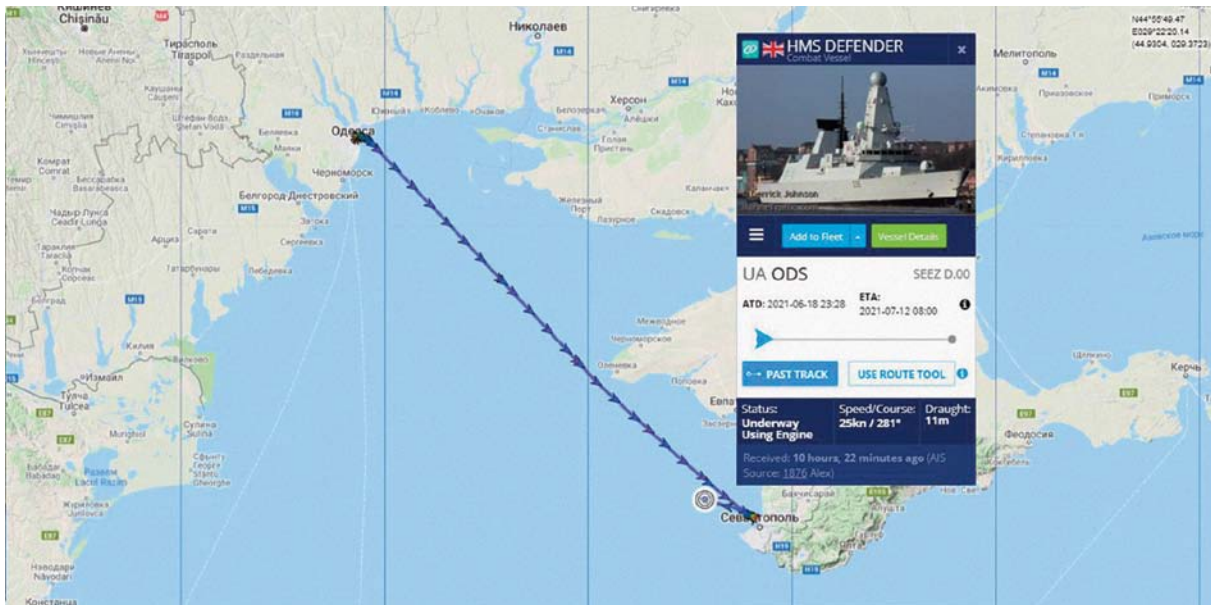


Figure 9. Track of the Royal Navy missile destroyer HMS Defender (D 36).
Source: marinetracker.com

The photo below (taken from an online webcam) proves that in fact, during this period, both ships

were remaining in the Port of Odesa...

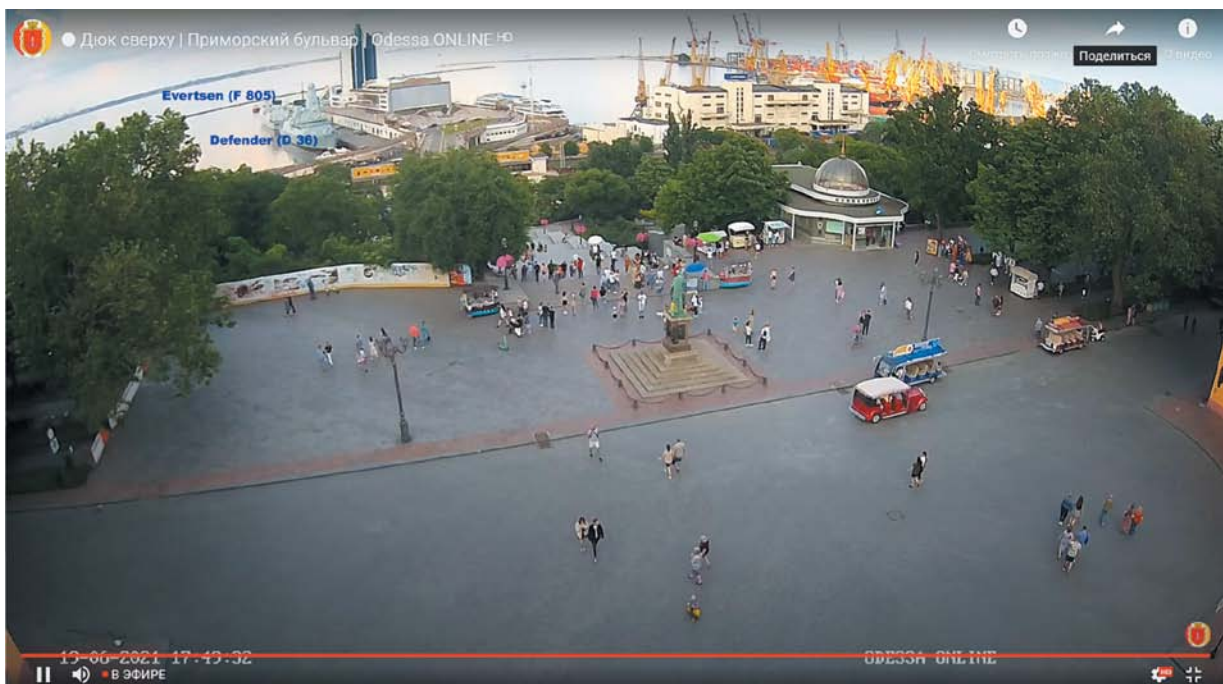


Photo 10. Evidence that on 18.06.2021 the Royal Navy's HMS Defender missile destroyer and the Royal Dutch Navy's HNLMS Evertsen missile frigate stayed in the Port of Odesa. A picture from an online webcam.

At the same time, it was not at all surprising to see that as a result of the same computer technology's application, an U.S. Missile Destroyer USS

Laboon (DDG 58) passed through the Kerch Strait under the bridge to the Sea of Azov at night of 18 to 19.06.21... (see Figure 11 below):

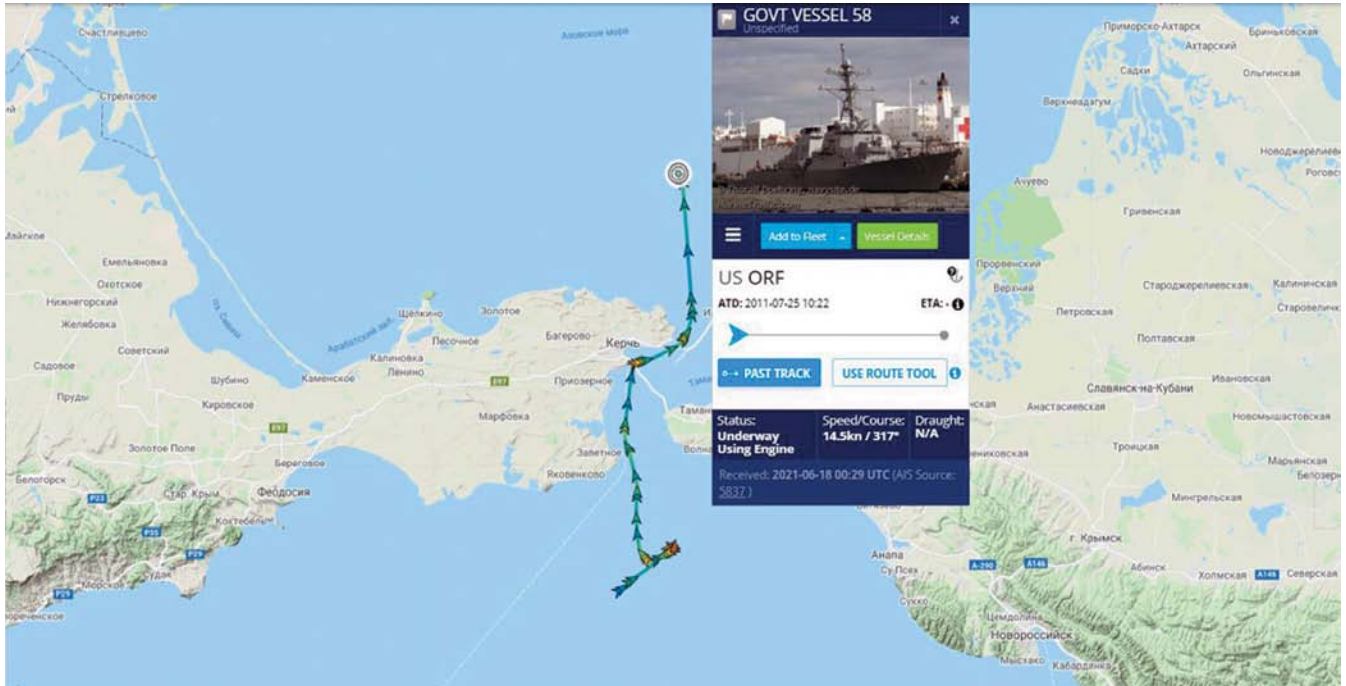


Figure 11. Fake spoofing using data on the American missile destroyer USS Laboon (DDG 58) passing through the Kerch Strait under the bridge to the Sea of Azov at night from 18 to 19.06.21

This technology (known to experts) is called GPS spoofing. That is artificially created signals that fake the actual position of the ship.

Our colleagues and we have been recording similar things since 2017 – in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. When one looks at the map with dynamic markings and see that the ship is going on land, near Rostov... For example, in June 2017, about twenty ships in the Black Sea complained about GPS anomalies showing that ships were moving far from their actual location.

GPS anomalies were observed, for example, on the Black Sea coast of the Russian Federation around Putin's Palace in Sochi. There were incidents related to the spoofing of Russian GPS in Norway during a NATO exercise that led to a collision of ships, spoofing from Syria by the Russian military, which affected the airport in Tel Aviv.

Note that **two days earlier – on 16.06.2021 – one of the Russian media reported on the “intentions” of the ship of the US Sixth Fleet to pass under the Kerch Bridge:**



Photo 12. The early announcement by pro-Kremlin propaganda media of the “intention” of the US 6th Fleet ship to pass under the Kerch Bridge

The last example of GPS spoofing was recorded on the night of 29 June to 30 June 2021. According to the false AIS signal, the US Missile Destroyer Ross (DDG-71) of the U.S. Sixth Fleet, together with the Ukrainian Navy missile boat Pryluky (U153), passed near Sevastopol (See the Figure below).



Figure 13. Example of using GPS spoofing on the night of 29-30.06.2021

One can guess that at this very time the USS Ross (DDG-71) was actually in the port of Odesa – see the photo from the webcam below:



Photo 14. A webcam recording of the true location of the American ship USS Ross (DDG-71)

3.4. A non-virtual incident involving missile destroyer of the Royal Navy HMS Defender (D 36)

Let's start with the fact, that the Russian Federation had officially warned that there would be “unintended” incidents during the Sea Breeze 2021 exercise. The embassy of the Russian Federation in the United States of America started this on 22.06.2021 in its Twitter account.



Photo 15. Screenshot of the warning of the Russian Embassy in the United States on Twitter

In the morning of the next day – 23.06.2021 – none other than the leading news agency of the Russian Federation, picked up this topic...



Photo 16. Screenshot of a message from a Russian news agency based on a warning from the Russian Embassy in the United States.

Of course, the incidents were not long in coming. **On the same day – 23.06.2021 – Russian ships tried to interfere with the peaceful passage of the missile destroyer of the Royal Navy HMS Defender (D 36) on the traditional international**

route from Odesa to the Georgian Port of Batumi. This corridor “cuts off” part of the 12-mile zone off the coast of the occupied Crimean Peninsula near Sevastopol (see Figure 17 below).

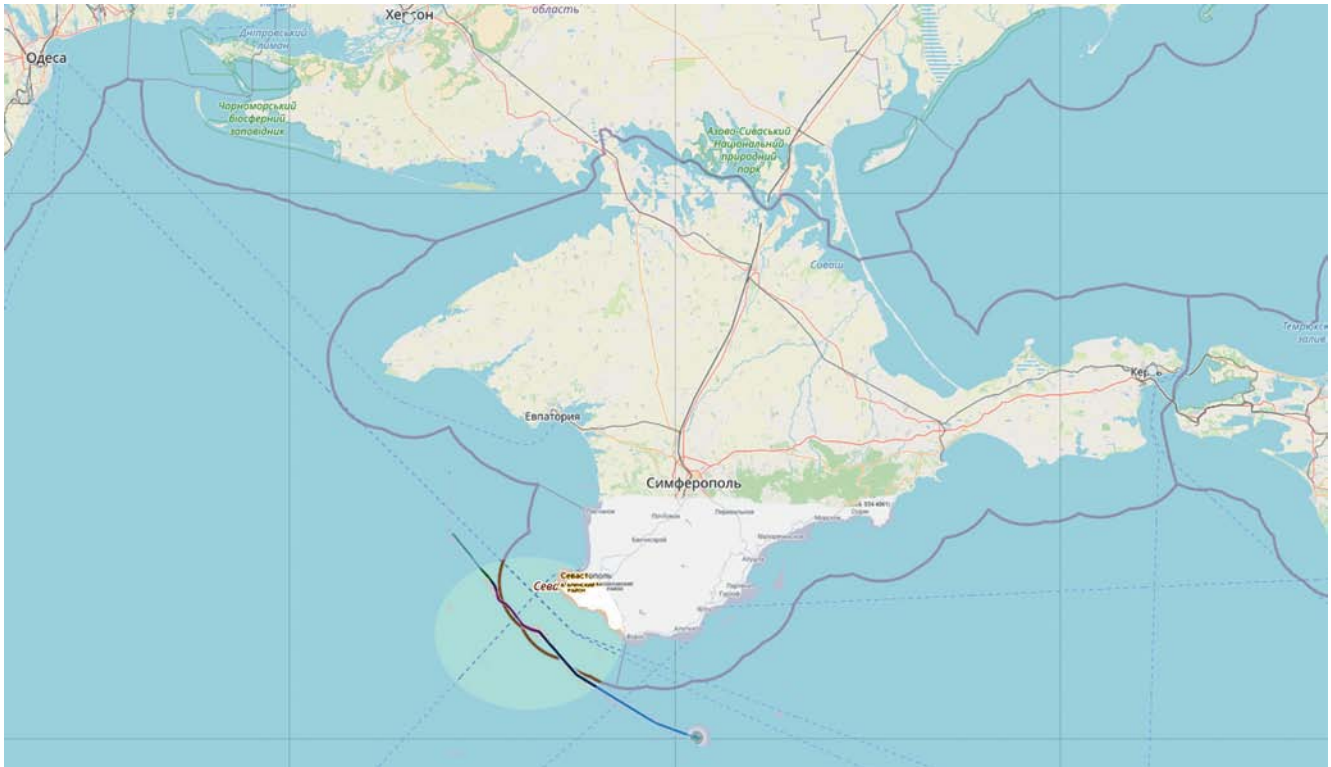


Figure 17. Scheme of a traditional international route from Odesa to the Georgian Port of Batumi.

This international route has not changed since the Soviet times, it is plotted on all sea maps. And it really, as experts say, goes three miles deep into the 12-mile zone (the territorial sea or territorial waters of Ukraine near the Crimea).

During this passage, the patrol corvette of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation Pavel Derzhavin, hull number 363, warned the Defender to change course for the sake of its safety. To this, the British destroyer replied that it received the message and was following its intended course.

Despite warnings of possible shelling and shooting that were heard at a distance in the neighbouring Black Sea area, where the Russian Federation conducted its exercises, and despite numerous (up to 20 times) overflights, the British destroyer HMS Defender (D 36) did not change course.

In the end, it turned out that **the actions of HMS Defender (D 36) can be interpreted as freedom of navigation operations (FONOP), that is, response to operational challenges against excessive maritime claims**, which demonstrate the resistance of leading states to excessive maritime claims.

3.5. Another non-virtual incident involving the Missile Frigate of the Royal Dutch Navy HNLMS Evertsen (F 805)

The next day – 24.06.2021 – during the stay in the Black Sea of the missile frigate of the Royal Dutch navy HNLMS Evertsen (F 805), Russian aircraft created a dangerous situation near this ship.

“Armed Russian warplanes provoked a dangerous situation in the Black Sea near HNLMS Evertsen last Thursday. The plane repeatedly flew at a dan-

gerously low altitude over and near the ship, and performed simulated attacks. During these persecutions, HNLMS Evertsen was in the international waters,” the Dutch Ministry of Defence said in a statement dated June 29, 2021. Dutch Minister of Defence Ank Bijleveld-Schouten called Russia’s actions “irresponsible”. “Evertsen has every right to sail there. There is no justification for such aggressive actions, which unnecessarily increase the likelihood of the accidents,” she said, adding that the authorities will discuss this issue with Russia at the diplomatic level.

3.6. New Russian technology for hybrid warfare – “protective barrier of fake exercises” around the occupied Crimean Peninsula

In September 2020, for the first time, the Russian Federation blocked almost the entire maritime perimeter of the occupied Crimean Peninsula outside the 12-mile zone under the pretext of exercises. This, for example, was the map of the Black Sea closed areas on September 21, 2020 – the corresponding areas are marked in yellow (Figure 18).

