

SYNERGING



ENERGIES

BLACK SEA SECURITY

ANALYTICAL JOURNAL №1 (41) 2024



IN FOCUS:

SANCTIONS
AGAINST AGGRESSOR

NAVAL DRONES

DENUCLEARIZATION OF RUSSIA

SEVEN YEARS IN PUTIN'S PRISONS. THEY WARNED ABOUT RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE. AS OF FEBRUARY 2023, ACCORDING TO DMYTRO LUBINET, UKRAINIAN PARLIAMENT COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, RUSSIA IS ILLEGALLY HOLDING 180 POLITICAL PRISONERS. THIS LIST INCLUDES THREE OF OUR COLLEAGUE



OLEKSIY BESSARABOV, journalist, deputy editor-in-chief of the Black Sea Security Journal of the NGO “Nomos” Center, a political prisoner of the Kremlin. The sentence in the case of “saboteurs” is 14 years in a prison under strict regime. In May 2021, Oleksiy Bessarabov from a Russian prison addressed the US Secretary of State: *“Despite the fact that my name, like the names of dozens of other political prisoners, is on the lists of such human rights organizations as FreedomHouse, Memorial, we are almost forgotten. Only our relatives, friends, and work colleagues remember us. We are forgotten. Oleg Sentsov is already free, but the “Sentsov list” remains, moreover, it is constantly being replenished with new names of detainees,”* – Oleksiy wrote a year before the large-scale invasion of Russia. The repression of the occupation authorities in Crimea continues to this day. Moreover, they are spreading.

In April 2011 O. Bessarabov wrote: *“Today, Russia does not apply military and political pressure on Ukraine, preferring to seize its strategic assets and economic absorption... Such a course of events does not exclude the possibility of the situation turning into a conflict, including with the use of force.”*

“The Black Sea region: an explosive mixture with several detonators”, Collection of the Razumkov Center “Crimea, Ukraine in Black Sea Security Coordinates”

DMYTRO SHTYBLYKOV, Head of international programs of the “Nomos” Center, member of the editorial board of the Black Sea Security Journal, a political prisoner of the Kremlin, sentenced in the “saboteurs case” to 5 years in a strict regime colony. On November 8, 2021, Dmytro Shtyblykov was supposed to be released in connection with the end of his sentence in the case of “Crimean saboteurs”. On the same day, he was transferred from the Lefortovo FSB detention center to Rostov-on-Don to the Southern District Military Court. Accused of “espionage” and “treason”. The new term of punishment for a Russian political prisoner the “court” announced on November 9, 2016. According to it, Dmytro should spend another 14 years and 6 months in Russian prison.



In October 2012, he wrote :

“... It turns out that the militaristic sentiments of Russian citizens are directed against the nearest neighbors. I would like to hope that it is not so! The military-political leadership of the Russian Federation increasingly uses the topic of an external enemy and a possible military conflict to justify any means of maintaining internal stability in Russia, consolidating the population and distracting it from acute social problems... However, will the leadership then be able to extinguish the fire of militarism that is fanning today?. Do the Russians want war? Ask “Tishina”... SSK-1 “Tishina” is a Russian silent rifle and grenade launcher complex.

“Military threats to Russia or with whom the Russian Federation can fight”, Black Sea Security Journal, No. 4 (26)



VOLODYMYR DUDKA is a military pensioner, former commander of the ship of the Ukrainian Navy “Simferopol”, the sentence in the “saboteurs case” is 14 years in a strict regime colony.

Volodymyr Dudka did not publish the Black Sea Security Journal, he was simply a friend of Oleksiy and Dmytro from the time of their service in the Ukrainian Navy. This turned out to be enough to become the third participant in the “saboteurs case” and receive a harsh sentence on a falsified case.

The surnames of Bessarabov, Shtyblykov and Dudka are included to the lists of Ukrainian human rights organizations, as well as “FreedomHouse” (USA), “Memorial” (RF) and resolutions of the European Parliament as political prisoners.

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Members of the editorial board Oleksiy Bessarabov
and Dmytro Shtybylykov 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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Heading into 2024. Instead of a preface

The Third World War... Will it happen? Is it already underway? Everyone has their own opinion. The purpose of this issue is to help answer this question. It is pretty obvious to us Ukrainians – Russia's leader declared war against Ukraine in Munich in 2007. Following that, an algorithm of aggression developed – Georgia in 2008, Ukraine in 2014, Syria in 2015. Meanwhile, the West has been seeking “strategic stability” all this time...

In what ways are China, Russia, and the United States alike in their geostrategic thinking? It is their belief that large nations should determine the fate of the world, either through the G3 format or the G2 format. Driven by inertia, the U.S. is clinging to the outdated notion of wooing Russia into an alliance against China, envisioning a comfortable G3 format. Thus, the US policy regarding the Kremlin-led war in Europe can be described as follows: “Russia must not lose, and Ukraine must not win.” In response to China's burgeoning power and its deepening partnership with Russia, the U.S. attempts to reverse the “Kissinger maneuver” by wooing Moscow away from Beijing's orbit and into its own. The goal is to weaken the growing global South, which is increasingly leaning towards China. While Moscow actively pursued partnerships and Beijing employed a more muted approach, both countries successfully established an anti-Western coalition. For now, it's a global “gang of four” – Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran, but behind them are not only geopolitical “pawns” – Belarus, Syria, and Nicaragua. Several global “swamp” countries, including India, Indonesia, Brazil, and South Africa, closely monitor the shifting global landscape and adjust their positions accordingly. In the Western camp, there are “Trojan horses”, such as Orban's Hungary, Erdogan's Turkey, and Fico's Slovakia.

About 4/5 of the world's population resides in the Global South, which holds substantial mineral reserves, while the Global West holds the primary financial power. The combined GDP of the Global West, including the USA, EU, UK, Norway, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, stands at approximately \$53 trillion. In contrast, the total GDP of the Global South, including China, India, Africa, Latin America, and

ASEAN, is considerably smaller, at around \$32 trillion. Therefore, the fundamental contradictions of the future will be defined along the West-Global South axis. The West will be represented by its classic institutions, such as the G7, NATO, and the EU, with the United States in the formal leadership role. The Global South will be represented by the SCO, BRICS, and BRI, with China in the real leadership role.

The transformation of the European Economic Community into the European Union in 1992 led to the emergence of an economic giant on the continent, albeit with limited geopolitical influence. Despite its rapid economic growth, India does not possess significant geopolitical power; it is often seen as the Germany of Asia. India has chosen a policy of distancing itself from the West and aligning with the Global South, albeit unsuccessfully challenging China's leadership.

The West's disregard for Moscow's actions in the post-Soviet space, such as the 2008 conflict in Georgia and the 2014 events in Ukraine, is a consequence of a misguided belief that strengthening Russia aligns with Western interests in countering China's rise. It is now evident that Moscow and Beijing are increasingly openly demonstrating their potential for mutual reinforcement.

China, like the West, sees Ukraine as part of “historic Russia.” Beijing believes that if Ukraine is in Russia's sphere of influence, not the West's, then China will be able to use the resources of both countries to expand its influence in Europe (through its Belt and Road Initiative). Beijing sees Ukraine as a country with limited sovereignty, which should be under the protection of Moscow, which should be under the suzerainty of China.

By inertia, the United States wants to preserve Russia as a global player for the sake of strategic stability, but Russia is actively undermining that stability.

Henry Kissinger's vision of Russia's geostrategic role vividly confirms this: “For all its propensity to violence, Russia has made decisive contributions to the global equilibrium and to the balance

IN FOCUS: THE TRIANGLE OF (IN)STABILITY

of power for over half a millennium... The goal of a peace process would be twofold: to confirm the freedom of Ukraine and to define a new international structure, especially for Central and Eastern Europe. Eventually Russia should find a place in such an order.”

Notably, the U.S. Defense Strategy adopted in 2022 identifies China as the top threat, Russia as an acute threat, and North Korea and Iran as persistent threats, focusing on the hierarchy of threats.

The document, however, fails to consider a scenario where these actors act in concert on an informal, undeclared anti-Western coalition. Therefore, the American political establishment will seek to keep Russia on the geopolitical map (like it did with the USSR in the 90's), even amidst discussions of its potential dissolution due to its defeat in Ukraine. By attempting to extract threat #2, a weakened Russia post-Ukraine conflict, from the “coalition of evil,” the U.S. aims to transform it into an ally in countering threat #1, China. The current U.S. administration seeks to outmaneuver Beijing in the global “G2” game while not denying Xi’s perspective that “the planet Earth is large enough for both countries to succeed.”

In the current standoff with the rising Global South, the West has not fully grasped the strategic advantage of Ukraine’s membership in its alliances (NATO and the EU) as the eastern flank of the transatlantic civilization. It remains trapped by old paradigms. The West continues to underestimate the global consequences of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. This is because the West believes that the conflict between the two countries, which have a combined GDP of only 2% of the global GDP, cannot significantly impact the global economy. Its impact is considered merely regional, within the Eurasian space and the eastern borders of Europe. The West believes that it is important to keep the conflict within the conflict zone, that is, within the concept of “the war in Ukraine.” This is still the logic of the current political establishment of the G7. And Russia is taking full advantage of this.

Despite the failure of the “Novorossiia” project in 2014 and the Putin-led blitzkrieg in 2022, which resulted in unprecedented Western sanctions, Russia’s missionary vision of its geostrategic role

remains unaltered within its establishment: “We have liberated the world from Western dominance – from military superiority that it possessed for 500 years, upon which its political, economic, and cultural power was built... We are a victorious nation. We defeated all hegemonies. With great effort, the Genghisids. Then Karl XII. Then Napoleon. Then Hitler. And now, we are ending the dominance of the USA” (S. Karaganov). It is noteworthy that such a sweeping vision - spanning 500 years – aligns with Henry Kissinger’s perspective on Russia’s stabilizing role “over the last half-millennium.”

Moscow seeks to exploit this vision, cunningly offering the West the concept of a global North in response to the global South. The idea is that if there is a global South, there must also be a global North – the “Great North.” This is envisioned as a “triumvirate” consisting of Russia, the United States, and Europe (V. Surkov). As Sun Tzu wrote, “War is the way of deception and illusion.” While these deceptions may be primitive, they can serve as effective bait for a certain segment of the Western political establishment that desires a return to the status quo ante and entertains the illusion of “re-orienting” Russia toward the West against China.

The latest flare-up of the Middle East conflict between Arabs and Israel is accelerating the global division of the world into two camps: “us” and “them.” The rapid decline of international cooperation organizations, such as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and others, is a sign that the world is on the brink of a global war. NATO’s failure to stop Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, a country on its eastern flank, is only encouraging Moscow to continue the war and intensify its subversive activities against the United States and the European Union. The Kremlin hopes to destabilize these countries’ internal affairs, making it difficult for them to continue supporting Ukraine.

Is there a way out of this impasse? Yes, but it requires a return to the policy of tough retaliation against the aggressive actions of the “axis of evil,” as pursued by Ronald Reagan. The United States’ efforts to achieve “strategic stability” in a triangle with two “strategic destabilizers,” China and Russia, one of which is engaged in global nuclear blackmail, are doomed to failure.

IN FOCUS: THE TRIANGLE OF (IN)STABILITY

Some former American officials have proposed that the West should “redefine success in Ukraine.” This would essentially boil down to coercing Ukraine into negotiations with the aggressor and pursuing a pseudo-peace settlement reminiscent of Munich-38. This path would be disastrous not only for Ukraine, but also for the West as a whole and the United States in particular.

As for Ukraine, its political leadership needs to root out Russian agents and anti-state elements within its ranks and fully mobilize civil society to defend its statehood against the aggression of the new Horde from the east.

This issue of the journal contains a lot of interesting information, both about the regional situation and about the Third World War, which is unlike the two previous ones.

Although the Doomsday Clock shows 90 seconds to midnight, 2024 still has a chance to be a year of victory for the Forces of Freedom in their fight against the Coalition of Evil. What is required is the will to win!

[illegible]

Pavlo Lakiychuk,
*Head of Security Programs
of the Centre for Global Studies Strategy XXI*

Seven years ago...

On the morning of November 9, 2016, masked men broke into the apartment of Oleksiy Bessarabov, deputy editor-in-chief of the magazine “Black Sea Security” in Sevastopol. They knocked the owner to the floor, handcuffed him. After that, they turned everything upside down in the apartment. Finding nothing, they threw the victim’s own jacket over his head, pulled him into a black “Barguzin” car with tinted windows, and disappeared in an unknown direction. At about the same time, FSB agents (former employees of the local SSU branch) seized and took away Dmytro Shtyblykov, director of international programs at the Sevastopol Center “Nomos”, to an unknown destination. On the same day, a military pensioner and former commander of the “Simferopol” command ship of the Ukrainian Navy, Volodymyr Dudka, was abducted from near the district polyclinic...

Only almost a week later, it became known that this trio of friends is being held in the Simferopol pre-trial detention center. The occupying authorities accuse Shtyblykov, Bessarabov, and Dudka of “preparing sabotage against military infrastructure and vital facilities in Sevastopol on the orders of Ukraine’s military intelligence.” Later, it was revealed that for several days, the captives were held in the basement of a private residence in Simferopol, where they were brutally tortured to extract “confessions” of cooperation with military intelligence and involvement in alleged sabotage. More details about the mistreatment of the captives and the falsification of the “Sevastopol saboteurs” case can be found in materials from the now banned in Russia Memorial human rights center.

On the basis of fabricated charges related to sabotage activities allegedly conducted on behalf of Ukrainian special services, Shtyblykov, Bessarabov, and Dudka were sentenced to lengthy prison terms by the occupying court in Sevastopol during a closed session. Oleksiy and Volodymyr maintained their innocence and were handed the maximum sentence of 14 years in a strict regime

colony. Shtyblykov, under pressure and blackmail, agreed to “cooperate with the investigation” and was given 5 years in a colony. However, it became evident that Russian “justice” had only deceived Dmytro. In December 2020, he was charged with a new offense, this time “high treason,” resulting in an additional 20-year prison sentence! By the way, on November 8, Dmitry turned 53 years old...

Who are the “Sevastopol saboteurs” that the occupiers feared so much? Dmytro Shtyblykov, Oleksiy Bessarabov, and Volodymyr Dudka, all residents of Sevastopol, are united by the fact that before being discharged from the reserve, they served in the Ukrainian Navy and were friends. After the Russian armed takeover of Crimea in the spring of 2014, they, like many other former military personnel, chose to remain in Sevastopol, believing that the Russian occupation of Crimea would be temporary. Before the occupation, I worked with Dmytro and Oleksiy as experts at the Center for the Study of Geopolitical Issues and Euro-Atlantic Cooperation of the Black Sea Region “Nomos”. We were members of the editorial board and authors of articles in the magazine “Black Sea Security”. “Nomos”, headed by the well-known Crimean political scientist Serhiy Kulyk, became the first non-governmental analytical center in Sevastopol in the early 2000s. It specialized in research in the field of national and international security, European integration and regional cooperation. “Nomos” organized numerous expert events in Crimea, and its analysts were invited to speak in Brussels, Berlin, Warsaw, Paris, Prague, Istanbul, and other cities.

Dmytro and Oleksiy were prominent figures in the social and political life of Sevastopol and beyond. Oleksiy published articles in the journal “Sudnoplavstvo” (“Shipping”), and served as a regional representative of the “Glavred” information agency in Sevastopol. He collaborated with other publications as a reporter. His investigative reports in “Black Sea Security” exposed facts of abuses and violations by the Russian Black Sea Fleet of

IN FOCUS: KREMLIN PRISONERS

Russian-Ukrainian agreements, which stipulated that the fleet should remain in Ukrainian Crimea until 2017. Dmytro was engaged in scientific research on the international legal aspects of counterterrorism efforts. The issue of terrorism and terror was deeply significant to him. Shtyblykov actively prepared a scientific work, published in European publications on the problems of international aspects of the fight against terrorism, participated in conferences in Ukraine and Russia, countries of the South Caucasus ... As early as 2008, after the Russian invasion of Georgia, Dmitry Shtiblikov published an analytical article in "Black Sea Security" with the eloquent title "Russian-Georgian conflict. Is Ukraine Next?" And in 2012, in the material "Do Russians want war?" ("Хотят ли русские войны?") he concluded that the work of the Russian military machine is aimed at aggression against neighbors, and Ukraine is likely to soon become its target. The FSB could not forgive such a thing – when Crimea was occupied by Russian troops in February-March 2014, its hands were untied. Russian security forces began pressuring some of the "Nomos" experts to cooperate, but they resisted. This led to increased pressure, culminating in the fabricated "Sevastopol saboteurs" case.

Our friends have been behind bars for eight years. In a hostile state. Daily humiliation and torture, limited communication – it can drive you insane. Dmytro Shtyblykov's daughter Tetiana tells: "Today is already the seventh birthday that my dad is celebrating in captivity. For the first time in several years, I have the opportunity to personally congratulate him in a letter. The conditions remain harsh, a single cell-type room, solitary confinement most of the time, a short walk in a small closed yard, no video- or regular phone calls, or visits. There's a limited number of books and a restricted time for writing letters. So, the mere possibility of exchanging letters is already a small joy!". Conditions for Oleksiy and Volodymyr are no better... Coordinator of the Crimean Human Rights Group, Olga Skrypnyk, emphasizes: "In essence, by international standards, this constitutes

torture – a person feels pain, and it is used to exert pressure. In general, this 'case of Ukrainian saboteurs' is used for propaganda purposes both for the internal Russian audience and the external one." When choosing their victims, the FSB tries to find a certain background that lends credibility to their version. After the annexation of Crimea, Russia gained access to all lists of military personnel, employees of the Security Service of Ukraine in Crimea, and police officers. In the case of the "saboteurs", the past affiliation of the defendants with the Armed Forces of Ukraine and their analytical and journalistic activities served as a basis for the FSB's idea of "saboteurs."

Arrests and pressure on Ukrainians in occupied Crimea continue and intensify. According to the Crimean Human Rights Group, at least 117 Crimeans are being held in Russian prisons as part of politically motivated persecution. And this is only those about whom Ukrainian human rights defenders managed to collect information! The actual numbers are much higher! The situation, similar to what happened to Dmytro Shtiblikov, where occupiers deliberately inflict additional punishment after the initial sentence, is not isolated. It's a form of torture. Oleg Prykhodko, a Crimean political prisoner, was sentenced to 4.5 more years of imprisonment by a Russian "court" on November 10, 2023. He was convicted of "justifying terrorism and publicly calling for the resolution of aggressive war" (everyone knows what they mean by this in the aggressor state). In total, he was sentenced to 9.5 years of imprisonment. Currently, Ukrainian political prisoners in Russia have almost no chance of being released alive.

The Ukrainian people are fighting a life-and-death battle against the bloodthirsty aggressor every day. We hear about the deaths and captivity of our brothers-in-arms daily. We remember the Heroes of "Azov". Let's not forget about the Crimean captives. Crimea is Ukraine! We will return, and justice will be served to the oppressors!

Centre for Global Studies Strategy XXI

Based on the materials of the Project «International Sanctions against Russia: Additional Opportunities» with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation.

Sanctions that (do not) work

The Russian economy contracted by 2.1% in 2022, despite international financial organizations forecasting a decline of 8.5%. Such a reduction in the Russian economy is not critical and has little impact on ending Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Russia's economy, in general, maintains its functionality, supported by increased orders in the defense industry, and substantial budget injections at the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023 from the National Welfare Fund. There should be careful work monitoring, enforcing the sanctions regime, and implementing secondary sanctions. Additional opportunities in the sanctions policy include monitoring, coordinating actions between government and civil structures, and strengthening control to replace Russian energy resources and reduce their imports into the G7/EU. Without enhanced enforcement of sanctions compliance, the effectiveness of sanctions will inevitably be undermined, along with trust in the United States/G7/EU.

Do sanctions work?



<https://www.energyintel.com/00000186-0d6c-d963-a396-adfe861b0000>

«Yes, sanctions are working,» wrote the head of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell, on August 26, 2023, in his blog. Since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine, the European Union has imposed 11 packages of sanctions on Russia, including travel bans and asset freezes on over 1,500 individuals and nearly 250 organizations from Russia. Specifically, Borrell noted that automobile production in Russia decreased by 48% compared to the same period last year, other transportation equipment decreased by 13%, and the production of computers, electronics, and optics decreased by 8%. Retail trade in Russia fell by 10%, while wholesale trade fell by 17%. Compared to 2021, in 2022, 58% of the total EU imports from Russia had already been discontinued, with energy

imports decreasing by almost 60%. Iron, steel, precious metals, and timber also saw significant declines. The overall export of EU goods to Russia was 52% lower than the average before the invasion in 2022. At the same time, the export of European dual-use goods and advanced technologies necessary for Russia to produce weapons for the war against Ukraine dropped by 78% in 2022 compared to 2019-2021, emphasized Borrell. «In one year, sanctions have already constrained Moscow's political and economic capabilities, causing a financial squeeze, cutting off the country from key markets, increasing trade costs, and significantly deteriorating Russia's industrial potential,» noted the head of European diplomacy.

However, the Russian economy contracted by a mere 2.1% in 2022, though international financial organizations had forecasted a decline of 8.5%. This contraction is not critical for the Russian economy and has little impact on the end of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Although Western economic experts reasonably note that «cannibalizing the productive economy to finance the war is not a sound economic decision,» comparing it to burning household furniture for heating a house, Putinomics nevertheless operates in a mobilization mode, sustaining the Putinist war budget.

Overall, the Russian economy remains functional, fueled by an increase in defense orders, massive budget injections at the end of 2022 and the be-

ginning of 2023 from the National Welfare Fund. High gas prices due to Gazprom's successful special operation amid an unprecedented price escalation in the EU gas market in 2021-2022 and record earnings from oil and oil product exports are key sources of the Russian budget's sustenance, allowing it to maintain expenditures in 2022. In 2023, despite Western embargoes and price ceilings on oil and oil products, Russia had no significant economic downturn. Furthermore, the economy is adapting by employing many new ways to circumvent sanctions. The IMF's forecast for 2023 is a 1.5% growth, while the Russian Ministry of Finance is confident it will be 2.5%. In fact, it can be argued that the Russian economy in 2023 will «recover» from the slight setback in 2022 caused by Western sanctions.

Sanctions are having an impact on the Russian economy, but they have not yet achieved their desired goal of forcing Russia to end its war in Ukraine...

Assessments of why sanctions are not working can be boiled down to three main reasons. First, high energy prices helped Russia create a kind of security cushion in 2022, which, thanks to accumulated revenues, helped soften the impact of sanctions. Record-breaking revenues from the export of energy resources, the highest in the entire history of the current Russian Federation, are a vivid confirmation of this (see Table 1 below). This is the

perpetual motion machine of Russian aggression against Ukraine and subversive activities within Europe from within Europe.

Secondly, Russia had been preparing for a full-scale invasion since 2014. Following the initial sanctions imposed due to the annexation of Crimea, the occupation of eastern Ukraine, and the downing of flight MH17, Russia strategically focused on protecting itself from future Western sanctions. In 2018, Moscow withdrew some reserves from the U.S. financial system and increased its gold reserves, creating internal interbank transfers and payment mechanisms that effectively handled internal transactions and payments between Russia and its allies. Russia deepened its relations with China, India, and Middle Eastern countries, creating new sales opportunities to compensate for the breakdown of trade with the West. Once sanctions were imposed, Russia resorted to specific macro-economic policies. These policies controlled the movement of capital and finances for companies affected by sanctions, allowing them to weather the short-term consequences of Western sanctions. While these measures won't ensure Russia's long-term economic health, they did mitigate the short-term economic impact of Western sanctions.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the sanctions imposed are insufficient and lack a devastating effect. Unlike the "maximum pressure" economic warfare that the United States waged in recent years

Table 1.

Perpetuum mobile of Russia's aggression, \$ bln/year



Export indicators	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022*	2023**
Crude oil & petroleum products	280,0	282,9	269,7	157,0	119,6	151,6	207,1	188,3	117,7	180,1	~286*	~175
Natural Gas	63,0	67,2	55,2	46,4	31,2	38,7	49,1	49,5	32,0	55,5	~98*	~43
Coal	13,0	11,9	11,8	9,6	9,1	13,9	17,0	15,9	12,4	17,6	~25*	~22
Total energy export	366,0	362,0	336,7	213,0	159,9	204,2	273,2	253,7	166,9	253,2	~409*	~245
Total all exports	524,7	526,4	496,9	345,9	287,5	359,8	452,1	424,6	331,7	493,3	591,5	~460

On the base of Federal Customs Service of Russian Federation, Central Bank of Russia, Rosstat data

* Estimated

* estimated data for 2022 ** forecast for 2023

IN FOCUS: THE SANCTIONS REGIME

against Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela, sanctions against Russia were considerably more limited in scope. Many Russian banks remain connected to the international financial system, providing a financial channel for trade that has not been sanctioned. The West, in general, has refrained from imposing secondary sanctions to prevent countries like China, India, and the UAE from trading with Russia. In implementing successive rounds of sanctions, EU countries were cautious to limit the impact on their own revenues and the global economy as a whole.

Sterilized sanctions have had little impact on the Kremlin's strategic calculations, as evidenced by the 3-year war budgets adopted since 2022. The effect of such sanctions will only be more noticeable in the perspective of at least 3-5 years, and then only if a sanctions compliance regime is introduced and violators are punished for non-compliance.

What's wrong with the sanctions?

The sanctioning coalition has the ability to reduce oil revenues by lowering the price ceiling, but it lacks the political will. The initial ceiling price of \$60 per barrel was expected to be regularly reviewed, but it has remained unchanged throughout 2023. In the United States, which is entering a new election season, there are concerns about destabilizing the oil market.

The transportation of Russian oil and oil products involves a "shadow/phantom fleet." Nearly 500 old tankers with unknown owners and unclear insurers transport Russian oil. In 2023, Russia built its own "ecosystem" of oil trading outside the G7, spending significant financial resources on creating its tanker fleet. According to one estimate, going outside G7 services to find new buyers and contractors cost Russia up to \$35 per barrel of oil. Shadow tankers conceal the location/origin of the oil they transport from Russian ports/re-export to Western countries. The secretive tactics include:

- turning off the ship's automatic identification system transponder;
- ship-to-ship oil transfers in international waters;
- changing the flag or the country of vessel registration;

- complicating the ownership and management structures, which change monthly.

Almost 12% of the global maritime shipping market is in shadow now due to regulatory loopholes. The largest importers of petroleum products from Russian oil are the EU, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan.

Since the end of February 2022, EU countries have gradually imposed sanctions that have directly affected the oil refining industry:

- import and repair of equipment for oil processing in Russia have been banned;
- agreements with major Russian state oil refiners such as Gazpromneft and Rosneft have been restricted;
- the ban on insuring oil and oil product shipments by sea from Russia to third countries came into effect on December 5, 2022.

However, these measures did not lead to a collapse in the Russian oil refining industry.

Global energy companies, such as BP and Total, have stopped accounting for their stakes in Russian companies in their financial reports but are effectively continuing to receive dividends in closed Russian accounts and not renouncing them, citing the threat of punitive sanctions by Russia for breaching contracts.

Gas sector: slow gas phase-out instead of sanctions

Despite the European Commission's desire to reduce its dependence on Russian natural gas supplies and plans to reduce gas demand by 15% in EU countries, there are no mandatory restrictions on importing Russian gas to Europe.

According to the Finnish think tank CREA, from the beginning of the year to August 31, 2023, the EU imported Russian fossil fuels worth €21.3 billion, including pipeline and liquefied gas worth €8.023 billion and oil worth €13.24 billion. This is second only to China, which paid Russia almost €43 billion.

Against the backdrop of a drastic reduction in pipeline gas supplies from Russia, imports of liquefied gas to the EU are dynamically growing.

