UA: UKRAINE ANALYTICA

RESILIENCE HYBRID THREATS NATO EASTERN FLANK SECURITY EUROPEAN SECURITY INTERNATIONAL LAW NUCLEAR WEAPONS ALLIES BLACK SEA ARMS CONTROL MILITARY WARFARE DEFENCE WARSAW SUMMIT SECURITY SECTOR CSDP JOINT TRAINING PEACE OPERATIONS DETERRENCE ARRANGEMENTS RUSSIA

- **CHANGE OF MILITARY BALANCE**
- **HARD SECURITY**
- **NATO COOPERATION**

UA: UKRAINE ANALYTICA

Military Security

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UKRAINE IS READY TO CONTRIBUTE INTO EUROPEAN AND EUROATLANTIC SECURITY

Interview with Vice Prime Minister for European and Euroatlantic integration of Ukraine Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze for UA: Ukraine Analytica

Is Ukraine a Security Provider or Security Consumer in Europe?

It is a rather rhetorical question. Ukraine has always been an active contributor to European and Euro-Atlantic security. Ukraine's peacekeeping contingents and personnel participated in a huge number of NATO' and EU-led operations as well as in numerous missions under the UN umbrella all around the world. Ukraine is the only Partner Nation that has contributed to all ongoing NATO-led operations and missions.

Despite Russian aggression against Ukraine, the country continues to contribute to the Kosovo Force (KFOR), currently with a heavy engineering unit with counter-improvised explosive devices capabilities.

Ukraine is also currently supporting the NATO-led Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan aimed at training, advising and assisting Afghan security forces. Furthermore, we are the first partner country to have contributed to the NATO Response Force (NRF) by providing strategic airlift capabilities.

We have a history of successful cooperation with NATO in the sphere of joint military exercises. I would like to mention today, among others, the Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian brigade that participated in the largest war exercises in Poland,

Anaconda-2016. This is also a part of our contribution to European and Euro-Atlantic security. We must intensify and develop it further.

Ukraine is the first line of defense for Europe and its democratic values, and we need international support. Russian aggression against Ukraine has never stopped. Russia is consistently building powerful military strongholds in the occupied Donbas and Crimea, ready to explode at any opportune moment and lead to a full-fledged European crisis.

Since Russia unleashed an armed aggression against my country, many western countries have joined efforts in many various formats to help Ukraine. Without this help, it would be very difficult for us to resist heavy attacks at all fronts, including military, economic, humanitarian, information ones etc.

> **Ukraine is the first line of defense for Europe and its democratic values, and we need international support**

I firmly believe that UA is simultaneously both a security provider and security consumer in Europe, as it is impossible to view the security of one European country separated from the security of others.

Why is NATO Important for Ukraine?

This year, for the first time in its history, Ukraine adopted fundamental military strategic documents. For the first time the full cycle of strategic planning was conducted in close cooperation with NATO and NATO advisors.

We are building the new Army according to NATO standards. Fifteen new brigades are already operational and ready to fight. We have made deep and profound changes in military training and education. We are extremely grateful to NATO Nations, which are participating in the training of Ukrainian troops.

The new Special Operations Force has been created in Ukraine. Together with NATO experts we have redefined the role of the Airborne Forces and the Artillery in the ATO.

At the same time, it is not only about what NATO can do for Ukraine, but what Ukraine can and already does for NATO. We do not expect NATO forces to fight for us. Ukrainian troops defend Ukrainian sovereignty. We have contingency plans for different scenarios of the conflict. Together Ukraine and NATO can be a strong defender of the eastern flank of Europe.

Ukraine has a unique experience of fighting the largest Army in Europe. Not a single NATO member state fought with a modernized Russian Army. Ukraine has a successful experience of having countered Russian hybrid warfare tactics for two years. We inflicted severe physical casualties to Russian troops, ruined their plans to invade half of Ukraine and stopped Russian advance in Donbas.

Ukraine can contribute to NATO collective security with practical experience of Ukrainian troops, as well as security service and military intelligence. At the

same time, we expect that NATO will continue to support Ukraine's territorial sovereignty particularly by strong political and diplomatic efforts. My strongest appeal to the international community is to consolidate and to maintain pressure on Russia until it stops aggression and returns to adherence to the international law.