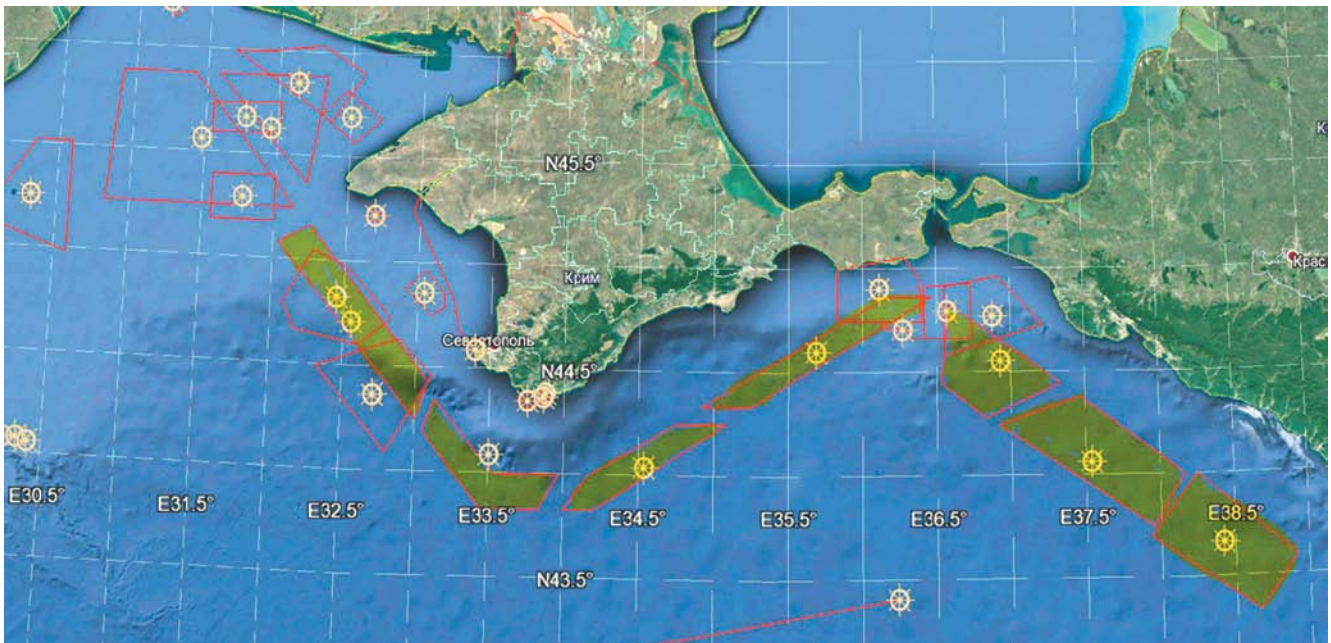


Figure 18. The map of the Black Sea closed areas on September 21, 2020

Closure of the perimeter of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation **continuously lasted almost 3 months** – from September 17 to December 09, 2020. Soon this technology was restored in the period 15.01.2021 – 08.02.2021, and then 22.02.2021 – 12.03.2021. According to calendar dates, this usually coincided with the presence of the non-Black-Sea NATO countries’ ships – namely, reconnaissance ships and modern missile destroyers and cruisers.

The Russian Federation has long practiced blocking large areas of the Black Sea. But each time it moves further and further – both in terms of the size of the closed areas and the duration of the closure period. Said differently, it tests the reaction to its next steps.

Against this background, the situation with the

closure of the large Black Sea areas in April 2021 for the period from 24.04.2021 (hereinafter “retroactively” changed to 16.04.2021) to 31.10.2021 or **for more than 6 months** does not seem strange. This is just the next step in terms of closure duration.

The map of closures initially looked as provided below (Figure 19) – these are areas of the Black Sea closed by the Russian Federation, according to Coastal Warning (PRIP) * Novorossiysk 152/21 (07.04.2021). It was published in the weekly bulletin No. 17/21 of the Main Department of Navigation and Oceanography of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation.

* Reference. PRIP – abbreviation from **PR**ibrezhnoye **P**reduprezhdeniye (English – Coastal Warning).



Figure 19. Closed Russian regions of the Black Sea, according to CW * NOVOROSIYSK 152/21 (07.04.2021)

The main feature of this action – **the first closure of the approaches to the Kerch Strait (so far only for military and other state vessels)**. Previously, there was always a free corridor between the closed areas.

A few days later, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation cancelled the CW No. 152/21 (where Point B provided for the coordinates

of the area that blocked the approaches to the Kerch Strait) and issued a new CW No. 169/21 instead. In it, the coordinates of the closed area in front of the Kerch Strait remained the same. The configuration of the closed areas near Sevastopol changed – the Russian Federation remembered that it is undesirable to block traditional international sea routes passing near Sevastopol... The map of closed areas now looked as given below:

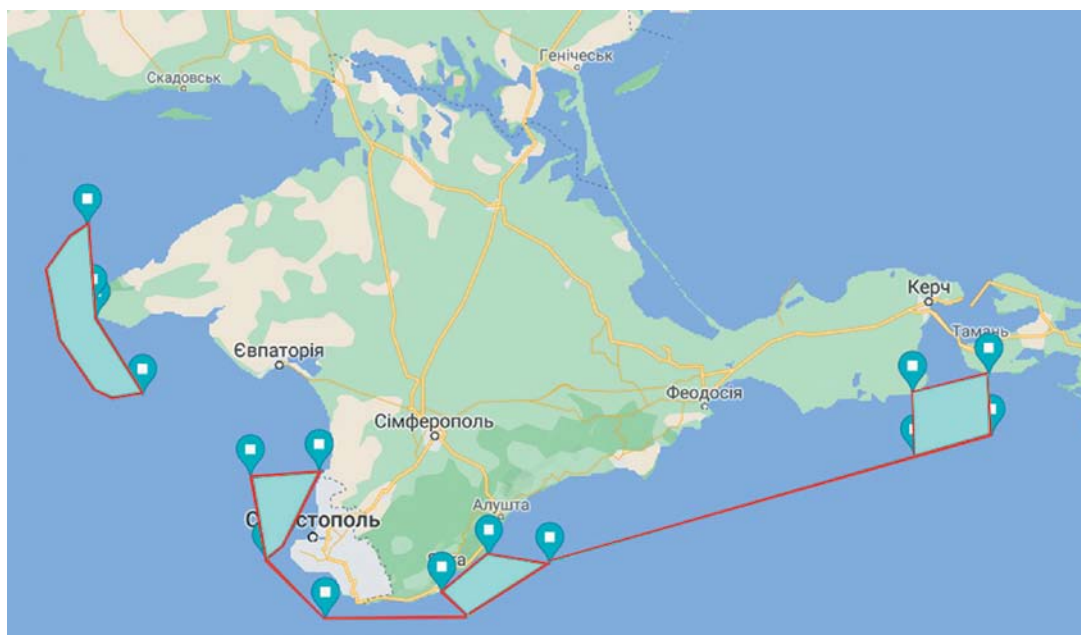


Figure 20. Map of closed districts of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation in April 2021

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In addition, if CW No. 152/21 provided for the closure commencement on 24.04.2021, the new CW No. 169/21 – 16.04.2021 (retroactively). The expiration date has not changed – 31.10.2021.

Thus, the Russian Federation is bringing chaos to the international system, designed to ensure the safety of navigation and is gradually establishing

in its intentions to turn the Black Sea into a Russian lake.”

3.7. Detention of Ukrainian fishermen from Ochakiv in the Black Sea between Crimea and Odesa by the Russian Coast Guard 20.04.2021

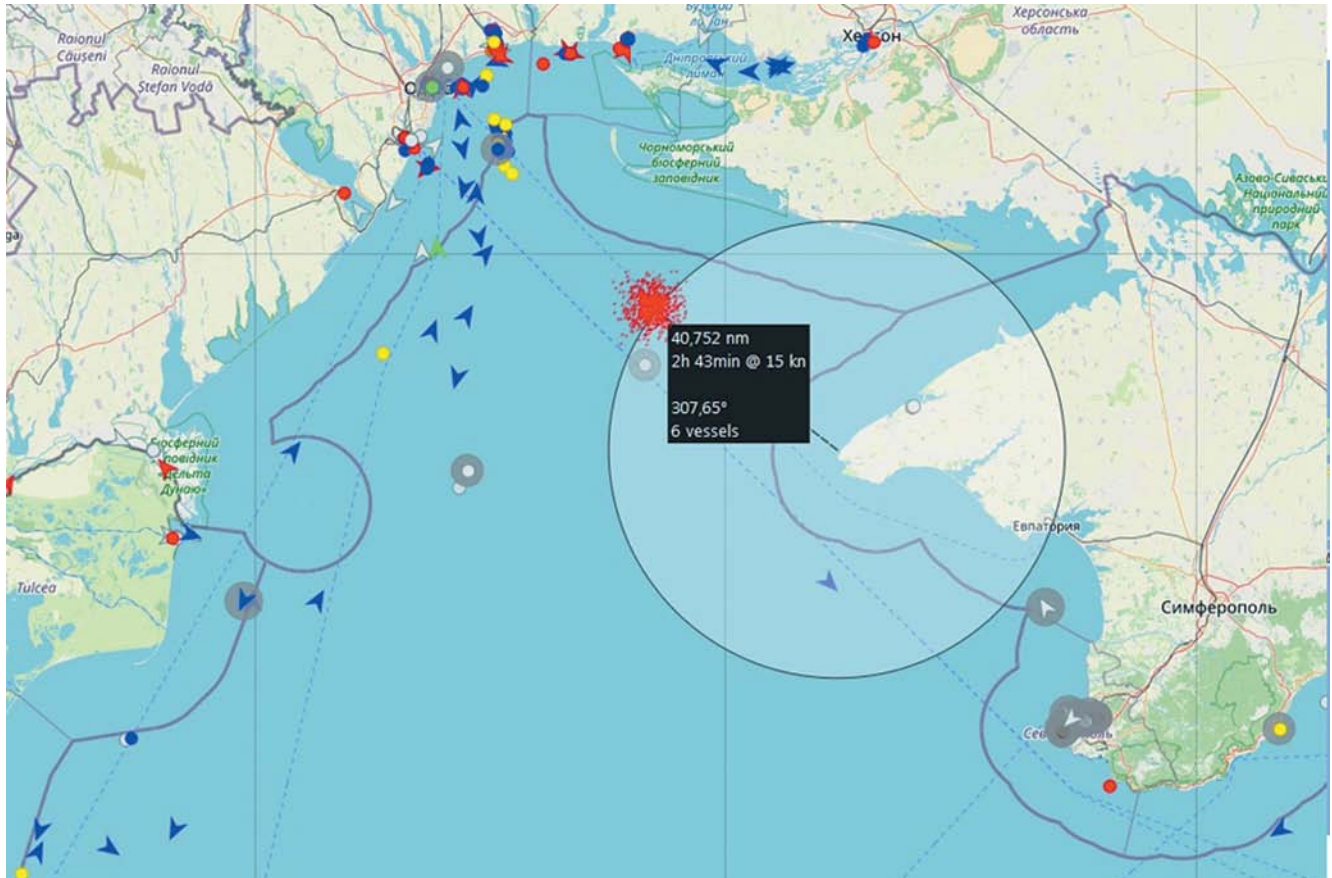


Figure 21. The purple line on the map is a 12-mile zone (territorial sea of Ukraine) on 20.04.2021, 40 miles northwest of Cape Tarkhankut (or 50 miles from Odesa). The FSB Coast Guard of the Russian Federation detained the Ukrainian fishing boat YAOD-2483 (from Ochakiv).

Russian message: “The citizens were catching flounder and Black Sea turbot in the economic zone (!!) of the Russian Federation. On April 21, the court found the captain of the detained vessel guilty. The violator was sentenced to a fine of 257 thousand roubles. In addition, the poachers’ driftnets were confiscated.” The boat was brought to the occupied Crimea in Chernomorsk. After the fine was paid, the fishermen were released.

3.8. Claims of the Russian Federation to the part of the Ukrainian EMEZ adjacent to the occupied Crimean Peninsula

It is noteworthy, that the case of the fishermen’s detention, discussed above, is not unique. What is unique is that the Russian Federation is

increasingly publicly calling the Black Sea area where fishermen were detained “the exclusive maritime economic zone of the Russian Federation.”

But this is not just about fishermen – such “arguments” are the basis for the closure of the Black Sea areas under the pretext of military exercises, attempts to prevent the free passage of ships and vessels near the occupied Crimean Peninsula, gas production on Ukrainian sea platforms captured in the spring of 2014 on the Black Sea shelf.

The map of Exclusive Maritime Economic Zones in the Black Sea is given below:

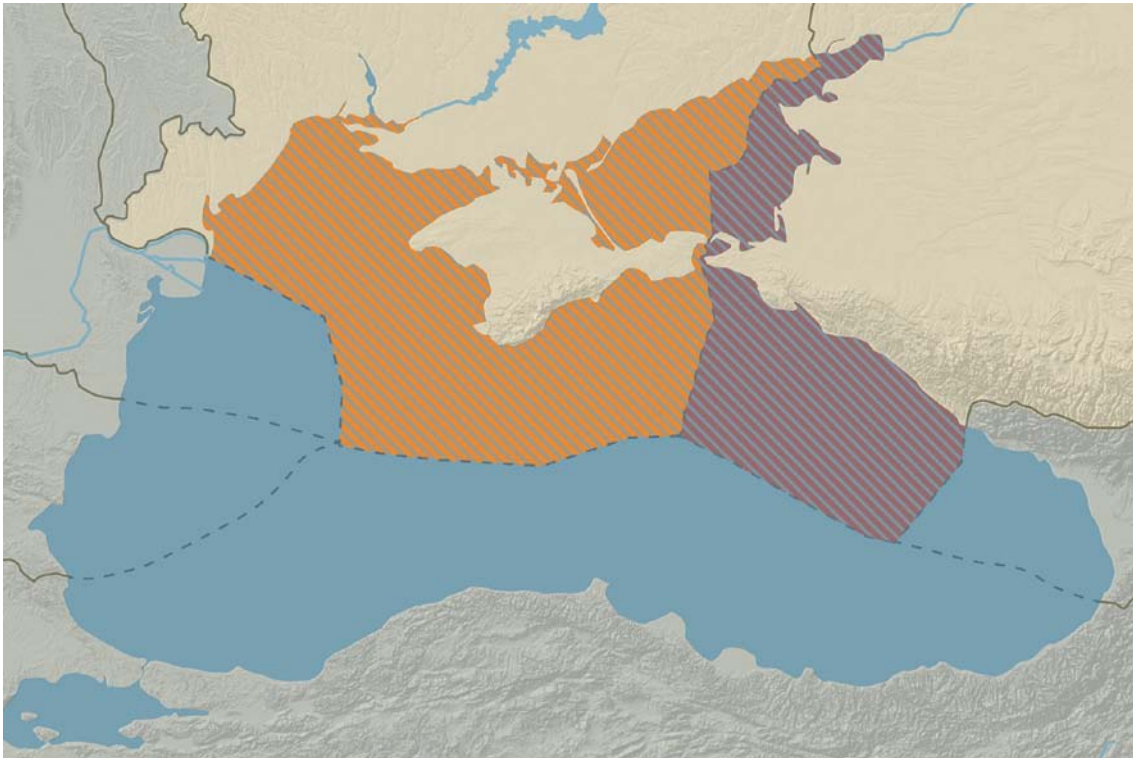


Figure 22. The map of exclusive maritime economic zones in the Black Sea

Source: Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/world/europe/in-taking-crimea-putin-gains-a-sea-of-fuel-reserves.html>

But such claims to EMEZ are increasingly being put forward by the Russian Federation by its actual actions after the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula, see Figure 23 below. At the same time, it takes advantage of the fact that for 30 years after

the collapse of the USSR, it blocked and delayed negotiations on the establishment of land and sea borders with Ukraine. Ukraine has normalised sea EMEZ borders with Romania and Turkey but did not with the Russian Federation.

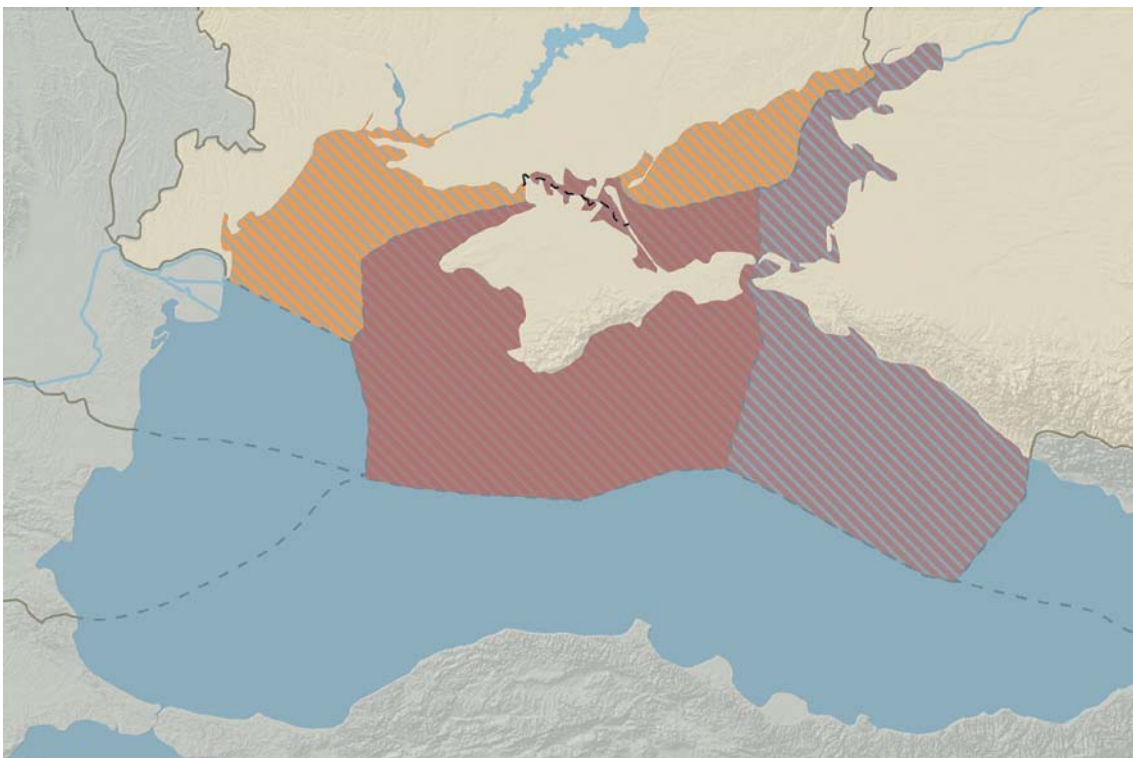


Figure 23. Claims to EMEZ, put forward by the Russian Federation by its actual actions after the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula

4. The forecast on the developments in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov

Russia's claims to the Ukrainian territorial sea and the Exclusive Maritime Economic Zone (EMEZ) may and will continue to be more significant.

Exports from Ukrainian ports of the Sea of Azov account for only 5-7% of Ukraine's sea exports. The remaining 95% of exports go through the ports

of the Odesa region, Mykolayiv, and Kherson. The main export-import routes of Ukraine are located in the Black Sea and lead to/from the Bosphorus.

But on the Black Sea – near the recommended sea routes from Odesa to the Bosphorus and from Odesa to Batumi and Turkish ports of the Black Sea – there are gas and oil drilling platforms captured by Russia during the occupation of Crimea on the Ukrainian offshore (please, refer to the maps below – Figures 24 and 25).