According to Global Witness, more than half of Russian LNG, valued at 5.3 billion euros at spot prices in January-July 2023, went to EU countries. The homeland of the EU's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, Spain, is the world's second-largest buyer of Russian LNG, accounting for 18% of total sales. Belgium is also among the leaders.

While some EU politicians call on European companies not to buy Russian LNG, in the absence of a ban, its imports are expected to continue to grow compared to 2022. Last year, the import of Russian LNG increased by a record 40% in annual value terms. Among the largest buyers of Russian LNG are Shell and TotalEnergies, which continued to cooperate with Russia even after the invasion.

In addition to the increase in the share of Russian LNG in gas imports to the EU, some European countries' governments try to maintain the share of Russian gas on the markets, despite the demonstrative demonstration of reducing dependence on it. For example, in 2022, Russian gas from Gazprom was supplied to Bulgaria under the guise of Greek companies DEPA and Mytilineos, despite the official announcement that Gazprom had completely stopped supplying natural gas to the Bulgarian state-owned company Bulgargaz due to refusal to pay in rubles.

A similar trend is observed in other countries as well. For instance, Gazprom does not supply natural gas directly to Romania but can do so indirectly through private companies like WIEE Romania and Conef Energy. The former is owned by the German Gazprom Germania (now SEFE), which the German government nationalized in early April 2022. Russian gas can be supplied to Romania through the TurkStream via Bulgaria.

The procurement of Russian gas through intermediaries reflects a "pragmatic" approach by some governments to energy policy, which may contribute to the partial restoration of Gazprom's access to the gas market in these countries in a shadow format.

Sanctions that continue to fund the war

The November 8, 2023, hearings in the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee were revealing. Jeffrey R. Pyatt, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources and former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine (2013-2016), appeared before the senators. His report and the hearings as a whole confirmed that the long-term American sanctions policy is aimed at limiting Russia's potential as an ally of China. In practical terms, the goal of the U.S. in implementing a price cap at \$60 per barrel is not so much to restrict Russia's ability to finance the war budget against Ukraine but rather to limit the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on world oil prices and, consequently, American prices in the context of future presidential elections in the U.S.

Based on various data and estimates of the dynamics of Russia's spending "on the war," annual military spending for 2023 can be estimated at \$145-156 billion. In monthly terms, based on this figure, it can be estimated at \$12-13 billion per month.

Ukraine's military spending (covering the entire defense and security sector), considering additional appropriations allocated by the parliament in 2023, can be estimated at almost \$46 billion annually. This means monthly expenditures averaging around \$3.8 billion, significantly lower than the aggressor's spending. The imbalance is evident and poses a dangerous situation. It is somewhat mitigated by Western assistance from the United States and Europe, but it nevertheless persists. Moreover, it is expected to grow in 2024 since Western aid to Ukraine is already being reduced, while Russia's war budget is increasing.

In the explanatory note to the draft budget of the Russian Federation for 2024-2026, the following expenditure dynamics under the "national defense" category are recorded:

- in 2024: 10.736 trillion rubles, or 6% of GDP;
- in 2025: 8.520 trillion rubles, or 4.5% of GDP;
- in 2026: 7.419 trillion rubles, or 3.7% of GDP.

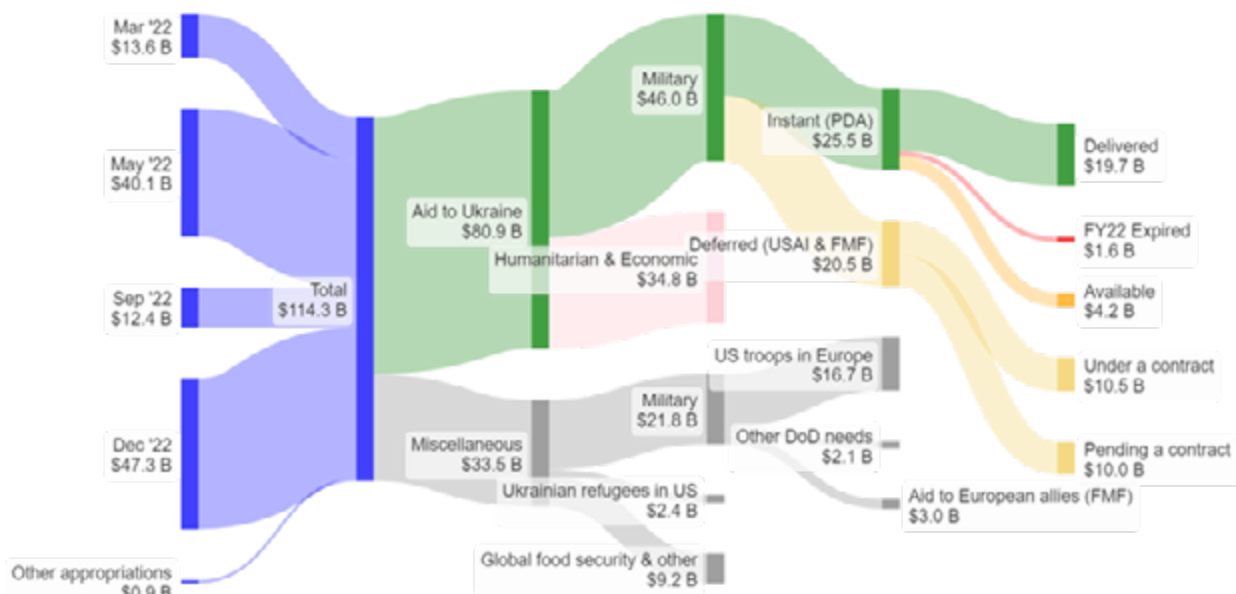
IN FOCUS: THE SANCTIONS REGIME

Considering that in 2023, the formal Russian military budget is about 9.8 trillion rubles or almost 6% of GDP, the peak budget burdens will fall in 2024.

Real volumes of American aid to Ukraine in the face

of Russian aggression are shown in the analysis by Protect Ukraine Now. As we can see from the figures provided, the actual military assistance to Ukraine is significantly less than the total aid amounts often cited by politicians and the media, often interpreted as military aid.

US AID TO UKRAINE. FROM 24 FEBRUARY 2022 TO 14 JANUARY 2024



Source: <https://protectukrainenow.org/en/report>

Seeing a reduction in their export revenues, increased war expenses, and a decline in the value of the ruble, the Kremlin has focused not only on striking the Ukrainian Armed Forces on the battlefield but also on weakening Ukraine by damaging both military and civilian infrastructure. Moscow has placed a particular emphasis on vital energy infrastructure and logistics for the primary export, which has shifted to agriculture following the decline of the metallurgical sector in the eastern region. Obviously, a depleted enemy can be overcome faster and cheaper.

Therefore, if the sanctions regime is not expanded and strengthened by the West, and if oil prices remain roughly at their current levels, Russia is likely to fully adapt to life under sanctions and continue its aggression against Ukraine as early as 2024.

Moreover, Russia's adaptation to sanctions risks diminishing the role of economic sanctions as a political weapon for the United States. Shifting a significant portion of Russian oil exports to the

shadow fleet places hydrocarbon exports beyond the reach of the U.S. and their G7 allies. Despite the undisputed global spread of the U.S. dollar, there is no infrastructure that would "track the money" and use financial sector data to prosecute those who violate export controls and oil price caps. Other countries, including China, are closely watching the mechanisms for enforcing sanctions that the United States is currently using, and the weaknesses of the sanctions enforcement algorithm could be used by China in a future confrontation. Failure to ramp up sanctions enforcement will not only cripple their effectiveness but also erode global confidence in U.S. economic leadership.

What to do?

Some sectors of the Russian energy industry have been undeservedly neglected. This is particularly true of the already mentioned gas sector, as well as the nuclear energy sector. We have only a few examples of limited British sanctions against "Rosatom," Finland's rejection of a Russian-designed

nuclear power project, and the gradual transition of Czech and Slovak nuclear operators to non-Russian nuclear fuel. The United States and France are de facto blocking nuclear sanctions against Russia.

Considering that the export of oil, oil products, and gas (liquefied and pipeline) continues to provide the lion's share of revenue to the Russian budget, necessary measures to restrict or ban imports are required. One proposal is to lower the maximum price of oil. CREA suggests that the maximum price should be within \$25-35 per barrel. Our estimates show a similar range of \$20-30 per barrel.

It is necessary to replace Russian gas on the European market completely. A drastic reduction in pipeline gas import has already occurred, although it was recently considered impossible. Appropriate decisions at the EU level are needed to stop the import of Russian LNG, requiring a comprehensive package of gas sanctions.

LNG has become a key element of European energy security. Today, Russian LNG shipments cannot be considered a reliable component of gas supply security in the EU. Russian LNG flows are increasingly significant in its overall imports to the EU. The EU should be prepared for the possibility that Russia may unilaterally block LNG exports to the EU and redirect them to Asian markets.

The EU's goal of phasing out Russian fossil fuels by 2027 means that most LNG contracts must be terminated early.

Another factor of the sanction policy that can effectively influence the aggressor is civil society in European and democratic countries in general. It has powerful tools of influence within its own countries. These tools should be maximally applied, ensuring public support for rejecting Russian fossil fuels and supporting joint actions to restore Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

It is also necessary to cease the participation of Russian representatives in international energy organizations, conferences, and events. Members of international organizations can already choose to refrain from participating in events under Russian auspices, withhold funding for activities benefiting Russia, and so forth.

In practice, Russia has worked out and gradually implemented various schemes to bypass sanctions imposed by the G7 and the EU in 2022 and 2023, using countries that ignore Western sanctions. Violations of sanctions are carried out using quasi-legal mechanisms that exploit the "loopholes" in sanction regimes and allow them to avoid significant penalties or substantial fines.

Careful control and monitoring of the sanction regime and the introduction of a secondary sanction regime are needed. Additional opportunities in sanction policy include monitoring, coordinating actions between governmental and civil structures, strengthening control to replace Russian energy carriers, and eliminating their imports to the G7/EU. Companies producing equipment for the extraction of fossil energy resources must be in the constant focus of sanctions policy, which must have a punitive dimension.

The current system of international maritime control over the movement of vessels does not provide for serious penalties for disabling the ship's automatic identification system beyond territorial waters, which is exploited by carriers transporting Russian oil and petroleum products.

A tanker with its AIS transponder turned off becomes invisible to international monitoring networks of vessel movements in the World Ocean. However, as evidenced by the case of post-factum detection of vessels with their transponders turned off after the explosion of the "Nord Stream-1; 2" gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea on September 26, 2022, such monitoring is technically possible using satellites and aerial observation.

Considering that NATO forces are constantly monitoring Russian maritime activity in the Baltic Sea, North Sea, Black Sea, and Aegean Sea, the European Commission and the Ukrainian government may consider reaching out to the United States, the United Kingdom, and NATO regarding the identification of tankers with disabled transponders using satellite monitoring and reconnaissance aircraft, as well as reconnaissance UAVs in the waters of these seas where there is intensive traffic of tankers carrying Russian oil. Based on this information, lists of vessels violating the oil embargo can be compiled.

NATO operates a Boeing E-3A Airborne Warning & Control System (AWACS) aircraft fleet. There are 14 AWACS aircraft stationed at the NATO airbase in Geilenkirchen, Germany. They officially participate in monitoring activities in the Black Sea following Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022. Additionally, the United States has bases for reconnaissance UAVs in Italy (Sigonella) and Romania (Câmpia Turzii), which monitor the airspace and maritime conditions in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean.

As part of the sanctions group led by MacFola-Yermak, it would be advisable to initiate an additional punitive measure, such as the detention of embargo-violating tankers until the war's end when they enter the ports of G7/EU/Norway countries.

An effective measure would be to prohibit the passage of empty tankers through the Baltic and Black Sea straits for loading with oil and oil products in Russian ports. However, this would require the use of NATO forces, but the Alliance leaders lack the political will for such action. The fear of the United States, Turkey, and NATO to introduce military-naval escorts for vessels carrying Ukrainian grain in the Black Sea after Russia refused to extend the grain agreement in July 2023 is illustrative.

It is noteworthy that the European Parliament adopted a special resolution on November 9, 2023, P9_TA(2023)0397, titled "Effectiveness of the EU sanctions on Russia," which highlights that "Rosatom" and the Russian nuclear industry are not included in the sanctions packages, even though "Rosatom," through its subsidiary companies, supplies critical technologies and materials for the Russian defense industry.

The nuclear sphere should not be exempt from the sanctions regime in the EU and the USA, as Russia has already crossed a red line and has started using civilian nuclear energy as a weapon.

In light of this, it is advisable and necessary to:

- Launch an initiative by Ukraine and a group of EU member countries to freeze

all their projects involving "Rosatom" or its affiliated companies or joint ventures until the complete cessation of Russian aggression and the withdrawal of occupation forces from the territory of Ukraine.

- The Ukrainian government should appeal to the European Commission and the governments of EU member countries for the swift transition of energy units with Soviet-designed VVER reactors to non-Russian fuel (only 18 out of 103 nuclear energy units in the EU depend on Russian fuel supplies, producing no more than 10% of the total nuclear energy in the EU).
- Vessels of the subsidiary company of "Rosatom" – "Atomflot," both specialized icebreakers and container ships, as well as vessels of the auxiliary technical fleet, should be banned from entering ports in Europe, North America, and G7 countries, as well as from being serviced or repaired. "Atomflot" should not receive any equipment from European or American companies.

The EU should make the provision of funds from EU to Hungary conditional on the termination of the project to build two power units at the Paks nuclear power plant in Hungary, where the contractor, "Rosatom", was selected in circumvention of the EU's mandatory tendering procedure. This would achieve two goals simultaneously: dealing a significant blow to "Rosatom" and taking measures to counter the Kremlin's expansion in the heart of Europe, specifically targeting the corrupt and anti-European regime of Orban.

In conclusion, it should be noted that Western sanctions against Russia are working in a comfortable mode for the Western countries themselves, but not for the purpose of stopping Russia's aggression against Ukraine and establishing peace on the eastern periphery of the EU and the eastern flank of NATO. Thus, the West continues to fatten the dragon of war...

Olena Snigyr,

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Russian Strategic Narratives 2022-2023

Russia can win this war only if it wins the competition to establish a dominant discourse. Therefore, the furnaces of Russian propaganda and disinformation work non-stop. At the same time, the source of narratives for agents of Russian propaganda should be sought at the highest level of the Russian

government – where strategic narratives are invented and projected.



Strategic narratives are different from propaganda. According to Lawrence Friedman, narratives are strategic "because they do not arise spontaneously, but are deliberately constructed or reinforced on the basis of ideas and opinions that are already relevant." The author defines strategic

narratives as narratives that show how the elite of one or another country sees this world, what it really wants and what it tries to convince its society and other states and nations. Russian strategic narratives can help define Russia's short-term and long-term political goals. and cornerstone ideas shaping the behavior of Russian society and the state.

The failures of the Russian military blitzkrieg plan heightened official Russian rhetoric to such an extent that narratives surfaced clearly, and devoid of ambiguity. This condition helped to identify the Russian strategic narratives that have been evolving since the outset of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory on February 24, 2022, and integrate these narratives into a cohesive framework that can elucidate the primary objectives of the Russian government, particularly in the realm of international politics.

This article is based on research, which is limited to a specific time frame (February 21, 2022 – March 2023) and is based on the analysis of a total of 63 texts (see Appendix 1) by President

V. Putin, Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Lavrov and three Russian political scientists – members of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC): D. Trenin, S. Karaganov and A. Kortunova.

Russian strategic narratives can be categorized according to Miskimmon's classification of strategic narratives into three levels: International System Narratives (describing how the world is structured, who the major players are, and how it operates), National Narratives (outlining a state or nation's story, values, and goals), and Issue Narratives (explaining the necessity and desirability of a policy, along with its successful implementation) (Miskimmon et al. 2013, 7).

IN FOCUS: RUSSIAN STRATEGIC NARRATIVES

Strategic Narratives						
	International System Narratives		National Narratives (outline of the history of the state or nation, values and purposes)		Issue Narratives (explaining the necessity and desirability of the policy along with its necessary implementation)	
	The international order is changing, and the West (the liberal world) is trying to preserve its hegemony		Russia is a sovereign, self-sustained, original civilization, based on traditional values, a center of Russian World / a leader of regional integration (sphere of influence, Greater Eurasia)		The new world order requires conceptual, systemic and structural changes	
I-level Sub-narratives	Subjection of Europe (European states)	Conflict of values	Russia is the leader of the illiberal world		Multipolarity / Regionalism based on spheres of "legitimate interests"	Rights of illiberal regimes / Supremacy of the state sovereignty over human rights
	Russia is a victim of the West					
II-level Sub-narratives	Denial of sovereignty and identity of Ukraine	Protection of people who belong to Russian World	War with heirs of Nazis			

Thus, the framework of main Russian strategic narratives are: the narrative of the international system – *“The international order is changing, and the West (the liberal world) is trying to preserve its hegemony,”* national narrative – *“Russia is a sovereign and self-sufficient original civilization based on traditional values, the center of the “Russian World” / the leader of regional integration (Greater Eurasia),”* issue narrative – *“The new world order requires conceptual, systemic and structural changes.”*

Russian strategic narratives contain sub-narratives that reveal the content of the main narrative. The main subnarratives within the framework of the Russian international system narrative are:

- *Denial of sovereignty of Europe (European states)*
- *Conflict of values*
- *Russia is the leader of illiberal world*
- *Russia is a victim of the West*

Quantitatively, the sub-narrative *“Russia as a victim of the West”* stands out as hegemonic among all other narratives. It receives the most extensive coverage and is explored in great detail. This sub-narrative forms the foundational framework for Russia's narrative concerning the war with Ukraine.

The Strategic National Narrative, *“Russia is a sovereign and self-sustained, original civilization, based on traditional values, a center of Russian World / leader of regional integration (Greater Eurasia),”* is the least represented in the analyzed texts. It is complemented by the sub-narrative *“Russia is the leader of illiberal world,”* which also belongs to the International System Narratives.

The Strategic Issue Narrative, *“The new world order requires conceptual, systemic and structural changes,”* is conveyed through the following sub-narratives:

- *Multipolarity / Regionalism*
- *Rights of illiberal regimes / Supremacy of state sovereignty over human rights*
- *A new system of international institutions and a new international financial system based on national currencies*

The context of the war significantly impacted the dominance of the sub-narrative “Russia is a victim of the West” within the system of Russian strategic narratives today. It is an integral part of the Russian International System Strategic Narrative, *“The international order is changing, and the West (the liberal world) is trying to preserve its hegemony,”* which interprets contemporary international

developments as a shift from a unipolar world, dominated by the West, to an emerging multipolar order that the West “is attempting to obstruct”. These changes are presented in Russian narratives as inevitable, and various conflicts, including Russia's war with Ukraine, are seen as byproducts and consequences of the transformation of the international system.

According to the Russian International System Narrative, the current unipolar world order embodies an unfair system of material goods distribution, stemming from modern Western neocolonialism and a continuation of the colonial policies of Western nations from previous centuries. This narrative asserts that the unjust system is upheld by a set of international legal norms imposed by the West and is enforced through existing international financial institutions.

“The West is ready to cross every line to preserve the neo-colonial system which allows it to live off the world, to plunder it thanks to the domination of the dollar and technology, to collect an actual tribute from humanity, to extract its primary source of unearned prosperity, the rent paid to the hegemon. The preservation of this annuity is their main, real and absolutely self-serving motivation. This is why total de-sovereignisation is in their interest.” (Putin 2022, September 30)

According to the Russian narrative, the ultimate objective of the Western powers is to establish complete dominion over the world and supplant the existing “UN-based” system of international relations and international law with a “rule-based order.” President Putin underscores that Russia acknowledges only one guiding principle in international affairs – international public law.

“There is only one rule that must be observed, and that is public international law. These are agreements between countries that are some kind of compromise and which are signed by the respective states. And if someone came up with these rules for themselves in order to impose them on other countries, then they will never work...” (Putin 2022, June 17)

Within the Russian narrative, it is asserted that genuine sovereignty within the collective West is

concentrated solely in the United States. Consequently, the liberal world order is fundamentally framed as “the American liberal world order.”

“Under the guise of the so-called rule-based order and other dubious concepts, they are trying to control and direct global processes at their own discretion, they are pursuing a course towards creating closed blocs and coalitions that make decisions that are beneficial only to one country – the United States of America.” (Putin V. Address to the participants of the X Petersburg International Legal Forum. June 30, 2022)

Russian authorities claim that the West, in its pursuit of global dominance, is using the framework of the liberal-democratic order to hold back the progress of “other civilizations” while advancing its own economic interests. This perspective assumes that the West shows a lack of tolerance for the sovereignty of other nations and peoples, it classifies the world into “authoritarian” and “democratic” regimes, imposing a special form of liberal democracy, denying other states the autonomy to make their own choices. The Russian authorities call this imposition of liberal values a manifestation of “Western self-confidence” that is “characterized by racist and neo-colonial foundations.”

The Russian authorities claim that the West, seeking to maintain its influence and support the world liberal order, uses a number of tools, including the introduction of sanctions, destabilization of international markets and the world financial system, instigation of color revolutions, and the organization of coups d'état, etc.

The Russian narratives depict liberal democratic values, coupled with the West's technological advantage, and the mechanisms of “global interdependence,” such as standardization and unification, as instruments employed by the West to assert control over the rest of the world. These narratives accentuate the presence of double standards within the West. They suggest that while the West proclaims universal rules for all, it simultaneously nullifies favorable globalization rules for countries that reap benefits from globalization. Furthermore, the West employs sanctions as a means of deterrence against those

who oppose Western dominance. This approach is framed as a violation of the fundamental principles of a market economy. As illustrative examples, the Russian narratives point to the policies of Western countries concerning Serbia and Kosovo, Iraq, and Libya.

The subnarrative of "*The Conflict of Values*" within the Russian narrative characterizes the conflict between Russia and the West as having an irreconcilable and existential nature.

In this narrative, Western liberal values are pitted against traditional (illiberal) values, which, according to Laruelle, have become the cornerstone of Russia's strategic narrative (Laruelle 2021). Laruelle identifies the value system promoted by Russia as conservative, noting that "The meaning of this conservatism remains blurry not only by default but by design."

Russian authorities and ideologues define Russian traditional values as spiritual and moral values that encompass traditional Christian values and the cultural heritage of Russian society. However, it's important to note that the term "conservative" is not explicitly used in the texts of Russian officials and political scientists. Instead, the term "traditional" is widely employed. This choice of terminology may emphasize the Russian political elite's alignment with the ideas of the Traditionalist or Perennialist School. It could also be an effort to make the term "traditional values" more accessible and adaptable for a broader audience of international actors. Consequently, this term doesn't categorize values as part of an ideology but rather indicates their belonging to a particular society.

According to the Russian narrative, there exists a war of values between the liberal-democratic West and traditional societies, where both parties aim to expand their sphere of influence while limiting the influence of the other. This narrative insists that liberal and traditional values are fundamentally incompatible. It argues that liberal democratic values, through the Western concept of human rights and freedoms, erode societies with traditional values and destabilize their state systems.

"...the dictatorship of the Western elites targets all societies, including the citizens of Western countries themselves. This is a

challenge to all. This complete renunciation of what it means to be human, the overthrow of faith and traditional values, and the suppression of freedom are coming to resemble a "religion in reverse" – pure Satanism." (Putin V. Signing of agreements on the accession of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, Zaporozhye and Kherson Oblasts to Russia. September 30, 2022)

Furthermore, it is asserted that the Western elite perceives Russian traditional values as a threat to its interests, leading to sanctions against Russian media and cultural figures. Simultaneously, Russian authorities argue that Western liberal values serve as a mere instrument to achieve the "true goal of the West": the imposition of Western standards and consumer stereotypes to create favorable market conditions for Western companies. Globalization, underpinned by liberal values, is depicted as a process of "homogenization," primarily centered on protecting the rights of women and sexual minorities. The West's refusal to recognize the right of authoritarian and dictatorial regimes to restrict the rights and freedoms of their citizens is interpreted by the Russian narrative as a policy of "homogenization and denial of differences."

The Russian narrative defines traditional or illiberal values as a reflection of the traditions and cultural-historical experience of individual peoples and proposes that the protection of these values (or the protection of regimes that claim commitment to these values) is carried out through the principle of sovereignty. *Thus, Russia aims to expand the concept of sovereignty to guarantee the equality and inviolability of political regimes, regardless of the nature of their domestic and foreign policies. In this case, the principle of protection of human rights loses its universal character; instead, the principle of sovereignty (inviolability) of political regimes acquires universality.* This is justified as the "principle of democracy" in international relations, based on the principle of sovereign equality of states enshrined in the UN Charter.

The Russian interpretation of the concept of "democracy" plays a crucial role in its strategic narratives. It conceives democracy as the rule of the people (people's governance or democracy with specific characteristics), but without key elements such as human rights and freedoms, democratic

institutions, and procedures. According to the Russian narrative, alongside liberal democracy there are alternative forms of popular government that the West does not recognize and tries to restrain states that have chosen these alternative socio-political systems, including autocracy. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov defines an autocracy as a centralized state with a strong vertical structure capable of making quick and effective decisions, which is a significant advantage within the expected "horizon."

Thus, the Russian view of the conflict of values considers it as the development of the struggle of societies with traditional values against the hegemony of liberalism or the anti-colonial liberation movement against the unipolar hegemony of the USA. Russia is presented as the leading power in this "anti-colonial movement".

The subnarrative "*Russia is the leader of illiberal world*" plays a dual role within both international system and national narratives. It portrays the challenge posed by the West and its dominance as a mission for Russia – to safeguard its interests and establish a "just world order". The Russian authorities identify the following as Russian national interests: preserving genuine strategic sovereignty (economic, technological, etc.), conducting international transactions in rubles, creating a comprehensive European security system based on consensus with Russia's right to veto, establishing a new international order organized into regional zones of responsibility for major powers, developing Russian society within the framework of its traditional values, and rebuilding the system of international law and international institutions based on the equality of political regimes regardless of their human rights records (sovereign equality of states).

The Russian government actively seeks allies in its "crusade against Western hegemony" and the reconfiguration of the international order to align with its priorities. It endeavors to secure the support of as many states as possible, particularly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Russia appeals to these countries' historical memories of colonialism, asserting that the West, through its neo-colonial policies, seeks to hinder their development today.

Russian narratives provide arguments that explain the complex socio-economic situations in Global South countries by attributing them to the influence of the unfair global economic order imposed by the West and the unjust modern system of international mechanisms and institutions. These narratives underscore that the West has itself triggered global food crises (due to US macroeconomic policies and anti-Russian sanctions) and energy crises (due to restrictions on oil and gas prices) and does not address the issues of inequality and injustice, which originate from its policies.

Another argument advanced by Russia to convince potential allies of its position is the assertion that most Global South countries do not share the liberal democratic values of the West but instead align with Russia's understanding of traditional values, similar to those upheld by the Russian Federation.

In this context, Russian authorities strategically employ the narrative of a conflict of values as a means of discourse power to garner support from various actors, including states and population groups in other countries. They consistently seek to win the support of citizens in European countries by highlighting that Russia is unable to forge a partnership with a Europe grounded in liberal-democratic values. Instead, they emphasize the potential for partnership with a Europe rooted in traditional Christian values, pointing to Hungary under the leadership of Viktor Orban as an illustrative example. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov emphasizes that Russia maintains strong ties with European communities that share its values and its interpretation of sovereignty principles.