In the case of Ukraine, there are two principal ways to reach this: to make Ukraine stronger and to make the price of aggression for Russia much higher. All responsible international actors should send a clear signal to Russia that all its aggressive actions violating international law would get a swift and resolute response. I call on the world leaders to intensify their support to Ukraine, including enhancing our defense capabilities and increasing the pressure on Russia, in particular, through sanctions.

Ukraine extremely needs the solidarity and unity of its international partners to withstand and tackle Russian aggression, which is aimed at simply killing Ukrainian independence and statehood.

What are the Major Obstacles for Ukraine's Further Integration into European Security Structures?

NATO-Ukraine Distinctive Partnership is an inalienable part of Ukraine's strategic course towards the EU membership and is an essential element of security in the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond. The strategic nature of NATO-Ukraine Distinctive Partnership has been framing and will further frame relations and practical cooperation between Ukraine and NATO.

NATO membership is a strategic goal for Ukraine. We welcome NATO 2008 Bucharest summit decision that Ukraine will become a member of NATO. We expect that NATO's

door will remain open to "European democracies willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership". We also expect that decisions on enlargement be for NATO itself to make, and no third country has or will have a say in this decision.

The preparation to future NATO membership is an important direction of Ukraine's foreign and domestic policies. The mid-term goal for Ukraine is to achieve complete compatibility with NATO and the armed forces of its member states. The implementation of NATO standards in defense and security sectors, fight against corruption, civilian control over the military, raising public awareness on NATO are key priorities for today. All these are about functional integration.

How Would You Assess NATO's Recent Strategic Decisions over Security in Europe?

NATO's decisions to strengthen its presence in the Baltic States and Poland are important not only for European, but also for Ukrainian security.

Due to Russian aggression against Ukraine, NATO is switching from its policy of reassuring NATO Allies to taking its steps in a policy of deterrence towards Russia. It is a substantial change given the differences in perceiving the challenges and threats among different NATO members regarding the formation of policy towards Russia. The decision to deploy four battalion-sized battlegroups in Poland and the Baltic states is an important measure.

Nevertheless, the consequences of the upcoming elections in the USA, Germany, France as well as developments in the Great Britain in the context of Brexit may also present challenges to the credibility of NATO deterrence policy.

What Would Be the Most and the Least Favorable Trajectory of the Black Sea Regional Security for Ukraine?

The Black Sea region is rife with potential flashpoints that threaten regional security. In the Black Sea region, the mainstays of international order since the end of the World War II — territorial integrity, self-determination, non-intervention in domestic affairs — have been fundamentally challenged by Russia.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea has shifted the military balance in the Black Sea more strongly in its favor and significantly expanded Russia's strategic footprint.

> *a comprehensive international strategy towards the Black Sea security should be developed in cooperation with NATO, the European Union and other regional organizations*

Particularly dangerous are the Russian actions to prepare Crimean military infrastructure for deployment of nuclear weapons, including refurbishing the infrastructure of Soviet-era nuclear warheads storage facilities. Potential carriers of nuclear weapon, such as warships, short-range missile systems and combat aircraft, have already been deployed in the Crimean Peninsula. In fact, Russia turns Crimea into a "grey zone", which is de facto not covered by the existing multilateral arms control agreements.

An enhanced international military presence in Southeastern Europe and additional naval deployments in the region, if endorsed, would be valuable steps towards enhancing stability and security in the Black Sea region.

Thus, a comprehensive international strategy towards the Black Sea security should be developed in cooperation with NATO, the European Union and other regional organizations. From our point of view, this strategy should include maintaining a persistent NATO maritime, land and air presence in the region and additional international training and exercises.

How Could Ukraine Contribute to the European Security?

From my point of view, establishing peace in Eastern Ukraine is the best contribution to the European security. I am sure that Western political pressure and sanctions should be reinforced until Russia stops undermining Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.

Lifting sanctions at the background of continuing violations of fundamental international legal norms by Russia envisaged inter alia in the UN Charter and Helsinki Final Act will cause disruption of the international security architecture with unpredictable consequences. It will deprive international community of the key instrument of imposing responsibility and increase exposure to numerous security threats and challenges emanating from revisionist states and terrorism.