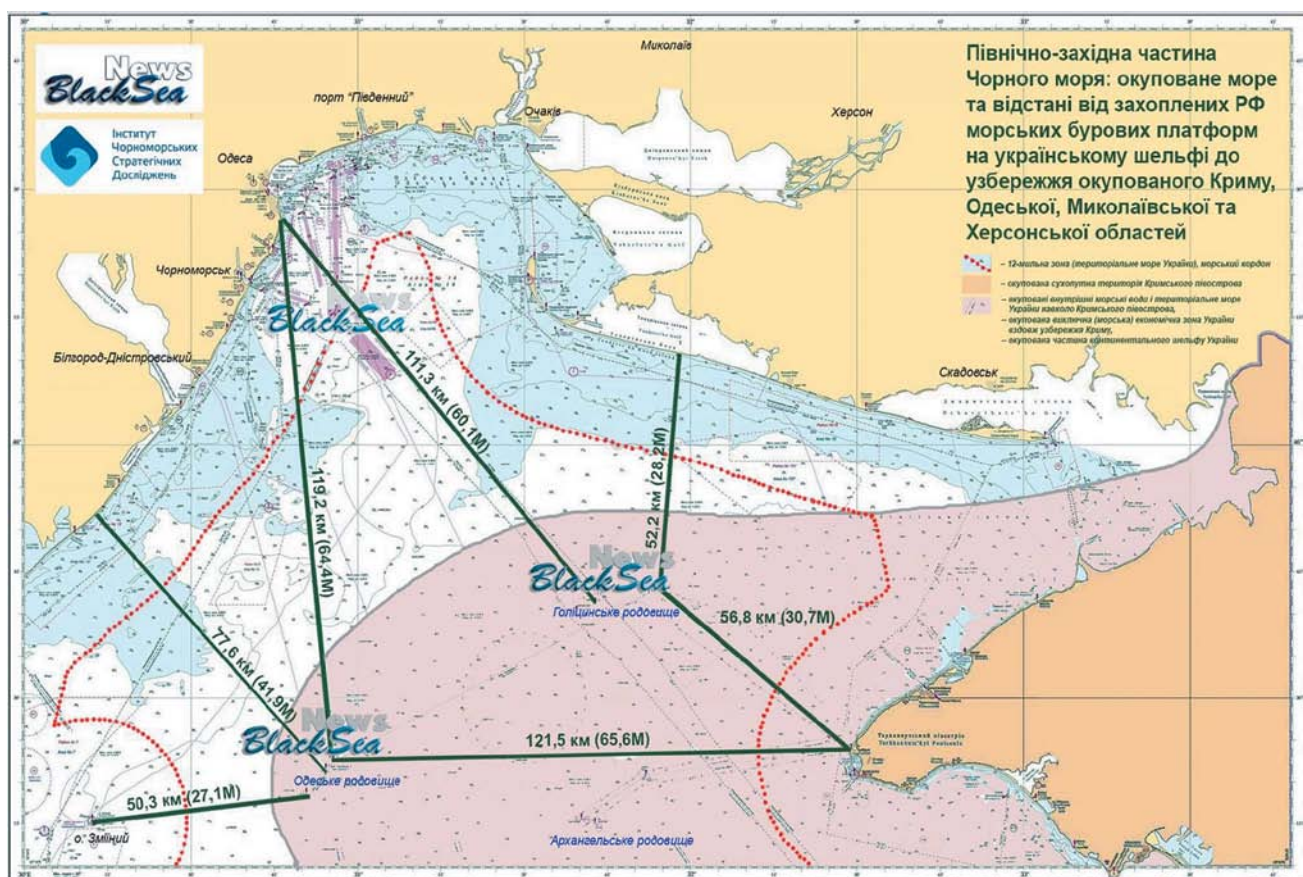


Figure 24.

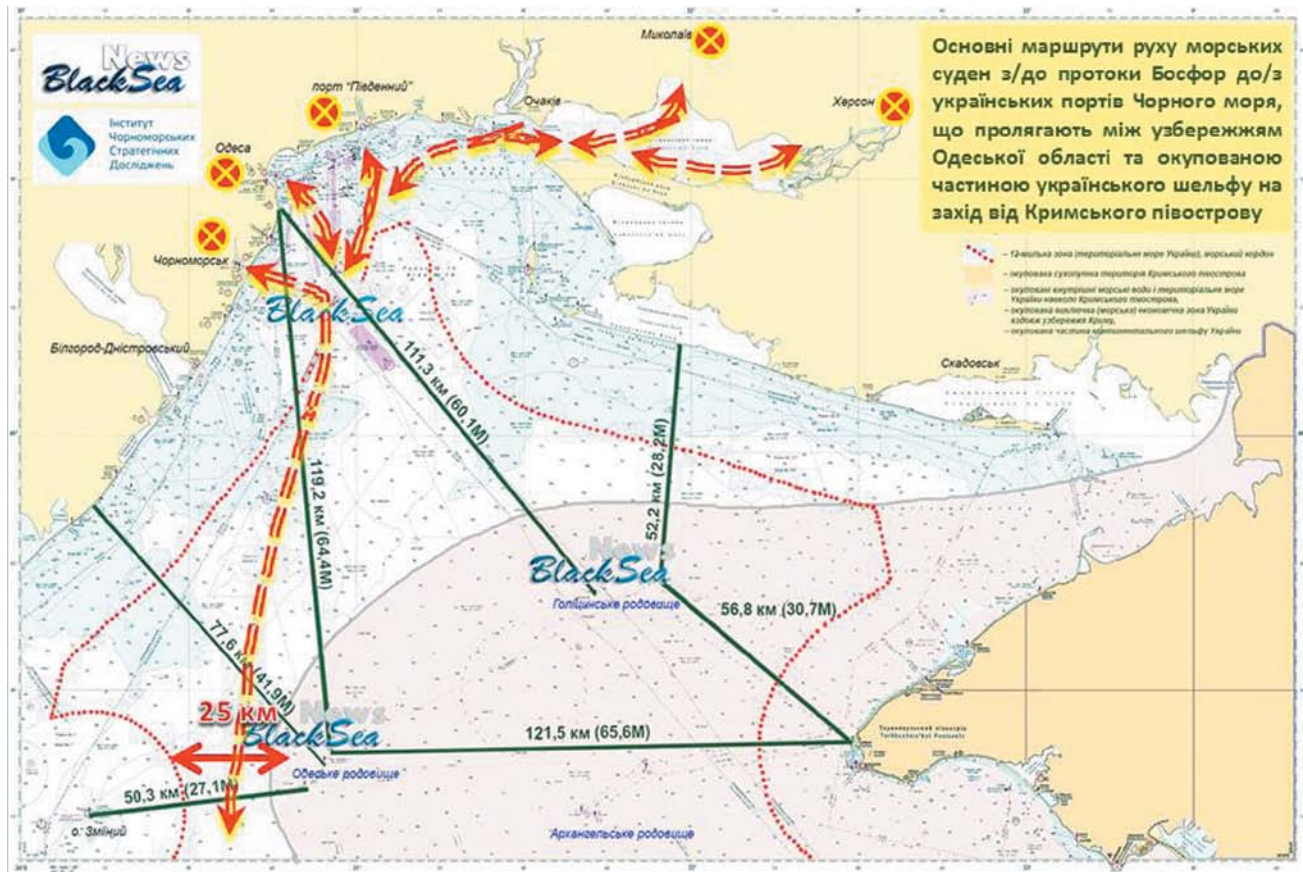


Figure 25.

The situation, where Russian warships start checking commercial vessels going from Ukrainian ports to the Bosphorus past the captured Ukrainian gas and oil platforms on the shelf (which the Russian Federation has long considered “its own”), according to the “Azov legend,” i.e. the presence of saboteurs and explosives, looks absolutely real.

Stated differently, shortly, we will talk more and more loudly about fixing Russia’s de facto occupation of the Ukrainian shelf of the Black Sea almost to the coast of the Odesa region.

5. What should Ukraine together with NATO and EU countries do to prevent the joint threat at sea

5.1. Policy of maritime and naval non-recognition of the illegal attempt to annex the Crimean Peninsula and the creeping occupation of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov

The authors imply the need to create international rules in the maritime and naval sphere, including navigation and cartography, developing and

specifying the UN General Assembly Resolution dated March 27, 2014, on non-recognition of the illegally changed status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation and refraining from the actions, negligence or steps that could be interpreted as recognition of such a changed status:

we are talking, for example, about a ban on the publication, distribution, and demonstration in any form of geographical and navigation maps, which would indicate the “nationality” of the Crimean Peninsula to the Russian Federation and, accordingly, the “nationality” of the sections of the Exclusive Maritime Economic Zone (EMEZ) of Ukraine in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov to the Russian Federation.

In addition, this may include refusing to service warships and support vessels of the Russian Navy in the ports of NATO and EU countries, and so on.5.2.

5.2. Application of the updated Crimean-Azov package of sanction

- Introduce international sectoral sanctions against the entire Russian shipbuilding industry – for the work of enterprises in these industries on manufacturing of the military products and weapons at captured Ukrainian factories in the occupied Crimea³ and for organising and participating in the maintenance of ships and missile systems of the Black Sea Fleet at the captured Ukrainian factories in the Crimea.
- Impose international sanctions on those Russian shipowners, insurers, and classification societies that provided for the activities of sea vessels that made visits to the seaports of the Crimean Peninsula in violation of sanctions.
- Introduce international sanctions against Russian ports in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, including the Ports of Kavkaz, Rostov-on-Don, Temryuk, Azov, and Novorossiysk. Sanctions are proposed to be imposed for transportation from these ports to the occupied Crimean Peninsula.

This package of sanctions may include:

- 1) prohibition of any type of service of merchant ships travelling from the above-mentioned ports to the ports of Ukraine and the EU, USA, British Commonwealth, and other countries (except for emergencies and disasters);
- 2) ban on organising sails to these ports from the ports of Ukraine and the EU, USA, British Commonwealth, and other countries;
- 3) prohibition of acceptance/dispatch in the ports of Ukraine and the EU countries, the United States, the British Commonwealth, and other countries of sea cargo that was or is planned for off-shore transshipment in the Port of Kavkaz.

5.3. A “set of actions to deter Russian aggression in the Black Sea”⁴

- Support Ukraine in forcibly establishing a maritime border with Russia in the Black and Azov Seas and the Kerch Strait through

the UN and delineating maritime spaces with Russia under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

- Create in the future the A2/AD (anti-access and area denial) district in the area of Deveselu military base, Romania-Odesa Naval Base, Ukraine in such a way that it protects the sea and airspace in the area of the Black Sea coast of Ukraine, Bulgaria and Romania and guarantees a single route for commercial navigation to the Black Sea ports of Ukraine, not controlled by Russia.
- Introduce permanent (365 days a year) naval and air patrols of the main route of merchant ships in the Black Sea from the Bosphorus Strait in the general direction of Odesa, including the Black Sea area from the Dnieper-Bug estuary (Ochakiv) to the Danube delta (Vilkovo) and the zone of gas and condensate fields captured by Russia in 2014 in the Ukrainian EMEZ;
- respectively, strengthen the number of ships of the NATO Navy on duty in the Black Sea.
- Create for this purpose in the Black Sea a joint naval format “NATO, including the Black Sea member countries of the Alliance, and partner countries (Ukraine and Georgia)” for regular patrols in the Black Sea to ensure freedom of navigation.
- Initiate an international investigation of GPS spoofing in the Black Sea zone, carried out by the Russian side.
- Support Ukraine in initiating relevant decisions and monitoring of violations of the freedom of navigation by the Russian Federation in the Black and Azov Seas in international organisations (IMO, ICAO, FAO, International Telecommunication Union, European Council, and EU), courts (ITLOS, ECHR) and arbitration courts. In particular, this may apply to restrictions on navigation, fishing, and mass abuses of the closure of sea sections under the pretext of military exercises using the international warnings system of maritime navigation dangers NAVTEX, and so on.
- Initiate an international investigation into the use of Crimea as a naval base for Russian aggression in Syria, Libya, etc.

³ In this work, almost 150 defence and other plants of the Russian Federation from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok (mainly shipbuilding yards and instrumentation plants) were “highlighted”; the absolute majority of them are not under sanctions.

⁴ Developing proposals, in addition to the authors' achievements, we used the work of Marine Expert Platform.

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NATO's Regional Missile Defense Approaches Within the Black Sea Security Dimension

In paper, regional approaches within the Black Sea security dimension are reviewed. The paper focuses on the main difficulties and opportunities in the context of NATO's missile defense. The key approaches and characteristics of regional policy in the NATO Black Sea security are discussed. It also discusses how those and especially states with strategic strike forces and weapons of mass destruction should act to ensure global security.

Introduction

Against the background of the challenges in the modern world and geopolitical changes, when the existence of strategic strike weapons and weapons of mass destruction is more relevant, the role and function of the Euro-Atlantic Alliance in the field of world security becomes very important. The original goal of the NATO Partnership Policy was to break down the barrier between the countries and achieve security through dialogue and cooperation. Today, the goals are much more ambitious as partner countries work with NATO to tackle the security problems of the 21st century. Including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and failed states.

Security is especially relevant in the era of globalization, when economization, democratization, informatization create unprecedented development opportunities, but at the same time make the system of international relations more vulnerable to challenges such as terrorism, the use of weapons of mass destruction. The search for security by states is manifested in defense or attack, in a cautious stance of attitude towards more power, and neutrality. This is the circle that realists define as the «security dilemma.»

The problem of ensuring international security

became more urgent after World War II when the creation and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction posed new threats to humanity. Against the background of the establishment of new world order, the role and place of security in the development of the international system are further increasing. The international political and international security system of the 21st century is characterized by a concept described by the theory of complex interdependence.

The Concept of Missile Defense

Missile defense plays an important role in the strategic modeling of nuclear war. Which includes various systems and their constituent elements that are to ensure the territorial security of the state and at the same time protect strategically important facilities from a missile attack. In the early stages of the Cold War, when nuclear tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union escalated, new security models needed to be developed to reduce existing tensions. The sides were deploying their nuclear weapons and at the same time anti-ballistic missile systems and already anti-ballistic missile systems after ballistic missiles. An important moment was the pursuit of a detente policy during the Cold War, which aimed to «defuse tensions». In this regard, the 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) But also needs to establish control over armaments.

SALT I imposed restrictions on strategic nuclear weapons based on the «substantial equivalence formula»: since the United States had a technological advantage and could place more than one atomic bomb on one missile, the Soviet Union was given the right to own more missiles. The idea was that if both sides had a quantitative limit, nuclear containment would be ensured. SALT I also severely restricted the deployment of anti-ballistic missile (ABM) defense systems, as

they helped to stabilize: if one side knew it had the potential to defend against a nuclear strike, guaranteed mutual destruction would be ensured by that side first. A nuclear strike would be more likely ([Jentleson, 2015](#)). Despite the rise of the

detente policy, several problems prevented it from being fully implemented, and even after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the detente policy was finally put to an end.



Photo 1. Richard Nixon (left) and Leonid Brezhnev sign the OSO-1 contract, Moscow, May 26, 1972 © AP Photo

Missile Defense - A set of forces and means, as well as measures and combat operations to repel an enemy missile-nuclear strike by damaging its ballistic missiles or the warheads on the flight trajectories of these missiles (Missile Defense, 2018).

The missile defense includes:

- Means for detection of ballistic missiles (ballistic parts), anti-missile systems of different distances;
- Complex of computing tools;
- Means of transmitting the information.

A missile defense system, depending on the destination, can be

- territorial - for the defense of the whole country;
- zonal - for the defense of large areas;
- of facilities - important for the defense of administrative, industrial, and military facilities;
- for defense against strategic-strategic ballistic

missiles (intercontinental, submarines, medium-range ballistic missiles) and non-strategic (tactical) - for protection against medium-range ballistic missiles, operational-tactical and tactical missiles (anti-missile warheads) (Missile Defense, 2018).

It is important to mention the ballistic missile to better understand what we are dealing with. Unlike the cruise missile, the ballistic missile does not have special aerodynamic surfaces to create a lifting force when flying in the atmosphere. Divided into guided and unguided, single and multistage missiles. Used in the form of combat, missile carriers, research missiles, and more. Combat ballistic missiles are included in-ground missile complexes and submarine-missile complexes. A ballistic missile with a flight distance of more than 6500 km is called an intercontinental ballistic missile. The first combat ballistic missile is considered to be the German FAU-2 (Ballistic Missile, 2020). Intercontinental ballistic missile (CBR) - a long-range weapon (more than 5,500 km), which is usually designed to deliver nuclear warheads to enemy territory. Due to their range

and destructive force, intercontinental ballistic missiles were the most destructive force in the event of a full-scale nuclear war (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, 2020).

Nuclear weapons are a key component of NATO's overall capabilities for deterrence and defense, alongside conventional and missile defense forces. NATO is committed to arms control, along with a policy of disarmament and non-proliferation, but as long as nuclear weapons exist, it will remain a nuclear alliance. Reliable deterrence and defense, nuclear, conventional, and missile defense capabilities remain a key pillar, a key element of NATO's overall strategy to prevent conflict and war. The credibility of NATO nuclear forces is crucial, which is why the security, combat readiness, and effectiveness of these forces are constantly assessed in terms of technological and geostrategic development.

To better understand the issue, it is important to find out exactly how anti-missile devices work, what they are and what their purpose is. A Multi-Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicle (MIRV) is a ballistic missile with two or more warheads, each capable of hitting the target individually. It differs from ballistic missiles that have a single, unitary warhead. The warheads are located on the front end of a ballistic missile, also called a «bus» (Geoarmada, 2013).

Ballistic missiles with individual warheads have the following advantages:

1. It can do more harm than good. It is known that several small warheads can do more damage than a single warhead of their total power due to the attenuation of the blast wave over long distances. In this respect, it resembles cluster tools.
2. If a ballistic missile carries one warhead, then a new ballistic missile is required for each target. And in the case of the MIRV, at one of the flight stages of a ballistic missile, warheads are distributed to damage various targets.
3. Reduces the effectiveness of anti-ballistic missiles that act against a single warhead. It is also possible to use bait extraterrestrial warheads

in combination with «real» warheads, which will reduce the effectiveness of anti-ballistic missiles against them (Geoarmada, 2013).

The world's first MIRV was the Minuteman III created by the United States in 1970. Principle of operation - in MIRV, the starting engine divides the «bus» into the sub-orbital flight phase. After the start-up phase, the «bus» maneuvers through small rocket engines and computerized inertial navigation systems. It takes on a ballistic trajectory from which it will then deliver warheads to the target; then some cobwebs start flying in the direction of this trajectory. After that, it, again, maneuvers towards a new trajectory and launches a new warhead. This process is repeated for all warheads.