The Russian authorities, in an attempt to create the perception of extensive international support, assert that African, Latin American and Asian states (so called Global South) are keen on dismantling the unipolar system dominated by the West and are backing Russia in its confrontation with the West. However, according to Russian narrative those states often find it challenging to openly express their stance due to pressure from the United States and its allies. *The Russian leadership is confident that Global South nations share Russia's objectives, which include advocating for unrestricted*

access to technologies, establishing alternative mechanisms for international transactions, and adopting national currencies in international settlements. Russia identifies the BRICS countries as its primary partners within the Global South.

In contrast to the Global South countries, which, according to the Russian narrative, aim to enhance their sovereignty and uphold traditional values and diversity, the Russian authorities contend that European nations are subservient to the USA. This perspective portrays European countries as lacking sovereignty and agency due to their alignment with the United States.

“The European Union has finally lost its political sovereignty, and its bureaucratic elites are dancing to someone else's tune, accepting everything they are told from above, causing harm to their own population and their own economy, their own business.”

“Europe is “playing” together with the US. The EU has almost no independence left – Washington has crushed Brussels under itself. There are almost no independent voices left in the European Union. French President E. Macron occasionally, but less and less often, tries to recall the “strategic autonomy” of the EU. No one will allow them to create any kind of autonomy, especially a strategic one” (Interview of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation S. V. Lavrov for the film “Nazism Under Investigation”, Moscow, November 26, 2022).

The sub-narrative about non-independence and Europe's subjection to the USA emphasizes Russia's role as the leader of the resistance movement against American dominance and as the head of the “sovereignty movement.” The denial of sovereignty and independence to European countries also aligns with the narrative of denying the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, which the Russian authorities have used and continue to use to legitimize their aggression against Ukraine. Thus, the concept of sovereignty in the Russian narrative is closely linked to the legitimacy of states. *By denying the sovereignty of a particular state, the Russian government essentially questions that country's legitimacy,*

thereby providing ample justification for its actions.

To support their arguments for non-independence and Europe's subjection to the USA, the Russian authorities point out Europe's reliance on the USA for military security and the EU's inability to develop its own military capabilities, often referred to as “strategic autonomy.” By highlighting Europe's dependence on the USA for security, the Russian authorities explain European countries' positions on cooperation with Russia in the security realm. For instance, they cite Europe's rejection of Russia's proposals for a new Treaty on European Security in 2009 and 2021. Additional arguments put forth to support the idea of the EU's subjugation include the EU's perceived failure as a “guarantor of the agreements signed in 2014 between the President of Ukraine and the opposition, as well as the Minsk agreements of 2015.” *The same failure is also applied to the EU's handling of the agreement on the creation of the Community of Serbian municipalities in Kosovo.*

The Russian authorities further claim that the United States is exploiting the Russian-Ukrainian war as a means to compel the European Union to fully relinquish its reliance on affordable Russian energy sources. According to this narrative, such a move “should lead to the deindustrialization of Europe, even greater dependence on the US, and the eventual severing of all ties with Russia.” As part of this alleged strategy, the Russian narrative attributes the explosions on the “Nord Stream” pipelines to the interests of the “direct beneficiaries” of the destruction of this gas pipeline, namely the USA, Poland, and Ukraine.

“The United States, pushing through the EU's complete rejection of Russian energy carriers and other resources, is practically leading to the de-industrialization of Europe, to completely taking over the European market – they understand everything, these European elites, they understand everything, but they prefer to serve other people's interests. This is no longer servility, but a direct betrayal of their peoples.” (Putin V. Signing of agreements on the accession of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, Zaporozhye and Kherson regions to Russia. September 30, 2022)

Russian authorities argue that the European Union is genuinely interested in facilitating negotiations between Ukraine and Russia, aiming for a ceasefire and cooperation with Russia to "build a security architecture." They contend that it is Washington and London that are constraining the European Union and Ukraine from pursuing these measures. The Russian narrative asserts that it is solely the influence of the United States that compels Europeans to declare their objective of aiding Ukraine in defeating Russia on the battlefield.

By negating Europe's agency and portraying it as a victim of the United States' dominance, the Russian narrative insists that European countries still aspire to emancipate themselves from American tutelage and influence, aspiring to join the Greater Eurasia project— "a unified geopolitical space stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok in all aspects."

"I spoke in my speech about Eurasia as a whole, including the European part. Do you know what is very important? It is very important that this European part regains its legal personality.

How to talk with this or that partner if it does not decide anything and on every occasion it has to call the Washington "regional committee" and ask what can be done and what cannot Therefore, of course, it is necessary to create this single space in all senses from Lisbon to Vladivostok. But this can only be done with those who have the right to speak...

Helmut Kohl once told me that the United States would someday take care of their own affairs, including in Latin America. Asia would develop powerfully in its own way. If European civilization wants to be preserved as some kind of world center, then, of course, you need to be with Russia. (V. Putin's speech at the meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club on October 27, 2022)

The Russian authorities position themselves as leaders opposing Western dominance and insist that the West is attempting to restrain, weaken, and stifle Russia's development opportunities. The Russian explanation for the war with Ukraine is articulated in the sub-narrative "Russia is a victim of the West." comprising three second-level sub-

narratives: "War with heirs of Nazis." "Denial of sovereignty and identity of Ukraine." and "Protection of people who belong to the Russian World."

The Russian authorities assert that the West has long pursued an anti-Russian policy, exemplified by supporting "terrorists" in the North Caucasus, transforming Ukraine into an anti-Russia entity, fostering anti-Russian sentiments in Moldova and Georgia, and attempting to undermine Russia's relations with other Global South countries. They cite the constant expansion of NATO, efforts to draw Ukraine into NATO, and the disregard of Russian demands in European security matters as evidence of this anti-Russian policy. The United States, Great Britain, and most Central European countries (except Hungary) are portrayed as leaders among Russia's adversaries.

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According to the Russian narrative, the main dimension of the confrontation between Russia and the West is the value dimension, which was discussed in more detail above. At the same time, *the Russian authorities do not limit the narrative of value confrontation with the West to the competition of liberal and traditional values, but combine it with the construct of historical memory about the Great Victory of the Russian (Soviet) people over Nazism in the Second World War (Great Patriotic War).*

The second-level sub-narrative regarding the "War with the heirs of the Nazis" attributes to Western powers, as well as the Ukrainian authorities, an association with neo-Nazism. While Ukrainians are accused of collaboration with the Third Reich, the Russian arguments about the revival of European

neo-Nazism consist in condemning the policy of historical memory of Poland and the Baltic countries; comparing the "politics of Russophobia" in Europe with the policy of the German Nazis towards other nationalities; false information and manipulation regarding the position of European states during the Second World War.

"Under German Nazism, A. Hitler united most of the countries of Europe under his flag in order to attack and destroy the Soviet Union. Now approximately the same group of countries, with some variations, supports V.A. Zelensky" (Lavrov S. Interview with the "60 Minutes" program, October 11, 2022)

The purposeful bad influence of the West on Ukraine with the aim of planting neo-Nazism in Ukraine and turning it into an instrument of war with Russia (against Russia) explains the political development of Ukrainian society over the past 30 years. The Russian authorities insist that Ukraine is under complete Western governance, justifying its own intervention to protect individuals whom it considers part of the "Russian World," a cultural and ideological space shared with Russia. This was cited as the rationale behind Russia's occupation of part of Ukrainian territory in 2014. The narrative also suggests that Russia launched a "preemptive strike" in 2022 due to the constant perceived threat from Ukraine and the West, drawing parallels with the unexpected attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union in June 1941.

Therefore, the Russian narrative frames *the conflict with Ukraine solely as a part of the broader transformation of the global world order*, asserting that the "collective West, led by the USA," is waging a war against Russia on Ukrainian territory. Ukrainian people are depicted as part of the "Russian world" and as victims of Western influence. Russia's mission is portrayed as one of "liberating Ukrainians" from Western (USA) control.

A significant element of the sub-narrative "Russia is a victim of the West" is the second-level sub-narrative, *"The denial of the identity and sovereignty of Ukraine."* According to this narrative, the Ukrainian people lack a distinct identity that

separates them from the Russian people, along with their own state tradition, history, or culture. Even the Ukrainian language is deemed artificial. The idea of Ukrainian identity and an independent state is portrayed as an anti-Russian project of the West that lacks legitimacy. By denying Ukraine's sovereignty, the Russian government effectively denies its legitimacy and justifies any actions it takes as the protection of people affiliated with the "Russian World."

The concept of the "Russian World" encompasses the entire Ukrainian population, categorizing them as part of the Russian people and "compatriots." The definition of the concept of "compatriots" and the "policy of the Russian Federation towards compatriots" is outlined in the Federal Law titled "On the State Policy of the Russian Federation towards Compatriots Abroad," in its 2010 edition. According to this law, individuals who were born in the USSR and their descendants, as well as the descendants of those born on the territory of the Russian state, which effectively includes the Russian Empire, are categorized as "compatriots." The law grants the Russian Federation the authority to protect the rights of these individuals. (Article 1, Clause 3 of the Federal Law №99-Φ3, (1999).

Therefore, in the context of the war with Ukraine, the Russian narrative explains Russia's actions as measures taken to protect the people who belong to the "Russian world" and were allegedly discriminated against and are being discriminated against by Kyiv on linguistic, cultural and religious grounds. A separate important element to be protected by Russia is the historical memory of compatriots about the events of the Second World War, including historical narratives in education and public commemorative practices. Under the influence of the war that Russia is waging against Ukraine, this narrative is supplemented with theses about the need to protect against the war "crimes" of the Kyiv authorities against the residents of Donbas and against possible military aggression of Kyiv against Crimea. An additional argument regarding the need for Russian intervention on the territory of Ukraine and the attempt to annex Ukrainian territories is also the fact that the population of Ukraine is divided by values and therefore cannot live in one state.

The Russian narrative about protecting compatriots is intertwined with Russia's interpretation of the right to self-determination. The Russian government claims that its actions are aimed at upholding justice by ensuring the population of Ukraine's right to freely determine its own future, exercising the right to self-determination. In justifying its actions, Russia refers not only to domestic Russian norms but also to Article 51 of the UN Charter (the right to self-defense) and to provisions outlining the right of peoples to self-determination:

“The question of the relationship between the right to self-determination and the principle of territorial integrity, after many years of debate, was resolved in the 1970 UN Declaration on Principles of International Law. It confirms the inviolability of the territorial integrity or political unity of states, provided that they have governments representing all the people living in a given territory. We know what severe oppression the Kiev regime subjected the Russian and Russian-speaking population to after the 2014 coup. It is obvious that the authorities in Kiev do not represent the residents of the Donbass, Zaporozhye and Kherson regions. The question of the conformity of referendums with the Constitution and the legislation of Ukraine does not affect their qualification under international law. Recall the decision of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo in 2010. According to it, when exercising the right to self-determination, a particular territory is not obliged to apply for permission to declare its sovereignty to the central authorities of the country. Thus, the precedent was set.” (Lavrov S., Interview with the newspaper "Arguments and facts", October 8, 2022))

The system of Russian national strategic narratives also encompasses a narrative *“Russia is a sovereign, self-sustained, original civilization, based on traditional values, a center of Russian World / a leader of regional integration (sphere of influence, Greater Eurasia)”*.

This modern interpretation of the "Russian idea" emphasizes that Russia is a civilized state with

a European heritage, encompassing elements of Byzantine Christianity, political culture, and a Slavic written and linguistic heritage. While acknowledging the colonial aspects of Russia's historical past, the Russian narrative also affirms and justifies policies of coercion and assimilation against various peoples and ethnic groups in Eurasia as essential for preserving the Russian state today (Trenin, 2022). While the core of Russian civilization is often associated with the Russian ethnos, it's important to note that contemporary belonging to Russian civilization is defined not solely by ethnic characteristics but also by shared values. Within this value framework, Russians are expected to serve the state based on principles of self-denial. "The Russian idea" is conceptualized as "the Russian Truth," representing the foundational worldview and a synthesis of fundamental principles, rooted in the imperative of justice and equality. In the Russian worldview, the concept of "justice" is regarded as superior to the concept of legality, and it is considered the foundation that lends legitimacy to any actions undertaken by the state (Trenin, 2022c). It is not planned to make the Russian idea universal, but it is assumed that it will be attractive to all people belonging to the Russian civilization/"Russian World".

While some Russian political scientists may suggest an isolationist approach in Russia's global positioning, (Karaganov, 2023a) a comprehensive analysis of the national strategic narrative, along with narratives at the international and issue levels, suggests that a desire for expansion and influence on the global stage persists. The declared emphasis on internal state and societal reform, as well as the protection and promotion of the principle of sovereignty in international politics, can be viewed as necessary measures aimed at restoring resources lost during the war. These measures often include the reorganization of society with the goal of mobilizing it for military purposes and the removal of external restrictions, such as sanctions.

The Russian national strategic narrative encompasses both internal and external dimensions. The internal dimension focuses on the restructuring of society and the state to achieve self-sufficiency and maximum independence from the outside world. This includes a push for the militarization of the Russian economy,

seen as necessary for survival in an increasingly chaotic global environment. The strategy also involves a continued "turn to the East," which should evolve into a more pronounced "turn to Siberia," while the western regions of Russia are considered less important and are viewed as a buffer zone. In terms of foreign policy, there is a call for a more "isolationist" stance with selective cooperation. Russia seeks to collaborate primarily with international actors that support its interests, particularly countries in the Global South or the so-called World Majority. The overarching goal is for Eurasian Russia to shed Western influences, especially Western values and ideas. (Karaganov, 2023a).

The external dimension of this narrative posits that Russia should emerge as the focal point of Eurasian regional integration in a prospective world divided into spheres of influence among major global players. The concept of Eurasianism is by no means novel, as it holds deep historical roots within Russian political thought. Presently, Russian political scholars are endeavoring to establish it as the cornerstone of a revitalized Russian state ideology. Advocates of the Greater Eurasia concept delineate it as an autonomous region where the preponderance of the global populace is concentrated, adhering to traditional values while espousing a strong aversion to liberalism. Integration within Greater Eurasia is envisaged upon the foundations of extant projects and frameworks, supplemented by the implementation of novel intergovernmental financial mechanisms and institutions designed as alternatives to their Western counterparts. It is imperative to underscore that Russian authorities attach great significance to the notion of Greater Eurasia encompassing Europe. This facet has been repeatedly underscored in official statements, with an emphatic insistence that such inclusion can only materialize if Europe attains "full sovereignty." This would, in effect, necessitate a severance of allied relations with the United States.

"A natural part of Greater Eurasia could be its western tip – Europe. But many of its leaders are hampered by the conviction that Europeans are better than others, that it is not appropriate for them to participate in some undertakings on an equal footing with the rest. Behind such arrogance, they somehow

do not notice that they themselves have already become someone else's periphery, have essentially turned into vassals – often without the right to vote." (V. Putin's speech at the meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club on October 27, 2022.)

"61. The realization by the states of Europe of the non-alternative nature of peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial equal cooperation with Russia, the increase in the level of their foreign policy independence and the transition to a policy of good neighborliness with the Russian Federation will have a positive impact on the security and well-being of the European region, and will help the European states to take their rightful place in the Greater Eurasian Partnership and the multipolar world." (Foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation, March 31, 2023)

The vision of the world order that Russia aspires to and seeks to promote to other countries is encapsulated within the Strategic Issue Narrative titled "The new world order requires conceptual, systemic and structural changes." This narrative comprises three sub-narratives that effectively outline Russia's foreign policy objectives, which have been articulated by Russian authorities since at least 2007. The contemporary interpretation includes a recognition of a values-based conflict and the absence of potential compromise with the liberal-democratic elites of the West.

The Russian strategic issue narrative is notably characterized by its vague formulation. While it asserts that existing international processes and institutions are inherently unfair and advocates for their elimination and replacement, it does not offer a clear description of the new processes and institutions that should replace them. Instead, it articulates guiding principles such as "justice," "sovereign equality," "balance of interests," "respect for all," and "inclusiveness," among others.

The Russian narrative of the new multipolar order envisions a world divided into zones of responsibility and special interests of major global powers (regional leaders). This concept, referred to as **regionalization**, stands in contrast to globalization.

According to this narrative, regionalization entails the creation of large integration blocs around regional leaders, who represent new and emerging centers of power. Within these blocs, Russia proposes the development of alternative international instruments and institutions to replace existing ones. The Russian authorities argue that this structure of international relations will afford greater sovereignty to international actors, better serve their interests, and result in a more balanced international order. However, the Russian narrative introduces a degree of ambiguity and contradiction by combining the concept of sovereignty with the idea of dividing the world into areas of responsibility and special interests of Great Powers, which may entail restrictions on the sovereignty of smaller states. To address this gap, Russian authorities suggest that states unable to exercise full sovereignty within these limits should interpret sovereignty as an opportunity to shape their socio-political systems in accordance with their own traditional values.

The Russian narrative posits that the foundation of the new world order should rest upon a "*balance of interests*," which will be regulated by the balance of power rather than existing international legal norms. Additionally, it emphasizes the principle of *democratization of international relations*, which entails the equality of political regimes, regardless of their adherence to human rights. As an exemplar of an international institution that upholds the sovereignty of all regimes, regardless of their form of government (besides the UN), the Russian authorities frequently cite the Non-Aligned Movement.

"...there are also represented what are called democracies, and electoral autocracies, monarchies and many other forms of government, each of which, in accordance with the UN Charter, has sovereign equality..." (S. Lavrov, Interview with Zvezda TV channel for a documentary on the Non-Aligned Movement, August 28, 2022.)

The Russian narrative also calls the *principle of justice* an important element of the new multipolar system, which includes: *the creation of a new global financial system "based on the financial systems of influential world states" and the introduction of a*

mechanism for the free exchange of technology and education in international relations. The details of the functioning and the process of creating new institutions and mechanisms are currently not disclosed in Russian strategic narratives, while the first step in the framework of the creation of a new financial system is the abandonment of the dollar and euro in international settlements and the transition to national currencies.

Conclusions

The Russian strategic narratives discussed in this article collectively form a comprehensive storyline that can be characterized as the "Russian Grand Narrative." In this overarching narrative, Russia positions itself as a staunch adversary of the liberal world, represented by the West. It portrays Russia both as a victim of Western actions and as a leader spearheading a global movement against Western hegemony. The war in Ukraine is framed as an integral part of this broader global confrontation. Consequently, the antagonistic posture of the Russian government toward Western countries is likely to persist beyond the conclusion of the Russian-Ukrainian war, as long as the current Russian political regime remains in place.

To legitimize its actions and policies, the Russian strategic narratives imbue Russia's conduct with a higher purpose – defending traditional values. Another component of this legitimization strategy is the narrative that questions the subjectivity and identity of the target of Russian aggression. This narrative, initially applied to Ukraine, is gradually being extended to European states. By denying subjectivity and identity, Russian strategic narratives lay the groundwork for framing Russia's actions as protective, not only of those within the "Russian world" but also of those who might seek refuge from perceived threats of "liberal neo-colonialism" by turning to Russia for protection.

These strategic narratives outline Russian foreign policy objectives, all guided by the overarching goal of reshaping the global order into one that is perceived as fairer. This envisioned order involves the division of the world into spheres of influence or regional integration led by major global powers. Russia positions itself as the future hub of Eurasian regional integration, including Europe as part of Greater Eurasia. This perspective underscores

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Russia's view that Europe should regain its sovereignty, paving the way for its eventual integration into the Greater Eurasian space.

In challenging the existing world order, Russia seeks to reshape two fundamental principles: international law and a hierarchy of values. According to Russian strategic narratives:

- The global system of international law and international institutions should be reestablished on the principle of a "balance of interests" ("balance of power") rather than relying on existing international legal norms.
- The rights of authoritarian and dictatorial regimes should take precedence over the universal principle of human rights

within the framework of international law. This is referred to in Russian rhetoric as the "principle of democratization of international relations," which advocates equal treatment and impunity for political regimes regardless of their human rights records.

If Russia and its allies succeed in this normative confrontation with the West, it could result in the erosion of the international legal system and international institutions. The potential consequences for Europe and liberal democracies worldwide might include the rise of radical political forces, economic and political instability, heightened internal conflicts, increased corruption, decisions at odds with liberal democratic norms, the weakening of European and transatlantic unity, and heightened security threats to European states.

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On the issue of Russia's denuclearization



“As a nuclear aggressor state that has attacked a nuclear-free state, threatened to use nuclear weapons, seized nuclear energy facilities risking a large-scale nuclear accident, undermined the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and accelerated the development of such weapons in threshold countries, the demilitarization and denuclearization of Russia should be a vital component of the international community's response...”

The need to denuclearize Russia is dictated by the unprecedented attack by a nuclear state on a non-nuclear NPT signatory country, which voluntarily gave up its nuclear weapons. We believe that the United States, as the leading nuclear power, and other members of the “nuclear club” such as the United Kingdom, France and China – as countries responsible for the fate of the world — should initiate the process of the denuclearization of the Russian Federation. Denuclearization should be a precondition for the lifting of sanctions on Russia, and any attempts at evading denuclearization should lead to their strengthening up to the point of complete economic isolation of Russia as a potential threat to peace in Europe.”

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I. The denuclearization of Russia is a necessary element of post-war security architecture in Europe. One of the lessons from Russia's aggression against Ukraine is that Moscow views nuclear weapons as a practical means of waging war (threats to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine) and as **an instrument of nuclear blackmail to prevent assistance to the victim of aggression by “third countries”** (threats to start a nuclear war if the West crosses certain “red lines”). This applies not only to Ukraine but also to all countries that are potential targets of Russian military and political expansion and aggression, such as the Baltic states, Poland, other NATO members, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and so on.

Russian analysts close to the government openly talk not only about the possibility of Russia using nuclear weapons if it finds itself on the brink of existence but also about the feasibility of delivering nuclear strikes against Western countries to weaken them radically. “This military operation cannot end in a decisive victory without imposing a strategic retreat or even capitulation on the West,” wrote Karaganov. To do this, he muses, “it will be necessary to restore

confidence in nuclear deterrence by lowering the unacceptably raised threshold of the use of nuclear weapons, by quickly climbing up the stairs of deterrence-escalation. The enemy must know we are ready to deliver a preventive strike in response to his current and past aggressions.” And to blackmail the West, Karaganov suggests, it is best to move up the escalatory ladder. This escalation ladder can include statements of intentions to use nuclear weapons, transferring nuclear weapons to the troops, bringing them to full combat readiness, and subsequent actual use, initially singularly, then en masse.

Karaganov's revelations could be considered the ramblings of someone not entirely mentally sound. However, similar ideas are propagated by individuals who belong to the elite of Russian political analysts, such as Fyodor Lukyanov and Dmitry Trenin, who, until recently, were considered in the West the most knowledgeable interpreters of Russian foreign policy.

“... It is necessary to urgently start a dialogue with the leading countries of the world majority on the possibility (advisability, inevitability) of

delivering limited nuclear strikes against countries that support the war in Ukraine, primarily against NATO. Continuing this war will reduce resistance to this idea. It is necessary to promote this trend actively,” they wrote together with political scientist Karaganov and Ambassador Kramarenko in an analytical memorandum sent to the president’s administration. Trenin does not consider it necessary to hide that a Russian nuclear “strike on the territory of Ukraine will not stop anyone at all; a strike on the territory of Europe will not be seen as critically important, as critically dangerous. It’s a different matter to strike the territory of the United States.” This is another confirmation that Russian aggression against Ukraine is viewed in Moscow as the first step in a “great war” with the West, in which Russia plans to be the first to use nuclear weapons.

Thus, Russia’s attack on Ukraine, and before that, on Georgia, confirms that as long as Russia remains in its current state, there is a real threat of its military aggression against neighboring countries and, accordingly, the danger of nuclear escalation with all the ensuing consequences of regional and global proportions. In light of this, the denuclearization of Russia belongs to the key security interests not only of the countries surrounding it but also of the “collective West” and, essentially, the entire world community. This is important because the nuclear disarmament of Russia can only be achieved through the collective efforts of a number of states.

It is also important that Russia’s aggressiveness is not dependent on the form of its state structure and the ruling regime within it. It stems from the deep-seated characteristics of the public consciousness and political thinking of Russian society, which are affected by a paranoid syndrome, leading to the pursuit of external expansion, the reconstruction of an empire, and the establishment of a belt of dependent countries and territories around it as an integral goal and characteristic of Russian state foreign policy.

IV. The strategy for denuclearizing Russia depends on the specific results of the Russian-Ukrainian war, or more precisely, on the state where Russia will find itself after its inevitable defeat. There are three options:

Russia disintegrates into several state and quasi-state entities due to power struggles in Moscow after the departure or removal of Vladimir Putin. This scenario results from the paralysis of the decision-making center, the breakdown of the centralized state apparatus, and ultimately the transfer of real power **to regional elites**.

Russia remains a single state but is severely weakened and has become keenly interested in normalizing relations with the Western world. Having lost the war, the military loses political influence, and power shifts **to ideologically neutral technocrats**.

Russia emerges from the war retaining a military machine, a relatively effective military-industrial complex, and a system of state management. Its political system can vary from an authoritarian military-fascist regime to a semi-democratic republic with predominant influence from **army generals and intelligence services**. It’s also not ruled out that Putin remains the highest-ranking official.

V. Option A is often seen as the most dangerous by many Western leaders and political forces because it poses the risk of nuclear weapons, both tactical and strategic, falling into the hands of irresponsible, possibly criminal groups and their proliferation. Denying the possibility of such events, though **just a possibility**, is not advisable. It’s also important to consider that preventing the collapse of the bureaucratic system through external measures is unrealistic. Processes like this, as seen in 1990-91, have their own logic and develop according to their own rules.

At the same time, the weakening, up to the collapse, of the management apparatus and law enforcement agencies will **allow to take control of the “objects “S” of the Russian Ministry of Defense** (centralized storage bases for nuclear weapons), command centers of the Strategic Missile Forces, long-range aviation, as well as the units of the military-maritime strategic forces, communication centers, and other key facilities for managing nuclear forces **through airborne operations**. The locations of these objects are well-known and are under constant surveillance by U.S. intelligence services and several other Western states (such as members of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance).

It's also possible to simply **buy nuclear weapons from those who control them.**

VI. In the event of a significant weakening of Russia resulting from its defeat in the war with Ukraine, **the nuclear disarmament of Russia should become one of the conditions or agreements for its capitulation**, a prerequisite for normalizing relations with the victorious coalition of Ukraine and its Western allies. There is no doubt that Russia's nuclear disarmament will face resistance from parts of its political class, state apparatus, and public opinion. However, this resistance is unlikely to be decisive in a situation where the population and elites in Russia will primarily be concerned with their own survival and/or maintaining their positions in the social system rather than preserving their nuclear status.

VII. In these two scenarios, a useful technical measure and **the first step in the denuclearization of Russia could be the introduction of an additional "nuclear key" (the "Cheget" terminal) into the "Kazbek" system, through which commands for the use of Russian strategic nuclear weapons are transmitted.** This system's operation mechanism is strictly classified, but according to some information, turning the "nuclear key" could unlock the system for transmitting commands to launch strategic nuclear forces and, secondly, issue the corresponding command. Consequently, introducing an additional terminal under international control could reduce the risk of Russia using strategic (but not tactical) nuclear weapons.

VIII. The most challenging scenario for the denuclearization of Russia is if it emerges from the war with a significant part of its armed forces intact, along with the ability to restore its military potential taking into account the experience of the Russian-Ukrainian war. This option, however paradoxical it may seem, is considered by some political circles in Western countries as the most desirable since it **"allows Putin to save face"** and avoid a deep restructuring of the existing system of international relations in Europe. However, in reality, **it is the most dangerous.** A lost war breeds revanchist sentiments, and the remaining military-industrial and nuclear potential creates the material prerequisites for a repeat of aggression against Ukraine or NATO member states, especially the

Baltic states and Poland. Therefore, in this case, **nuclear disarmament of Russia is particularly necessary.**

IX. To achieve the denuclearization of Russia in such a scenario, it is possible to convince its political leadership and military command, firstly, of the futility of nuclear blackmail, in other words, that the West, primarily NATO countries, in the event of a threat of the use of nuclear weapons by Russia, will use all available means at their disposal to eliminate this threat. Secondly, continuing the policy of intimidation of real and potential adversaries and preparations for nuclear war will have serious consequences. This will result in a new arms race, which Russia is likely to lose, including due to its increasing technological lag.