Sanctions are the only effective and peaceful instrument to deter Russian aggression in Europe. Together with the other kinds of pressure they have brought a concrete result — Russian aggression in Donbas was suspended and localized, now they have to achieve their ultimate goal — returning Russia to practice of observing and honoring international law and bringing peace to Europe's eastern flank.

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THE (POST) WARSAW NATO STRATEGY AND THE EASTERN FLANK: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE SOUTH

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The Warsaw Summit was held on 8-9 July 2016 with the assumption of "an essential Alliance in a more dangerous world" both in the eastern and in the southern flanks. Bearing in mind that the allies gathered in "a defining moment for the security of our nations and populations", this contribution aims to analyse the main decisions of the Warsaw summit towards a 'new' NATO 360º full spectrum approach based on agility, flexibility and readiness. Moreover, as collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security remain the key core areas of NATO, this paper will also explore some critical insights to address eastern flank challenges from the southern perspective. We will conclude that an enhanced cooperation and full engagement between NATO and the EU as agreed in the final communiqué are crucial for security and defence of all borders.

Introduction — Eastern and Southern Changing Security Environment

In the last couple of years, we all have been witnessing unprecedented challenges in the East of Europe (annexation of the Crimea, destabilization of eastern Ukraine, military build-up in the Baltics[1]) as well as a growing dramatic emergency in Europe's external and internal borders (radicalization of religious extremism, brutal attacks by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Da'esh, refugees and migration exceptional flows or trans-national illegal activities). In fact, the security environment of both European eastern and southern borders has been considerably and rapidly deteriorating with a twofold challenge: due to its unpredictable nature, those threats will surely remain for a long time; and because of their transnational character, any possible solution can only be searched in cooperation, complementarity and synergy between origin, transit and destination countries, as well as security providing organisations and non-governmental institutions.

As Federica Mogherini, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has been recalling, we live in a "more connected, contested and complex world"[2]. Such transnational risks as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, failed states, transnational organized

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[1] The Baltic region represents a major challenge for NATO as expressed by D. A. Shlapak and M. W. Johnson (Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics, RAND Corporation, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1253/RAND_RR1253.pdf)

[2] Please see "The European Union in a changing global environment", available in https://eeas.europa.eu/docs/strategic_review/eu-strategic-review_strategic_review_en.pdf

crime and hybrid war models that security providers such as NATO and the European Union are facing today require a broad multidimensional security concept that goes beyond geographical borders.

> « *Acknowledging the need to balance the NATO approach towards both the east and the south is thus crucial to tackle the (new?) security environment through a 360º approach , with an enhanced cooperation and full engagement between NATO and the European Union*

In the context of NATO, the eastern European security demands a major commitment from the allies in air policing, reassurance measures and readiness action plan (RAP[3]). In its turn, NATO's southern flank urges a holistic approach[4] towards the structural problems of the (failed) state actors. Non-state actors are in fact

taking advantage of the 'arc of instability[5]' that is expanding from the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and Maghreb to Sahel. Therefore, structural profound political, economic, social, environmental and security changes that those regions have been facing for a few years now[6] have exposed how their challenges spread to the entire transatlantic area.

Acknowledging the need to balance the NATO approach towards both the east and the south[7] is thus crucial to tackle the (new?) security environment through a 360º approach[8], with an enhanced cooperation and full engagement between NATO and the European Union based on agility, flexibility and readiness. In fact, close cooperation between NATO and the EU is an important element in the development of an international "comprehensive approach"[9] to capacity building as well as crisis management and operations, which requires effective application of both military and civilian means.

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[3] RAP was one of the most significant accomplishments in the 2014 Wales summit to reinforce the Alliance response to new security challenges from the east and the south. Originating at the 2014 Wales Summit, it was only in Warsaw that it was implemented and agreed upon as part of the post-cold war strategy in terms of deterrence and defence.

[4] A holistic approach assumes that a wide range of instruments should be at disposal to enhance allies' security.

[5] For a more detailed study, please see the project from the Center for strategic & International Studies "Militancy and the Arc of Instability in the Middle East and North Africa", available in https://www.csis.org/programs/transnation-al-threats-project/past-projects/militancy-and-arc-instability-middle-east-and (last accessed on 20 October 2016).