Precise technical details are kept secret so that these technologies are not used by the enemy. Some rocket systems, e.g. The British Chaveline can launch bait warheads to mislead radars and anti-ballistic missiles. Accuracy is also important. Accurate hitting the target can reduce the number of warheads needed to damage it. For the Trident II and Peacekeeper ballistic missiles, the circular estimated deviation is 90-100 meters (Geoarmada, 2013).

Thus, while the attention of the world community is focused on countering the «new» threats, this time in a broader, multifaceted format, preconditions are being gathered for the activation of the «old» threats in the form of nuclear, rocket, and space weapons. The establishment of a new system of international security will largely depend on whether the world community will be able to agree on innovative approaches to the transition from the classic model of «bilateral guaranteed destruction» to a «mutually guaranteed security» (Gvenetadze, 2017).

Missile defense is a set of weapons designed to capture and destroy ballistic missiles and their main parts. According to the performance of the tasks, missile defense is traditionally divided into

1. Strategic - used to fight intercontinental ballistic missiles (strategic missile defense) and 2. Military theater (anti-missile defense for the theater of military operations). Recently, a regional missile

defense architecture has been formed, which has the parameters of a theater of military operations, but at the same time can perform the function of strategic missile defense as one of the components (Gvenetadze, 2017).

Here we have to consider the combat plans so that it is possible to better neutralize the opponent and gain an advantage. First strike, in nuclear strategy is called a pre-emptive strike. The ability to strike first is the ability of one country to defeat another nuclear-armed country by destroying its arsenal to the point where it can no longer wage war; And if it launches a counterattack, its power will not be great, because the most strategic tools of the country must be destroyed during this attack. Preference is given to targeting intercontinental ballistic missiles, minefield launchers, strategic bomber aerodromes, and submarine ports equipped with ballistic missiles. This strategy is called the opposite force. Intercontinental ballistic missiles with individual warheads are considered to be good for the first strike (Geoarmada, 2013).

The second strike - the ability of a country to respond with nuclear weapons; to do this, the country must not allow the attacker to be able to destroy its complete nuclear weapons.

Increase in the number of nuclear submarines equipped with ballistic missiles is essential. Submarines are highly mobile and have a virtually unlimited range of action; it is unlikely that a country planning a nuclear strike will be able to locate and neutralize submarines equipped with all enemy ballistic missiles.

It is possible to further strengthen the ground-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, shaft launchers. None of the missile shaft launchers can withstand the direct impact of a nuclear weapon, although if it is sufficiently fortified and the weapon does not hit it directly, it may survive.

Ballistic missiles can also be installed on vehicles such as e.g. rolling cranes; due to the ability to change locations, it will be more difficult for the opponent to destroy them (Geoarmada, 2013).

The need to create a national missile defense system is linked to the administration of George W. Bush, which in turn was triggered by the Septem-

ber 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. According to Article 15 of the Missile Defense Treaty, J. Bush (senior) told the world community about the need to create it, and in January 2002 the United States launched a new missile defense program. The creation of a missile defense system was intended to protect not only the United States but also its allies and state forces abroad.

For this purpose, it was planned to catch ballistic missiles and cut off the combat block at any distance from the flight trajectory. If previously the main task was to catch the ballistic missile combat blocks in the middle of the flight trajectory, now it has added the main task - to catch the ballistic missile in the active flight distance (launch phase). The missile defense systems were designed to integrate the potential enemy area from which the missile could be launched. The case concerned not only surface but also naval, air and space bases. Priority was given to deploying and destroying intercontinental ballistic missiles that might have been launched from Korean territory (Gvenetadze, 2017).

The above action has irritated the Kremlin. Official Moscow considered that policy of NATO would prevent the implementation of the imperialistic ambitions of Russia. For example, Deployment of anti-missile systems in Europe would lead to the political independence of European states and European leaders, which in itself would reduce the Kremlin's influence in several countries.

Western experts have argued with Russia that anti-missile missiles based in the Third Position posed no threat to Russia, and even if they were used, they could not even reach Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles in the Volga region. However, despite the above arguments, Russia has again chosen to pursue an aggressive policy, which in itself has strained Russia-US and NATO-Russia relations.

Temporary improvement in Russia-US relations was a result of the Obama administration's reset policy, which led to the US refusing to deploy strategic anti-missile systems in the Czech Republic and Poland, as well as changing approaches to the European segment of the missile defense system.

According to experts, the improvement of the anti-missile system has various possible consequences.

Namely, in the wake of the destruction of offensive ballistic missiles, anti-missile defense complexes can destroy reconnaissance satellites. Their capability also includes the destruction of satellites that provide control of the armed forces through connections with space echelons. As part of this missile defense program, experts also believe that the creation of other means of destruction is based on new physical principles. An important factor in the context of nuclear safety is the new BeiDou-3 Navigation Satellite System launched by China, which will make it able to attach independent and guided ballistic missiles to its program, thus avoiding other GPS flaws and corridors. Thus, China will be able to hit point shots anywhere on earth. It should be noted that there are a total of 3 navigation systems in the world today. After American GPS, Russian GLONASS, and European Galileo, China's BeiDou navigation system will become the 4th. According to the Chinese authorities, their navigation system will start working in 2035 and will be much more powerful than GPS. This fact is an important factor for China, both civilian and military industries, and in terms of global security (Interpressnews, 2018).

In 2010, a modified laser device was successfully tested onboard a Boeing aircraft in the United States. A short-range rocket was fired through it. So far there is talk of anti-aircraft missile technologies. But success in this field could mean that they could be used for ground strikes from space in the future. That is why finding real compromises and solving problems is essential for a future global secure world.

The Boeing YAL-1 is a megawatt chemical oxygen-iodine laser mounted on a modified Boeing 747-400F. Its main purpose was to destroy tactical ballistic missiles. The chemical oxygen-iodine laser is an infrared chemical laser. Because the beam is infrared, it is impossible to see it with the naked eye. In 2007, a test shot from a YAL-1 with a low-power laser was fired at an air target. And in 2010, a high-power laser test was performed on a target and two test missiles had already been done by the following month. Funding for the program ceased in 2010 and the project ceased in 2011 (Geoarmada, 2012).

In addition, as part of the study, we ask the following questions: What are the potential risks that

come with the development of new technologies? How international strategic stability will interact with international politics? Can arms control include new technologies? And does it have control over future strategic armaments?

Arms control has potentially been able to reduce the risks to strategic stability associated with the emergence of new technologies. Ultimately, asymmetric arms control can play a positive role in ensuring strategic stability by crossing different areas and reflecting the international nature of international conflicts, and this structure can potentially be used in the context of new and emerging technologies beyond hyper buster systems. The establishment of arms control can significantly reduce the risks, but it requires the renewal of arms control as well as the achievement of strategic stability, which allows us to assume that strategic arms control has a future.

Let us better understand the essence of strategic stability. Military-strategic stability is a stable state of international relations at the regional and global levels, in which states (coalitions of states) do not resort to military means to resolve disputes (Georgian Military Encyclopedia, 2021). It is quite difficult to achieve strategic military stability in modern international relations, but the existence of a nuclear arsenal somewhat stabilizes the existing tensions and does not allow large-scale wars between nuclear states, and also non-nuclear states are afraid of nuclear strikes and destruction, leading to aggression. This is where the theory of balance of power plays a major role, where if one side gains a strategic advantage, the other side has to fall at a rapid pace and balance, and if it fails, it loses. In the case of the second factor, when one side has the dominant strategic power, everything is clear, it leads and sets the political game on the agenda. Theory of the Balance of Power helps us better understand the essence and nature of strategic containment policy, which is necessary in light of the risks in the modern world.

Highlighting several important issues at the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit, the Alliance identified the key threats and challenges facing NATO and highlighted the impending threats. The main challenges facing NATO were threats from the East and the South, cyber, terrorist, and hybrid threats from both state and non-state actors. Given the existing

threats, an important role is played by stopping Russia's aggressive policy.

As part of its containment and defense policy, NATO has set out a strategy to strengthen its eastern flank. The NATO Summit Declaration noted that Alliance had taken significant steps to strengthen its containment and defense mechanisms. Based on a decision made by NATO leaders at the Warsaw Summit, the Alliance deployed four battalion-sized military units in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland in the Baltic states. This was followed by the deployment of anti-missile systems, which Russia met quite aggressively but was unable to take open aggressive steps. In 2016, a NATO anti-missile shield was launched at the Desevel military base in Romania. Before the decision, NATO had approved a Readiness Action Plan at the 2014 Wales Summit. Which was taken in response to the strategic influence of the Alliance for threats from Russia.

The Warsaw Summit focused on the security of the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea. Due to the developments in the region, including the annexation of Crimea and the mobilization of excess military infrastructure by Russia in the area, the security of the Black Sea has become an area of particular concern to the Allies. In this regard, the Warsaw Summit Declaration underlined the importance of Romania's initiative to establish a multinational brigade. It was also noted that various opportunities to strengthen NATO's presence in the region will be discussed. The declaration clearly emphasizes that the Alliance will strengthen dialogue and cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine on security issues in the Black Sea (Warsaw Summit Declaration, 2016). Consequently, we have seen that NATO has intensified the presence of its warships in the Black Sea. In the geopolitical context, Georgia is directly linked to the Black Sea countries, namely Ukraine, Turkey, Bulgaria, Russia, and Romania. The frequent entry and presence of NATO warships in the Black Sea area is an important signal for both Black Sea countries and global players (Warsaw Summit Declaration, 2016).

In this regard, Russia has begun to actively modernize and upgrade its nuclear submarine fleet equipped with supersonic missiles. According to the official report of the Russian Federation, by 2024 its navy will be able to carry out military

operations with full combat readiness. To do this, Russia had to suspend all temporary military projects. By deploying a fleet in the Black Sea, Russia will have access to NATO anti-missile systems and will be able to carry out short-range nuclear strikes. Russia has been developing hypersonic weapons since 2011 to strengthen offensive power in the Black Sea. On October 7, 2020, Russia tested a supersonic anti-aircraft missile "Zircon". The Commander-in-Chief of the Russian General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, informed Vladimir Putin about this. The "zircon" was launched from the White Sea, which successfully destroyed the target in the Barents Sea. The rocket was able to develop speeds of more than eight laps and covered a distance of 450 kilometers. The rocket was moving at a speed of 1.6 km (5.7 thousand km / h), and at the peak of motion, it developed a speed of 9.5 km / h. The maximum height of the rocket was 28 km and the time was 4.5 seconds. According to official reports, the Russian Navy will take up arms in 2021. There is talk that the maximum speed of the rocket will reach 10.7 thousand km / h, the flying distance will be more than 1000 km, which is quite a serious figure and a significant striking force. This could pose a significant threat to military-strategic stability in the world.

Hypersonic missiles pose a significant threat to modern international strategic stability, as these technologies are currently the fastest military weapons in the world. Capturing these supersonic systems is a very difficult task for anti-missile systems and anti-missile modules. It can be openly said that hypersonic missiles are a big problem and threat for all states. That object exceeds the speed of sound), which means that this is the highest speed. It can reach its destination quite quickly in a very short time. This is the best option among the existing ones. (Resonance, 2020).

In 2017, the US and Australia tested a supersonic missile at an Australian test site. Under the Hi-FiRE project, which cost \$ 54 million, the United States and Australia developed a supersonic missile with a flight speed of 7700 miles per hour or 12000 km / h. The American side said that they had to start working on the creation of the missile because China and Russia were already working in this direction. Hyperbody missiles are currently being developed by the United States - Lockheed Martin SR-72, Boeing X-51 Waverider, Advanced

Hypersonic Weapon (AHW), Hypersonic Technology Vehicle2, HTV-3X. Russia - Yu-71, AS-19 <<Koala>>, Zircon3M22, China -DF-ZF (American designation Wu-14), and India - BrahMos-2, Shaurya.



Photo 1. DST Group and the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory have completed an experimental hypersonic flight from the Woomer Test Site in South Australia. Source: Defence Ministry of Australia: <https://www.dst.defence.gov.au/news/2016/05/18/hypersonic-flight-success>

John Hyten, Commander-in-Chief of the US Armed Forces Strategic Command, addressed a conference of the U.S. Army Missile and Air Defense Association in February 2018, discussing the use of anti-aircraft weapons by Russia and China. The General, to warn and liquidate the launch of ballistic and supersonic aircraft, urges the authorities to focus on means of space containment. Once a supersonic apparatus is discovered from space, it must be destroyed by a spacecraft, using traditional land or naval means. Violation of the Open Skies Agreement poses an even greater threat to these areas (The Dead District, 2018).

In December of 2019, Russia launched its supersonic missile avant-garde test flight. Moscow said the missile was moving at a speed of 11,000 km / h and that it could evade anti-missile defense systems. A system known as a hyper body glider can handle nuclear and conventional warheads. Ultrasonic missile systems are ahead of existing missile systems in speed and maneuverability, and they have been able to break through anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems, as well as research into

anti-satellite technologies that include missiles. The development of dual-purpose missiles capable of transporting nuclear and conventional warheads could create new levels of nuclear uncertainty and the potential for devastating error. In a crisis, the military operates under very severe psychological pressure, when they do not know the type of missile launched against them. They may consider it to be a nuclear missile and misdiagnose the situation, which could lead to an unintentional escalation.

A significant threat to global security is the possible withdrawal of the United States from the Open Skies Agreement. The main reason given by the United States is the arbitrary interpretation and periodic violation of the terms by Russia. Under the Open Skies Treaty, states can conduct surveillance flights over each other's territory by predetermined quotas. The parties are obliged to warn each other 72 hours after providing the exact coordinates of the flights, gather intelligence on each other's territory, and enter the obtained data in a common database. Open skies have been established to control the implementation of existing disarmament treaties, which is an international legal regime related to airspace. The main purpose of the Open Skies Treaty is for the parties to avoid the risks of military escalation and to maintain mutual trust. In doing so, they are somewhat reassuring each other that military provocative operations will not take place. The Open Skies Agreement is the third international treaty on arms control, following the Iran nuclear deal and the agreement on the elimination of medium- and short-range nuclear missiles left by the United States. It is important whether the US will continue to work on reducing the new START Strategic Nuclear Weapons for the next five years, which was signed in 2010 and expired in February 2021.

Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Georgian Factor in the Context of Global Security

In modern international politics, no state can say that it can or will avoid the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. It is therefore important that all states involved in global politics be involved in the non-proliferation of weapons of

mass destruction. Georgia's participation in this direction is noteworthy and involved in nuclear summits since 2010. On March 31, 2016, and April 1, 2016, the Georgian delegation took part in At the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC, which was held for the fourth time at the personal initiative of US President Obama. It was attended by the heads of more than 50 countries and governments and heads of various international organizations (UN, EU, International Atomic Energy Agency, Interpol) (MFA of Georgia, 2016). It has become an important platform for cooperation on nuclear security and non-proliferation. Georgia has joined the strong support of global nuclear security, which is reflected in the amended version of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, as well as in the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of Nuclear Terrorism and membership in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

According to Barack Obama, world nuclear weapons security and the prevention of nuclear terrorism are the main challenges to global security (Voice of America, 2012). At Obama's initiative, various states have strengthened the security of nuclear facilities and restricted access to nuclear materials as much as possible, as the main targets of terrorists are nuclear weapons, plutonium, and enriched uranium.

That is why in 2010, at the initiative of US President Barack Obama, the Nuclear Security Summit was set up to prevent nuclear threats, particularly nuclear terrorism. This is a world summit where states and international organizations discuss and agree on the protection of nuclear weapons within their borders, the avoidance of nuclear threats, and, most importantly, cooperation. The summit is discussing how to avoid attacks in a variety of scenarios. The most important factors for nuclear safety are 1) inadmissibility for outsiders to access it, 2) reduction of nuclear material, 3) strengthening protection of nuclear reactors (Nuclear Terrorism, 2016).

A significant threat is also chemical terrorism, which has recently become quite active in the Middle East. In this regard, we consider Syria and Iraq, where these facts were actively revealed. Terrorists today not only freeze toxic chemicals, but they also have the technology and facilities to pro-

duce full-fledged toxic chemical weapons. Against the background of growing threats, Georgia's participation and involvement in the non-proliferation and control of weapons of mass destruction is crucial. Collaborative security approaches and theory play a key role here. According to Richard Cohen's model, if a relationship is not based on growing mutual understanding, then that relationship is doomed to failure or disintegration. In the context of global security, to consider this means by not engaging in the process of disregarding and disseminating the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction by states participating in international politics, pose a rather great threat to the world as a whole and their states.

One of the most important agreements in the field of global security and national security of Georgia is the 1997 document "On Cooperation in the Prevention of the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Strengthening of Defense and Military Ties" between Georgia and the United States. In this regard, the activities of the Georgian Defense Threat Reduction Service are important. The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) supports the goals of the US Embassy in Georgia, such as Euro-Atlantic integration, international cooperation, and peace and security measures. The main, active programs of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency in Georgia are the Joint Threat Reduction (CTR) Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP), the Weapons of Mass Destruction Program (WMD PPP), the International Non-Proliferation Program (ICP) and the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Emergency Situation management program. (CBRN) (US Embassy, 2018). Georgian Armed Forces Combat-Engineering Battalion Rapid Reaction (radiation, chemical, and biological) protection and "EOD Squadron Technical Training Course" exercises for representatives of the EOD Squadron are being actively conducted. The annual report on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Georgia is also a significant success. Measures implemented by Georgia in the fight against terrorism were assessed in the 2019 report. (Security Service of Georgia, 2020).

The growing process of globalization has created the need to understand a unified security system. To address global threats, states recognize the need for dialogue, cooperation, and networking. Hence

the need to create connections in the modern era as the basis for the national security concepts and policies of the states.

An important issue is that over the last decade of NATO, the Alliance has released a new strategy aimed at deterring nuclear threats from Russia, and the issue of Georgia is included in NATO's new strategy. Specifically, we are talking about the discovery of multilateral military assistance to Georgia and even more large-scale military exercises. The adoption of this strategy has caused quite a lot of dissatisfaction in Moscow, as the new strategy, along with several measures, openly talks about military assistance to Russia's border countries and even larger exercises near the Russian border, including in Georgia, which is already quite active. Russia has been strengthening its armaments and violating international agreements for a long time, and it is often threatened with a nuclear attack. NATO policy in this direction is quite justified since Putin approved a new military doctrine in 2015 and it was called the Gerasimov Doctrine. The basic principle of which is the principle of the use of the pre-nuclear strike. The Black Sea region thus entered directly into an integral part of NATO's strategy.