The success of such a strategy is supported by the experience of resolving the "missile crisis" in Europe in the 1980s. The deployment of intermediate-range SS-20 (Pioneer) missiles in the Soviet Union was aimed at acquiring the potential for a limited nuclear war in Europe. After NATO and the United States concluded that it was impossible to halt the deployment of these missiles and reduce their numbers through negotiations and diplomatic measures, it was decided to deploy American intermediate-range missiles, such as "Tomahawk" and "Pershing-2," in Europe. Ultimately, Moscow was convinced that these missiles could deliver not only a disarming but also a decapitating strike, and **the Soviet Union had to agree to the destruction of the entire class of corresponding nuclear weapons.** In other words, when the Soviet elite realized that the West had the technical capabilities to defeat the Soviet Union in a nuclear war and, more importantly, the political will to do so, it agreed to real nuclear disarmament. It seems that the logic of nuclear thinking of the current Russian leadership and especially the military command, does not fundamentally differ from that of their Soviet predecessors.

It is precisely at this time and in the near future after the end of the war against Ukraine that it is necessary to convince Russia that its refusal to nuclear disarmament will compel the West to:

- Enhance the readiness of strategic forces of ground and air deployment (for example,

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by deploying two additional warheads to the Minuteman III ICBM);

- Create and deploy nuclear and high-precision non-nuclear weapons on the European theater of operations capable of preemptively eliminating command centers, Russian nuclear weapons, and their delivery systems intended for use against European NATO countries as well as non-NATO countries.

Such weapons include, in particular, Mid-Range Capability weapons, namely:

- The mobile ground-based missile system “Typhoon” (launching cruise missiles “Tomahawk” with a range of up to 1,800 km and SM-6 anti-air missiles with a range of up to 460 km against ground targets), already delivered to the US Army.
- Precision Strike Missile with a range of 499-550 km (with prospects up to 1,000 km) is in advanced stages of development.

- The prospective hypersonic medium-range ground-based missile complex LRHW (Long Range Hypersonic Weapon) with a declared range of over 2,775 km.

The task of destroying Russian nuclear weapons, both tactical and, in certain cases, strategic, can also be addressed by multi-role F-35 fighter jets and stealthy B-2 Spirit bombers, which are undetectable by radars. It is also essential to make it clear to Moscow that the West has the political will to preemptively use these means if Russia is found preparing to use nuclear weapons.

X. A critical factor for the success of Russia’s denuclearization **is the determination of the West** to defeat Russia through the preemptive use of nuclear and high-precision non-nuclear weapons. This includes revisiting certain fundamental principles of strategic doctrines and nuclear policies aimed at maintaining strategic parity. Denuclearization of Russia, necessary for global and European security, will become a reality only after Russia is convinced of the West’s determination to achieve strategic nuclear superiority.

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Branders of the XXI century. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow of naval strike drones

The article is dedicated to the pressing issue of understanding the role and place of maritime robotic systems (MRS) in the execution of tasks in past, present, and future wars, both at sea and beyond. The article’s purpose is not to establish a clear dependency between the extent of direct or indirect damage to the military-economic (logistic) activities of warring states at sea from the actions of the opponent’s MRS or the application of one’s forces. Instead, it aims to outline certain trends that have existed, continue to exist, and perhaps will exist in maritime warfare. It is understood that based on the research conducted by the authors, it is challenging to establish qualitative, consistent mathematical or logical dependencies or reach any groundbreaking conclusions. This objectively requires considering the geostrategic conditions of the activities of objects and subjects of influence, such as such activities.



*Seminar “Security Challenges in the Black Sea Region”, September 12, 2019, Bucharest.
General Brian Keller is second from the left.*

In September 2019, during one of the international expert meetings dedicated to security architecture trends in the Black Sea region, a private conversation was held with Brian Keller, the Director of Military

Support at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency of the United States. The conversation started with an unexpected question from the American intelligence officer: “Why don’t you

consider naval drones?” “The United States is a wealthy country that can afford to build what it needs here and now,” explained General Keller. “For example, our military has concluded that the U.S. Navy needs a new class of littoral combat ships. We ordered a dozen LCS Independence-class ships for several billion dollars. Still, if they don’t meet our expectations, we will put them in mothballs and build other ships based on their operational experience. Ukraine is a poor country. Resource-constrained, you can’t afford to experiment like that. You must start building what will serve you today and in twenty and fifty years...” Ultimately, the American general emphasized, “The future belongs to naval drones!”

This conversation left a lasting impression. However, the emphasis on naval drones went unnoticed at the time. It was only after the publication of “Strategy of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine 2035” that debates about the future fleet began to heat up. Two concepts were in contention: the classic approach, which proposed traditional universal combat ships as the core of the Naval Forces, and the idea of a “mosquito fleet,” which called for the rapid construction of a large number of relatively inexpensive, small, fast, and maneuverable missile and patrol boats with powerful armament. The “mosquito” tactic involved simultaneous attacks from multiple directions, making it difficult for the enemy to track individual strikes and target the boats accurately.

This tactic has been used for some time, with torpedo and missile “mosquitos” proving to be effective and asymmetric forces against large warships in enclosed maritime theaters¹. As a result, naval forces of various countries have devoted significant attention to anti-ship (AShM) and mine countermeasure (MCM) defense (boats could serve as carriers for not only anti-ship torpedoes but also naval mines). The development of AShM and MCM capabilities has led to a significant change in the tactics of naval operations in littoral areas.

1 Ihor Kabanenko. Sea mosquitoes in the era of anti-ship missile weapons. 25.05.2021. “Український мілітарний центр”. <https://mil.in.ua/uk/blogs/morski-moskity-v-eru-protykorabelnoyi-raketnoyi-zbroyi/>

By 2022, the concept of a “mosquito fleet” was already present in Ukraine², but it was not validated at the state level, let alone implemented. This was due to the onset of a large-scale invasion by the enemy, including from the sea.

Meanwhile, Brian Keller looked further ahead, suggesting elevating the idea of “mosquitos” to a higher level. The Ukrainian Defense Forces ultimately implemented this idea as part of the “Army of Drones” project³... Several factors contributed to this, which are discussed below.

It would be incorrect to say that naval drones (NDs), or unmanned maritime vehicles (UMVs) and systems, are a recent invention. Devices collectively known as Uninhabited Maritime Vehicles (UMVs) have been used in various naval forces worldwide for over twenty-five years.⁴ The proliferation of unmanned remotely operated robotic systems in the civilian maritime sector played a significant role in their introduction into military fleets. However, military forces have not yet fully determined how and to what extent maritime unmanned vehicles will be used for military purposes. Despite the increasing inclusion of UMVs in leading naval forces’ arsenals, most remain experimental. An analysis of the use of maritime unmanned systems in the fleets of leading world armies, as presented in the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) “Military Balance+” blog⁵, shows that almost three-quarters of existing types of maritime unmanned vehicles are considered “experimental but operational.”

2 Iryna Nazarchuk. In the face of military threats: what is Ukraine focusing on in the development of the fleet? Radio Svoboda. 19.05.2021. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/rozbudova-viyskovoho-flotu-ukrayiny/31259308.html>

3 Yuriy Tarasovskiy. Mass production of drones, air force strike companies, operator training. What are the achievements of the “Army of Drones” project for the year. Forbes. 26.07.2023. <https://forbes.ua/news/masove-virobnitstvo-droniv-udarni-roti-bpla-navchannya-operatoriv-yaki-dosyagnennya-proektu-armiya-droniv-za-rik-26072023-15047>

4 Patterson, Ruth G.; Lawson, Emily; Udyawer, Vinay; Brassington, Gary B.; Groom, Rachel A.; Campbell, Hamish A. Uncrewed Surface Vessel Technological Diffusion Depends on Cross-Sectoral Investment in Open-Ocean Archetypes: A Systematic Review of USV Applications and Drivers”. *Frontiers in Marine*. 2022. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2021.736984/full>

5 Jonathan Bentham. Navies get their feet wet with UMVs. Military Balance Blog. 11th September 2023. <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2023/09/navies-get-their-feet-wet-with-umvs/>

IN FOCUS: NAVAL DRONES

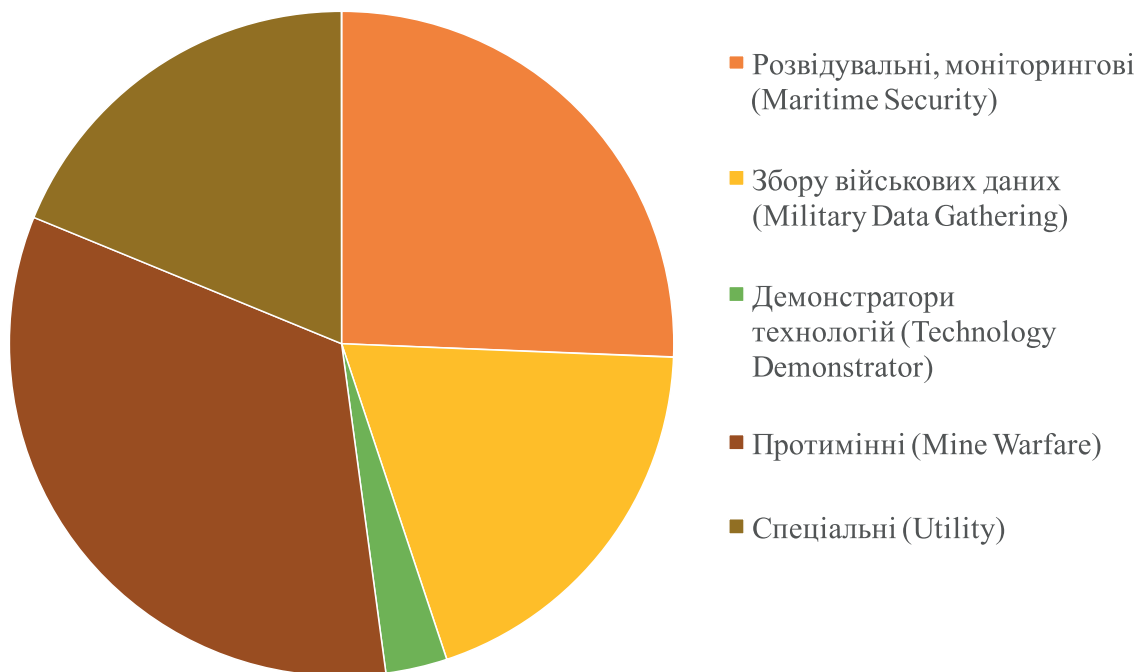
According to IISS estimates, the navies of leading nations operate at least 134 types of naval drones. Experts from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) categorize them as follows:

- **Maritime Security:** Typically, these drones perform patrol functions.
- **Military Data Gathering:** These are reconnaissance and monitoring drones.
- **Mine Warfare:** These drones are used for mine detection and clearance.

- **Technology Demonstrator:** These are various research and development prototypes.
- **Utility:** This category includes all types of drones that do not fall into the previous four categories.

According to IISS researchers, the majority of existing platforms (autonomous drones) and systems (comprising robotic elements) are primarily reconnaissance-patrol or mine warfare tools (see diagram).

Types of unmanned maritime vehicles and robotic systems by purpose



In our view, this classification, or the one in place until February 2022, is influenced by a certain inertia of thought. Military art and military technology are inherently conservative concepts. Revolutionary changes in these fields usually require extraordinary conditions, often a major war. In times of peace, technologies, and tactics tend to progress gradually over decades. Moreover, what appeared to be groundbreaking in peacetime sometimes turns out to be a “wrong branch of evolution,” while ideas that remained on the periphery of military experts’ attention for a long time can become fundamental for new operational principles. UUVs can be categorized based on their application areas or functional purposes.

One of the mistakes made by developers of military unmanned surface vessels (USVs), in our opinion, was not recognizing them as an independent naval force but trying to integrate them into the established framework of traditional naval forces dominated by crewed surface vessels. Unmanned platforms were initially viewed as an intermediate link between the carrier ship and missile weaponry, following the example of remotely operated devices like mine-searching and clearing robots, which had proven themselves effective. An example from the period before the Russian invasion of Ukraine is the Turkish Unmanned Surface Vessel (USV) ULAQ.

In October 2020, the Turkish shipbuilding company ARES introduced the ULAQ armed unmanned surface vehicle (AUSV), armed with a launch module containing four guided missiles for striking naval targets and two anti-aircraft missiles (four 70mm Cirit missiles and two L-UMTAS anti-tank

missiles). The vessel’s specifications include a length of 11 meters, a width of 2.7 meters, a weight of 2 tons, a maximum speed of up to 65 km/h, and an autonomous sailing range of up to 215 nautical miles (400 kilometers). ULAQ can be equipped with optical-electronic and radar stations for target detection and tracking, secure communication systems, radio reconnaissance, and jamming, all tailored to various operational and tactical needs. According to the developers, the drone is intended to be part of the ship’s armament complex, and it can be operated from various platforms: maritime, ground, airborne, and even space-based. The contract for the production of ULAQ USVs for the Turkish Navy was signed between the Turkish Defense Industry Presidency and the companies Ares Shipyard and Meteksan in 2022⁶.

However, the triad of “ship platform – drone weapon carrier – anti-ship missiles (mines, torpedoes, etc.)” has shown its limited prospects as it is complex, expensive, and lacks clarity in terms of tactical deployment. A breakthrough has been made by Ukraine in the use of maritime drones – multifunctional and multisphere drones, remotely controlled unmanned maritime vehicles, which are colloquially referred to as “kamikaze drones”!

To say that maritime “kamikaze drones” are our absolute know-how would not be entirely accurate. Before 2022, there was at least one example of using kamikaze drones against a large military ship. In January 2017, Houthi rebels in Yemen unexpectedly attacked a Saudi Arabian Navy frigate, the Al Madinah, with an unmanned surface vessel

6 The Turkish Navy will receive unmanned boats ULAQ. Black Sea News. 28.12.2022 <https://www.blackseanews.net/read/198552>

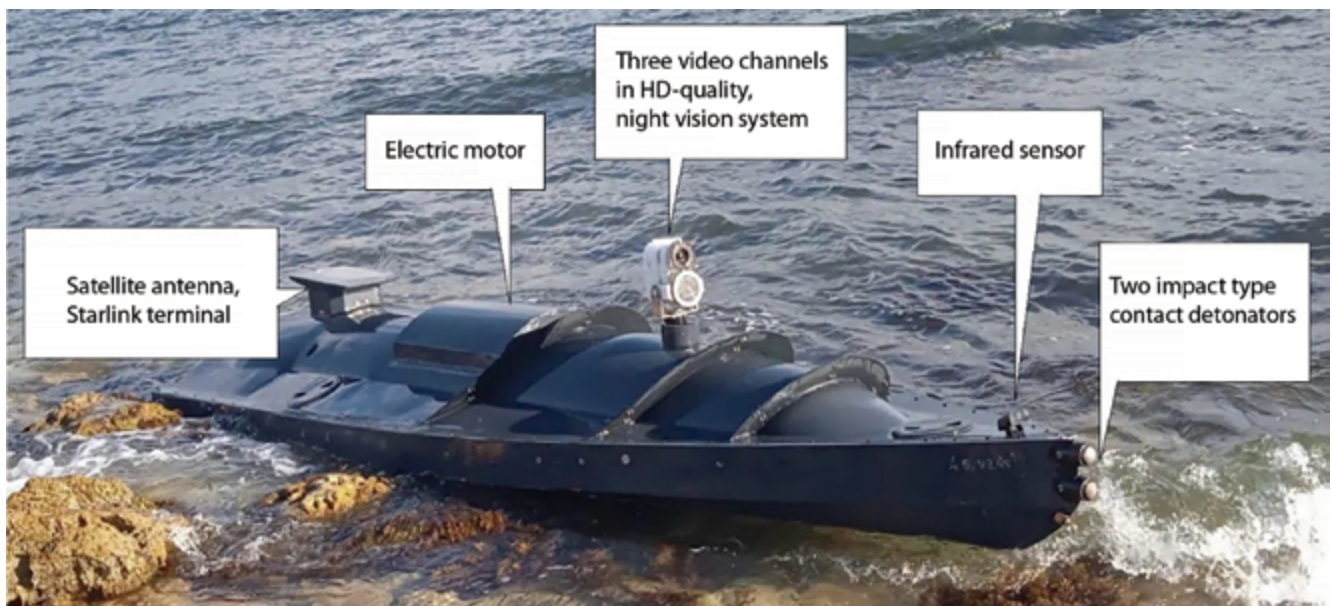


Turkish naval strike drone ULAQ (AUSV, Armed Unmanned Surface Vessel) Photo: ulaq.global)

IN FOCUS: NAVAL DRONES

(USV) in open waters. The ship was damaged, and two sailors were killed as a result of the explosion. This incident can be considered the first combat use of a kamikaze drone. Before that, similar attacks had been carried out by human-operated vessels. Ukrainian innovation was not only in the development of a range of maritime drones but also in the development of original tactics for their integrated combat use in coordination with other forces and assets of the Ukrainian Navy. Maritime kamikaze drones have become a fully-fledged combat force. Although maritime drones are not

vehicles (UAVs), including loitering munitions of various types, sizes, and capabilities, during the war paved the way for the emergence of naval drones. In simple terms, if you already know how convenient it is to deliver a 300-gram grenade, a three-kilogram mine, or twenty kilograms of explosives to the enemy's heads, then throwing a 250-kilogram bomb at them is simply a matter of choosing the delivery method. And if the bomb is too heavy for an aerial platform, we change the environment – we have an airborne kamikaze drone, so why not have a maritime one too?



Ukrainian kamikaze attack drone. May 2022. Infographics based on photos from open sources.

a novelty, the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine served as a catalyst for their adoption by naval fleets, similar to how the war in Afghanistan was a turning point for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Thanks to the innovative combat use of maritime kamikaze drones, Ukraine demonstrated an asymmetric advantage that a smaller fleet of kamikaze drones could achieve in countering traditional large naval platforms.

So, what are our famous naval drones? How did they come about? As mentioned earlier, weapons technology and tactics are conservative concepts. Usually, they evolve along an incremental path. But in the evolution of weapons, there are revolutionary periods. Not always, but often. When the appropriate prerequisites accumulate for a leap forward. The wide use of unmanned aerial

The construction of Ukrainian maritime kamikaze drones is as simple as ingenious. In the first-generation unmanned surface vessels (USVs), aviation bombs like FAB-100 or FAB-250 served as the combat component. Two contact detonators of the impact type were located in the nose section of the structure. Like most attack UAVs, the maritime drone was controlled using satellite geolocation systems, as well as through video feed, with the signal from the camera transmitted via the Starlink satellite communication system to the operator's control station. This was housed in a hydrodynamic fiberglass hull with a powerful and efficient engine. The design of the initial maritime drones consisted of elements from civilian hydrocycles, which are quite common in the market. This approach significantly simplified and reduced the production process of the drones.

IN FOCUS: NAVAL DRONES

The unmanned vessel was propelled by a waterjet engine at the stern of the hull, which operated in conjunction with a powerful three-cylinder gasoline engine capable of accelerating the “hydrocycle” to speeds of up to 70 knots. These drones could be assembled manually in almost any garage if needed. According to experts’ estimates, the price for one maritime drone is approximately \$274,000⁷.

In late July, at the international defense exhibition IDEF-2023 in Turkey, the Ukrainian state company “Spetstechnoexport” showcased its development – the maritime autonomous unmanned security robotized apparatus MAGURA V5. Within a few days, a story about the Ukrainian drone aired on the American TV channel CNN. They presented a drone that fully meets the characteristics and looks like MAGURA V5.

- Combat payload: 320 kg.
- Maximum speed: 42 knots (almost 78 km/h).
- Cruising speed (economical): 22 knots (40.7 km/h).
- Range of operation: 450 nautical miles (833 km).
- Autonomy: up to 60 hours.
- Navigation methods: automatic GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System), inertial, visual.
- Video transmission: up to 3 simultaneous HD video streams.
- Encryption: 256-bit encryption.



Magura V5 Naval Kamikaze Drone, July 2023. A freeze frame from a CNN report.

Here are the tactical and technical characteristics of MAGURA V5 according to “Spetstechnoexport”⁸:

- Dimensions: length 5.5 meters, width 1.5 meters, height above the waterline 0.5 meters.
- Total weight: up to 1000 kg.

⁷ H I Sutton. Sea Baby: The Ukrainian Navy's 'Bridge Killer' Maritime Drone. 16 August 2023. <http://www.hisutton.com/Ukraine-USV-Sea-Baby.html>

⁸ The details of the new Ukrainian maritime drone MAGURA V5 have been revealed. Ukrainian industrial portal.25.07.2023. <https://uprom.info/news/vpk/rozkryto-detali-novogo-ukrayinskogo-morskogo-drona-magura-v5>

As provided by other sources, data on the characteristics of Ukrainian maritime kamikaze drones are similar but somewhat different. This is likely due to the fact that Ukrainians are rapidly improving their USVs, and there is no time for lengthy factory or state testing of new models. Weapons are being tested directly during strikes on enemy ships. Therefore, we may be talking about five or six models of drones developed/modified for specific tasks. The evolution of Ukrainian maritime drones continues. It can be predicted that with their improvement and, accordingly, some increase in cost, this type of weaponry may incorporate the research and concepts applied to other



The prototype of the Turkish ULAQ KAMA kamikaze naval drone. Photo: ulaq.global

types of weapons. For example, guidance systems traditionally used in guided missiles or torpedoes, such as infrared, acoustic, radar, laser, and more. Another obvious improvement is increasing the power and modifying the warhead depending on the tasks at hand; it would be logical to duplicate the impact detonator with a remote-controlled or programmed electronic initiator (including a self-destruct feature). The weak point of modern USV drones is their vulnerability to anti-ship and anti-diversionary means. One way to increase the resilience of kamikaze drones to anti-ship and anti-diversionary means, as well as to enable strikes below the waterline of the target, is the development of semi-submersible self-burying systems, which will bring the characteristics of drones closer to modern torpedoes. This is an example of the “technology transfer law.”

Along with the improvement of the hardware, the tactics for using maritime drones are also evolving, from individual attacks on stationary objects to complex coordinated strikes on groups of enemy ships at sea or naval bases, involving a large number of maritime and aerial drones of various purposes, guided missiles, and aviation. This is a whole different level! The tactics of complex

application of a “swarm” of aerial and maritime kamikaze drones are our know-how. This tactic will be studied in academies, and developers of similar technology will orient themselves to it in the future. Even now, the world’s leading fleets are closely studying the operations of Ukrainian maritime drones. Special attention is focused on the comprehensive use of many single and multi-sphere drones in combination with powerful cyberattacks.

Example: After the success story of Ukrainian kamikaze drones, Turkish naval drone manufacturers we mentioned earlier, Ares Shipyard and Meteksan, have already presented their version of a kamikaze drone, ULAQ KAMA, at IDEF-2023. KAMA will have the following characteristics: hull length – 6.37 meters, width – 1.2 meters, cruising speed – over 20 knots, cruising range – 200 nautical miles, seafaring – up to 4 points, weight – 1.3 tons, of which the combat part or other useful cargo – 200 kilograms⁹. You can compare this with the specifications of the MAGURA V5.

⁹ Turkey showed its kamikaze boat, ready to make 100 units in 1 year. Back Sea News. 27.07.2023 <https://www.blackseanews.net/read/206832>

Foreign colleagues often ask, “When will the Russian fleet start using naval drones in confrontation with Ukraine at sea?” The answer is not anytime soon. There is one missing factor for this step: to perform the tasks that Ukrainians assign to drones, Russians have an abundance of “classic” means – they have a numerous fleet of missile and patrol ships armed with cruise missiles, torpedoes, and naval artillery. Only when they realized at Znamenka that the “inexhaustible” supply of “air-to-surface” cruise missiles was running out and it was impossible to restock them, they turned to Iranian mullahs for “Shaheds,” then “Lancets” emerged from the margins onto the scene. The same will happen with naval drones. Meanwhile, in July, Russian propagandists demonstrated an “unmanned kamikaze boat” – a naval liquidator drone.

Although the technology of naval kamikaze drones has shown high efficiency for Ukraine in confronting the overwhelming forces of the Russian fleet, this tactic has become a “headache” for states with large “classic” fleets. And it’s not just the Russians who are forced, so far unsuccessfully, to find effective ways to counter Ukrainian kamikaze drones. Potentially, UUVs, as a new type of “asymmetric” weaponry, raise concerns in the headquarters of the world’s leading fleets. Because other, less Western-friendly states may also use Ukrainian know-how. For example, in the future, swarms of kamikaze drones may appear in the Persian Gulf or elsewhere in the Middle East, disrupting military ship missions and blocking civilian navigation.

On October 8, the press service of the Turkish Defense Industry Agency announced that Turkey had conducted combat tests of surface kamikaze drones Albatros-S. A swarm of eight surface drones Albatros-S, supported by the Bayraktar TB2 UAV from the air, sank a 69-meter target ship in a matter of minutes. According to the statement by SavunmaSanayiST, this was the “world’s first joint operation of a group of surface unmanned vehicles and an unmanned aerial vehicle.”¹⁰

Despite Turkish bravado, Ukraine is the real leader. The authoritative portal Naval News wrote, “Maritime drones are a relevant topic for many navies, but Ukraine became the first to form a specialized unit for the use of kamikaze drones. The newly created 385th separate brigade is one of its kind in the world. And it is being formed for wartime needs... Ukraine is quickly gaining a reputation as an innovative and inventive country.”

Ukrainian naval drones have already made their mark in the history of naval warfare. Nevertheless, the future of UUVs challenges the leading naval forces to find the right balance between traditional combat platforms and unmanned systems to perform military missions and meet operational needs effectively. This is a task that still needs to be addressed. But in any case, the future belongs to maritime drones!

¹⁰ Haber Merkezi. Albatros Kamikaze İDA Sürüşü gemi batırdı: Dünyada ilk. Savunma Sanayi ST. 8 Ekim 2023. <https://www.savunmasanayist.com/albatros-kamikaze-ida-surusu-gemi-batirdi-dunyada-ilk/>

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Preparation of strategic documents in the field of Ukraine’s national security in the conditions of Russian aggression: selected aspects

Creating a safe environment for its own citizens is the primary duty of the state. An organically and robustly built national security system, effective interaction of all its elements, fair procedures for selecting professional personnel to work in the field of national security, individuals with deep knowledge and a strategic vision of ways to address security issues accumulated over years of independence, are the guarantee of the protection and economic well-being of the Ukrainian people and the prevention of interstate armed conflicts in the future. The author suggests considering the issue of amending the Law of Ukraine “On National Security of Ukraine” or adopting a new Law on National Security of Ukraine.

Let’s try to identify certain elements that make up Ukraine’s national security system and outline the principles of effective planning in the field of national security in the conditions of Russian aggression.

We’ll start our exploration with some theoretical but highly important questions.

In the world, there is no single established definition of the concept of “national security” and an exclusive list of areas (components) it should encompass [1].

In the realm of planning in the field of national security for any state, it is crucial to understand what the state apparatus interprets as “national security” and what approach is chosen to interpret this complex phenomenon.

According to the definition provided in the Law of Ukraine “On National Security of Ukraine” [2], national security of Ukraine is the protection of the state’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, democratic constitutional order, and other national interests of Ukraine from real and potential threats.