[6] The events known as Arab Spring (2010-2012) somehow nourished the illusion that democracy would lead to stability and development, but soon the turn of events in Libya or Syria developed with such surprise and uncertainty that the effects are still being faced in the entire region. Please see for a foresight analysis F. Gaub & A. Laban (eds.), Arab futures: Three scenarios for 2025, "ISSUE Report", no 22, Institute for Security Studies, 2015

[7] E. Barbé (1997) argues how important the balance between the east and south must be perceived as a priority for all member states. (E. Barbé, Balancing Europe's eastern and southern dimension, "EUI Working paper", Robert Schuman Centre, 1997)

[8] both the East and the South started to be disseminated through ambassadorial and ministerial speeches all over Europe. That was the case of I. Eriksen Søreide, Defence Minister of Norway (NATO needs an upgrade, http://europesworld.org/2016/07/08/nato-needs-upgrade/#.WBdUa9KLTcs) arguing a "political unity and the will to defend allies against any adversary applies to threats from any direction, and in different geographic areas". Also NATO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Alexander Vershbow at the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria Conference on Black Sea Security, Sofia, Bulgaria in April 2016 argued that "NATO takes a 360-degree approach to deterring threats and, if necessary, defending Allies. Our situational awareness is comprehensive – alert to all potential threats from all directions — and our capacity to respond is the same. Experience has taught us that we cannot allow them to be anything less". (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_130340.htm, last accessed on 28 October 2016)

[9] A comprehensive approach (similar to 'holistic') combines political, civilian and military instruments to address today's complex security environment. For more information, the official assessment by NATO can be found in http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_51633.htm (last accessed on 28 October 2016)

On one hand, the Common security and defence policy, as framed by the Lisbon Treaty, is perceived as an essential pillar of the EU's external action towards a credible regional and global security provider[10]. On the other hand, NATO and the European Union share 22 of its members, common values, and strategic interests and have been expanding their cooperation on crisis management, capability development and political consultations within the European space, its immediate neighbourhood[11] and even the Western Balkans, Libya and the Middle East. In fact, in the 2010 Strategic Concept (following the Lisbon Summit), the Allies committed to improve the NATO-EU strategic partnership in crisis prevention, conflict management and post-conflict stabilisation. Along with operations and capability development, the EU-NATO cooperation has been growing in other areas with a potential for further growth: assistance for the growing refugee and migrant crisis in Europe[12], combat terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction[13], hybrid threats, energy security and cyber defence[14].

Therefore, bearing in mind that the instability of the immediate and extended neighbourhood is no longer border limited and involves a broad spectrum of threats and challenges, this contribution argues that the rising complex strategic environment must be regarded as an opportunity for the EU and NATO to enhance their cooperation and full engagement through a 360º approach towards both the southern flank and the eastern flank. The two organisations must thus agree on mutual conceptual tools and policy instruments based on agility, flexibility and readiness, acknowledging that this cooperation is unique and essential to address the current institutional framework of security and defence.

Strengthening the European Project: NATO's Role

The European Union and NATO are essential partners in crisis management and capability development. The two organizations share the majority of its members, strategic interests and common values, as well as demanding challenges in its southern and eastern neighbourhoods.

The key underlying principle of this relationship has always been perceived as a matter of indivisibility of the security dimension, refusing subsidiarity and duplication. In fact, EU-NATO cooperation added value is in the complementarity between collective defence (the pillar of the transatlantic organisation) and crisis management (range of autonomous instruments framed by the European Security and Defence Policy).

Although NATO-EU cooperation dates back to the mid-1990s in the Western

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[10] "The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) enables the Union to take a leading role in peace-keeping operations, conflict prevention and in the strengthening of the international security. It is an integral part of the EU's comprehensive approach towards crisis management, drawing on civilian and military assets." (https://eeas.europa. eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp/431/the-common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp_en)

[11] With the crisis in Ukraine, both organisations have regularly exchanged and complemented views on their decisions regarding Russia Consultations.

[12] In February 2016, NATO defence ministers decided to deploy a maritime force to the Aegean Sea to conduct reconnaissance, monitoring and surveillance of illegal crossings, supporting Turkish and Greek authorities and the EU's Frontex agency.