The issue of nuclear materials in Georgia. Radioactive substances were stored in Georgia in the 90s. There was a place to store radiation materials in Sokhumi, there was a Soviet institute in which artificial satellites and nuclear energy sources needed for them were made. These Soviet reconnaissance satellites were launched into Earth orbit during the Soviet era. In 1993, Georgia lost de facto control over Abkhazia, after which the fate of these entities is unknown. When the Georgian military units left Sokhumi, they managed to hide the radioactive substances from the Sokhumi Institute of Physics and Technology in a special grave. After local separatists took control of the territory together with Russian security services, Georgia could no longer ensure their security. It is difficult to say what happened to the radiation sources, but it is clear that part of it was leaked to Russia, and part of the trace was lost. On March 19, 2019, the Counterintelligence Department prevented the sale of Uran-238 in Kobuleti. Several facts of transfer and sale of the radioactive isotope cesium 135 were revealed and prevented by the Georgian special services. Smuggling of nuclear material

from the occupied territories remains a serious challenge for Georgia. Some groups want to move nuclear technology and nuclear materials through Georgia. Any country is facing the same threat. To address these threats, Georgia has been provided with equipment installed by the United States as part of a program that can detect increased radiation background when crossing the border. Until 1989, there were 320 nuclear warheads in Georgia. After the Soviet Union withdrew its tactical nuclear weapons in 1989, the Mtskheta research reactor, whose operation had already been suspended, remained a nuclear facility in Georgia. In the late 1990s, with the help of the United States, both used and new uranium rods were completely removed from Georgia (Voice of America, 2012).

Threats and challenges in the Caucasus region are important issues for Georgia. During the border conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus region, on July 16, 2020, the Azerbaijani side officially threatened Armenia that under certain circumstances it was ready to strike the Armenian nuclear power plant. Azerbaijan says its armed forces can accurately strike the Metsamor nuclear power plant with their state-of-the-art missile systems. It will cause quite a lot of casualties and a Chernobyl-like catastrophe in Armenia. Which would be a pretty big disaster for the whole region as well. There are several cities near the Metsamor nuclear power plant, and Yerevan is just 35 kilometers away. The Armenian side also threatened to attack the Mingeauri Dam, which is also a major threat to the region. Isn't this a conflict? The Armenian nuclear power plant is already a big threat because it is already quite old and also located in a seismically active zone. Damage to this nuclear power plant or in the event of an accident would be catastrophic for the entire region and beyond. Another important issue is that the Armenian nuclear power plant is based on old standards and norms that do not automatically meet modern risk factors, the power plant was built in the 1970s.

Tensions and threats in the region have made it clear that Georgia could face the greatest threat, with the Metsamor nuclear power plant 113 km from Tbilisi, a considerable distance for nuclear radiation. It is therefore essential that we, together with our neighbors and European partners, develop peace initiatives and security mechanisms. Given the existing risk factors that may arise shortly,

Turkey, Azerbaijan, and the European Union have repeatedly called on Armenia to shut down the Metsamor nuclear power plant, but to no avail. Conflicts in the Caucasus region have some impact on global nuclear safety, as radiation can irradiate a significant portion of Adyan, leading to human disease and death. The problem with all this is environmental pollution, which is also detrimental to the global climate.

Georgia plays an important role in global security in international politics as it fights with its partners the threats and challenges posed by weapons of mass destruction. Georgia is involved in international peacekeeping missions and makes a significant contribution to the fight against terrorism. With all this in mind, it became necessary to develop a national military strategy for the defense of weapons of mass destruction in Georgia. As a

result of this strategy, Georgia will increase its defense capabilities, which is an important issue for global security at the same time.

Conclusion

In the modern period, as a result of Russia's imperialist policy in the Black Sea region, it can be said that the world is in condition of a new "Cold War". Countries are developing anti-missile systems, but these systems do not fully protect countries from missile strikes, especially when supersonic missiles are being developed, refined, and modernized. The world needs to understand the need for global security and the conclusion of new peace treaties that should serve to achieve global security, as well as respond to the challenges of modernity and the changes that are taking place in the world.

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From «Generalbezirk Krim» to «Republic of Crimea»: Hitler's Vision and Putin's Reality of the Peninsula

In twenty-first century, Crimea repeatedly changed its state affiliation. An attempt of its illegal annexation, initiated by the Russian Federation in 2014, and the ongoing occupation have greatly increased interest in the peninsula. Particularly symbolic is the fact that the Kremlin's forced border change in Europe is the first such case since World War II. Therefore, despite Moscow's active attempts to thwart this process, more and more analysts, not to mention publicists, are drawing parallels between the Hitlerite and Putin regimes. The comparison of their policy towards Crimea is also meaningless.

During the XX and early XXI century, Crimea repeatedly changed its state affiliation, and even more often – its actual subordination. The attempt to illegally annex it, launched by the Russian Federation in 2014, and the ongoing occupation have significantly increased interest in the Peninsula. Particularly symbolic is the fact that the Kremlin's violent border change in Europe is the first such case since World War II. Therefore, despite Moscow's active attempts to prevent this process, more and more analysts, not to mention publicists, are drawing parallels between Hitler's and Putin's regimes. A comparison of their policy towards Crimea is also not meaningless.

Sources and methodology

Within the framework of one article, in general, it is impossible not only to analyse, but even just list all the Nazi documents on the arrangement of the "Eastern Space", which would mention

"Generalbezirk Krim" ("General District of Crimea"). This is a matter of comprehensive monographs [1; 2]. It is even less possible to review the entire corpus of similar Russian documents on the "Republic of Crimea", given both the duration of the occupation and the intensity of the Kremlin's propaganda and bureaucratic machines.

Therefore, we will focus on one rather fundamental issue – how exactly German leader Adolf Hitler saw the past and the future of Crimea, and which parts of his vision were implemented by the Russian leader Vladimir Putin. The Führer's words will be quoted from the Russian translation of his "Table Talk," as published by Trevor-Roper. [3 (*dates will be specified instead of page numbers*)]. If necessary, other testimonies will be involved. The President's words will be quoted according to official sources.

Historical claims

Although Hitler, whose power over Crimea was based on the right of conquest, did not need to resort to historical arguments, he still used them. We are talking, first of all, about the Gothic period in the history of the Peninsula: "Fifty years ago, in the Crimea, nearly half the soil was still in German hands. Basically, the population consisted firstly of the Germanic element, of Gothic origin; then of Tartars, Armenians, Jews; and Russians absolutely last. We must dig our roots into this soil" [3, 5.11.1941]; "It is the Goths who have succeeded in maintaining themselves longest in the Crimea. As recently as the eighteenth century, there was once a court case in which the litigants could only speak Gothic!" [3, 8.08.1942].

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The Führer was also going to change the “Slavic Geographical Names” to German ones. “The Crimea, for example, might be called Gothenland.” [3, 2.11.1941]. On December 14 of the same year,

in a conversation with Hitler, the Minister of the Eastern Territories, Alfred Rosenberg, proposed renaming Simferopol to Gothenburg, and Sevastopol to Teodorichshafen [4, p. 25].



Photo 1. Caption on the photo: «From Ukraine. Inkerman sand quarries in Sevastopol». In the lower-right corner, the number 1890 does not indicate the year, but most likely the photo number. The authorship of the photo belongs to the German studio “Paul Hoffmann & Co., Berlin-Schöneberg”. In 1914-1916 (and it was at this time that this photo was taken) in Europe, in particular, in Germany, it was believed that Sevastopol is Ukraine. The Empire was Russian, but the (historical) regions still existed...

Source: Argument

For Putin, whose quasi-legal arguments like “self-determination of Crimeans in a referendum” proved unconvincing to the rest of the world, the appeal to the so-called “historical rights” has become a cornerstone in justifying the annexation of Crimea. In this case, he did not invent the bicycle but continued the tradition of the communist authorities to manipulate the Peninsula’s past for the sake of current politics. Immediately after the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944, Soviet “experts” were assigned to rewrite the history of the Peninsula in such a way that both the Gothic and Crimean Tatar peoples disappeared from it. In an attempt to turn Crimea into a “native Russian land”, some agreed to what they called the Scythi-

ans Slavs. In any case, after the Crimean session of the Academy of Sciences in 1952, free Gothic and Turkic studies on the Peninsula became impossible (for more information about the “only correct” history of Crimea, see [5, p. 11-38]).

After the collapse of the USSR, it seemed that the time of gross interference of politicians in historical science had passed, but this did not happen. And if until 2014 the disputes were only over interpretations of certain facts (for example, legal or not transfer of the Crimea to Ukraine in 1954), the annexation of the Peninsula gave way to falsifying the facts themselves. Due to the efforts of Kremlin propagandists, an alternative past of the Penin-

sula was created, in which it always belonged to Russia, had nothing to do with Ukraine, and the Crimean Tatars were deprived of the status of an indigenous people.

The beginning was laid by Putin himself in the so-called “Crimean speech” on March 18, 2014 [6]. “To understand why such a choice was made, it is enough to know the history of Crimea, to know what Russia meant and means for Crimea and Crimea for Russia. In Crimea, literally, everything is permeated with our common history and pride. Here is the ancient Chersonesus, where the Holy Prince Vladimir was baptised. His spiritual feat – conversion to Orthodoxy – determined the common cultural, value, and civilisational basis that unites the peoples of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. In Crimea are the graves of Russian soldiers, whose courage brought Crimea under the Russian state in 1783. Crimea is Sevastopol, a city of legend, a city of great destiny, a fortress and the birthplace of the Russian Black Sea Fleet.” The speech mentioned, as expected, both Khrushchev’s “illegal decision” and “Russian Sevastopol”, and the fact that in 1991 Crimeans were not asked about their opinion, but given to independent Ukraine “like a bag of potatoes”.

On May 16, the Russian President actually refused to recognise the Crimean Tatars as an indigenous people, citing the lack of such a status among the Greeks: “One of the indigenous peoples, including the repressed ones, is the Greeks, they also have the right. The Greeks were here before you and me, you know? Therefore, we need to look at all this in the most careful way” [7].

On November 5 of the same year, Putin once again stressed the importance of Russian claims, saying: “After all, it was in the Crimea, in Chersonesus, that Prince Vladimir was baptised. Afterward, he baptised Russia. The primary baptismal font of Russia is there. And what is Chersonesus? This is Sevastopol. Can you imagine the connection between the spiritual source and the state component, meaning the struggle for this place: for the Crimea as a whole, for Sevastopol, for Chersonesus? In fact, the Russian people have been fighting for many centuries to stand with a firm foot at their historical spiritual font. This is an extremely important thing. We turn over some things that seem more important to us, but there is also something

deeper, even than just, say, the concept that Sevastopol is a city of Russian and naval glory, which is also very important” [8].

Thus, it can be stated that both leaders resorted to arguments from the past to justify their actions in the present. Real facts, such as the presence of Gothic statehood in Crimea or a century and a half of the Peninsula “nationality” in the Russian Empire and the USSR, were taken out of context, absolutised, and used to legitimise aggression. But if Nazi propaganda managed to prepare only a few publications on the “history” of Crimea (the “Gothic Myth” of Crimea is analysed in detail in [9]), the number of Russian books on Crimean topics after 2014 has already gone to dozens, and the articles are legion at all (the most popular, but not all Russian myths about Crimea are considered in [5]).

“German Gibraltar” vs. “unsinkable aircraft carrier”

The importance of Crimea as a military base capable of controlling the Black Sea basin was realised by the Russians at the end of the XVIII century when the “Great Fortress” and Admiralty were laid in Sevastopol [5, p. 67]. The Germans discovered the benefits of Crimea in the spring of 1918. General Philipp Aschauer, the first German Commandant of Sevastopol, wrote after the capture of the Peninsula: “The capture of this bridgehead on the northern coast of the Black Sea, with its ideal sea harbours and ships in them, expanded the circle of our influence in such a volume that we had no idea about” [10, p. 39].

Hitler was also not going to let go of the captured. “In the same way, we must organise the Crimea in such a manner that, even in the dim future, we should never be constrained to leave to others the benefits of the work we have done there. We shall have to modernise the ports of the Crimea and establish strong fortifications on the narrows which command the approaches to the peninsula. These fortifications will have to be so strong that the workmen who constructed them will themselves be convinced that here we have an impregnable position. It will be sufficient to have just one such base in the Crimea, for the Black Sea has for us an interest that is purely economic” [3, 13.05.1942]. In fact, it was about turning the Peninsula into a

“German Gibraltar” [11, p. 254]. Generalisations about how much this idea was implemented are contained in English in [12] and in Russian in [13].

Who exactly came up with the expression about the “unsinkable Crimea aircraft carrier” is not known for certain, but it has been used since the 1930s [14, P. 3]. The “joke” about “the largest land aircraft carrier in the world” was repeated on April 8, 2014, by Putin’s press Secretary Dmitry Peskov [15]. But the President himself spoke more openly on this topic on the “Direct Line” on April 17 of the same year. “By the way, our decision on the Black Sea Fleet, among other things, was partly related to this. Certainly, first of all, and mainly this is the support of Crimeans. But there are also considerations of such an order that if we do nothing, then after a while, guided by the same principles, they will draw Ukraine into NATO and say: “This does not concern you,” and NATO ships will find themselves in the city of Russian naval glory – Sevastopol. But the point is not even in the emotional side of this issue, but in the fact that Crimea, of course, protrudes into the Black Sea, located, in a way, in its centre. However, as if for military reasons, it does not have such significance as in the XVIII-XIX centuries, implying the presence of modern strike weapons, including coastal ones. But if NATO troops come there – and put these strike weapons there – this will be already of geopolitical importance for us: Russia will be practically squeezed out of the Black Sea region.” We still have a small piece of the coast – 450 or 600 kilometres. That is it! And this is – really – squeezing Russia out of this very important region of the world for us, for which so many Russian bones were laid during all previous centuries. This is a big thing” [16].

Thus, the mythologeme was born, repeated more than once later, that if Russia had not hurried to annex Crimea, the American fleet would already be stationed in Sevastopol. And it is clear that Putin could not avoid the issue of strengthening the Peninsula. In an interview with the authors of the movie “Crimea. The Way Home” (2015) he stated the following: Bastion is a high-precision weapon. At some point, we moved the Bastion complexes, and deployed them in such a way that they could be seen from space. This is probably the most efficient coastal complex in the world today. Yes, and at some point, to make it clear that

Crimea is reliably protected, we transferred these Bastion coastal complexes there [17].

The results of the modern Russian militarisation of the Peninsula can be found in the reports of the Institute for Black Sea Strategic Studies [18; 19].

Consequently, both the German and Russian leaders highly appreciated the strategic potential of Crimea and, to the best of their ability, sought to turn it into an impregnable fortress. The German fortifications did not pass the tests of 1944, but the Russian ones still allow Moscow to own the region.

The Black Sea Riviera

Hitler attached no less importance to Crimea as a resort. He even used a comparison of the Peninsula with the Riviera, which has become commonplace over the past 70 years: “The beauties of the Crimea, which we shall make accessible through an autobahn — for us Germans, that will be our Riviera. Crete is scorching and dry. Cyprus would be lovely, but we can reach the Crimea by road” [3, 5.07.1941]; “The Crimea will give us its citrus fruits, cotton, and rubber (100,000 acres of the plantation would be enough to ensure our independence). We’ll take them on trips to the Crimea and the Caucasus” [3, 17.09.1941]. As the Chief of the German Labour Front, Robert Ley, agreed with the Führer, the Peninsula should become “one big German resort” [11, p. 254]. However, these plans never came to be.

Putin talked a lot about Crimea as a resort in 2014. He promised to return it to the status of an all-Russian health resort [20], “advised”, i.e., ordered Russian officials to spend a summer vacation on the Peninsula [21], said that Crimea is the best place with a unique climate, although not everything is in order in everyday life there [22]. At a meeting on the development of the Peninsula on March 18 this year, the President stressed: “By 2025, we should reach the figure of 10 million tourists a year. At the same time, every person, every guest of Crimea and Sevastopol has the right to count on a decent service that is not inferior to foreign alternatives, on a wide range of affordable, high-quality services in terms of living conditions, food, excursions, cultural programme, cleanliness, and arrangement of beaches, public spaces. Our tourism industry



Photo 2. Historical postcard from 1930 from a family who came from Rybinsk to Sevastopol on vacation. Interestingly, the postcard with a view of the Sevastopol railway station was printed in Moscow in Russian and Ukrainian, and the name of Sevastopol is duplicated with a postmark in Crimean Tatar, and not in the same way as in modern spelling – Aqyar, Akyar, or Aqyar, but in a slightly different way: Axjar . The transfer of Crimea to Ukraine was still 24 years away.

Source: *Argument*

in Crimea, with its unique natural, cultural, and health-improving potential, is simply obliged to meet the highest international standards” [23].

Thus, the resort of Crimea attracted both Hitler and Putin. However, Ukrainian experts are unanimous that over the past seven years, the tourism sector on the Peninsula has degraded, and multimillion-dollar crowds of vacationers exist exclusively on the pages of Russian official statistics [24; 25].

Big Construction

However, neither the fortress nor the resort in the Crimea was possible without a large-scale development of infrastructure, most importantly – the roads and bridges. Hitler saw great road construction as a means to change the very essence of

Soviet Russia: “We’ll take away its character of an Asiatic steppe, we’ll Europeanise it. With this object, we have undertaken the construction of roads that will lead to the southernmost point of Crimea and to the Caucasus. Our south is Crimea” [3, 17.10.1941]. “Of what importance will the thousand-kilometre stretch to the Crimea be, when we can cover it at eighty kilometres an hour along the autobahn and do the whole distance easily in two days! When we can go from Klagenfurt to Trondhjem and from Hamburg to the Crimea, we shall have a system of Communications that will shorten space to the same degree as the old carriage highways for the conception of their time.” [3, 18.07.1942].

Another important structure was to be the bridge across the Kerch Strait. The need for its construc-

tion was thought of in the Russian Empire at the end of the XIX century, engineering surveys began in 1903, and plans were prepared from 1910. However, the First World War and the Revolution did not allow them to be implemented. And only the German authorities took up the implementation of this project. Here is how Hitler's ideas and Crimean reality were described by Reich Arms Minister Albert Speer: "In the spring of 1943, Hitler demanded to start construction of a five-kilometre highway and a railway bridge across the Kerch Strait, although we had long been building a cable car there with a daily capacity of one thousand tons, which was put into operation on June 14. Supplies on it were quite enough for the defence needs of the 1Seventh Army, but Hitler did not abandon the plan to invade Iran through the Caucasus. He openly justified his order to build a bridge for the transfer of troops and weapons to the Kuban bridgehead precisely by invading Iran. Soon, in the summer of 1943, General Jaenecke, Commander of the 1Seventh Army, was forced to request an order through Zeitzler to leave the Kuban bridgehead. He wanted to take more favourable positions in Crimea and prepare for the expected Soviet offensive in the winter. But Hitler, even more zealously than before, insisted on the construction of a bridge to bring the implementation of his plans closer, although even then it was obvious that the bridge would never be built" [26, p. 390].