As we can see, the current position of the state apparatus regarding the term “national security of Ukraine” does not adequately reflect the need for the primary protection of the individual as the highest social value in Ukraine, which does not correspond to Article 3 of the Constitution of Ukraine.

At the same time, the Legal Encyclopedia defines national security as the state of protection of the vital interests of the individual, society, and the state from internal and external threats [3, p. 210].

In our opinion, the Legal Encyclopedia contains a more accurate definition, as any civilized state primarily focuses on the protection of its citizens.

It should be added that Article 27 of the Constitution of Ukraine imposes an obligation on the state to protect human life. However, this obligation is not unilateral; it does not negate the constitutional duties of citizens of Ukraine as stipulated by Article 65 of the Constitution of Ukraine, which include defending their Motherland, its independence, and territorial integrity, as well as performing military service in accordance with the law.

Therefore, we believe that it is necessary to change the conceptual approach to defining the term “national security of Ukraine” by specifying the need to ensure, above all, the security of the individual, which will be in line with the Fundamental Law of Ukraine.

Special attention should also be given to the elements that make up Ukraine’s national security system. Defining such elements or spheres is not only of theoretical significance but also of practical importance, as specific government bodies, units, and their leaders should correspond to each element of national security in planning and implementing state policy.

Let’s begin by examining the legal norms related to defining the elements of national security.

The Constitution of Ukraine [4] defines the following elements of the national security system:

- Human security (Article 3 of the Constitution of Ukraine)
- Environmental security (Articles 16, 92, and 116 of the Constitution of Ukraine)
- Economic security (Article 17 of the Constitution of Ukraine)
- Information security (Article 17 of the Constitution of Ukraine)
- State security (Articles 17 and 37 of the Constitution of Ukraine)
- Public security (Article 138 of the Constitution of Ukraine)

According to Part 1 of Article 6 of the Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of Internal and Foreign Policy” [5], the fundamental principles of internal policy in the field of national security and defense include, among other things, ensuring the protection of the vital interests of the individual and the citizen, society, and the state, timely identification, prevention, and neutralization of real and potential threats to national interests in foreign policy, defense, socio-economic, energy, food, environmental, and information spheres.

Thus, the Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of Internal and Foreign Policy” effectively distinguishes the following spheres of national security:

- Foreign policy
- Defense
- Socio-economic
- Energy
- Food
- Environmental
- Information

In turn, the Law of Ukraine “On the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine” [6] establishes that, in accordance with the functions defined by the Constitution of Ukraine, this Law, and other laws, the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, among other things, makes decisions regarding the determination of Ukraine’s strategic national interests, conceptual approaches, and directions for ensuring national security and defense in political, economic, social, military, scientific and technological, environmental, and information spheres (paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Article 4 of the Law of Ukraine “On the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine”).

However, the Law of Ukraine “On National Security of Ukraine” includes definitions only for such elements of national security as “military security,” “state security,” and “public security and order.” The current version of the Law of Ukraine “On National Security of Ukraine” does not contain definitions for the terms “human security,” “environmental security,” “economic security,” and “information security.”

Additionally, the Law of Ukraine “On National Security of Ukraine” states that long-term planning documents include the National Security Strategy of Ukraine, the Military Security Strategy of Ukraine, the Public and Civil Defense Strategy of Ukraine, the Defense Industry Development Strategy of Ukraine, the Cybersecurity Strategy of Ukraine, and the National Intelligence Program (the second paragraph of Part 3 of Article 25 of the Law).

The question remains open as to why this provision of the law does not establish an obligation for the state apparatus to develop long-term planning documents aimed at determining the priorities,

tasks, and measures for ensuring the security of the individual, environmental security, economic security, information security, and state security of Ukraine.

This gap in the law indicates, among other things, the disregard by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the content of Article 3 of the Constitution of Ukraine during the voting on the Law of Ukraine “On National Security of Ukraine.” Article 3 of the Constitution of Ukraine establishes that the individual, their life and health, honor and dignity, inviolability, and security are recognized as the highest social value in Ukraine. It also reflects Article 17 of the Fundamental Law of Ukraine, which among other things states that ensuring the economic and information security of Ukraine is the most important function of the state, a matter of the entire Ukrainian people.

The provision of the fourth part of Article 3 of the Law on National Security contains a list of some directions of state policy in the field of national security and defense. According to this provision, the law aims to ensure military, foreign policy, state, economic, informational, and environmental security, as well as the security of critical infrastructure, cybersecurity of Ukraine, and more.

However, the mentioned list of directions does not fully align with the Constitution of Ukraine. The fourth part of Article 3 of the Law on National Security does not include the most important direction of state policy - ensuring the security of the individual. This provision also lacks a clear definition of “human security” and leaves the concept of “state security” open to real and potential non-military threats.

At the same time, Article 17 of the Constitution of Ukraine clearly stipulates that ensuring state security and protection of the state border of Ukraine are the responsibilities of the respective military formations and law enforcement agencies of the state, the organization and procedures of which are defined by law.

In this context, it is appropriate to consider the provisions of the Laws of Ukraine “On the Armed Forces of Ukraine” [7] and “On the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine” [8].

According to Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine “On the Armed Forces of Ukraine,” the Armed Forces of Ukraine are a military formation entrusted, in accordance with the Constitution of Ukraine, with the defense of Ukraine, the protection of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability. The Armed Forces of Ukraine provide containment of armed aggression against Ukraine and counter it, safeguard the airspace of the state, and the underwater area within the territorial waters of Ukraine in cases determined by law. They also participate in actions aimed at combating terrorism.

Therefore, it is the Armed Forces of Ukraine that serve as the primary force protecting the state of Ukraine, its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability, which directly impacts the state’s security and defense.

On the other hand, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine is tasked with ensuring the inviolability of the state border and protecting Ukraine’s sovereign rights in its adjacent zone and exclusive (maritime) economic zone, as stated in Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine “On the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine.” During the state of war, the maritime border guard units and border guard units may be involved by the relevant military command authorities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the elimination (neutralization) of an armed conflict on the state border of Ukraine, international armed conflict, or in repelling armed aggression against Ukraine, as specified in the second part of Article 9 and the second part of Article 10 of the Law of Ukraine “On the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine.”

As a result, there are grounds to consider the definition of the term “state security” as reflected in the Law on National Security to be inconsistent with the Constitution of Ukraine and the Law of Ukraine “On the Armed Forces of Ukraine.”

As previously mentioned, the Law on National Security defines state security as the state of protecting vital national interests from real and potential non-military threats. At the same time, taking into account the content of Article 17 of the Constitution of Ukraine and Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine “On the Armed Forces of Ukraine,” one can come to the obvious conclusion that the state security of Ukraine involves the state’s

protection, particularly from military threats, and military security is an integral component of state security.

In light of the above, we believe that the current version of the Law of Ukraine “On National Security of Ukraine” contains significant shortcomings in legislative drafting and does not fully comply with the Constitution of Ukraine. Furthermore, despite the fact that the National Security Strategy of Ukraine was adopted in 2020 [9] in a security environment significantly different from the current situation (before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine), this strategic planning document is still in effect and deserves separate attention.

For example, point 66 of the National Security Strategy of Ukraine from 2020 outlines a list of planning documents in the field of national security and defense that need to be developed. These include the Strategy of Human Development, the Strategy of Military Security of Ukraine, the Strategy of Public Security and Civil Defense, the Strategy of Defense Industry Complex Development of Ukraine, the Strategy of Economic Security, the Strategy of Energy Security, the Strategy of Environmental Security and Climate Adaptation, the Strategy of Biosecurity and Biological Protection, the Strategy of Information Security, the Strategy of Cybersecurity of Ukraine, the Strategy of Foreign Policy Activity, the Strategy of Ensuring State Security, the Strategy of Integrated Border Management, the Strategy of Food Security, and the National Intelligence Program. This list of documents demonstrates the President of Ukraine’s and his team’s perspective on the national security system and its specific elements.

We can note that the National Security Strategy of Ukraine from 2020 outlines the following directions of state policy:

- 1) human development;
- 2) military security;
- 3) public safety and civil protection;

- 4) development of the defense-industrial complex;
- 5) economic security;
- 6) energy security;
- 7) environmental safety and adaptation to climate change;
- 8) biosafety and biological protection;
- 9) information security;
- 10) cyber security;
- 11) foreign policy activity;
- 12) state security;
- 13) integrated border management;
- 14) food safety;
- 15) intelligence program.

As a result of our analysis of selected legislative acts of Ukraine in the context of identifying elements of national security, it would also be useful to pay attention to the domains mentioned in the U.S. National Security Strategy adopted in 2022 [10, p. 22], namely, military domains (land, air, sea, cyber, and space) and non-military domains (economy, technology, and information).

Taking into account the provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of Domestic and Foreign Policy,” the Law of Ukraine “On the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine,” the Law of Ukraine “On the Armed Forces of Ukraine,” the Law of Ukraine “On the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine,” and the Law on National Security, as well as the National Security Strategies of Ukraine and the United States, we propose our own distribution of directions for ensuring (elements of) national security of Ukraine, based on the foundation of the Constitution of Ukraine:

IN FOCUS: NATIONAL SECURITY

No.	Name of the main element of Ukraine's national security	Name of sub-elements of the main element of Ukraine's national security	Notes
1.	Human's security	Health security of the nation Food safety Public security	-
2.	Economic security	Economic security Energy security Maritime security	Maritime trade and marine energy resources are of key importance for the economy of Ukraine
3.	State security	Military security State border security Security of critical infrastructure Political security	Military security provided in the following domains: on land, at sea, in the air, in space and in cyberspace Political security includes both foreign and domestic security Corruption is one of the main threats to Ukraine's political security
4.	Data security	Cyber security Protection of the information space of Ukraine from disinformation and destructive propaganda	-
5.	Ecological security	-	-
6.	Scientific and technological security	-	-

Therefore, we propose to conditionally divide Ukraine's national security system into six main elements, namely: human security, economic security, state security, information security, environmental security, and scientific and technological security. Each of the main elements can have sub-elements.

Based on the above, we believe that the Law of Ukraine "On National Security of Ukraine" should be revised or a new Law on National Security of Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as the New Law) should be adopted, clearly specifying an exhaustive list of directions for planning and implementing state policy in the field of national security.

For each direction of state policy in ensuring national security, the New Law should stipulate an obligation to develop a separate "sectoral" strategy within 180 calendar days after the entry into force of this law. Each of the "sectoral" strategies, subject to prior approval by the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, should be approved by the President of Ukraine within the constitutional powers defined by Article 106 of the Constitution of Ukraine.

Furthermore, in order to implement each of the "sectoral" strategies, the New Law should stipulate an obligation for the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, taking into account Article 116 of the Constitution of Ukraine and in coordination with the President of Ukraine, to simultaneously approve a government action plan for the implementation of the respective strategy. This plan should include the stages and deadlines for the implementation of each measure, along with specifying responsible performers. To ensure democratic civilian control over the activities of state authorities in implementing planning documents, it is necessary to ensure the publication of government action plans for the implementation of strategies (except their confidential annexes).

In addition, the organizational structures of the Office of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine and the main "security" structural unit of the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine should be brought into full compliance with the elements of the national security system established by the New Law. For example, "the service for human security of the Office of the NSDC of Ukraine" and "the expert group for sci-

entific and technological security of the Directorate for National Security of the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine." In this regard, the tasks, functions, and rights of the units of the Office of the NSDC of Ukraine and the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine should undoubtedly correspond to their names.

In order to prepare proposals for the President of Ukraine to address the problematic issues related to the planning and implementation of state policy in the field of national security of Ukraine by directions, as well as to perform tasks that will be determined by the "sectoral" strategies, we propose to establish specialized councils under the President of Ukraine as advisory bodies. These councils would include both state and non-state experts, policymakers, and scholars, including foreign experts.

For example, under the President of Ukraine, advisory bodies may be formed, such as the Advisory Council on Human Security, the Advisory Council on Economic Security of Ukraine, the Advisory Council on State Security of Ukraine, and so on.

We believe that the unprecedented scale and duration of threats to our state require the government apparatus to seek new ways to continuously and significantly strengthen the national security of Ukraine.

Given the introduction of martial law in Ukraine and the ongoing aggression by the Russian Federation, effective planning in the field of national security, as well as the quality and timely execution of the planned actions by the government apparatus, will save thousands of Ukrainian lives and help the state restore its territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders.

Recommendations for the government apparatus: Considering the above, as well as the radical change in the security environment since the entry into force of the Law of Ukraine "On National Security of Ukraine," we consider it necessary to formulate the following recommendations:

Consider the issue of revising the Law of Ukraine "On National Security of Ukraine" in a new edition or adopting a new Law on National Security of Ukraine, which should include, among other things:

1 . Dividing the system of national security of Ukraine into six main elements, namely: human security, economic security, state security, information security, environmental security, and scientific and technological security.

2 . Developing a separate “sectoral” strategy for each direction of state policy in the field of national security (element of the national security system) within 180 calendar days from the entry into force of the law.

3 . Simultaneously with the approval by the President of Ukraine of each “sectoral” strategy, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine should approve a government plan of measures for the implementation of the respective strategy. This plan should include the stages and deadlines for the implementation of each measure, along with the designation of responsible executors.

4 . Publishing government plans of measures for the implementation of “sectoral” strategies (except classified annexes).

5 . Determining specific responsible structural units of the Office of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine and the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine for each direction of state policy in the field of national security.

6 . Establishing specialized councils under the President of Ukraine, organized by directions of state policy in the field of national security of Ukraine, as advisory bodies. These councils should include leading state and non-state experts, policymakers, and scholars, including foreign experts.

7 . Ensuring the alignment of Ukraine’s legal framework with this law.

These measures are proposed to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Ukraine’s national security policy, especially in the face of ongoing threats and aggression.

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Black Sea lessons for Taiwan

One of the key takeaways from the Black Sea conflict for a case like Taiwan, being an island nation, is that anti-ship, anti-air, and anti-landing readiness should be top priorities. Additional possibilities for a sanctions policy include monitoring, coordinating actions between government and civil structures, and increasing control to replace Russian energy carriers and cease their imports to the G7/EU. Without strengthened enforcement of sanctions legislation, the effectiveness of sanctions will inevitably be undermined, along with trust in the US/G7/EU.



Before Russia initiated its invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, many analysts predicted that Kyiv would fall within three days. These forecasts were unprofessional and unsubstantiated, echoing Russian propaganda claims. One of the most striking differences between Ukraine and Russia was their naval potential. The Russian Black Sea Fleet, which included not only ships from one of Russia's four fleets but also vessels from other fleets, notably large landing ships (LLCs) for amphibious operations and ships with missile armament on board, significantly outclassed the Ukrainian Navy.

In the run-up to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the naval grouping of the Southern Military District of Russia counted 275 ships and vessels, with 74 of them being combat-ready. On the other hand, the Ukrainian Navy had 16 ships, with 12 of them being small patrol boats. Ukraine did not possess submarines, while Russia had 7 units equipped with sea-launched "Kalibr" cruise missiles. Additionally, Ukraine lacked sufficient means for coastal defense, with only one division of Neptune anti-ship missile systems and a limited number of large-caliber howitzers. Given the vast

disparity in naval capabilities and Russia's initial successes in the Black Sea, it was surprising to foreign observers that the diverse strike force of the Russian fleet, with such a superiority, not only failed to secure an amphibious landing but was also forced to withdraw from the Ukrainian coastline in April 2022.

The most vivid example of Russia's failure in the Black Sea was the destruction of the flagship of the Black Sea Fleet, the guard missile cruiser "Moskva." On April 14, 2022, the flagship was hit by two Ukrainian anti-ship missiles "Neptune," while a Bayraktar UAV conducted distracting maneuvers in the air. Although there is no doubt that the damage inflicted by the missiles led to the cruiser's destruction, this incident also underscored the insufficient readiness of the Russian fleet. The "Moskva" cruiser faced issues with technical maintenance. The cruiser had a multi-layered air defense system that theoretically should have protected the vessel from threats. However, crew negligence and incompetence nullified the effectiveness of the defense system.

One of the key takeaways from the Black Sea conflict for a case like Taiwan, being an island nation, is that anti-ship, anti-air, and anti-landing readiness should be top priorities.

To strengthen Taiwan's defense, the existing ground-launched anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM) systems should be improved by increasing the range and enhancing the homing heads of the Harpoon ASCMs. Taiwan also possesses its own ASCMs, including the supersonic Hsiung Feng III and the subsonic Hsiung Feng 2E. Furthermore, Taiwan plans to commence mass production of

an extended-range version of its Hsiung Feng III ASCM this year, while increasing the production volume of the Hsiung Feng II and the baseline Hsiung Feng III models.

The standard-range Hsiung Feng II missile has a range of 148 km, while the new extended-range variant has a range of 160 km to 200 km, along with improved maneuverability and electronic countermeasure capabilities comparable to Western systems. The Hsiung Feng III has a standard range of 150 km to 200 km, with the extended-range variant effectively reaching 400 km. These enhanced missiles are expected to significantly increase Taiwan's ability to strike anti-ship targets in the seas to the north, south, and east of Taiwan. Taiwan plans to produce over 1,000 ASCMs by 2026. The defense industry has the capacity to produce 201 missile systems per year, including 131 Hsiung Feng II or Hsiung Sheng missiles that share a common production line and 70 Hsiung Feng III missiles, either in the baseline or extended-range version.

Ground-based missile systems will play a crucial role due to China's immediate proximity to Taiwan. Additional assistance to Taiwan may not arrive in time, so Taiwan must be prepared to defend its territory and prevent potential amphibious invasions. Additionally, Taiwan should ensure it has the capability to rapidly deploy naval mines to target approaching Chinese vessels. The use of MANPADS (Man-Portable Air-Defense Systems), such as Stinger missiles, could also be implemented, as was effective in Ukraine against Russian helicopters, attack aircraft, and drones. Of course, MANPADS alone may not suffice without the establishment of an integrated air defense system.

The Improved HAWK (I-HAWK) air defense system remains the backbone of Taiwan's air defense. This medium-range system, operating at low to medium altitudes, is designed to protect fixed and mobile assets from high-speed aircraft. Taipei has also deployed domestically produced air defense systems known as Tien Kung or Sky Bow, intended to replace the retired American Nike-Hercules system. Tien Kung is a medium and long-range system, while another variant, Tien Kung-II, is configured as a stationary, two-stage, single-rail or bunker-based system. To detect,

track, and guide missiles on the mid-course, Tien Kung employs a multifunction phased-array radar with an associated computerized fire control system and a continuous wave illuminator antenna linked to the radar.

In response to the increasing missile threat from mainland China, Taiwan acquired the Modified Air Defense System (MADS), an enhanced variant of the Patriot air defense system. MADS, which began arriving in Taiwan in 1997, has been deployed around densely populated Taipei.

Short-range air defense is primarily provided by the Chaparral and Skyguard systems. Chaparral consists of four modified AIM-9C Sidewinder missiles mounted on a tracked vehicle. Skyguard is an integrated air defense system comprising a modified AIM-7M/Sparrow surface-to-air missile launcher and a 35mm anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) gun. Taiwan also has a ground-based version of the Sea Sparrow missile and employs it within its Skyguard air defense system.

One area where Taiwan's defense differs from Ukraine is in maintaining air superiority. The lack of modern multi-role aircraft in Ukraine significantly complicated operations in the Black Sea. If Ukraine had F-16 Fighting Falcons, it could have used AGM-84 Harpoon missiles to target Russian fleet ships, forcing them to move further away from the Ukrainian south to avoid greater losses. Without a robust aerial defense component, defending Taiwan from China would be an extremely challenging task, as there would be no means to cover Taiwan's defense effectively.

Another crucial factor to consider is maintaining control of the sea, which is essential for safeguarding supply chains. The conflict in the Black Sea exposed vulnerabilities in supply chains on both sides. Before the war, over 70% of Ukraine's external trade passed through the Black Sea. This was understandable because Ukraine has access to the World Ocean only through the Black Sea. Ukraine is a significant player in the global food market, and tens of millions of tons of Ukrainian grain were shipped to markets from Black Sea ports.

Russia turned food supplies into a weapon through its control of the region. By withholding food

from vulnerable regions in the Global South that depended on Ukrainian grain exports, Russia created conditions for a humanitarian crisis that could force Ukraine and its partners to compromise with the aggressor. The idea of the Black Sea initiative mediated by Turkey was to allow Ukraine to export its grain from its ports, despite Russian control of the Black Sea region. However, this was far from a reliable way to protect global food security. Ukraine and its partners found themselves in a situation where the implementation of the agreement depended entirely on the aggressor. When Russia chose not to resume its participation in the grain export agreement and thus left the initiative, it once again demonstrated that it could not be trusted to fulfill its commitments, exposing the West's vulnerability in relying on the enemy. This failure not only underscores the futility of cooperation with the enemy but also reveals the danger of allowing the aggressor to seize control of the sea. Control of the sea defines the flexibility that both sides must have to conduct any activity in the region. Preventing the enemy from seizing control of the sea should be a top priority.

The Kerch Bridge is an indispensable transportation link that connects Russia to the occupied Crimea, facilitating both military and civilian supply chains and holding vital significance for Russia to maintain its control over the Black Sea. Since the beginning of the war, Ukrainians have twice attacked the Kerch Bridge – first in October 2022 and then again in July 2023.

Success in the Ukrainian forces' efforts to undermine the Kerch Bridge highlights the importance of using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) at sea, especially during the second attack in July, when Ukrainian forces used maritime drones to assault the bridge. Complete destruction or irreparable damage to the bridge will leave Russia with a single land supply line through the occupied territories along the Azov Sea coast in Ukraine, imposing additional supply constraints, as this route is periodically under the control of Ukrainian forces.

Russia began from dominant positions in the Black Sea, using its naval advantage to launch missile strikes on Ukrainian cities. However, with the help of cruise missiles, maritime, and aerial drones, Ukraine managed to push back the

Russian fleet away from Ukrainian territories. The damage to Russian vessels in the Kerch Strait and Novorossiysk in the summer of 2023 indicates that all Russian ships in the Black Sea are within the range of Ukrainian military strikes. Nevertheless, Russia retains significant control over the Black Sea region through its aerial component and continues to disrupt grain exports from Ukrainian ports and bypass maritime routes.

The danger of hostile control over the sea is particularly relevant in the case of China's invasion of Taiwan. Maintaining control over the Taiwan Strait will be especially challenging due to its proximity to mainland China. If China gains control of the strait, the threat to Taiwan's supply chain could be even more serious than the situation with Ukraine. This is because, unlike Ukraine, Taiwan lacks overland corridors to other countries that could provide overland options to support the supply chain (such as through Poland, Slovakia, and Romania in Ukraine's case). This means that if Taiwan is surrounded by the Chinese fleet and cut off from the rest of the world, the supply of semiconductors produced in Taiwan will be immediately reduced. This will lead to serious consequences in many industries, including automotive manufacturing, healthcare, telecommunications, and consumer electronics production. Allowing the enemy to disrupt the supply chain will create extraordinary problems for both Taiwan's defense and global trade, and this must be prevented at all costs.

Russia's war in Ukraine has crossed the 20-month mark, and the battle for control over the Black Sea region is still ongoing. However, the lessons learned from this war provide valuable information that could be crucial in preparing Taiwan for a potential future Chinese invasion. Taiwan must be prepared militarily – in addition to developing adequate naval capabilities, Taiwanese forces must ensure ground-based long-range missile systems (Taiwan possesses medium-range Yun Feng missiles for ground targets) to defend the island from the approaching Chinese fleet, as well as maritime drones to assist in Taiwan's defense. It is crucial to dominate the air and establish control over the Taiwan Strait, as the island is highly vulnerable to losing its primary supply chain. Before any invasion of Taiwan occurs, an extraordinary trade mechanism must be developed, primarily

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involving Japan and South Korea (and possibly the Philippines and Vietnam). This mechanism may include an operational cooperation line between the navies of Japan and South Korea, which would prevent the Chinese fleet from encircling the island and isolating Taiwan from the rest of the

world, thus ensuring the continuation of exports and trade. An invasion of Taiwan will pose many unforeseen challenges, and Taiwan and its allies must draw lessons from the Black Sea war to overcome foreseeable obstacles.

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Fighting to Win: Ukraine, Russia and the War for Survival



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Key findings:

- Both the Kremlin and Ukrainians see the war as an existential conflict, even as a “holy war,” and are prepared to fight for years to achieve victory.
- Russian war aims vis-à-vis Ukraine have morphed into creating a “frozen conflict” to maintain its land bridge with Crimea. However, its primary war aim remains weakening NATO to regain its sphere of influence in the former Soviet republics and Warsaw Pact states. To achieve this, Russia will conduct a prolonged strategic defense in Ukraine to demonstrate that Ukraine will never regain its territorial integrity and to show that American support will eventually end as it has for other client states.
- Ukraine’s primary war aim of restoring its territorial integrity is shared across its society. To achieve this, Ukraine’s strategy is to break the will of the Russian army and then reclaim Crimea, even if that takes several years.
- Ukrainians do not fear a long war but an inconclusive one that reignites in five or ten years. They want to settle this conflict with Russia once and for all, and see NATO membership as the only way to prevent it from happening again.
- For US policymakers, the dangers arising from the war overshadow opportunities.

One opportunity is a Russian defeat that can serve both as a brake against further Kremlin aggression and as a catalyst for Russia to possibly change her imperial identity. Another opportunity is the chance to strengthen NATO's conventional forces and geographic position to give it an overwhelming advantage against any possible future Russian aggression. For that to happen, Ukraine must enter the alliance.

The greatest threat to Putin over his handling of the war comes from the ultra-patriotic right and accounts for the recent repression of those complaining about his leadership in the wake of the Prigozhin mutiny. Putin has to date balanced the need to mobilize Russia's society and economy for the war while also shielding both as much as possible from the conflict to reduce the risk of social unrest. How long this will be possible is unknown. There are reports that the Kremlin may need to conduct a second mobilization for a prolonged war and despite relatively rosy International Monetary Fund projections, many observers expect a worsening economy as embargoes and limitations on Russian energy sales instituted in late 2022 take greater hold.

Ukrainian society also views the war as existential. Most Ukrainians, witnessing war crimes in occupied territories, knowing of attempts to destroy the Ukrainian language and culture there, and undergoing daily attacks, believe that the Russians are fighting a genocidal war against them. Speaking directly with Ukrainian citizens during my visit, I came away with several clear impressions of how they see the war and are reacting to it. Andriy Klymenko, a member of Ukraine's Black Sea Institute of Strategic Studies, believes Russia can and will sustain a long war. He says that it is impossible to seal off imports to a country like Russia with its immense borders and its allies helping avoid sanctions on energy sales and computer chips. He also believes that the imperial mindset of Russian officials, intellectuals, and even its poorer citizens will sustain the war at least into 2024. Mykhailo Gonchar, president of Ukraine's Center for Global Studies, agrees that Russia will be able to economically support the war for several years, noting that energy revenues from 2022 allowed Russia to increase defense spending in 2023 and that this will continue.

Assessing Russian and Ukrainian War Aims and Strategies.

Russia. Moscow's larger objectives vis-à-vis NATO and American power never altered. The most recent announcement of Russia's war aims coincided with the NATO Summit in Vilnius. On July 12, 2023, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov repeated in an interview that Russia's war aims were the protection of the population of Donbas; the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine (i.e., regime change); and the elimination of security threats that emanate from the territory of Ukraine.

Two key points of Russia's war aims are the following. First is the imperial belief that Ukraine has no agency, the ability to make one's own decisions, and therefore is nothing more than a Western puppet. Second, Moscow believes this war is rooted in Western aggression against Russia for which Ukraine was only an instrument. Therefore, Russia remains focused on its overarching strategic goal to diminish American power and believes it can achieve this goal by attacking US resolve. To do so it has shifted its military strategy to a strategic defense. Moscow's goal is to attrit Ukrainian forces and hold onto as much territory as possible so Washington loses hope that Ukraine will regain its full territorial integrity. The Kremlin's aim is to create a "frozen conflict," which it could claim as a victory by securing a land bridge to Crimea and demonstrating the limits of Western, specifically American, resolve. Russia's strategy now is not to outlast Kyiv but Washington.

This is also a strategy of nihilism (i.e., deterrence by punishment) which prevents an opponent from acting because the costs are too high. In the Kremlin's mind, the destruction of Ukraine's economy and cities, the decades-long consequences of mines and unexploded ordnance in her fertile fields, and the uncertainty of the whereabouts of millions of her citizens in the occupied areas (many deported to Russia, especially children) will serve as a warning to its neighbors, NATO members or not, about what happens to those who anger Moscow. If this strategy works, if a lack of support creates a "frozen conflict" in Ukraine, it could begin a process of splitting the NATO alliance.

Ukraine. In early June 2023, I interviewed Major General Borys Kremenetskyi, the Ukrainian Defense Attaché in Washington. He said Ukraine's definition of victory was regaining its territorial integrity to the internationally agreed upon borders of 1991; using frozen Russian assets to pay for reconstruction in Ukraine; obtaining justice and accountability for Russian war crimes in Ukraine; and entering NATO to provide security for the future.

Currently, the three scenarios for Ukraine's counteroffensive are for it to either break through, gnaw through, or be stalemated. Breaking through will require breaching the Surovikin line with enough reserves to exploit success. If the Ukrainians achieve this, they might exploit the resulting chaos and quickly move through the Perekop Isthmus into Crimea. This is possible, but would require a faster tempo of operations than Ukraine has been able to generate so far. More likely, Ukraine's army can gnaw through Russian fortifications but in doing so might use most of its reserves. A slower rate of advance could allow the Russians to conduct an orderly withdrawal behind the narrow Perekop Isthmus. **The final scenario is a stalemate in which the front does not move forward and attrition requires an extensive rebuilding of Ukrainian reserves. This would put the ball in Washington's court as Kyiv hopes for support into 2024 and the Kremlin hopes that a stalemate will end such support.**

Strategically and politically, control of Crimea will determine the winner and loser in this war. Many Ukrainians consider an unambiguous Russian defeat, including the loss of Crimea, as the key to ending Russian imperialism.

US Policy Considerations and Opportunities.

US foreign policy makers need to decide for what goals and how long America intends to support Ukraine against Russia. Ukraine cannot win without Russia losing; but fears of a Russian collapse or the possible use of nuclear weapons seem to drive US policy more than considerations of the opportunities that a Ukrainian victory could bring.

However, American officials should also recognize opportunities that could strengthen US security if they take advantage of them. One opportunity is

a Russian defeat that can serve both as a brake against further Kremlin aggression and as a catalyst for Russia to possibly change her imperial identity. Another opportunity is the chance to strengthen NATO's conventional forces and geographic position to give it an overwhelming advantage against any possible future Russian aggression. For that to happen, Ukraine must enter the alliance. Russian military losses in Ukraine likely preclude conventional aggression against NATO members bordering Russia for five years or more. The alliance has benefited greatly from Ukraine's sacrifices considering that just a few years earlier many believed that NATO could not prevent Russia from seizing the Baltic states. Now many believe that defeating Russian aggression in Ukraine may deter Chinese aggression against Taiwan. Furthermore, by lessening the conventional threat to the Baltics, the United States can concentrate more against threats in the Indo-Pacific region.

Ukrainian membership in the alliance would make the Black Sea a NATO lake, no longer vulnerable to Russian military and economic pressure. Any latent Russian imperialism will have to be directed into the Caucasus, where it will face Turkish opposition, or Central Asia, where China has already guaranteed Kazakhstan's territorial integrity. Ukraine in NATO will stabilize Europe to a point where it can be defended mostly by European ground forces and US air and air defense forces; the rest of US power can then concentrate on other threats.

One question about winning the peace is *can other alternatives, such as the proposed Israel or South Korea models, suffice instead of NATO membership?*

In short, no. Neither model can prevent war from breaking out again. The South Korea model, an armistice along the current front line,[23] means a frozen conflict until one side regains enough strength to start fighting again. It is Russia's preferred solution, has been rejected by Ukraine, and would create an unstable situation on the continent like a permanently smoldering fuse next to a powder keg. Furthermore, proponents of this option fail to recognize that what has kept South Korea safe for decades was not an armistice but the stationing there of tens of thousands of US soldiers and at one time nuclear weapons.

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The final question is what if Russia breaks apart and we face the specter of loose nuclear weapons and another Russian Civil War?

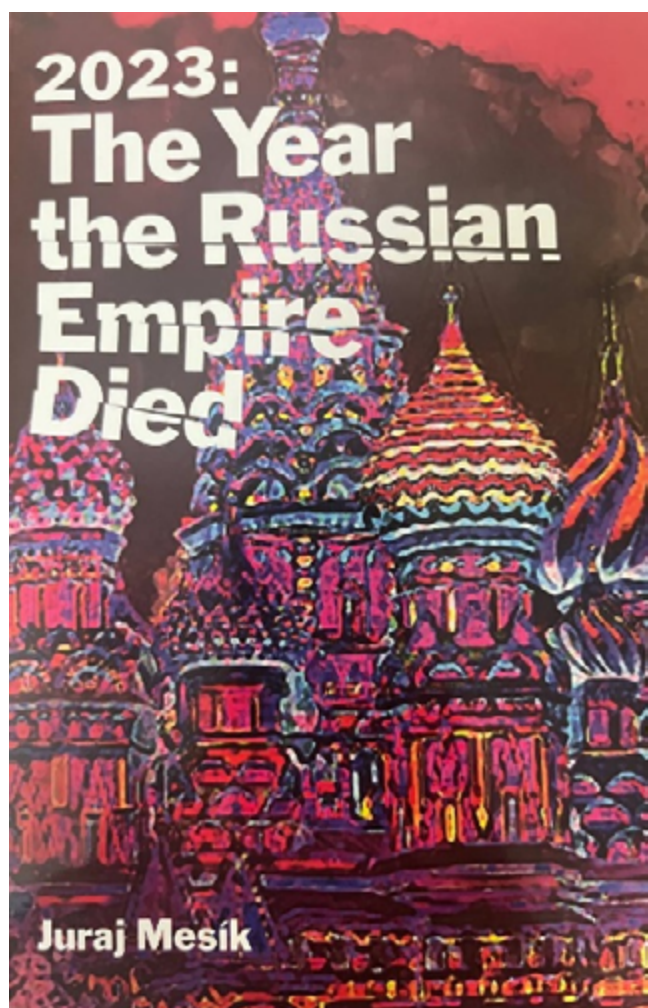
Russia just might break apart. As noted in a previous FPRI paper, the loss of Crimea could lead to Putin's downfall, political violence including even civil war, and the possible disintegration of parts of the Russian Federation.[24] The United States must prepare for this possibility and have

plans to deal with the threats posed to Russia's nuclear inventory just as we had to during the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Empires end and there is nothing observers can do about it if the empire's rulers cannot. Despite the dangers, the end of the Russian empire would mean the end of Russian imperialism, which would be beneficial for long term stability in Europe and the geopolitical position of the United States.

Book “2023: The Year the Russian Empire Died”

The author is **Juraj Mesik** futurologist, researcher in the Slovak Foreign Policy Association.

The abstract is published with the consent of the author.



All empires are dead, and some die unexpectedly. The Russian Empire, renamed the Russian «federation», is also doomed to sudden death. According to the author of this book, after the military defeat in Ukraine, the Russian «federation» will meet with rapid disintegration, like what happened to Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union after the fall of communism and the defeat in Afghanistan. Russia is a colossus with feet of clay, which is supported only by a repressive apparatus, an ideology of megalomania, and profits from the sale of oil and gas.

The full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine exposed the weaknesses of the Russian military-industrial complex and the economy, and significantly weakened all the forces that forced this disparate entity to hold together. The collective action must prepare for the collapse of the Russian Federation, otherwise it will be taken by surprise by the rapid development of events, as it was after the collapse of the USSR. Democracies must not repeat their mistakes from the XX century, in which the West saved the Russian Empire three times, only to see Moscow once again endanger world peace.

Instead of saving the empire for the fourth time, according to the author, this time Western policy should focus on achieving the five Ds – demilitarization, denuclearization, denazification, decolonization, and the gradual dismantling of the remnants of the Russian empire.

The disintegration of the Russian Federation may result in a chaotic and unstable mosaic of many state entities. From the ruins of modern Russia, on the basis of geographical and demographic parameters, the following can potentially be formed:

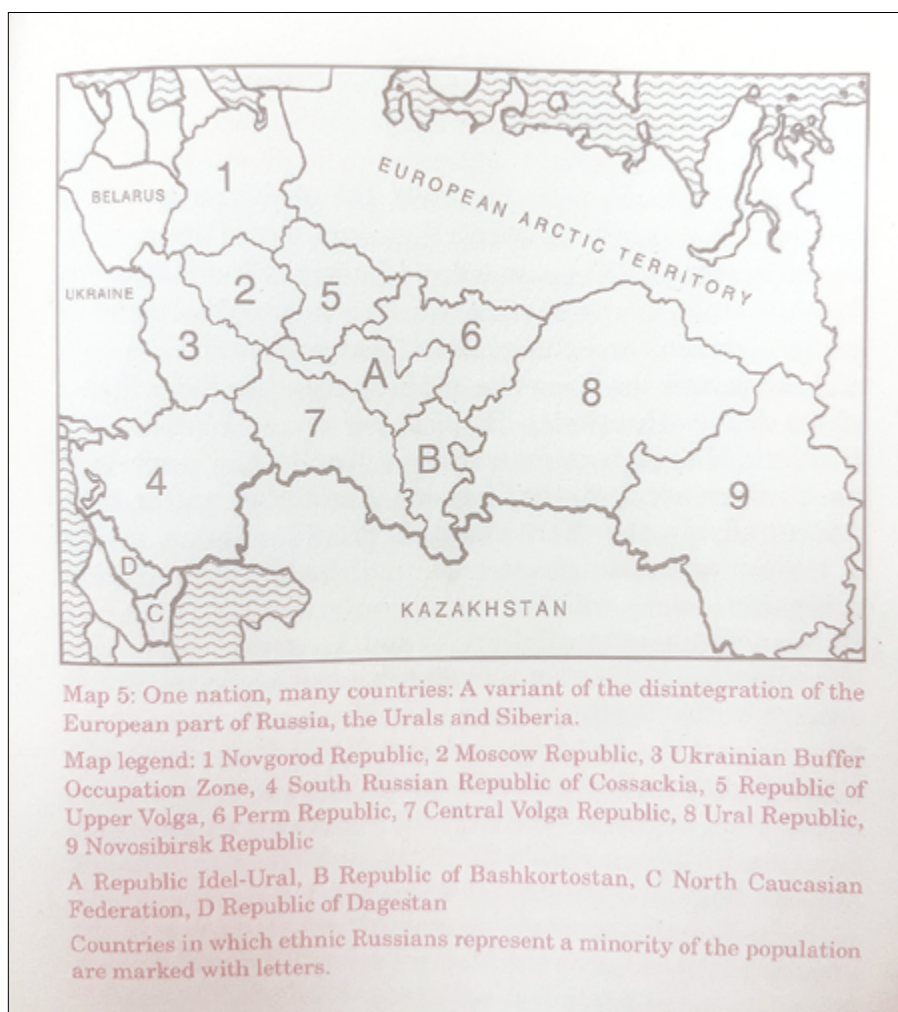
- **Novgorod Republic** – capital St. Petersburg, 125,000 sq. mi, 11 mln. inhabitants.
- **Moscow Republic** – capital Moscow, 66,000 sq.mi, 26 mln. Inhabitants, or alternatively – 96,000 sq.mi with 29 mln. inhabitants;
- **Ukrainian Buffer Occupied Zone** (as an alternative scenario of reintegration with Ukraine and return to the borders of 1991) – 56,000 sq. mi, 6 mln inhabitants, or alternatively 87,000 sq. mi out 9 million people;
- **Southern Russian Republic of Cosackia** – with the capital Rostov-on-Don,

IN FOCUS: THE COLLAPSE OF RUSSIA

an area of 188,000 sq. mi. and 17 million inhabitants;

- **Republic of Upper Volga** – Nizhny Novgorod, 75,000 sq. mi, 5.5 mln inhabitants
- **Perm Republic** – the capital city of Perm, area of 96, 000 sq. mi., 3.5 million inhabitants.
- **Central Volga Republic** – with the capital in Samara, an area of 124,000 sq. mi. and a population of 9 mln. people;
- **Ural Republic** – capital Yekaterenburg, 350,000 sq. mi. and 12 mln. inhabitants;
- **Novosibirsk Republic** – capital Novosibirsk, 350,000 sq.mi., 11 mln inhabitants;
- **Krasnoyarsk Republic** – capital Krasnoyarsk, 500,000 sq.mi, 5,5 mln inhabitants.

According to one of the scenarios, about 113 million inhabitants of today's Russia, mostly ethnic Russians, will live on the territory of these 11 state entities. Russian-speaking minorities, and in some cases diasporas, will live not only in the people's republics of the North Caucasus, the Volga and South Siberia, the Far Eastern Republic, but also in large territories that will be administered by the United States and the European Union: the ChuMA-KA Territories (contiguous in the northwest to the sparsely populated shores of the Arctic Ocean, which today are part of two huge administrative units of the Russian Federation – the Republic of Yakutia and the Krasnoyarsk Territory), the American Arctic Territory (may extend from the borders of the modern Chukotka Autonomous District to the west through , the European Arctic Territory, and as well as Finland, Norway, Poland and Lithuania.



Illustrative map of the variant of the disintegration of the European part of Russia from the book «2023: The Year the Russian Empire died» by Jurai Mesik

IN FOCUS: THE COLLAPSE OF RUSSIA

Russian new state formations can appear on the ruins of the Russian empire with the help of Western democracies, which can only arise if there is a clear vision of the collective West of post-war Russia. Such a vision should be outlined already in 2023, in order to be agreed upon after the defeat of Russia in the war at the upcoming Kyiv Peace Conference.

If the collective West is unable to prepare and gradually implement a plan of controlled disintegration, Russia will either turn into a huge raw material appendage of totalitarian China or plunge into a period of mafia wars with the use of private armies.

Thus, Gazprom's private army can potentially fight with Rosneft's PEC and enter into alliances with the remnants of the defeated Russian armed forces, or militarized entities that are financially supported by oligarchs. These wars will be fought over the raw material base, the large oil/gas fields of the Urals and Siberia, and critical infrastructure

and major export corridors for the transportation of hydrocarbons, as well as over the distribution of the resources of the industrial complex. According to the author, this is one of the main reasons for the spread of private companies in the Russian Federation, the purpose of which is not only to participate in hostilities in Ukraine, but also to guarantee the safety of the sponsors of these armies in the new Russia, as well as to ensure their share in the distribution of resources.

The collective West can draw on the positive and negative historical lessons of the controlled disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires after 1918, as well as the German and Japanese empires after 1945. The most prosperous countries of our time were formed on the ruins of these empires. The West must prepare for the post-Putin period of Russian history. The mutiny and Prigozhin's march to Moscow on June 24, 2023 demonstrated that any development of events is possible in Russia.



Jurai Mesik – expert of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. From 1989 to 1990, Dr. Mesik served as a Member of Parliament in the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly in Prague. From 1990 to 1991, he served as Chairman of the Green Party in Slovakia and vice-chairman of the Federal Green Party. In 1990, he also became Director of the Department of Social Context within the Federal Ministry for Environment in Prague and remained in that position until 1992. From 1993 to the 2002, Mr. Mesik was Director of Nadacia Ekopolis – Environmental Partnership for Central Europe – Slovakia (EPCE). In 1998, Dr. Mesik was elected to the Banska

Bystrica City Council. At the beginning of March 2003, Jurai Mesik started work as the World Bank's Senior Community Foundation Specialist. His two-year assignment is part of a World Bank/Council on Foundations joint initiative to introduce the community foundation concept at the Bank and to explore whether community foundations can be integrated into some of its community-driven development operations in Bank client countries. He worked for the World Bank until 2008 when he returned back to Slovakia. Since then, he works as independent consultant and gives lectures on global challenges on University in Olomouc (Czech Republic) and Comenius University in Bratislava.¹

¹ The bio is taken from open sources: <https://mesik.wordpress.com/english/personal-data/>

Mechanisms to counteract completion of the NORD STREAM 2

With this publication, the editors are starting a new series “From the archives” – publication of some of the works of the Centre for Global Studies “Strategy XXI,” which were of a non-public nature. The need for this is dictated by (dis)information campaigns to discredit Ukraine, using the ignorance of a wide audience, both in Ukraine and abroad, regarding certain aspects of the events that took place. In this case, we will be talking about the strings of the Russian gas pipeline the Nord Stream. As is known, they were blown up on September 26, 2022. Despite the fact that the second year has passed, the investigation did not provide an answer to the question of who is the author of this unprecedented sabotage. Instead, there appeared a number of versions about the authorship of the Americans, then the British, then the Americans together with the Norwegians.

And the version about the “Ukrainian footprint” remains the dominant one, which periodically appears in the media space with new “details”. Is there really a “Ukrainian footprint” in opposing Putin’s streams? Yes, there is. And it was never a secret. Ukraine strongly opposed the project of exporting Putin’s corruption in Europe called the Nord Stream-2. But this was done within the framework of conventional actions, using existing international legal mechanisms. The US sanctions against NS2 can be considered a success of corporate diplomacy of Naftogaz of Ukraine.

The US administration at that time was active in opposition to this project, even encountering active resistance from different calibers of Putinverstehers and the Russian agents in Europe. Taking this into account, the Centre “Strategy XXI” elaborated the hybrid blocking mechanisms of NS2 at its final stage. These plans were hindered by the change of the American administration in 2020, which took a conciliatory position towards the Kremlin and its brainchild called Nord Stream 2.

Despite the fact that the focus of attention in the study is on the subject of the Nord Stream 2, the study has not lost its relevance, because it highlights Russia’s capabilities in the Baltic, methods of compensating Russia for the superiority of NATO’s military potential in the region, the vulnerabilities of the underwater communication infrastructure of the Baltic Sea. In this investigation, 2 years ago, the experts of the Center warned: “...Separate actions of the Russian Federation of a subversive nature against sensitive objects of active participants in opposition to the gas pipeline and the growth of Russian influence in the region are possible, and objects in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are considered especially vulnerable...” It was the October incident in the Baltic Sea with the damage to the Balticconnector gas pipeline between Finland and Estonia and the communication cables between them that brought to our attention the need to publish our archive research.



1. UNDERESTIMATED VULNERABILITIES OF THE NORD STREAM 2 IN GENERAL AND AT THE STAGE OF AN ATTEMPT TO COMPLETE THE CONSTRUCTION.

According to estimates by the Expert Group, there are following underrated vulnerabilities in Gazprom's marine gas pipeline projects in general as well as particularly in the Nord Stream 2:

1. Synchronization of Russia's intervention with the relocation of the sabotage-terrorist group in the East of Ukraine with its political and diplomatic efforts to promote in Europe new projects bypassing Ukrainian gas pipelines in 2014.
2. Use of the Nord Stream 2 project as a corruptogenic business-bait and mechanism to generate financial flows in the third party interest.
3. Use of the corridor for extra-project (military) purposes inconsistent with gas business.

The vulnerability 1 has a significant importance in the context of the draft bill S.1189¹ and H.R.7561² «Stopping Malign Activities from Russian Terrorism Act» initiated by Senator Cory Gardner on April 11, 2019 and Congressman Max Rose on July 9, 2020 respectively, along with the June blueprint «The RSC National Security Strategy: Strengthening America & Countering Global Threats» by the group of 13 Republicans led by Republican Study Committee Chairman Mike Johnson and National Security & Foreign Affairs Task Force Chairman Joe Wilson, where it is proposed to determine Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism³.

The vulnerability 2 can be used to initiate international investigation on corruptogenic use of a portion of incomes from gas sales by the companies affiliated with Gazprom, in particular, with a purpose to soften the negative reaction of key politicians and government officials, from the

leading countries of the European Union, member countries of the Normandy Four – Germany and France first of all – to aggression against Ukraine and further actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine. Nord Stream AG and Nord Stream 2 AG, being the operators, are registered out of the European Union – in Switzerland, and may be used for the purposes of creating financial flow for the chain of money transfers in order to provide subversive activity of the Russian Federation in Europe and the USA.

The vulnerability 3 can be used to initiate the audit from the NATO side or even the group of member-states in the Baltic Sea zone on submarine activity of the Russian Federation and use of the gas pipeline in order to solve the military tasks.

1.1. Synchronization of intervention of the Russian Federation in the east of Ukraine in 2014 with its diplomatic efforts to promote an extension of the Nord Stream in Europe

The Russian concealed intervention by means of sabotage-terrorist groups in Ukrainian Donbas in spring 2014 and flurry of political and diplomatic activity of the Russian Federation and Gazprom in Europe mean that “crisis in and around Ukraine” inter alia served as an allegation of necessity to build gas pipelines bypassing Ukraine, which is locked in “civil war”.

In March 2014 an armed sabotage-terrorist group led by the FSB Colonel Igor Girkin, which stationed in Crimea after the occupation by the Russian Federation, prepared by the FSB for the operations in the east of Ukraine and in April moved to Donbas. On April 12, it captured the building of the National Police of Ukraine and the Security Service of Ukraine in Sloviansk. From then on, in cooperation with other sabotage groups and illegal armed groups, created by the FSB and GRU (The Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation) they seized control over the part of Donbas. Later in his interviews to the Russian media, after leaving Donbas, Igor Girkin underlined, that an armed confrontation in Ukraine erupted exactly due to the activity of his groups. The Russian propaganda showed that as “the civil war in Ukraine”, which led to “self-destruction of Ukraine”, “transit risks”, etc.

¹ <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/s1189/text>

² <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/hr7561/text>

³ The RSC National Security Strategy: Strengthening America & Countering Global Threats. <https://rsc-johnson.house.gov/task-forces/national-security-foreign-affairs-task-force>

Based on abovementioned propaganda narratives, Russia intensified its energy diplomacy in April-May 2014 with the purpose to speed up the realization of the South Stream gas pipeline project in the Black sea and initiate the Nord Stream 2 in the Baltic Sea under the pretext of unreliability of Ukraine as a transit country for Russian gas exports to Europe. The meetings between Gazprom top management and high-ranking officials of the European Commission, the German Federal Government, heads of leading European gas companies and special messages of the President Putin to the European leaders on April 10 and May 15, 2014, phone conversations with A. Merkel on April 4, 2014, together with A. Merkel and F. Hollande on June 19 2014, and media-events held by Gazprom's top-management had to prove that⁴:

- **April 2, 2014:** Brussels hosted the working meetings of Alexey Miller, Chairman of the Gazprom Management Committee with Gunter Oettinger, European Commissioner for Energy and Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German Foreign Minister.

- **April 10, 2014:** Vladimir Putin addressed a letter to the leaders of several European countries, to which Russian natural gas is supplied via Ukraine's territory.

- **April 15, 2014:** Strasbourg hosted today a working meeting between Alexey Miller, Chairman of the Gazprom Management Committee and Guenther Oettinger, European Commissioner for Energy in the European Commission.

- **April 22, 2014:** Gazprom and Austria point out relevancy of alternative Russian gas routes to Europe.

- **May 4, 2014:** Telephone conversation between V. Putin and A. Merkel. Discussion of the crisis situation in Ukraine continued... The leaders of Russia and Germany also exchanged their opinions on ensuring the supply and transit of Russian gas in accordance with the outcomes of multilateral gas consultations held recently in Warsaw with participation of Russia, EU and Ukraine.

- **15 May 2014:** Vladimir Putin addressed to the leaders of the European countries with the message regarding the supply and transit of Russian gas across the territory of Ukraine.

- **June 19, 2014:** Telephone conversation with Angela Merkel and François Hollande. The exchange of views on the development of the crisis in Ukraine continued. They also discussed possible consequences of Kyiv's disruption of talks on settling debt for Russian gas supplies on **Europe's economy and energy security**.

Alexander Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of the Board of PJSC Gazprom and General Director of Gazpromexport, who played the role of “corporate foreign minister”, made two demonstrative statements in April-May.

The first appeared in an interview for Handelsblatt on April 7, 2014: “In order to avoid risks with unreliable transit countries, Gazprom and its European partners have built the Nord Stream gas pipeline via the Baltic Sea, and are planning to build South Stream pipeline through the Black Sea”⁵.

The second Medvedev's statement – about the expansion of the Nord Stream – was made at his meeting with Han Fennema, CEO and Chairman of the Executive Board of the Dutch gas company Gasunie on May 22, 2014, and was reflected in the official press release: “In addition, the meeting participants discussed the issues of improving the European gas infrastructure in terms of boosting Russian gas supplies to Europe. They mentioned the successful progress and the possible **expansion of the Nord Stream project**”⁶.

On June 3, 2014, at the Press Conference with Gazprom's top management, the materials were disseminated, in particular “Gas Export and Enhancing Reliability of Gas Supply to Europe”, where it was stated: “With a view to boost direct supplies of Russian natural gas to European consumers, the possibility of constructing the Yamal – Europe-2 gas pipeline **and extending the Nord Stream project is being studied**”⁷.

4 <https://www.gazprom.ru/press/news/2014/april/article187550/>
<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/page/360>
<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/page/354>
<https://www.gazprom.ru/press/news/2014/april/article188809/>
<https://www.gazprom.ru/press/news/2014/april/article189329/>
<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/page/345>
<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/articles/21025>

5 <https://www.gazprom.ru/press/news/reports/2014/interview-medvedev-hannelsblatt/>

6 <https://www.gazprom.ru/press/news/2014/may/article191546/>
7 <https://www.gazprom.ru/press/news/conference/2014/export-to-europe/>

On June 16, at the Joint Press Conference with Alexander Novak, Russian Minister of Energy, Alexey Miller, Chairman of Gazprom Management Committee stated: “State and economic management mechanisms have been destroyed. In fact, Ukraine is destroying itself... As for the Ukrainian transit risks. The Russian party has been speaking about them for a long time. **And it is due to the Ukrainian transit risks that such gas pipelines as Nord Stream and South Stream are being constructed. And speaking of current Ukrainian transit risks, there are some and rather considerable ones.**”⁸

It is noteworthy that the next day, June 17, an act of sabotage occurred on the Urengoy-Pomary-Uzhhorod main gas pipeline in the Poltava region. A similar sabotage took place on the same gas pipeline on May 12 in Ivano-Frankivsk region. The explosion coincided with the cessation of gas supplies for Ukraine and the withdrawal of the Russian side from the negotiation process with the participation of the European Commission on the security of natural gas supplies to Ukraine and the EU.