Work still began, in June 1943, the Soviet command learned that the pillars of the future bridge were being built in the Strait [27], but in the fall, during the retreat, the Germans destroyed them. Later, due to captured materials, the short-lived (November 1944-February 1945) Kerch railway bridge was built in the USSR.

It is no coincidence that it was in Crimea that Putin carried out similar large-scale projects: the Tavri-da highway, etc. The Crimean Bridge. The bridge, originally called The Kerch Bridge, by the way, was planned by the President on March 19, 2014 – the second day after the announcement of the annexation of the Peninsula [28]. On March 18, 2016, Putin announced the bridge's mission: "Of course, the key object that will help to fully utilise the rich potential of Crimea will be the Kerch Bridge, on the construction site of which we are located. It will connect Crimea with mainland Russia by

road and rail, integrate the Peninsula into national transport flows, increase the connectivity of Russian territories and, of course, create additional opportunities for economic growth... Our predecessors, as we see, understood the significance of the bridge crossing between the Crimea and Caucasus and have long striven to implement this project. Let's hope that we will fulfil this historic mission" [29]. On May 15, 2018, the President personally opened traffic on it by road [30], and on December 23, 2019 – by passenger rail [31].

Similarly, Putin launched the Tavri-da highway on August 27, 2020, congratulating the builders as follows: "I believe that people will be grateful to you for many, many years to come. In addition to the fact that tourists will travel and then remember how great it was done, it is also, of course, a good boost in the development of the entire Peninsula, because this road runs from the most important infrastructure projects, from the bridge to the airport. Now the Minister and I have spoken that we will make branches necessary for residents of Crimea, for Sevastopol residents, for tourists coming here to the southern coast of Crimea. This will certainly give a good boost to development" [32]. However, already on November 12, the segment opened by Putin collapsed [33], and the highway itself is regularly called the "road of death" in the Ukrainian [34] and even in the Russian-controlled [35] media due to the poor quality of work.

Therefore, both Berlin and Moscow quite correctly identified the Achilles' heel of Crimea – an undeveloped infrastructure – and tried to correct the situation to the best of their ability.

Population resettlement

This is the most controversial topic since the words and deeds of Hitler and Putin are in cross-opposition: the Führer said and did not do, the President does not say, but does. We are talking about programmes of forced resettlement of people both from and to the Peninsula.

Hitler was frank. At a meeting on July 16, 1941, he included Crimea in the list of territories of the Soviet Union that "were subject to purification from all foreigners." According to this plan, "the Crimea with its Tauride fields will go to Germany, and its Russian population will be resettled to [spe-

cifically] Russia” [11, p. 254]. The Führer returned to this topic later: “We’ll take the Southern part of Ukraine, especially the Crimea, and make it an exclusively German colony. There’ll be no harm in pushing out the population that’s there now” [3, 27.07.1941]. On the fifth of the so-called Ost General Plans (May 28, 1942) the urban population of Gothenghau (Crimea and Kherson region) should be reduced from 790 to 650 thousand people, and the total number of German migrants to local cities and villages within 30 years will be 925 thousand people [36, p. 71-73 facsimile].

The vacant space was planned to be transferred to German colonists and residents of South Tyrol disputed with Italy, as Frauenfeld suggested, and what Hitler himself found a “great idea”: “I think, too, that the Crimea will be both climatically and geographically ideal for the South Tyrolese, and in comparison with their present settlements it will be a real land of milk and honey Their transfer to the Crimea presents neither physical nor psychological difficulty” [3, 2.07.1942].

An overview of other Nazi plans to evict Crimeans and relocate Germans to Crimea and the conditions that made their implementation impossible can be found in [37]. In any case, the special “Crimean Command of the SS troops”, engaged in preparatory work for the planned colonisation of the Crimea, left the Peninsula as early as April 1944 [38, s. 291].

Putin, unlike Hitler, does not give out his real plans. On the contrary, he has repeatedly stressed that “it will be right if Crimea – I know that Crimeans support this – has three equal state languages: Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar” and that Crimea “is and remains both Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar. I repeat, it will be, as it has been for centuries, a native home for representatives of all the peoples living there. But it will never be Bandera’s!” [6]. Formal equality of all languages and the prohibition of discrimination based on nationality are spelled out in the “Constitution” and other legislative acts of the Russian Crimea. There is even a “Ukrainian Community of Crimea” on the Peninsula (although its leader does not speak Ukrainian [39]).

But on the other hand, Putin is convinced that Ukrainians and Russians are one people, which he

talks about almost every year [40]. And from this posture, it quite logically follows that there is no difference, who exactly inhabits the Peninsula – Russians or Ukrainians. If according to the 2001 census, 60% of Crimeans called themselves Russians, and 24% – Ukrainians, then according to the Russian census of 2014, the share of the former increased to 65.3%, and the latter decreased to 15% [41; 42].

The question of how many Crimeans were actually forced to leave the Peninsula after the Russian invasion, and how many Russian citizens arrived in their place, is one of the most controversial. However, the calculations of the Institute for Black Sea Strategic Studies suggest that over 70 thousand inhabitants left Crimea irrevocably in 2014, and during 2015-2019 inclusive – 100 thousand [43]. Therefore, by the end of this year, this figure will reach 200 thousand. The number of officially registered migrants from Russia exceeds 205 thousand people [44], but the real figure, which includes Ukrainians from the uncontrolled by Kyiv part of Donbas and numerous Russian security forces, is several times higher. Thus, on April 28, 2020, the Russian “governor” of Sevastopol at a meeting with Putin admitted that “realising that, according to statistics, it was necessary to deploy beds at the rate of 450 thousand people, they immediately decided to deploy twice as many, because even in terms of water and bread consumption, it is obvious that over 700 thousand people live in Sevastopol” [45]. If we apply the same coefficient to the population of Simferopol, we can assume that over 520 thousand people actually live in the Crimean capital instead of the official 336 thousand. It is clear that in other cities, the indicators of “attractiveness” for displaced persons will be lower (only Kerch, Yevpatoria, Feodosia, and Alushta are growing out among large cities due to migration). However, in any case, the number of people who actually arrived in Crimea after 2014 cannot be less than half a million, or even more.

Consequently, contrary to both international law (Article 49 (6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and Article 8 (2) (b) (viii) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court define the movement of the occupier’s population to the occupied territory as a crime) and its statements, the Putin regime is pursuing a policy of replacing the Crimean population not in words, but deeds.

Disloyal residents, primarily Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians, leave, loyal Russians come. What Hitler only intended to do is gradually but inevitably being done by Putin.

Brief Conclusions

The Crimean Peninsula, due to its history and geography, is an attractive, moreover, vital target for any regime that tries to dominate the Black Sea region. At the same time, neither the origin, nor the inner essence, nor, moreover, the external form of this regime is completely unimportant.

As a result of a comparative study of the views of the Führer of the Third Reich Adolf Hitler and the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, five theses were identified that are consonant with both:

1 . The past of the Peninsula justifies the change of its nationality in the present – there was once “our” statehood in Crimea, which means it belongs to “us”.

2 . Crimea is of great military importance for controlling the Black Sea; for this, it is

critically necessary to own Sevastopol as a port and the fortified Isthmus of Perekop.

3 . The nature of the Peninsula makes it a unique resort that will not be inferior to world-class analogues, provided that household comfort is established.

4 . For the development of Crimea, large-scale infrastructure development is necessary, first of all, the construction of a bridge across the Kerch Strait and a network of highways.

5 . The composition of the Crimean population should be changed: disloyal population – evicted and loyal – settled.

6 . Each of these theses can be quite freely applied to the description of any of the regimes, both Hitler and Putin, and the untrained eye will not notice the difference. This once again proves that the occupation of Crimea is not an internal matter of Russian-Ukrainian relations, but a challenge to the entire system of the modern universe.

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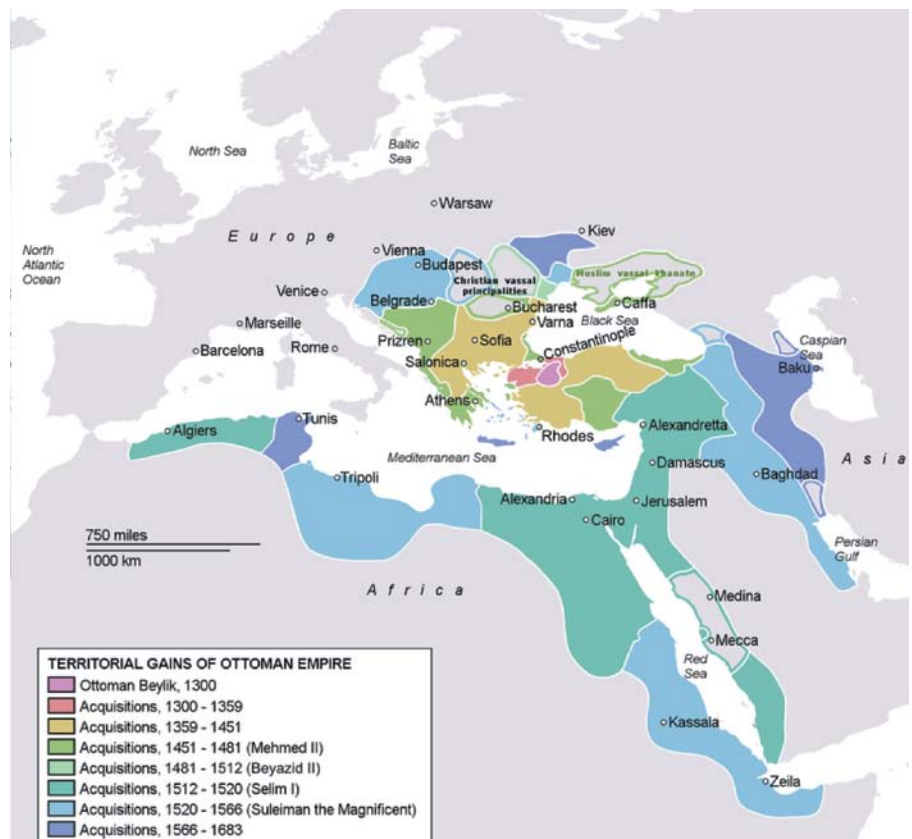
The Black Sea in Turkey's Foreign Policy

It is well known that the Black Sea, having been located at the center of trade and energy routes has a key geopolitical importance in world politics and with regard to the connection between the River Danube and Ren, it should be said that the Black Sea is not semi closed sea, anymore. Meanwhile, the Black Sea largely affects the Turkish-Ukrainian and Turkish-Russian relations and it can even be said that the Black Sea mostly determines those relations. In this article, we will try to analyze this situation.

From the point of view of Ukraine, the Black Sea is the only water way that opens the connects Ukraine with the world seas (and since Turkey is located at the “gates” of the Black Sea, ie, on the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits, Turkey has a key importance for Ukraine). From the stand point of Russia, The Black Sea is the weakest point of Russia, since from the shores of the Black Sea until Moscow, there is no natural obstacle that could stop an enemy, as all of the lands are plain. This also partially explains why Russia is so sensitive on the status of the Black Sea. (Throughout the history Russia has sometimes tried to use the Turkish Straits in order to gain access to warm waters, ie, for expansionist aims, but many times, it sought to close the Straits for non-littoral states).

From Turkish point of view, the Black Sea is first of all related with the security of the Turkish Straits and with the security of Istanbul. Anyone, who takes a look at history, will see that, every state, which possessed the territory where today's Turkey is located, had

sought to provide the security in the Black Sea region. It will be enough to recall the naval raids of the Kyivan princes Oleg and Igor to Constantinople, during the Byzantine Empire. After the conquest of Constantinople (and its transformation to Istanbul) in 1453 by the Ottomans, the Black Sea became a zone of stability for the Ottomans: It was the period of rise of the Ottoman Empire and the Ottomans within a short period, established their domination in the Black Sea basin. In this way, until the second half of the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire was the only power that controlled the Black Sea basin and the regime of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits used to be regulated by unilateral acts of the Ottomans.



Pic. 1. Territorial conquests of the Ottoman Empire at different times.

Source: Wikipedia

Russia's Increasing Influence

From the beginning 18th century, the situation with the Black Sea and the Straits started to change dramatically: It was the period of rise of the Russian Empire and Russia's rise coincided with the fall period of the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, Russia managed to capture the Azov Fortress and Ottoman Empire had to leave that fortress to Russia according to the conditions on the Istanbul Treaty of 1700. In this way, Russia had opened for itself a window to the Black Sea. Although Russia soon afterwards (in 1711) would be defeated by the Ottomans and would be forced to give that fortress back to the Ottomans, the process had already begun: The 18 and the 19th centuries would be full of many wars between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, most of which would result with the defeat of the latter. Especially the Russo-Turkish wars of 1768-1774 and 1787-92 had catastrophic results for the Ottoman Empire. As a result of those wars, the Ottoman Empire at first, was forced to leave Crimea (according to the Kuchuk Kainardzha Treaty) and recognize the independence of Crimea (which, in fact, had come under Russian protectorate). Soon afterwards, Russia in 1783 seized Crimea and the Ottoman Empire had to recognize this annexation de-jure according to the Iasi Treaty of 1792. (However, Ottoman emperors after that treaty would do everything to demonstrate that they in fact do not adopt loss of Crimea. In order to show their behavior, almost every year, Ottoman sultans used to send their representatives to Russian annexed Crimea. After the summer palace in Livadia built, the Russian tsars almost every year visited Crimea and before they arrived in Crimea, the Ottoman Government used to send a representative to Crimea in order to say "welcome" to the Russian tsar in the name of the Ottoman sultan).

According to the Kuchuk Kainardzha Treaty, Ottoman Empire was obliged to allow a free passage to Russian trade ships through the Straits (the period that the regime of the Straits was regulated by unilateral acts of the Ottomans was over). In 1833, when the Ottoman Army was defeated by the Egyptian Army (the governor of Egypt had rebelled against the Ottomans), thus, the capital of the empire was about to be occupied by the Egyptian Army, the Ottomans, in a hopeless situation, asked for help from their eternal enemies, ie, from the Russian Empire.

Russia gave its consent, but in return for this help, it demanded a change in the regime of the Straits. Consequently, Hunkar İskelesi Treaty of 1833 was signed between the Ottoman Empire and Russia and according to this treaty, the Ottoman Empire accepted closing the Straits in favour of Russia. In other words, Ottoman Empire accepted not to accept any foreign warships to the Black Sea. However, when the European powers learned about the situation, they reacted and in 1841, the Treaty on the Straits was concluded among the Ottoman Empire, Britain, Austria, France, Prussia and Russia. According to this treaty, the Straits would be closed for warships in peace time. However, in case of war, the Ottoman Empire would be able to decide, which warships could pass the Straits. After 1841, the status of the Turkish Straits would be subject to multilateral international regulations.

Britain's policy toward the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century was mainly based on supporting the Ottoman Empire against Russia. However, after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, it became clear that the end of the Ottoman Empire was not so far away (the Ottoman Empire, since the time of the Crimean War was being called "the sick man of Europe"). Moreover, the parliamentary elections in Britain in 1880 were won by the liberal William Gladstone, who was an opponent of the Ottoman Empire. As a result of these two factors, Britain changed its policy toward the Ottoman Empire. From that time, Britain began to negotiate with Russia on the partition of the Ottoman Empire (the two powers would ultimately come to an agreement on that partition during their secret negotiations in Tallin in 1907).

After the defeat at the 1877-78 War, the main concern of the Ottoman Empire would be to defend itself against the Russian threat. That was also a period of semi-colonization of the Ottoman Empire by the European powers. Now, the Black Sea was dominated by the Russian Navy and a threat of a Russian attack to the Ottoman capital by sea was very real.

WWI and the Black Sea

When the World War I broke out, the Ottoman Government did not hurry to join the Central Powers (headed by Germany). Instead, it sought a non-aggression guarantee from Russia and a guarantee of protection from Britain and France

against a probable Russian intervention. Talaat Pasha negotiated with the Russian Foreign Minister Sazanov and offered attending the First World War on the side of the Allies, but he was ignored. Other Ottoman statesmen also made similar attempts in London and Paris, but they were also ignored. It was clear that the Allies had already decided to partition the Ottoman Empire and naturally, they did not wish to accept such a country as an ally in the war. Under those circumstances, there was no choice for the Turks to enter the war on the side of the German Empire.

There was also another development, which helped the Ottoman Government to join the war on the part of the Central Powers: Since the 1880s', the Ottoman governments had not paid attention to the navy. The disastrous results of such a neglect would be seen in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, when the then small Greece, with its small but new fleet took the Aegean islands within a few weeks. After the Balkan Wars, the new Ottoman Government attached particular importance to have a new fleet and it organized public donation campaigns in order to buy new warships from Britain. It was essential for the Ottoman Government to have a strong navy in order to be able to protect the capital and the whole Black Sea coast from Russia. Ottomans, ordered two cruisers and they paid the money in advance. However, those cruisers were confiscated by the British Government, following the outbreak of the I. World War. This accelerated the process of attending of the Ottoman Empire to the war on the side of Germany. On the other hand, Germany brought two war ships to Istanbul, namely Goeben and Breslau, and those ships on the surface became Ottoman ships (although in fact, they remained in German possession until the end of the war): They were renamed Yavuz Sultan Selim and Midilli, they replaced the German flag with the Ottoman flag. Those two ships on 29 October 1914 bombed Sevastopol and Novorossiysk ports, thus, the Ottoman Empire entered the war. During the war, those two ships protected the Black Sea shore and Istanbul from the attacks (or probable attacks) of the Russian Navy.