In the special Gazprom’s Press Release of July 11, 2014, it was stated: “The Gazprom Board of Directors approved the Company’s policy on export routes diversification and additional measures aimed at increasing the reliability of gas supplies to European markets. With a view to improve the reliability of supplies the Company carries out projects for building new export gas pipelines which mitigate transit risks... Two strings of the Nord Stream gas pipeline are laid under the Baltic Sea. There is a possibility to extend this pipeline corridor by building one or two additional strings. The South Stream project is progressing according to schedule”⁹

Thus, the terrorist activity of sabotage groups of the Russian FSB in Donbas in April-July 2014 correlates with the activity of the Russian political leadership and Gazprom in Europe to spread at the international level the narratives about the “crisis in Ukraine”, “civil war” and “self-destruction by Ukraine” as a basis for its discrediting as a transit country with the simultaneous imposition on Europeans of

bypass gas pipeline projects in the Black and Baltic Seas. It was during this period that the possibility of expanding the Nord Stream was first mentioned, and a corresponding project called Nord Stream 2 was officially announced in 2015 at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

The political and diplomatic activity of Russia and Gazprom in pushing for the expansion of the Nord Stream in Europe declined sharply after July 17, 2014 – the shootdown of the MH17 flight by Buk-M1 anti-air missile launcher in the sky over the occupied territories of Donbas. It is obvious that the suspicion of Russia as the culprit of the shootdown of a civilian aircraft created a negative background for Kremlin to continue its actions to directly lobby for the gas pipeline project. Russia took a time-out by switching to the Chinese direction – lobbying of the Power of Siberia pipeline, while the topic of expanding Nord Stream was transferred to the inter-corporate level with a group of European companies.

The aspect of financing the “war in Ukraine” by the gas lobby is of key importance for finding out the hidden mechanism of launching and supporting subversive and terrorist activities. Part of the funds for the activities of Girkin’s group was received through the FSB. But only a part. The appearance in the war against Ukraine of the name of the Orthodox oligarch Konstantin Malofeev and his company Marshall Capital, in which Igor Girkin worked as the head of the corporate security service, indicates, the most probable indirect scheme of financing the Russian hybrid invasion under the scenario of “civil war” with the aim to create political, diplomatic and media illustrations of “transit risks through Ukraine”, “Ukraine as an unreliable transit link” and the need to build bypass pipelines. In general, it looks like this:

→ **The political leadership of the Russian Federation** (Vladimir Putin) directs Gazprom (Alexei Miller) to perform complexes of works on the construction of South Stream and Nord Stream 2 bypassing Ukraine through a system of contracts with inflated budget. At the same time, the FSB (Alexander Bortnikov) receives a task of a special operation to destabilize Ukraine to demonstrate to Europe its unreliability as a transit link →

⁸ <https://www.gazprom.ru/press/news/2014/june/article193523/>

⁹ <https://www.gazprom.ru/press/news/2014/july/article195875/>

→ **Gazprom** allocates overpriced financing to contractors: Arkady Rotenberg’s Stroygazmontazh (SGM) and Gennady Tymchenko’s Stroytransneftgaz (STNG) – people from Putin’s inner circle →

→ **SGM and STNG** direct part of the funds through the traditional mechanism of fictitious work to fill the “anti-transit fund” for further special operations “Civil War in Ukraine”. The FSB, in agreement with the Kremlin, determines Konstantin Malofeev’s Marshal Capital as the performer of the special operation →

→ **Private Marshall Capital** finances the activities of the subversive terrorist group of Igor Girkin, who is both a subordinate of K. Malofeev and an officer of the FSB.

However, withdrawals from contractors did not go directly to Marshall Capital due to certain business transactions, as there was a risk of exposing the scheme in the future. But such a deal was planned due to the purchase by A. Rothenberg of a Marshall Capital’s stake (10.7% for \$ 1.55 billion) in Rostelecom in 2013. It was stopped at the last minute, probably because of the high risk of exposure and sanctions in the future, when the operation begins. According to our estimates, preference was given to the cash filling of the “anti-transit fund” through the cashing out of part of the kickbacks from SGM contracts for the construction of gas pipelines and compressor stations in Russia. (K. Malofeev, in the end, was able to sell its stake in Rostelecom to its subsidiary and receive funds).

This scheme is indirectly indicated by the report “Gazprom: Performing as Designed” by analysts of Sberbank CIB Alex Fek and Anna Kotelnikova in 2018, which caused a resonance and for which they were fired. It contained the following conclusions:

- contractors and Gazprom work together under the guise of implementing projects in Russia, where it is difficult to control them;
- Gazprom’s huge capital expenditures are intended for contractors (SGM and STNG);
- they are all connected with the Russian authorities.

Also, «The Insider» in the publication of May 27, 2014 stated: «There could be several scenarios of interaction between Malofeev and the administration [Office of the President of the Russian Federation – author’s note]. **One of the most likely is the direct use of Malofeev’s resources to conduct hostilities without the use of Russia’s official armed forces.** It is known that Malofeev had previously participated in a “symbiosis” with the authorities, when his Safe Internet League became one of the main initiators of laws on censorship on the Internet, thus presenting these laws as coming from civil society. In the case of Ukraine, Malofeev is doing a service by allowing the authorities to say that the separatist initiative comes from some “militia”¹⁰.

Given that in 2019 Gazprom bought the shares of contractors and became their owner, the described scheme looks quite real and fits into the algorithm of concealment through reorganization under its roof of SGM and STNG from possible investigations in the future.

Taken together, these positions should serve as a basis for a detailed investigation by the US authorities in order to create a real threat of imposing sanctions on Gazprom in view of his donor participation in the chain of financing terrorist activities, so that Russia may later decide to abandon Nord Stream 2 in exchange for not applying sanctions against Gazprom.

1.2. Use of offshore gas pipeline corridors for extra-project purposes.

It first appeared in 2018-2019, when, according to the intelligence information of the Ukrainian Navy, tests and commissioning of a new Delta-MGA underwater environment monitoring system, which is actively used in the interests of JSC Gazprom (safety of offshore pipelines), were accomplished. These sonar stations are installed along the route of the TurkStream gas pipeline. Thus, this topic can be used to promote the idea of examination of the equipment installed on the route of the Russian gas pipelines: the Nord Stream, TurkStream and Blue Stream, whether they comply with their declared project purpose. **It is necessary to require the Russian side to provide a complete list of**

¹⁰ Marshall Malofeev. How the Russian raider captured Southeast of Ukraine. The Insider 27 мая 2014 <https://theins.ru/politika/796>

equipment located in the gas pipelines’ safety zone and perform appropriate inspections by technical means on site. Until such information is provided and verified by NATO, the construction of the NS2 cannot be proceeded.

The problem of certification of Russian marine gas transportation projects is the lack of safety verification or confirmation of the impossibility of using the gas pipeline for extra-project purposes, not related to the provision of gas transportation and maintenance of its functional technical condition. The requirements of national regulators when granting relevant permits concern only man-made safety, environmental safety and anti-terrorist measures. A priori, it is considered that the gas production and gas transportation systems may be under one or another threat of external origin (natural or man-made), but they cannot themselves generate or contribute to the generation of threats of a military nature for third parties. **The latter is not true, since Russia created and developed hybrid warfare technologies, using non-military infrastructure to create hidden advantages. This was confirmed in the Black Sea, and therefore the Russian Federation can use it as a template in the Baltic as well.**

2. ARGUMENTATION FOR CREATION OF THE ANTI ACCESS/AREA DENIAL (A2/AD) IN THE AREA PLANNED FOR THE NS2 COMPLETION.

2.1. Capabilities of Russia in the Baltics.

Russia has been pursuing a policy of increasing its naval capabilities over the past decade. This also applies to the smallest of four fleets of the Russian Navy – the Baltic Fleet (BF). But despite some increase in military capabilities, the BF loses significantly to NATO naval forces in the region. This is especially true for submarine operations, mine barriers, and NATO control over the strategically important Danish Straits, through which major exports of crude and oil products from Russia pass.

In addition, the Baltic Sea is an operational area for NATO Standing Maritime Groups. They are engaging warships from outside the region. For example, a NATO standing naval maritime immediate reaction forces (SNMG1) now consists of ships from Portugal, Belgium and Canada, and

NATO mine countermeasures immediate reaction force (SNMCMG1) and includes ships from the Netherlands, Belgium and Norway in addition to the Baltic ships. The maritime operational unit of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia BALTOPS has been strengthened and acquired additional capabilities, and since 2016 the amphibious component has been included in its composition. The last BALTOPS exercise in June 2020 involved ships from 17 NATO countries, as well as from neutral Sweden and Finland.

Thus, Russia is constantly trying to find non-standard and not entirely clear to the West methods of compensating for the advantage of NATO’s military potential in the region. The Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2 gas pipelines contain secret additional opportunities for such compensation.

Given the pathological antipathy of the Russian leadership to NATO, and on the basis of the abovementioned assessment of the geopolitical environment, it is possible to assume with high probability that the “streams” are clearly included in military activities in the Baltic Sea.

The use of the Nord Stream corridor to explore and monitor the underwater environment in almost the entire Baltic Sea area provides certain operational advantages that minimize the gap of the Russian Federation in the total combat potential at sea. This allows to more effectively use ships and missile ships available in the BF in countering NATO forces at sea, to determine in advance the covert deployment of submarine and surface forces of NATO countries from bases in areas of firing positions or patrols.

Technically, it is easy to implement the program of creating underwater advantages for the Russian Armed Forces and it will not require significant resources. Using the Delta-MGA’s standard gas pipeline security engineering system specifically designed for Gazprom, the Russian military only needs to add some technical components and secretly carry out work to install underwater sonar stations in the right places, including territorial waters of coastal countries. Here Russia has considerable experience and capabilities. Given the shallow depths of the Baltic Sea and the short distances from the Nord Stream corridor to the coasts of neighboring countries and the

critically important Åland Islands, Gotland and Bornholm, Russia can deploy a passive underwater surveillance system in a relatively short period of time at the base of several lines of the MGK-608 ‘North’ passive sonar complex.

The system of underwater surveillance in the Baltic Sea should be considered as a component of the global surveillance system created by the Russian Ministry of Defense under the official name “Unified State System for Surface and Underwater Lighting” (USSSUL) HARMONY”. It is based on special submarine robotic complexes that come out of the submarine and deploy sonar stations on the bottom. The robots transmit received data to the command control point via satellites. According to experts, some elements of the system have already begun to function, and fully HARMONY will work in 2020. This system is able to make “transparent” entire areas of the world’s oceans, detecting all ships, submarines and even low-flying aircrafts.

The Nord Stream’s offshore infrastructure can be used by Russia to build through military capabilities its superiority over NATO forces in the Baltic Sea region. Its place in the above-mentioned global system HARMONY can be defined as a component of the information module “Sonar data support of the Russian Navy and Federal Border Service of the Russian Federation” in the “Military Contour of the Unified System for Lighting Information on the Marine Situation”. The Operator is Hydroacoustika Center as a classified unit for the collection of sonar data (location of the Center – unknown).

The obtained sonar data can be used by special units of the Russian Navy to establish control, as well as damage, if necessary, of the submarine power cables, fiber-optic submarine telecommunications cable systems, pipelines and other underwater objects of NATO and EU countries. The latest example is the sudden disappearance in August 2019 in Eckernförde Bay of the large Boknis Eck monitoring station of the German Center for Ocean Research GEOMAR, which was used to collect important scientific data in the Baltic Sea. Only the severed communication cable remained at the station’s installation site.

2.2. Submarine communications in the southwestern Baltic.

The modern economy depends on the infrastructure for information transmission. Approximately 95% of intercontinental information traffic (e-mail, telephone calls, money transfers, etc.) is transmitted through fiber-optic submarine telecommunications cable systems laid on the sea and ocean floor. Breaking them can have serious economic and security consequences for affected countries¹¹. In the case of malicious sabotage, control systems, communications, energy infrastructure, etc., are affected. The time required to troubleshoot a fiber-optic line can be quite long. There is no general procedure for responding to emergencies.

All this applies equally to the submarine communications infrastructure of the Baltic Sea, where there is a fiber-optic submarine telecommunications cable system. Disruption of communication due to the interruption of submarine cables will lead to serious consequences over a long period of time, which is difficult to mitigate, even for those countries where there are several communication hubs. Therefore, fiber-optic submarine telecommunications cable system is an important target in hybrid warfare. Admiral James Stavridis, the former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), wrote that in the event of heightened tensions, access to the submarine cable system was a rich catch for reconnaissance as well as for serious damage to the enemy’s economy. Thus, such actions can lead to disorganization and instability in countries that have fallen victim to hybrid aggression and demonstrate the inability of public authorities to rebuild infrastructure.

Many submarine cables run at the bottom of the Baltic Sea, connecting energy and data flows between NATO and the EU, which are important for their economies.

B In the south-western sector of the sea, the “Baltika” and “Denmark – Poland-2” pipelines have been laid. The latter crosses the section of

¹¹ An earthquake in 2006 broke 9 cables off the coast of Taiwan. 11 specialist vessels were deployed to deal with the aftermath, working for 49 days to repair the damage.

IN FOCUS: FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE CENTER “STRATEGY XXI”

the route of both the existing Nord Stream and the unfinished section of Nord Stream 2 between the island of Bornholm and the coast of Poland.

In addition to the fiber-optic cable systems network, the Baltic has a network of cables for power transmission. For example, SwePol Link between Sweden and Poland. One of the first cables in the world was Gotland, which connects mainland Sweden with the island of Gotland. The Baltic cable from Gerrenvik (Sweden) to Lubeck (Germany) is the longest power cable in the world – 250 km.

Russia has “the most advanced sea warfare force,” according to a report by the US Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

In particular, it is referred to the placement of sonar stations, survey of the seabed, “wiretaps of submarine cables” to collect intelligence data.

In December 2017, the UK chief of the defense staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, warned that Russia could “immediately and potentially catastrophically” hit the world’s economies if submarine cables – 545,018 miles long in 213

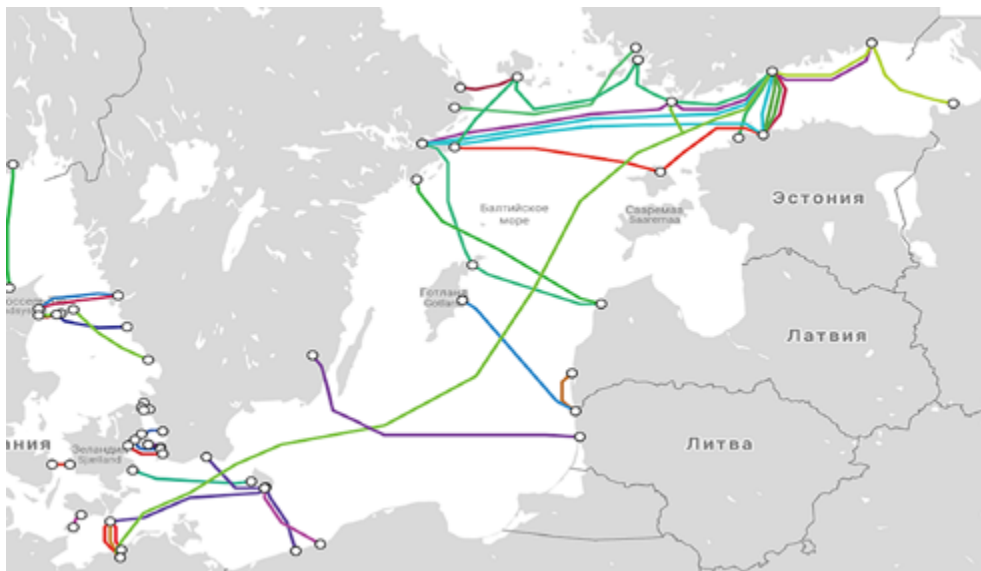


Fig. 1. Location of submarine cables in the Baltic Sea.
Source: <https://www.submarinecablemap.com/#/>

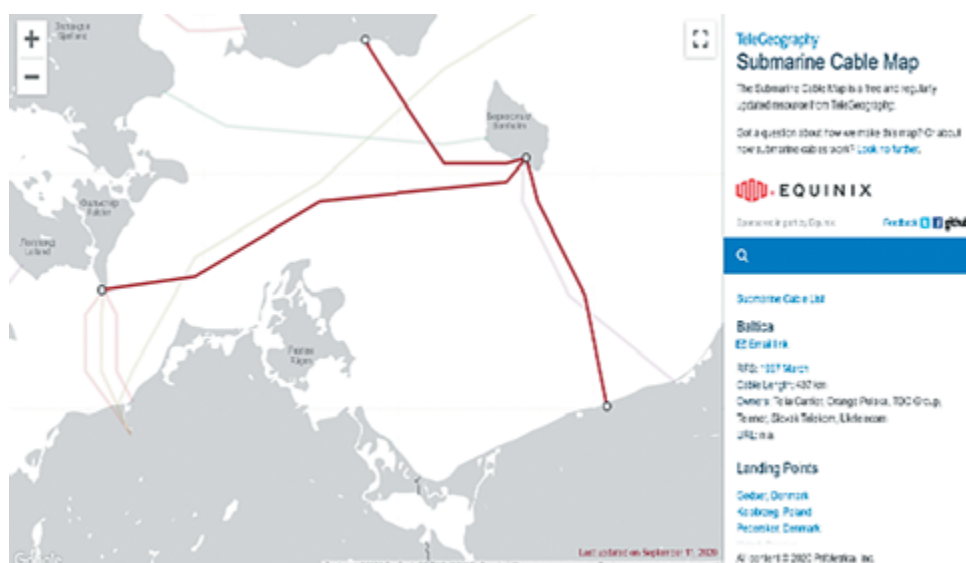


Fig. 2. The fiber-optic submarine telecommunications cables between the island of Bornholm and the coast of Poland

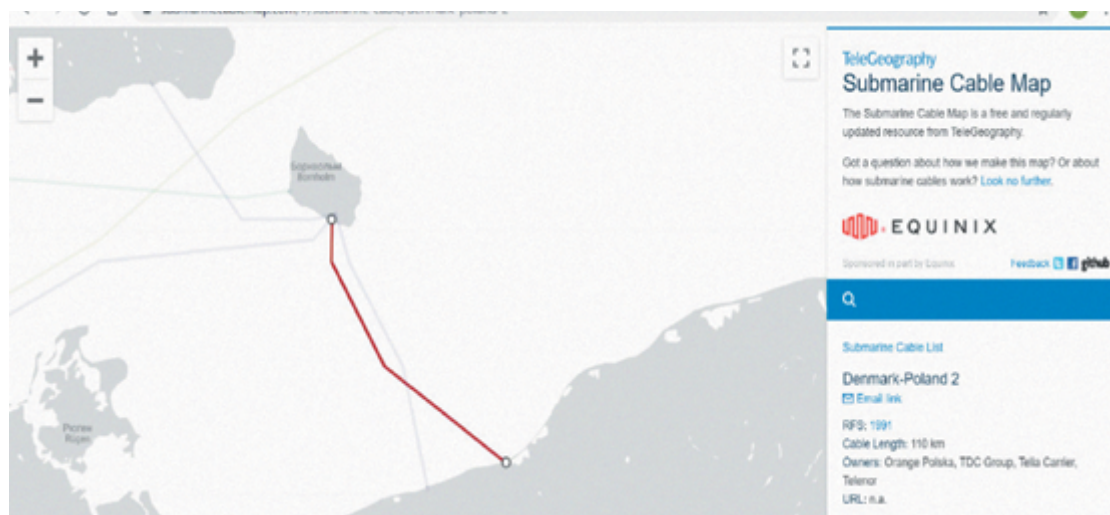


Fig. 3. The Denmark-Poland-2 fiber-optic submarine telecommunications cable system between the island of Bornholm and the coast of Poland.

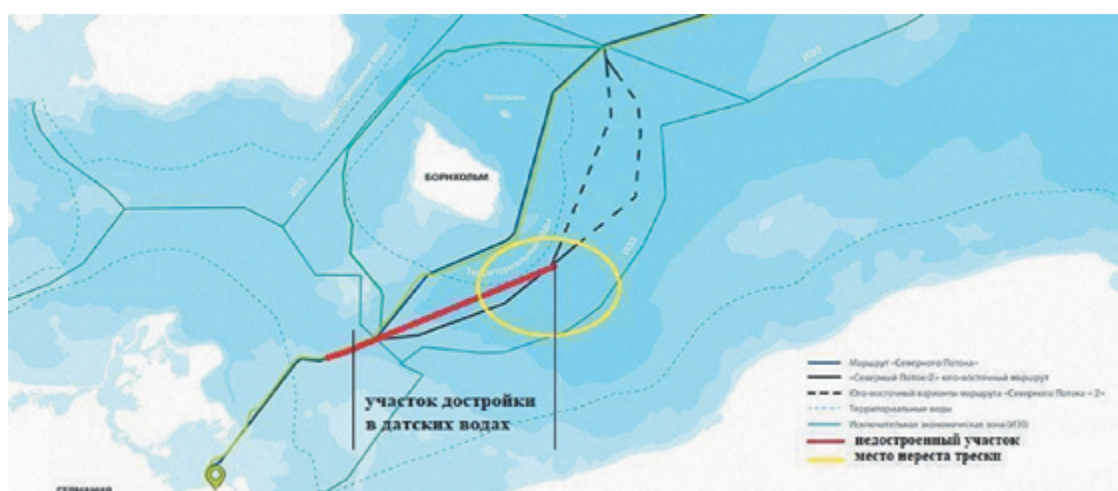


Fig. 4. An unfinished section of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline

independent cable systems – were cut or disrupted. Also, he stated that the vulnerability of undersea lines posed a “new risk to our way of life”. He said NATO had prioritised the protection of the cables “in response to the threat posed by the modernisation of the Russian navy, both nuclear and conventional submarines and ships”.

At the same time, Rear Admiral Andrew C. Lennon, Commander of Submarines NATO (COMSUBNATO) stated “we are now seeing Russian underwater activity in the vicinity of undersea cables that I don’t believe we have ever seen.” “Russia is clearly taking an interest in NATO and NATO nations’ undersea infrastructure,” he said. “And what we have observed is an increased activity of that in the vicinity of undersea cables. We know that these auxiliary submarines are designed to work on the ocean floor, and they’re transported by the mother ship, and we believe

they may be equipped to manipulate objects on the ocean floor.”

Given that the Nord Stream route crosses most of the Baltic Sea’s submarine cables, Russia will have much easier access to them for espionage and/or sabotage.

The Main Directorate for Deep-Water Research units are able to do this. This is a military unit 45707, one of the most classified military units of the Russian Federation, which plans and is engaged in special underwater operations. The hydronauts from the Main Directorate for Deep-Water Research are engaged in reconnaissance activities – wiretapping communication cables, installing motion sensors, as well as collecting from the seabed the wreckage of ships, aircraft and satellites – both their own, so as not to fall into the wrong hands (NATO), and others to

obtain information about the level of technological development of potential adversaries (NATO).

According to former hydronaut Vladimir Ashik, the task of his colleagues was to “gather intelligence information on enemy equipment, protect and maintain deep-water lines, lift from the bottom the remains of secret equipment left after tests or accidents.” Military unit 45707 is located in Peterhof – a suburb of St. Petersburg. It is likely that this unit may be used for special military operations on submarine cables in the Baltic under the guise of certain scheduled routine work on the route of the Nord Stream corridor.

Nord Stream’s infrastructure brings Russia closer to areas of covert intervention and sabotage at NATO’s strategically important military and industrial sites.

This applies primarily to the naval bases of Allies, Sweden and Finland, seaports and LNG terminals in Świnoujście (Poland) and Klaipėda (Lithuania). For this purpose units of the naval special forces of the Baltic Fleet of the Russian Federation (561st detachment), hydronauts from the Main Directorate for Deep-Water Research can be involved.

Special operations are greatly facilitated by the proximity of the Nord Stream to their areas and the ability to justify the Russian presence through the presence of a long pipeline system, the smooth operation of which requires technical supervision, which can be used for military purposes.

The Nord Stream gas pipeline is a kind of “force projection lever” for special operations in the central and, especially, in the south-western part of the Baltic Sea. Maintenance and security of the Nord Stream pipeline can be used as a basis for manipulating international maritime law (UNCLOS 1982) and the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS 1974).

2.3. The main proposed scenario to counteract completion of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.

The American maritime security expert Frank Hoffman in his research “Assessing Baltic Sea Regional Maritime Security” has modeled a possible scenario of the hybrid attack by Russia in

the Baltic Sea Region. Inter alia, he makes a model of damage in critical energy and information infrastructure – an explosion on LNG Terminal in Świnoujście, which resulted in casualties and damage to submarine cables that connect Sweden with the southern Baltic. The latter could lead to chaos in business, Swedish companies would complain of billions in losses.

Admiral James Stavridis, U.S. Navy (ret.): “The United States must start to consider its response to hybrid warfare at sea, which may require developing new tactics and technologies, working closely with allies and partners, and building U.S. hybrid capability to counter its deployment by other nations and eventually transnational actors.” Taking that into account, the scenario of navy exercises “Baltic Rapid Response” which would be held in the part of sea area where the gas pipeline lies, is proposed.

2.3.1. The Baltic Rapid Response exercises legend.

The counterintelligence services of the Baltic states, Poland, Denmark and Sweden observe increased intelligence activity of Ostland in areas of NATO’s coalition battlegroups deployment on the southern coast of the Baltic, while the naval forces of the Baltic states – in the area of strategically important islands – Bornholm and Gotland. The Polish counterintelligence service fixes an increased attention of some tourist groups around the LNG-terminal in Świnoujście and the land-based terminal of the Baltic Pipe gas pipeline, as well as around the area of American forces bases in Poland.

The Polish fleet observes unusual maneuvers of oil tanker under the flag of Caribbean country between Bornholm Island and Polish coast, and the appearance of Russian hydrographic survey vessel with a group of hydronauts from the Main Directorate of Deep-Sea Research according to information provided by the intelligence services.

Meanwhile, there is information on the damage of two fiber-optic submarine telecommunications cable systems – Baltica and Denmark-Poland 2. Poland, Denmark, Sweden face serious communication problems and address the USA. The USA, at the request of Poland and Denmark

Three Islands Key to Baltic Security

The location of the Åland, Gotland, and Bornholm islands are strategically important to security in the Baltic Sea. Russia has long recognized the value of these islands and has even carried out military training exercises that simulated capturing them.



Fig. 5. Strategically important islands of the Baltic Sea

NATO battlegroups in the Baltics



Fig.6. NATO coalition battlegroups in the Baltics

as its NATO Allies, start an emergency operation in order to provide help.

An appeal to London for help of the Royal Navy in order to overcome the crisis is not excluded. The naval special operations group led by the flagman – the Arleigh Burke class destroyer immediately

heads from the U.S. naval station NAVSTA Rota near Spanish city Cadiz to the Baltic Sea.

To achieve the objectives of exercises, a cable laying vessel (it could be a vessel from specialized technical fleet of Poland or Denmark – OSK-ShipTech A. S. with 30 years` experience in

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marine cables installation), ships and motor boats of Polish and Danish Naval Forces, are involved.

The A2/AD zone is declared in the southwestern sector of the Baltic Sea, the work on emergency fiber-optic submarine telecommunications cable systems (probably together with a power cable) between Polish and Danish (Bornholm) coasts starts in order to replace a disabled one.

The zone covers the waters, where the gas pipeline should be completed. The zone is secured by warships and motor boats of the US Navy, Polish Navy, Danish Navy and probably British. The seafloor works are made by robotic devices.

The media informs that the “Baltic Rapid Response” exercises involve the most modern robotic systems equipped with an Artificial Intelligence, which are the results of the top secret projects and are currently being tested.

The duration of exercises is 1 month. The A2/AD zone can be extended for a long term due to the “incident” – loss of secret submarine robot with an Artificial Intelligence which is being searched in all-out effort mode. There is a suspicion that it could be stolen by sabotage and reconnaissance group of frogmen from Ostland.