The First and Only Intergovernmental Relations Between the Ottoman Empire and Ukraine

The Russian revolutions in March and November of 1917 were greeted by the Ottomans, since this meant collapse of the main enemy of the Ottoman Empire, ie, the Tsarist Russia. Similarly, the Ottomans welcomed foundation of an independent Ukrainian state and the Ottoman Government established diplomatical relations with Rada Government of Hrushevsky (and then, with the government of Hetman Skoropadsky). Ottoman Empire was one of the participants of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and one of the few states, which recognized the Ukrainian state. For Ottomans, of course, formation of a Ukrainian state meant further weakening of Russia. Nevertheless, Ottomans met with some disappointment in their relations with Germans in that period: When the Russian Empire collapsed, the Ottoman Government had two great expectations: 1- Germany's support to the Ottomans to establish control on the Southern Caucasus 2- Germany's support on the transfer of the Russian Black Sea Fleet to the Ottoman Navy. Nonetheless, the Ottomans met with disappointment on both of the issues, since 1- Germany itself wished to possess the Caspian energy resources, so, did not want to allow the Ottoman Army to establish control in the region 2- Germany preferred to give the battle ships of the former Tsarist Navy to the newly established Ukrainian government and told the Ottomans that if they wished some vessels, then they could contact with the Ukrainian government on that issue. However, within a half year, the Central Powers would collapse and neither the German, nor the Ottoman Empires would survive and the Black Sea Fleet would ultimately pass to the Soviet Russia.

Turkey and the Soviet Union: From Cooperation to Confrontation

After the war, many parts of Turkey were occupied by the Allies and Turkish officers had to wage an independence war in cooperation with the Soviet Union. After the victory, the Republic of Turkey

was founded in 1923 and in the first 20 years of the republic, Turkey pursued close relations with the Soviet Union. At that time, the interests of both states on the issues related with the Straits and the Black Sea, were mainly in harmony: Neither Turkey, nor the Soviet Union were eager to see British war ships in the Black Sea. Although the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 (which is considered to be the title deed of the Turkish Republic) the Straits would be governed by an international commission, in which Turkey would be a member state, the Montreux Convention of 1936 gave the Straits to the sovereignty of Turkey and limited the access and presence of the war ships of non littoral states. On this issue, too, the interests of Turkey and the Soviet Union were in harmony. Nonetheless, the relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union deteriorated after the II. World War, especially when the Soviet authorities demanded “joint defense” of the Straits. Thus, the two countries came to odds and Turkey became a NATO member. During the Cold War era, the Black Sea basin was a zone of risk for Turkey, since the dominant power in the Black Sea was the rival Soviet Union and the two other littoral states (Bulgaria and Romania) were members of the Warsaw Pact.

After 1991, a favourable situation in the Black Sea basin emerged for Turkey. Because, first of all, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact had collapsed and this meant that Turkey would not perceive a great threat from the north, anymore. Bulgaria and Romania were not allies of the Soviet Union and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, new states, such as Georgia and Ukraine emerged. Crimea would not be possessed by Russia almost for the first time since 1783. This meant that the Black Sea basin would not be dominated by a single power for the first time since many centuries. And this, in turn, meant that there was a chance that the Black Sea region would be a region of cooperation.

Black Sea: A Sea of Stability For Turkey

Indeed, the Black Sea is the only sea, where Turkey does not have any dispute with other littoral states. As it is known, Turkey is surrounded with seas from 3 sides and it has coasts to 4 seas. If we put the Marmara Sea aside (since it is located between the two Turkish Straits, thus, it is subject to the regime of internal waters), among the three seas, where Turkey has a shore, the Black Sea is the

only sea, where Turkey is not in a conflict of right claim with any state. On the other hand, Turkey is in a permanent conflict with Greece in the Aegean Sea because of a number of issues, such as the disarmament of the Eastern Aegean Islands (an obligation of Greece under the Lausanne Treaty, whereas Greece has been violating this obligation), the issue of territorial waters and continental shelf, the question of the legal status of some Aegean islands, and the FIR (flight information region) boundary issue. In the Mediterranean, the Cyprus Problem is still actual and more recently, the issue of delimitation on the maritime zones has appeared. Compared with those seas and problems, the Black Sea is a place of relative stability for Turkey: The agreement on demarcation of continental shelves between Turkey and the Soviet Union had been signed already in 1978 and that agreement had come into force in 1980 (after the collapse of the Soviet Union, such partition of the Black Sea basin would also become valid for the successive states of the Soviet Union). This helps Turkey to explore gas reserves in the Black Sea without coming into a dispute with any other littoral state.

However, after the Cold War, some new problems emerged: First of all, instead of Cold War, local conflicts emerged in or around the territory of the former Soviet Union (such as the conflicts of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Chechnya/Transnistria). Secondly, some countries of the former Warsaw Pact (such as Bulgaria and Romania) and the former Soviet republic of Georgia oriented toward NATO and they demanded increased presence of the US in the Black Sea. In connection with this, they began discussing about amendment of the Montreux Convention in particular, or, the status of the Black Sea, in general. This situation caused concerns of Ankara. In this way, neither increase of Russia's activity in the region, nor the increase of activity of NATO in the Black Sea are desirable for Turkey, since the both cases may result with increase of pressure on Turkey. For example, in 2008, during the Five Days War between Russia and Georgia, a small crisis occurred between Turkey and the US, when the US demanded from Turkey a free passage for two US battle ships, whose tonnages were exceeding the limit for the tonnage of the non littoral states. The wish to avoid from such confrontations is also one of the reasons, why Turkey defends peace and stability in the Black Sea region.

Turkey's Deteriorating Relations With the US

Turkey's Black Sea policy was also determined by the fact that, after the end of the Cold War, Turkey's foreign policy gradually changed. While for the most part of the Cold War Turkey's policies toward the Soviet Union were parallel with the policies of the US, after the Cold War, Turkey began to pursue more independent policies. During the 1990's, Turkey's relations with Russia were could be summarized as economic cooperation and political rivalry. However, with the beginning of the millenium, Turkey and Russia began approaching with each other on political questions, as well. This rapprochement mainly had such reasons: 1- The belief that it was impossible to ignore Russia in this region: concerning the regional politics. 2- Mutual beneficial relations in economy and energy brought rapprochement in politics. 3- Deterioration in the relations of Turkey with the US, because of the conflict of interests between the two countries. Consequently, although Turkey remained a member of NATO, it started to pursue her own national policy, which in some aspects differ from the position of the US.

Turkey's relations with Ukraine also should be analyzed within the framework of those circumstances. That is to say, Turkey's desire on peace and stability in the region is in conformity with existence of an independent and prosperous Ukrainian state and with its territorial integrity. Turkey does not wish to be engaged into an active conflict with Russia and the two states are in cooperation in many spheres. However, Turkey would not like to see Russian domination in the Black Sea region. From this point of view, an independent Ukrainian state balances Russia's influence in the region. Moreover, there are many factors, which bring Turkey and Ukraine closer: First of all, Ukraine is almost the only state in the Black Sea region, with whom Turkey does not have a serious problem. Ukraine does not have any imperialist or expansionist aims and the two countries did not have a serious problem in the near history, either (yes, there were some problems, clashes in the 17th century because of Ottoman; Tatar attacks to the Ukrainian territories and Cossack attacks to the Ottoman territories, but those cases remained in deeper phases of history: Today, in Turkey nobody remembers this and the Ukrainians, unlike many other nations, do not

attach too much importance to the conflicts of the past). In relation with this, Ukrainians in general are tolerant to foreigners. Secondly, from the Turkish point of view, Ukraine has a great population (40 million of population is not a small population for a European country) and many educated people. Turkey's and Ukraine's economies are not concurrent. Instead, they complete each other in many spheres. Thirdly, -what is important from the Ukrainian stand point- Turkey is located on the gates of Black Sea and Turkey's territory is a transit territory for the trade between the northern countries and the Middle East. Fourthly, Turkey is the second greatest power in the region after Russia and this makes it more important for Ukraine. Those factors have created a firm ground for a mutual and long lasting cooperation between the two countries. In addition, Turkish-Ukrainian relations have an over-parties character: Turkey's relations with Ukraine do not depend on the political leaders and Turkey, in its relations with Ukraine, has never interfered to the inner politics of Ukraine; nor it has supported any party during the inner political conflicts with Ukraine. Thanks to this situation, the relations between the two countries always developed, despite the political changes in Ukraine. It can not be said that there are not problems in relations: For example, Turkish investors meet with difficulties in doing business in Ukraine. In addition, Ukraine has not taken firm steps to fight against the terrorist organization FETÖ (which was behind the coup attempt in Turkey, five years ago). On the other hand, the energy cooperation between Turkey and Russia causes reaction of Ukraine. However, since the ground in the bilateral relations is firm enough, officials of the two states prefer to negotiate those issues, behind the doors: In other words, such problems do not cause serious polemics or crises.

The events in 2014 (Russia's annexation of Crimea and the eruption of armed conflict in Donbas, ie, the actual Russian-Ukrainian War) caused deep concern of Turkey. Because, first of all, as it was mentioned above, for Turkey, it is vital to protect stability in the region. Secondly, annexation of Crimea was an attempt against the principle of stability of boundaries (one of the basic principles of the international law). Thirdly, annexation of Crimea would mean disturbance of the balance in the Black Sea region, since the Crimean Peninsula has a key geopolitical location. As it was said

above, neither US domination, nor Russian domination in the Black Sea region is desirable for Turkey. Turkey has not recognized the annexation of Crimea and it has always emphasized its support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea. However, Turkey has not joined the sanctions of the EU on Russia. Turkey, basing on its foreign policy requirements, pursues its own policy.

Turkey and Crimean Tatars

Another aspect in Turkey's Black Sea policy and in the Turkish-Ukrainian relations is the issue of Crimean Tatars. Crimean Tatars had begun to migrate to Turkey following the annexation of Crimea by Tsarist Russia in 1783. Today, it is estimated that about 5 million out of the 83 million people in Turkey are of Crimean Tatar origin. Turkey has always been interested in the problems of the Crimean Tatars and Turkey's presidents have been in contact with the Crimean Tatar leaders. However, although the Crimean Tatar question affects Turkey's regional policies, it will be wrong to say that there is a very strong Crimean Tatar lobby in Turkey, which can determine the policies of Turkey (in Turkey, the descendants of the Crimean Tatar immigrants of the past centuries are perceived as an integral part of the Turkish nation. There is no Crimean Tatar "lobby" in Turkey, similar to the Jewish lobby in the United States or the Armenian lobby in France). On the other hand, Turkey's concerns toward the Crimean Tatars have nothing to do with Ottomanist or irredantist

aims. Turkey renders support to Crimean Tatars, only for humanitarian purposes. For this reason, the comments that Turkey has irredantist aims toward Crimea – just like the Turkish intervention to Cyprus in 1974- does not reflect the truth. Because, first of all, Turkey supports the principle of stability of boundaries. Secondly, the Cyprus Republic of 1960 was a sui generis state, where there were two constituent nations – Greeks and Turks – and each of them would exercise the right of self determination, separately. Cyprus was also put under the guarantee of Turkey, Greece and Britain and when the Greek Cypriot community seized the state powers and when a danger of annexation of Cyprus by Greece occurred, Turkey made the intervention basing on those facts. That is to say, Cyprus has nothing in common with Crimea, which is unconditionally an integral part of Ukraine. Moreover, the developments after 1991 showed that the Crimean Tatars have good relations with Ukrainians and even more, the Crimean Tatars became a part of the Ukrainian political nation. Under those circumstances, Turkey deals with the problems of Crimean Tatars as a brother nation, but sees the future of Crimea and the Crimean Tatars within Ukraine.

As it can be seen, Turkey, in its history has faced with problems both with Russia and with the West. Being located at the crossroads between east and west, Turkey wishes to avoid from the conflicts in the region. For this reason, its policy toward the Black Sea can be summarized with those words: peace, stability and balance.

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Development of the Black Sea Shelf: Ways to Turn a Geopolitical Challenge into an Opportunity

The Black Sea is one of the least studied hydrocarbon deposits in the water area, which has a significant hydrocarbon potential, especially at great depths of 1,500-2,000 m. Only 4-5% of the Black Sea shelf has been studied: 3-5 per cent in the Ukrainian sector, 4 per cent in Bulgarian, 6-8 per cent in Romanian, and 5-6 per cent in Turkish. Potential reserves of energy resources in the Ukrainian sector of the Black Sea shelf are estimated at 2.3 billion tons of conventional fuel, which according to the State Service of Geology and Subsoil of Ukraine is about 40% of all reserves of energy resources of Ukraine.

The shelf is an important source of energy resources for many countries of the world. Over a hundred countries are engaged in the exploration, appraisal, and production of oil and gas. The share of global energy resources produced on the shelf of the seas and oceans exceeded 50% of their total volume. This trend will continue in the future as most of the land deposits have long been discovered and largely depleted.

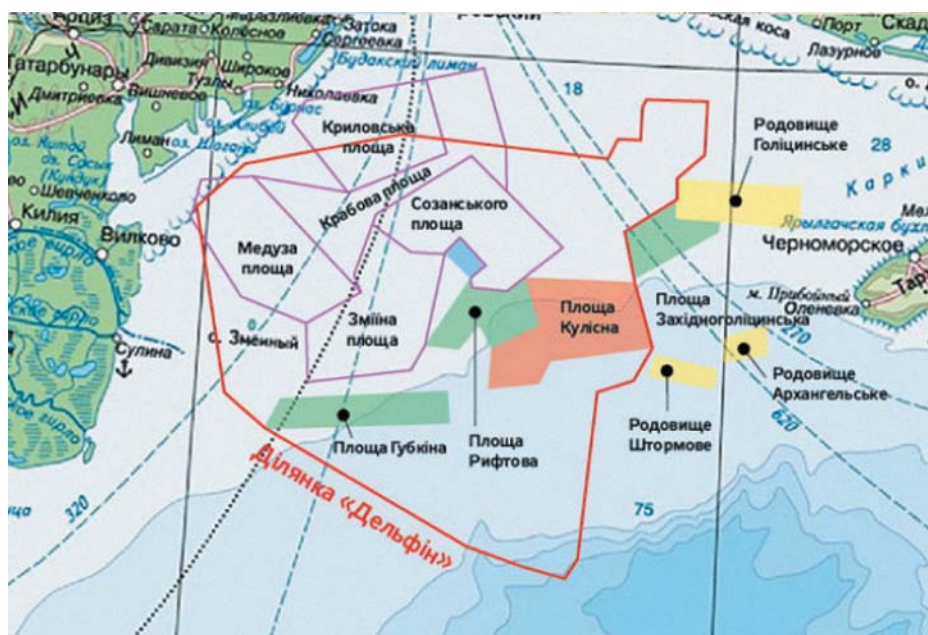
The Black Sea is currently one of the least studied water areas in terms of hydrocarbon deposits, which has a significant hydrocarbon potential, especially at great depths of 1,500-2,000 m. Only 4-5% of the Black Sea shelf has been studied: 3-5 per cent in

the Ukrainian sector, 4 per cent in Bulgarian, 6-8 per cent in Romanian, and 5-6 per cent in Turkish.

Potential reserves of energy resources in the Ukrainian sector of the Black Sea shelf are estimated at 2.3 billion tons of conventional fuel, which according to the State Service of Geology and Subsoil of Ukraine is about 40% of all reserves of energy resources of Ukraine.

The decision to move to the shelf

Under the Order No. 627 dated December 30, 2020, was made by the State Service of Geology and Subsoil of Ukraine and has granted Naftogaz of Ukraine NJSC a licence for the geological study of oil and gas-bearing subsoil, including pilot com-



Source:

https://biz.censor.net/resonance/3136287/chomu_shelfov_rodovischa_delfnu_mojut_vdyiti_vrtualnim_nvestoram

IN FOCUS: THE BLACK SEA SHELF

mercial development of the fields with subsequent oil and gas production at the Skifska and Dolphin areas.



Source: <http://shalegas.in.ua/urp-shhodo-skifs-koyi-dilyanky-pidpysaty-ne-mozhna-vidklasty/>

This was done under Paragraph 8 of the procedure for mineral subsoil licences issuance, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 615 dated 30.05.2011 (as amended by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 124 dated 19.02.2020).

Geographically, it is the slope and northern part of the Western Black Sea deep-water depression of the Black Sea within the Exclusive Maritime Economic Zone of Ukraine (up to 200 nautical miles from the coast). Naftogaz of Ukraine NJSC neighbours here are Romanian OMV Petrom, Turkish TPAD and its partners, and the Russian Black Sea Fleet, which manages a significant part of the sea area around the occupied Crimea with impunity, including the occupied Odesa, Holitsynske, Arkhangelske, and Shtormove fields.

A logical question arises: Will the Russian occupier still prevent us from geological exploration and drilling in offshore areas, relying on his impunity? There is no affirmative answer to this question. [Otto Waterlander](#), Chief Transformation Officer of Naftogaz of Ukraine NJSC, whose responsibility also included the study of the sea shelf, in an interview with Liga.Business assumed such a risk and offered to minimise it by attracting international

partners. However, to successfully follow this recommendation, we must consider the experience that Ukraine already had in the last decade.

Background overview

Ukraine has some experience in gas production on the shelf of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. From 1978 to 2014, the state-owned Chornomornaftogas was successfully engaged in production and carried out a full range of works in a single technological complex (search and exploration of hydrocarbons, drilling, and development of oil and gas fields, production and transportation of hydrocarbons). Active drilling operations on the Black Sea shelf in 2012-2013 made Chornomornaftogas one of the leaders in drilling in the region. The company drilled more than all companies operating in the Black Sea combined (Ukraine – 16,595 m, Turkey – 3,650 m, and Romania – 7,500 m).

Ukraine planned to become a leader in hydrocarbon production in 2015, as in 2012 Ukraine ranked second after Romania in oil and gas production on the Black Sea shelf. The expected 2020 production was about 5 billion cubic metres.

In August 2012 Ukraine has successfully held a tender for the conclusion of a production sharing agreement for hydrocarbons to be produced within the Skifska area. The winner was a consortium led by Exxon Mobil, whose competitor at that time was the Russian Lukoil Overseas Ukraine B.V. By that time, Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey were also actively engaged in the shelf (see map)



Source: <http://real-economy.com.ua/print/60690.html>

However, neither in 2012 nor in 2013 did the signing of the actual agreement with the consortium of the winners occur. On February 13, 2014, the dead-

line for signing the production sharing agreement defined by the legislation formally expired (Article 7 of the PSA Law of Ukraine). And although in September 2013 in New York, the then Energy Minister Eduard Stavytskyi signed a hydrocarbons production sharing agreement with representatives of Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, and OMV Petrom, the start of Russian aggression against Ukraine, the occupation of Crimea, and the seizure of offshore fields have put an end to this promising international project.