Photo 1. The working process of the cable laying vessel and auxiliary ships OSK-ShipTech in the Baltic Sea

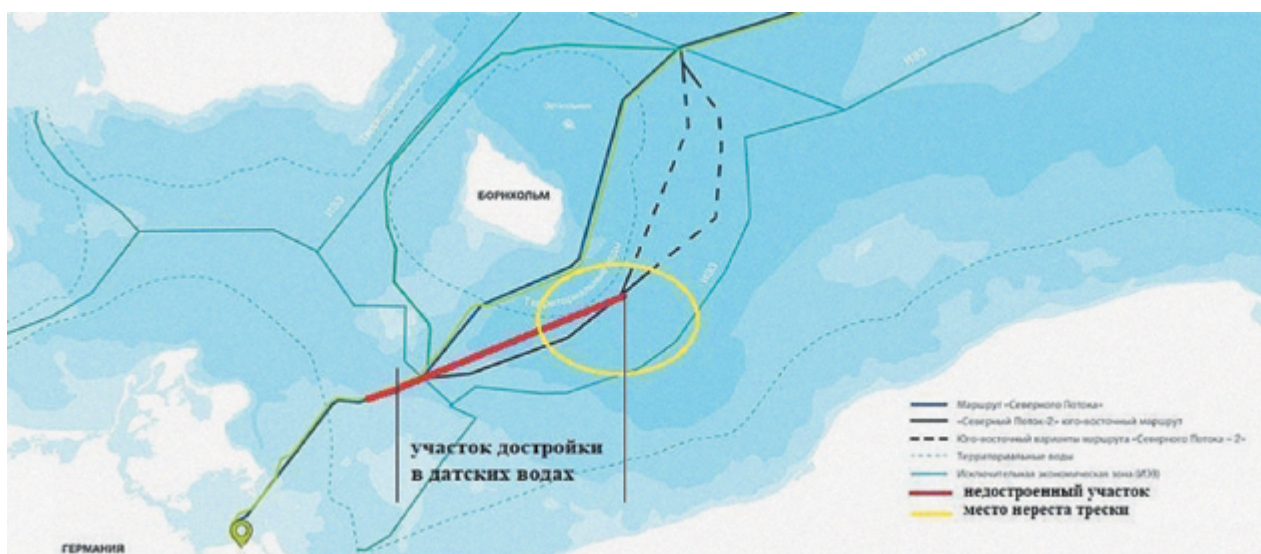


Fig. 7. An approximate example of A2/AD zone for exercises Baltic Rapid Response

2.3.2. Probable Russia's response to Allies exercises.

Russia's response to exercises and A2/AD zone across the Nord Stream 2 pipeline route would be strongly negative. It would be a tit-for-tat response to practices, which Russia uses in the Black Sea over the last years, when creating the anti-access zones during the exercises Sea Breeze-2019, Sea Breeze-2020, Agile Spirit consequently militating against them.

This was unprecedented when Russia cordoned off sea areas along the coast of occupied Crimea and its Caucasian coast of the Black Sea during the Caucasus-2020 exercise.

Russia has also disrupted the laying of the 400 km long NordBalt cable linking Lithuania and Sweden in April 2014 by means of the Baltic fleet

when creating A2/AD zone in the Baltic Sea¹². According to the statement of spokesperson of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the ALCEDO vessel chartered for cable laying, was asked by the Russian Navy to leave its position in Lithuania's exclusive economic zone, where it had a legitimate right to be, according to international law.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania has also made statements on Russia's interference in the cable laying process. Russia ignored official notes by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania referring to “protection of their military zones”.

The reaction to this use of force and proposal to counteract it also were made in the Parliament of

¹² <https://www.thelocal.se/20150502/russian-warships-disrupt-swedish-cable-laying>
<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-bullying-undersea-baltic-cable/26996165.html>

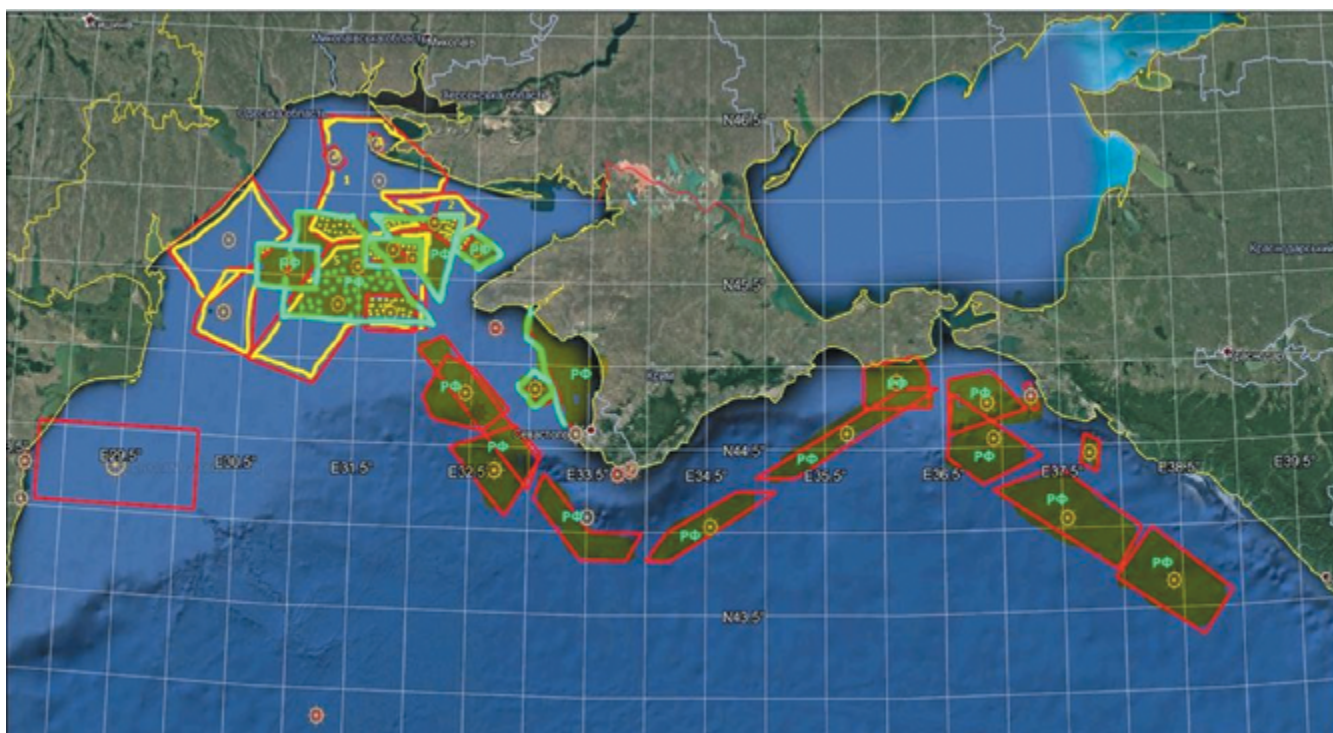


Fig. 8. The A2/AD zones established by the Russian Federation around the occupied Crimea in September 2020.

Estonia: Russia only responds to shows of force, so Sweden, which has a bigger navy than the Baltic states, should stand up to the Russians and send a ship there... But a more permanent solution would be to have NATO policing of the sea just as we have in the air”¹³.

There will be a positive reaction to joint American-Polish-Danish training exercises (probably together with the Great Britain) in Baltic countries and Denmark, which are NATO members as well as in Sweden. Finland and Germany won't express their negative opinion even if they would have it. **According to UNCLOS, military activity is not limited in waters out of the territorial sea of any country.**

¹³ <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-bullying-undersea-baltic-cable/26996165.html>

2.3.3. Legal arguments to conduct exercises and create A2/AD zone.

According to the abovementioned exercises legend there should be a hypothetical (or real) installation of the fiber-optic submarine communications cable system and/or power cable from Danish island Bornholm to Polish coastline with the assistance of the group from the American Navy, which arrived to help its allies. An imitation of installation or a real one for the purposes of exercises could take place in the exclusive economic zone of Denmark and Poland and in its territorial waters. On the condition that the rights of coastal countries are respected, neither Poland nor Denmark would face obstacles to install such fiber-optic communications cable system and/or power cable.

Article 79 (3) of the UNCLOS stipulates that the delineation of the course for the laying of such pipelines on the continental shelf is subject to the consent of the coastal State, in this case – Poland and Denmark. When laying submarine cables or pipelines, States shall have due regard to cables or pipelines already in position. In particular, possibilities of repairing existing cables or pipelines shall not be prejudiced.

Article 58 (1) of the UNCLOS defines that in the exclusive economic zone, all States, whether coastal or land-locked, enjoy, subject to the relevant provisions of this Convention, the freedoms referred to in article 87 of navigation and overflight and of the laying of submarine cables and pipelines, and other internationally lawful uses of the sea related to these freedoms, such as those associated with the operation of ships, aircraft and submarine cables and pipelines, and compatible with the other provisions of this Convention (Article 58 (1) of the UNCLOS). It means there are legal reasons for the U.S. forces to stay in exclusive economic zone of Denmark and Poland and do the following job together with allies.

According to Article 58 (3) of the UNCLOS in exercising their rights and performing their duties under this Convention in the exclusive economic zone, States shall have due regard to the rights and duties of the coastal State and shall comply with the laws and regulations adopted by the coastal State in accordance with the provisions of this Convention and other rules of international law.

As it was stated earlier, the operating area of the Nord Stream 2 covers the territorial seas and exclusive economic zones of the Russian Federation and the Federal Republic of Germany plus exclusive economic zones of Finland, Sweden and Denmark. Germany and Denmark are both parties of the North Atlantic Treaty, signed in Washington on April 4, 1949 (hereinafter – the Washington Treaty). Finland and Sweden, in their turn, for decades have close cooperation with NATO in various fields. This cooperation started in 1994 when both countries joined NATO's Partnership for Peace Program and Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997. Accordingly, Finland and Sweden are official and active partners with NATO, conduct joint military exercises on a regular basis, in particular in the Baltic Sea region.

Article 3 of the Washington Treaty defines that in order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.

Taking into account principles of the Washington Treaty, with the purpose of promoting security in the North Atlantic Area and southwestern sector of the Baltic Sea, it is proposed to create a special area denial that would cover the area planned for the Nord Stream 2 completion. Such area could be created in accordance with the successive intergovernmental agreement, for example between Denmark and Poland.

The regulations of this regional security agreement may also fix the issues of the interaction of the Parties in the future, in case of other countries' or business companies' petitions on approval of the route for pipeline construction on the continental shelf within its exclusive economic zones.

2.3.4. The use of NAVTEX system to conduct the military exercises and create A2/AD zone.

In order to rapidly block the area of the Nord Stream 2 completion by conducting the military exercise in the following sea zone, it is proposed to use NAVTEX system capabilities. According to Recommendation on Promulgation

of Maritime Safety Information, Annex to the International Maritime Organization Assembly Resolution adopted on 6 November 1991 A.705(17) “Promulgation of Maritime Safety Information” (including amendments in circular MSC.1/Circ.1287/Rev.1 dated 24 June 2013) (hereinafter – Resolution A.705), NAVTEX means the coordinated broadcast and automatic reception of maritime safety information (MSI) by means of narrow-band direct printing telegraphy.

Resolution A.705 also defines that geographical sea areas NAVAREAs are established for the purpose of coordinating the broadcast of navigational warnings. In its turn, International Maritime Organization and International Hydrographic Organization adopted the IMO/IHO Guidance for the World-Wide Navigational Warning Service (hereinafter – IMO/IHO Guidance) that is an annex №1 to the IMO Assembly Resolution adopted on 6 November 1991 A.706(17) “World-Wide Navigational Warning Service” (including amendments in circular MSC.1/Circ.1288/Rev.1 dated 24 June 2013) (hereinafter – Resolution A.706)

The Baltic Sea alongside part of the North Atlantic belongs to NAVAREA with a sequence number I. NAVAREA I is coordinated by the United Kingdom. Sweden is its sub-coordinator.

It is also important to note, that according to subparagraph 4.1.2 of the IMO/IHO Guidance navigational warnings should remain in force until cancelled by the originating coordinator. Navigational warnings should be broadcast for as long as the information is valid.

It is necessary to pay attention that subparagraph 4.2.1.3.13 of the IMO/IHO Guidance stipulates that information concerning naval exercises, missile firings and ordnance dumping zones, nuclear tests should be originated not only on the national level, but as a NAVAREA warning. Warnings concerning scheduled events should be originated not less than 5 days in advance, after the reference to relevant national publications.

Consequently, information about naval exercises and missile firings zone in the area of the Nord Stream 2 completion would be considered suitable

for broadcast as NAVAREA I warning which should remain in force until cancelled by the initiator.

From this perspective, in case the Baltic Rapid Response exercise takes place, its initiator Poland (and/or Denmark) prepares and sends corresponding NAVTEX-messages and in accordance with procedure, cooperates with NAVAREA I Subcoordinator and Coordinator, with hydrographic offices of Sweden and the United Kingdom respectively.

2.3.5. Potential response of Russia's Baltic Fleet and Bundesmarine if A2/AD zone, which covers pipeline route section, is created.

Possible military activity of NATO ships to counteract construction of the gas pipeline would seem to be either demonstrative action (military presence on the site of exercises) or humanitarian/search & rescue operation, hydrographic survey to explore the sea floor.

It seems that the German Navy could avoid participation of its ships in abovementioned events of Alliance or coalitions. An escalation in political relations between Germany and other NATO member states, in particular the USA and the UK, some attempts to use political and economic levers of influence in the European Union as Germany still remains its leader, could take place. An open confrontation with Bundesmarine ships is excluded. Germany can make a political decision to diminish its support to Alliance operations, including operations in the Baltic Region – the NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battalion Battle Group in Lithuania, where Germany plays the key role.

The Baltic Fleet of the Russian Federation will actively counteract the events, which make obstacles to complete the Nord Stream 2, using the wide range of hybrid instruments coordinated from Kremlin. But Russia will avoid the direct use of force.

The Armed Forces of the Russian Forces will continue and spread its practice of counteracting the NATO's ships operational activity in the Baltic

Sea, in particular of the US and the UK: permanent convoy of ships, installation of stationary and dynamic means of underwater surveillance, conduction of exercises and demonstration of the new weapon, weapon transfer to strengthen “Kaliningrad Bastion” on land and water.

Particular sabotage activity of the Russian Federation against facilities and active participants of the counteraction to gas pipeline and growth of Russian influence in region may take place. Facilities in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia remain the most vulnerable. There is a high probability of informational manipulations. The Russian Federation, in its turn, will continue its practice to close many areas of the Baltic Sea for shipping with the reference to SOLAS-74.

2.3.6. Possible cooperation with Polish Navy in creation of A2/AD zone in point of the Baltic Pipe, the Nord Stream and the Nord Stream 2 intersection.

In the interests of safety of the Baltic Pipe construction, Poland can use its Navy to provide countermeasure measures on the route and explore the sea floor and underwater.

This activity may be performed by tactic groups of the Polish Navy, in particular MCM and patrol boats and crafts, which are vulnerable to defend against enemy air and surface ships.

To counteract strike capabilities of the surface forces and air forces of the Baltic Fleet of the Russian Federation, Poland may engage its own coastal battery as anti-ship Naval Strike Missile (NSM), F-16 fighter aircrafts (the Second Tactical Wing, air terminal facilities on Poznań and Łask) and ask for support of the NATO’s Standing Naval maritime immediate reaction forces SNMG1 and Allies, first of all the USA, the UK and Denmark in order to locate Anti-Air Warfare Defense destroyers with anti-ship missiles.

For anti-sabotage measures special amphibious divisions of the Swedish and Danish Navy may be engaged as well as for activity in the region of islands Bornholm and Gotland.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS.

3.1. Take into consideration fact of synchronization of Russia’s intervention with the relocation of the sabotage-terrorist group in the East of Ukraine with its political and diplomatic efforts to promote in Europe new projects bypassing Ukrainian Gas Transmission System in 2014. It has a significant importance in the context of the draft bill S.1189¹⁴ and H.R.7561¹⁵ «Stopping Malign Activities from Russian Terrorism Act» initiated by Senator Cory Gardner on April 11, 2019 Congressman Max Rose on July 9, 2020 respectively, determining Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism.

3.2. Above mentioned point should serve as a basis for a detailed investigation by the US authorities in order to create a real threat of imposing sanctions on Gazprom so that Russia may later decide to abandon Nord Stream 2 in exchange for not applying sanctions against Gazprom.

3.3. The Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline is an additional Russian tool to boost its military power in the region around the Baltic Sea. The Nord Stream 2 will be used by Russia for military purpose to fill the gap of its comparative limited military power in the region.

3.4. It is necessary to recognize the Nord Stream 2 by NATO and particular countries in the region, as a hybrid threat to its security and defense.

3.5. Regional military exercises for the group of countries (USA, Poland, Denmark, Sweden) and under the auspices of NATO on protection of the underwater critical infrastructure in Baltics may become a response to the extra-project use of the Nord Stream type gas pipelines by Russia.

3.6. The Baltic Rapid Response military exercises with overcoming the consequences of sabotage activity against underwater communications infrastructure and creation of the A2/Ad zone, which would cover the area planned for the NS2 completion, may become an unconventional response of the USA and Poland to Russia’s attempts to complete the gas pipeline.

¹⁴ <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/s1189/text>

¹⁵ <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/hr7561/text>

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3.7. It seems expedient to create a closed-type International platform under the auspices of the USA for sharing intelligence data and analysis on the use of gas pipelines, in particular Nord Stream 2, by Russia as a hybrid tool to achieve military dominance in a hidden way.

3.8. Conducting the hydrographic survey of the Baltic Sea bottom by the navies of the USA and the UK, aimed at finding sonar equipment on the route and contiguous areas of the Nord Streams, could help to reveal Russian system for underwater espionage.

3.9. Article 3 of the Washington Treaty states that in order more effectively to achieve the objectives

of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.

3.10. Based on this and with the purpose of maintaining the security of the underwater communications system in southwestern sector of the Baltic Sea, it is proposed to establish a Special Maritime Exclusion Zone (SMEZ). A ‘spot’ of the SMEZ will cover the area planned in particular for the NS2 completion. Such zone can be created on the basis a special Agreement between Denmark and Poland. The NS2 construction and operation in the SMEZ shall be prohibited.

The agenda: U.S. strategy for the Black Sea region

On December 14, 2023, the United States Congress passed the «National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024,» which includes Section 1247 titled «Black Sea Security and Development Strategy.» Essentially, this is the approved «Black Sea Security Act» passed by both chambers of Congress during the summer. This law tasks the President with directing the U.S. National Security Council to develop an interagency strategy for the Black Sea region and its nations. This approach by U.S. lawmakers is crucial for enhancing the security of the Black Sea region, as the United States historically focused primarily on the North Atlantic, Indo-Pacific, and Arctic regions, relegating Black Sea issues to the sidelines.

The law specifies that the future strategy will focus on three main pillars of U.S. activity: security, economic prosperity, and the strengthening of democratic resilience. The strategy will encompass crucial areas of national security for all the nations in the region (except, of course, Russia), including military, economic, energy, and information aspects. Additionally, it is mandated that the strategy must be developed no later than 180 days after the enactment of the U.S. defense budget for 2024.



In turn, the President of the United States will determine any necessary authorities or budgetary resources required by the U.S. executive branch to implement the strategy in fiscal years 2025 and 2026. As we can see from the document's contents, its primary goal is to enhance security in the Black Sea region and, undoubtedly, bolster the U.S. role in this process. Special attention is also given to assessing the investment attractiveness of the Black Sea region, which is a sign of the seriousness of the superpower's intentions in implementing the planned strategy.

Below we republish the text of Section 1247 of the U.S. Law.

SEC. 1247. BLACK SEA SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY.

(a) In General.--The President shall direct the National Security Council to develop an interagency strategy with regard to the Black Sea region and Black Sea states --

- (1) to increase coordination with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union;
 - (2) to deepen economic ties;
 - (3) to strengthen energy security;
 - (4) to support efforts to bolster their democratic resilience;
- and
- (5) to enhance security assistance with regional partners in accordance with the values and interests of the United States.

IN FOCUS: REGIONAL SECURITY

(b) Purpose and Objectives.--The strategy authorized under subsection (b) shall have the following goals and objectives:

- (1) Ensuring the efficient and effective delivery of security assistance to regional partners in accordance with the values and interests of the United States, prioritizing assistance that will bolster defenses, increase regional cooperation on Black Sea security, and improve interoperability with NATO forces.
- (2) Bolstering United States support for the region's energy security and integration with Europe and reducing the region's dependence on Russia while supporting energy diversification.
- (3) Working with partners and allies to mitigate the impact of economic coercion by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on Black Sea states and identifying new opportunities for foreign direct investment from the United States and cooperating countries and the enhancement of United States business ties with regional partners in accordance with the values and interests of the United States.
- (4) Increasing high-level engagement between the United States and regional partners, including reinforcing economic growth, infrastructure development, and enhancing trade with a focus on improving high-level economic cooperation.
- (5) Increasing United States coordination with the European Union and NATO member states to maximize effectiveness and minimize duplication.

(c) Activities.--

(1) Security.--The strategy authorized under subsection (b) should include the following elements related to security:

- (A) A plan to increase interagency coordination on the Black Sea region.
- (B) A plan to coordinate and synchronize security assistance with Black Sea states, focused on Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, and Georgia, with the aim of increasing regional cooperation on Black Sea security.
- (C) A plan to enhance collaboration with Black Sea states to recognize and respond to Russian disinformation and propaganda in the Black Sea region.

(2) Economic prosperity.--The strategy authorized under subsection (b) shall include the following elements related to economic prosperity:

- (A) A strategy to foster dialogue between experts from the United States and from the Black Sea states on economic expansion, foreign direct investment, strengthening rule of law initiatives, and mitigating economic coercion by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.
- (B) A strategy for all the relevant Federal departments and agencies that contribute to United States economic statecraft to expand their presence and identify new opportunities for private investment with regional partners in accordance with the values and interests of the United States.
- (C) Assessments on energy security, focusing on the immediate need to replace energy supplies from the Russian Federation, and recognizing the long-term importance of broader energy diversification.
- (D) Assessments of potential food security solutions, including sustainable, long-term arrangements.

IN FOCUS: REGIONAL SECURITY

(3) Democratic resilience.--The strategy authorized under subsection (b) shall include the following elements related to democratic resilience:

(A) A plan to increase independent media and United States-supported media initiatives to combat foreign malign influence in the Black Sea region.

(B) A plan to increase mobilization of initiatives spearheaded by the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development to counter Russian propaganda and disinformation in the Black Sea region..

(d) Identification of Necessary Authorities and Budgetary Resources.--The President shall identify any necessary authorities or budgetary resources required, by agency, to support the implementation of the strategy for fiscal years 2025 and 2026.

(e) Submission of Strategy and Resource Assessment.--The President shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress--

(1) the strategy authorized by subsection (b) not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(2) the authority and resourcing assessment required by subsection (d) not later than 360 days after such date of enactment.

(f) Definitions.--In this section:

(1) Appropriate committees of congress.--The term ``appropriate committees of Congress'' means--

(A) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Appropriations, the Select Committee on Intelligence, and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Appropriations, the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives.B.

(2) Black sea states.--The term ``Black Sea states'' means --

((A) Bulgaria;

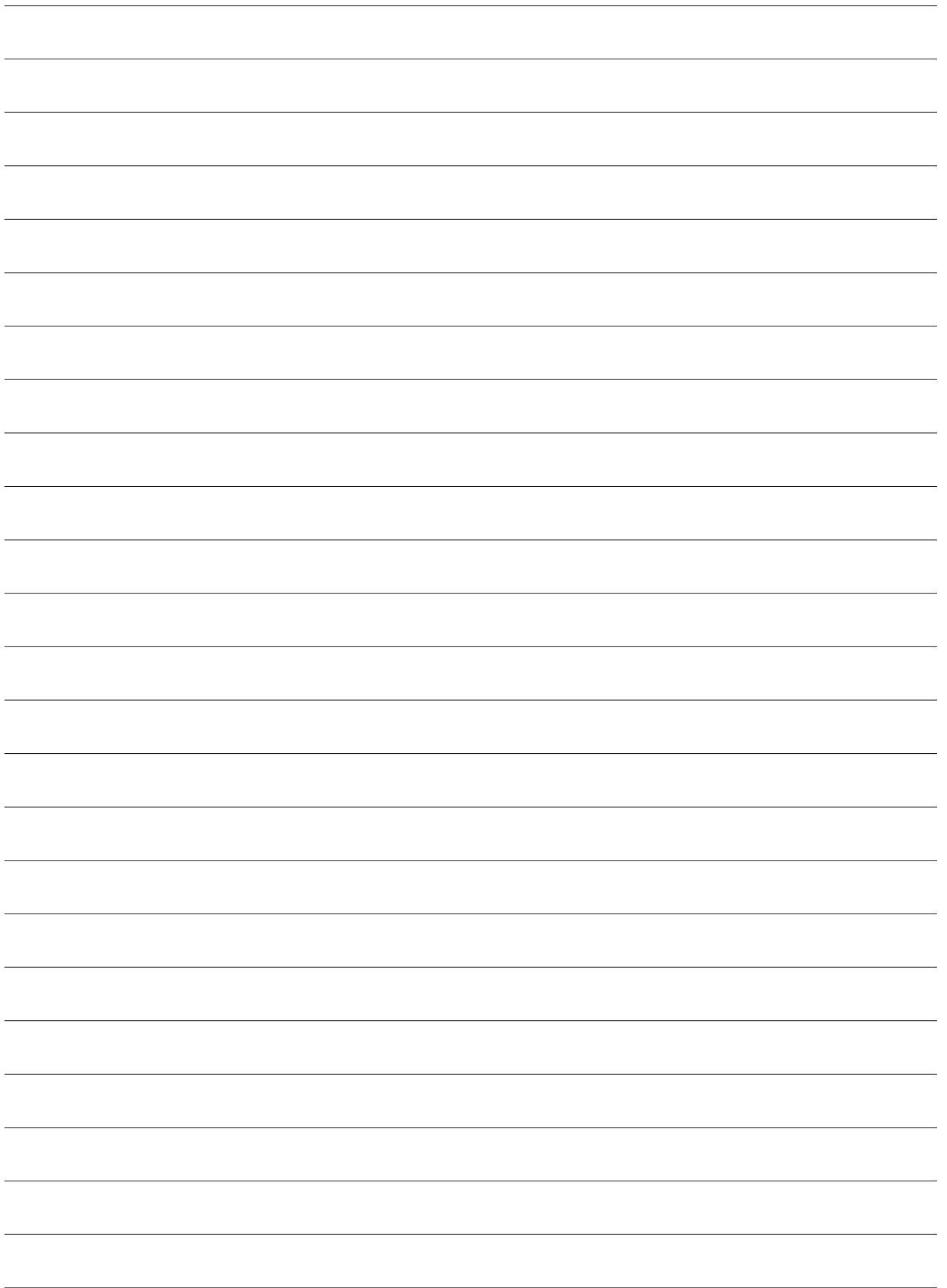
(B) Georgia;

(C) Moldova;

(D) Romania;

(E) Turkey; and

(F) Ukraine.





Twenty years ago, on November 23, 2003, in Sevastopol, the «Nomos» Center for the Promotion of Geopolitical Studies and Euro-Atlantic Cooperation in the Black Sea region was founded. It was an independent non-governmental organization aimed at conducting research in the fields of international relations, national security, European, and Euro-Atlantic integration in the Black Sea-Caspian region. It served as a platform for dialogue in Crimea. «Nomos» organized numerous expert events in Crimea and Sevastopol. The Black Sea Security

Journal provided its pages for representatives of various political orientations to express their views. The history of «Nomos» was bright until February 2014, before the occupation of Crimea by Russia. We continue the legacy of «Nomos». Today, we remember Nomos' experts Dmytro Shtybykov and Oleksiy Bessarabov, who were imprisoned by the occupiers and are still held in Russian captivity.



It's 90 seconds to midnight



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