Since then, Russia has gained a foothold on offshore platforms, equipped them with surface surveillance systems for radar detection and ships, vessels and low-flying targets' tracking, and sonar monitoring units for underwater monitoring.

Pirate's Impunity

Captured by Russian troops in March 2014, the jack up rigs, known Boyko rigs, were equipped with Neva-BS radar systems. And the facilities of the offshore platform No. 4 (MSP-4) at the Holitsynske field, MSP-17 at the Shtormove field, riser block platform No. 2 at the Odesa field (66 km northeast of Zmiyiny Island) were equipped with sonar control units.

Such facilities allowed creating casus belli conditions and using the forces of the Russian Black Sea Fleet against the vessels or other marine facilities that will be declared threatening Russian interests.

If earlier the area of the Odeske, Holitsynske, Arkhangelske, and Shtormove fields was patrolled by support service ships of the Russian Federation, from June 1, 2018, the protection of the captured Ukrainian rigs on the occupied shelf was officially transferred to the Forty-First Brigade of small missile ships of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation.

During the occupation period, Ukraine lost about 12.0 billion cubic meters of natural gas and 347 thousand tons of gas condensate and oil. And the predatory "development" of Ukrainian fields continues, where the estimated losses are already billions. Currently, the issue of reimbursement of damages caused to Ukraine by the Russian Federation is in international courts.

How can we level the Russian threat or even turn it into an opportunity that will help strengthen Ukraine's position in the Black Sea? Let's try to expand and detail the suggestions of the Naftogaz top manager about the need to attract international partners.

The first steps in this direction have already been taken – Naftogaz has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in the implementation of joint gas exploration and production projects in Ukraine with OMV Petrom (Romania) and a Memorandum of Understanding on the potential geological exploration of hydrocarbons in the Ukrainian part of the Black Sea with the Israeli Naphtha Petroleum Corp. Both companies can become important partners, have technological experience on the Black Sea shelf, and the financial resources required implementing a large-scale project of this kind. The project would also benefit significantly if it were possible to return the American oil and gas giant to the Black Sea. It would be great if Naftogaz worked in this direction, but only the synergy of corporate and government efforts can ensure success.

From a geopolitical point of view, the Black Sea hydrocarbon fields in the exclusive economic zone of Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Ukraine are competitors of Russian gas. In August 2020, Turkey has announced the discovery of a giant field in the Tuna-1 area bordering the Ukrainian section (see map)



Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/arielcohen/2020/09/18/turkeys-new-natural-gas-find-in-the-black-sea-exciting-but-tricky-process-ahead/?sh=16616dd25a86>

If Turkey manages to commission it in 2023, as promised by President R. Erdogan, the country will be able to abandon part of import supplies,

which means that not only the Russian budget will potentially suffer, but also the options for political pressure will decrease. Therefore, the Russian Federation will make every possible effort to prevent the success of the Ukrainian shelf development, and along the way, it will try to complicate the lives of Turkey and Romania as much as possible.

This situation creates the natural interest of these countries in joining forces at the state level to protect their interests. Therefore, the time has come to intensify political contacts and return to the idea of forming a Black Sea Maritime Alliance under the auspices of NATO. This issue could become part of the work of the Black Sea Platform, and the official launch will take place in August 2021 during the already announced start of its work.

Homework for Ukraine:

International dimension:

- 1 . Holding an international meeting at the level of the heads of States of the Black Sea region with the involvement of the United States and without the Russian Federation, during which Ukraine could share its vision of the geopolitical situation, the Russian threat to hydrocarbon production projects, and propose the creation of a maritime alliance.

- 2 . The maritime alliance should include political obligations to exchange information and support in case the Russian Federation commits illegal actions against the members of the alliance, and the introduction of the practices of continuous patrolling, performed by the joint naval and border groups within certain licence areas.

- 3 . The states of the Black Sea region should make a common claim to the Russian Federation on the inadmissibility of provocations, prepare and announce a joint sanctions package in case of such violations.

- 4 . Ukraine should appeal to the United States at the highest political level with a proposal to attract American investment and companies in the development of the shelf of the exclusive economic zone of Ukraine.

Institutional Cooperation and Coordination.

The National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine is a body that should take under permanent control and monitor the hydrocarbon production on the Black Sea shelf, as one of the main foundations of the state's energy security.

Already at the start of geological exploration on the Black Sea shelf, the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine can consolidate the efforts of other state authorities and, together with the Security Service of Ukraine, the Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine, and the State Border Service of Ukraine, immediately work out a mechanism for ensuring the security of relevant work.

The naval forces should support all stages of work on the Black Sea shelf to prevent aggressive actions of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, obstruction, or seizure of the seismic vessels. To do this, the procedure for interaction between the Naftogaz and the Navy should be agreed upon, and appropriate support should be provided at the level of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

The Ministry of Energy of Ukraine, as the body responsible for state energy policy, should initiate a special draft law on the basics of state support in the development of offshore deposits of energy resources. Such a draft law should create a comprehensive framework by introducing amendments to the Tax and Customs Codes to encourage offshore drilling, simplify licensing and coordination procedures for the employment of foreign specialists, land allocation, environmental protection actions, and guarantee investment protection by the state.

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Financial System of the Occupied Crimea

Comparative legal analysis of the Crimean budget indicators and the peculiarities of the budget process itself on the occupied peninsula has never been the subject of scientific research. Another form of government, the existence of an administrative-command system of government, characterized by state ownership of resources, bureaucratization and monopolization of the economy, administrative pricing, equal distribution of benefits, domination of the nomenclature – all this leaves its mark on the financial system of occupied Crimea. The article is devoted to the analysis of the current state of the financial system of Crimea and contains forecasts of further development of the difficult situation with finances on the peninsula.

The primary role in the financial system should be played by the public finance sphere, through which the functions and tasks of the state are performed. Its main financial document and an integral attribute of the state's life is the state budget. Reasonable planning of the revenues is important for the formation of the state budget, in the system of which the leading role is played by mandatory payments, which make up almost 60% of state budget revenues [1, p. 3]. A significantly smaller part of state budget revenues is traditionally made up of revenues from privatisation, sales of ownerless or confiscated property, fines, grants, gifts, etc. In countries with resource economies, the priority sources of budget revenues are revenues from “extractive industries and primary processing of raw materials, which ensures a positive trade balance due to a significant share (more than 50 %) of raw materials in the export of the national economy” [2]. Although resource-oriented economies, without parallel technical and

technological development, are considered non-viable on a global scale, there are a significant number of countries that have chosen this path.

Until 2014, the economy of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was a market economy. The occupation of the Peninsula by the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to RF) changed the established and balanced approaches to the formation, distribution, and use of centralised and decentralised funds in Crimea, which immediately affected both the principles of forming the Crimean budget and its model. As we noted earlier [3], the budget process in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, in the list of which the aggressor country, despite the norms of international law, included Crimea, is somewhat different from the domestic one. It is marked by both another form of state structure and the presence of an administrative-command management system, characterised by state ownership of resources, bureaucratisation and monopolisation of the economy, administrative pricing, equalising the distribution of benefits, and the dominance of nomenclature.

Of the 85 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, only 13 are not subsidised regions, while all others, to a greater or lesser extent, receive funding from the federal budget of the Russian Federation. Appendix 3 to the Order of the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation No. 1030 dated November 11, 2020 sets out the list of the Russian Federation subjects, in which budgets the share of subsidies from the federal budget for two of the last three reporting financial years exceeded 40 per cent of the revenues of the consolidated budget of the Russian Federation subject: the Altai Republic, the Republic of Dagestan, the Republic of Ingushetia, the Republic of Tuva, the Chechen Republic, and

the Kamchatka Territory. The Republic of Crimea has so far settled in a different list – subjects of the Russian Federation, in which budgets the share of subsidies from the federal budget for two of the last three reporting financial years exceeded 10 per cent of the revenues of the consolidated budget of

the Russian Federation subject (Appendix 2 to Order No. 1030) [4]. At first glance, it seems to be quite good, but let's compare the actual amounts of gratuitous proceeds in the budgets of the relevant Russian Federation subjects for 2020.

Ref. No.	Name of the recipient of gratuitous proceeds	Amount, billion roubles.
1.	Altai Republic	21,93
2.	Republic of Tuva	40,54
3.	Chechen Republic	92,93
4.	Republic Of Crimea	166,88

Thus, it is easy to see that now Crimea receives more funds from the federal budget than the Chechen Republic, which has already rooted in the list of subsidised regions of the Russian Federation. Therefore, the inclusion of Crimea in the group of “40 per cent” is only a matter of time.

For Crimea to cease being a subsidised region, Federal Law No. 379-FZ was adopted in 2014, which “granted the right to a Russian Federation subject – the Republic of Crimea – to set reduced rates applying the patent form of taxation and the simplified taxation system” [5]. Consequently, local laws reduced the tax rate under the patent system by 6 times, and by 2 times under the simplified system. Accordingly, half of the registered entrepreneurs of Crimea chose these special regimes. In terms of the number of patents issued in 2015, Crimea even overtook Moscow [6, p. 146]. But already in the Russian Federation itself, entrepreneurs made a fuss because of such tax discrimination.

Unlike under Ukrainian law, the local authorities in the Russian Federation have broader tax powers, and higher tax rates manipulating options. Moreover, no one guarantees that low rates are not banal bait, and as soon as entrepreneurs voluntarily proceed with tax registration, local or federal legislation does not change dramatically. We believe that as soon as economic calculations show that Crimea has received a sufficient basis for self-sufficiency at the expense of its own income, all tax benefits in Crimea will lead to the all-Russian level. But so far, the budget of the occupied Crimea does not fulfil the plan for personal income tax [7].

For the first time in many years, the budget of

Crimea for 2021 was approved with a deficit. Officially, the decline in revenues is explained by a slowdown in economic development not so much due to the coronavirus pandemic, but, as the Russian head of Crimea Sergey Aksionov said, “the completion of construction of such large facilities as the Tavrida Highway.” But this explanation is incomplete and disappointing [8]. And even more than that – incorrect.

The Federal Target Program “Socio-economic development of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol by 2022” provides for the maximum funding of 877.8 billion roubles, of which only 19.5 billion roubles will be spent from the budgets of the Russian Federation subjects [9]. While the total cost of construction of the Tavrida Highway was set at 149.3 billion roubles. It was claimed that for 40 years after commissioning, this road will not need any repairs, reconstruction, or expansion [10]. However, in November 2020, one section of the road (previously opened by Vladimir Putin, but, as it turned out, not commissioned officially) collapsed. Now the blame for poor-quality construction of the section is shifted to a certain Siberian contractor company, which is allegedly in a state of bankruptcy [11].

According to the so-called Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of Crimea Irina Kiviko, the growth rate of Crimea's taxed and non-taxed revenues over the next three years should increase by more than 27%. However, the income structure of the Republic of Crimea for 2021 is still dominated by gratuitous proceeds [8]. Irina Kiviko also announced that the government plans to cover the budget deficit by selling property. However,

among the objects that will really be in demand on the market, there are only a few, for example, the Massandra Winery. It, however, has already been sold to Yuzhny Proekt LLC, a subsidiary of Rossiya Bank, and for a rather ridiculous price. An existing industrial and profitable enterprise went under a hammer for 5 billion 327 million roubles. While Sofia Rotaru put up for sale her quarantined and unprofitable 16-room hotel in Yalta for 2 billion 301 million roubles [12].

Investors will primarily be attracted to profitable real estate objects that are in perfect condition, and there are not many of them left with the “Crimean authorities”. In the face of sanctions pressure, the loss of established channels for the supply of raw materials, and the sales of products, the cost of Crimean brands has seriously fallen. Therefore, it is not worthy to make a long-term bet on income from the privatisation of Crimean enterprises [3]. However, between Irina Kiviko’s lines, you can also read a certain threat or warning to nationalise real estate objects that are not used for their intended purpose.

The situation with investment in the occupied Crimea and forecasts for the future is so sad that in an attempt to attract investors and somehow revive the economy of the occupied Peninsula, Moscow is taking any steps. One of them is the draft law of the Russian Federation allowing the creation of so-called Special Administrative Districts (hereinafter referred to as SAD) on the territory of the Peninsula. According to the plan, investment in these districts will be a strict secret, and potential investors, thus, can be not afraid of falling under sanctions. As we have already noted, the real goal for which this project was initiated, is not only to attract investment to the Peninsula. It’s a little deeper. For the Kremlin, this is another jig, by which the Russian authorities hope to keep businesses and local oligarchs in check. As soon as they take a risk and invest money because of their greed, they will immediately be blackmailed, threatening disclosure. And, accordingly, they will start “milking” [13]. While for the officials themselves, the adoption of this law will create all opportunities for illegal enrichment.

The Russian Federation signed the UN Convention Against Corruption on December 9, 2003 and

ratified it on March 8, 2006. The federal law on ratification contains provisions in certain articles and clauses, under which the Russian Federation has jurisdiction and binding obligations, but this list does not include Article 20 of the convention “Illegal Enrichment”. And although in 2019 proposals were put forward to add an article “Illegal Enrichment” to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, ideas to recognise intentional illegal enrichment as a crime, that is, a significant increase in the assets of a state official that exceeds his legal income and cannot be rationally justified – remained on paper. And what does the SAD have to do with it, you may ask? The explanation lies on the surface:

- the investor’s identity, as the text of the draft law suggests, will be a secret (which opens up new horizons for officials);
- SAD participants can be Russian companies registered in any region (only Russian. Representatives of “fraternal peoples” are not allowed to conduct preferential business activities in Crimea).

The actual concealment of ultimate beneficiaries, multiplied by the lack of responsibility of civil servants for illegal enrichment and elevated to the general level of corruption in the Russian Federation, creates additional corruption risks. It also suggests that the real purpose of the legislative activity of Russian parliamentarians to attract investors to Crimea is to create opportunities for secret business in the absence of competition and the presence of preferential taxation, as a participant in the Crimea Free Economic Zone.

For example, organisations participating in the Crimea Free Economic Zone are exempt from property tax for ten years in relation to property created or acquired for fulfilling an agreement on the activities’ conditions in a free economic zone and located on the territory of this free economic zone (clause 26 of Article 381 of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation). While local entrepreneurs pay this tax in full. Owners of residential premises will also feel full tax pressure this year because it is through property payments that the occupation authorities of Crimea plan to significantly increase local budget revenues.

The “manual mode” of setting the cadastral value has led to the fact that 1 square metre of a house in a Crimean village can cost USD 2,200. Now, for revaluation, Crimeans need to apply to a special commission under the Ministry of Land and Property Relations. And in case of disagreement with its decision, they should go to court. However, the chances of a legal settlement of the situation are not very promising, given that from now on land lease agreements in Crimea concluded earlier than March 2014 can be renegotiated, and the lease term can be changed unilaterally [7]. There is a non-zero probability that in this way the occupation authorities force the population (in particular, citizens of Ukraine) to get rid of real estate, freeing up space for future investors.

In 2014-2015, over 330 enterprises, institutions, and organisations that were state-owned and owned by Ukrainian trade unions, as well as 280 private enterprises, were nationalised in Crimea. Then the reason was not to bring their constituent documents into compliance with the legislation of the Russian Federation by March 1, 2015, and not to register them [14]. In some areas, nationalisation has not yet ended, for example, ownerless engineering networks of Simferopol are periodically transferred to the balance of relevant services [15]. What will the “Crimean authorities” come up with when previously squeezed enterprises are sold off, but the budget deficit remains: inefficient management or non-compliance with the Federal Development Plan of the “Republic of Crimea”? We’ll find out the answer to this question soon. In the meantime, let’s take another look at the budget indicators.

Crimea’s budget revenues in 2021 are expected to reach 48.4 billion roubles (32.1% of total revenues), while gratuitous proceeds to the budget of the “Republic” from the federal budget in 2021 will amount to 102.4 billion roubles (67.9% of total revenue). Thus, the Crimean budget this year, as in previous years, will be formed by two-thirds from federal money. This trend does not contribute to the acquisition of self-earning skills, so the only way out of this situation is to reduce costs. It was this logical idea that Crimean officials came to when they decided to “tighten the belt”. As can be seen from the text of the law of the “Republic of Crimea” No. 139-ZRK/2020 dated 22.12.2020

[16] the volume of expenditures of the Crimean budget in 2021 will be 28.3% or 59.6 billion roubles less than last year. Due to this, the already most vulnerable social spheres of Crimea (education, medicine, and agriculture) may suffer.

The funds of federal targeted programmes, allocated in significant amounts annually to support certain areas of the national economy of Crimea, are used inefficiently (most of them are simply stolen). And those crumbs that are sent to the planned events are successfully mastered by the occupation authorities, their closest relatives, and “friends” [17; 18; 19; 20].

In addition to the tax and property sphere, there are other issues: the Russian Federation imposes bans on foreigners’ ownership of certain property (for example, coastal land or media resources); Crimeans cannot finish the privatisation started before the occupation; return the monetary deposit paid as a preventive measure in criminal proceedings, and so on.

Findings

Thus, we can conclude that the financial system of the occupied Crimea, despite all attempts to find its stable sources of income (for example, to tax all real estate), shows its non-viability, clearly manifested in basic budget indicators. The Russian Federation has lost the desire or ability to pull another subsidised region at the expense of the federal budget, which is now Crimea and is actively transferring it to self-financing, which in turn leads to increased tax pressure (primarily on local residents and entrepreneurs). The mechanism of creating special administrative districts and attracting secret investors carries more corruption risks than potential benefits, contains an undisguised goal of circumventing economic sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation, and violates the norms of international law, in particular the UN Convention Against Corruption. The right of private property in Crimea is systematically violated under the guise of state security needs; the contracts and laws become retroactive. The fiscal policy of the occupied Crimea continues to tend to the use of such unacceptable sources of state income throughout the civilised world as the nationalisation of property.

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Shtyblykov Dmitry, a member of the editorial board of the Black Sea Security Journal, head of international programs of the think tank NOMOS(Sevastopol), has been in Russian captivity for six years on a fabricated «saboteur case». In 2020, a new case was opened by the FSB. Dmytro Shtyblykov was transferred from a penal colony in Omsk to the Lefortovo FSB pre-trial detention center in Moscow, where investigative actions were carried out during the year. As of November 8, 2021, the case was transferred to the Southern District Military Court in Rostov-on-Don. The case is secret as the previous one. Dmytro Shtyblykov was transferred to the FSB pre-trial detention center in Rostov. Accused under Art. 275 of the Criminal Code. The term of imprisonment is from 12 to 20 years.





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