[13] Both institutions have already exchanged information on their activities in the field of protection of civilian populations against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks. NATO and the EU also cooperate in civil emergency planning by exchanging inventories of measures taken.

[14] In February 2016, NATO and the EU concluded a Technical Arrangement on Cyber Defence, which provides a framework for exchanging information and sharing best practices between emergency response teams.

Balkans, it was only after both the NATO Summit in Washington (1999) and the Nice European Council (December 2000) that the foundations were first agreed upon. The NATO-EU Declaration on the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)[15] was signed later, on 16 December 2002 underlying both the EU assured access to NATO planning capabilities for the EU's own military operations and the determination of both organizations to strengthen their capabilities. These capabilities were founded on the following six principles: partnership, which mutually reinforces two organisations of different nature; effective mutual consultation, dialogue, cooperation and transparency; equality and due regard for decision-making autonomy and interests of the European Union and NATO; respect for the interests of the Member States of the European Union and NATO; respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations; coherent, transparent and mutually reinforcing development of military capability requirements common to the two organisations. Those six principles were guided by three main objectives:

first, the European Union will ensure the fullest possible involvement of the non-EU European members of NATO within ESDP;

second, NATO will support ESDP and give the European Union assured access to NATO's planning capabilities;

third, both organisations will adopt arrangements to ensure the coherent, transparent and mutually reinforcing development of their common capability requirements.

In its turn, signing the landmark «NATO-EU Declaration on ESDP» has paved the way for «Berlin Plus» arrangements, concluded on 17 March 2003, that form the basis for practical work in crisis management between the two organizations by allowing EU access to NATO's collective assets and capabilities for EU-led operations, to which NATO as a whole is not committed.

The main seven elements of these "Berlin Plus" arrangements can be summarised as follows: assured access of the EU to NATO planning capabilities with a view to effective use in the context of military planning of EU-led crisis management operations;

post of Deputy to the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) — who will command EU-led operations (and who is always a European citizen) — and NATO European command options;

assured access to NATO's collective assets and capabilities (communication units, headquarters, etc.) for EU-led crisis management operations; NATO-EU agreement on security (exchange of classified information under the rules of mutual protection);

procedures to follow for the management of NATO assets and capabilities (release, monitoring, return and recall);

NATO-EU consultation arrangements in the context of EU-led crisis management operation calling on NATO assets and capabilities;

integration in NATO's longstanding defence planning system of military requirements and capabilities, which may be needed for EU-led military operations, in order to guarantee the availability of well-equipped forces trained for either NATO-led or EU-led operations.

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[15] NATO-EU relations Factsheet, Available at http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160630_1607-factsheet-nato-eu-en.pdf (last accessed 10 October 2016)

So, in brief, if the 2002 NATO-EU Declaration on the European Security and Defence Policy defined the NATO-EU relationship as a strategic partnership, since 2003 the "Berlin Plus" arrangements[16] have provided the basis for the NATO-EU cooperation in crisis management in the context of the EU-led operations that make use of NATO's collective assets and capabilities, including command arrangements and assistance in operational planning.

Therefore, still in 2003, the EU-led Operation Concordia took over the responsibilities of the NATO-led mission, Operation Allied Harmony, in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and it became the first "Berlin Plus" operation in which NATO assets were made available to the EU. Also in 2004, following the conclusion of the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU deployed, under the "Berlin Plus" arrangements, Operation EUFOR Althea. Moreover, in Kosovo, the NATO peacekeeping force KFOR works closely in the field with the EU's Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and in Afghanistan, the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission and its predecessor, the International Security Assistance Force

(ISAF), have cooperated with the EU's Rule of Law Mission (EUPOL). Moreover, since September 2008, NATO Ocean Shield and EUNAVFOR Atalanta have been deployed side by side off the coast of Somalia for anti-piracy missions.

In the Lisbon (2010)[17], Chicago (2012)[18] and Wales (2014)[19] summit declarations, a close cooperation between NATO and the EU has always been perceived as an important element in the development of an international "comprehensive approach" to crisis management and operations, which requires the effective application of both military and civilian means. However, the Warsaw (2016) Summit is particularly important, not only because it has the longest conclusions ever of all summits (139 paragraphs) where we can find several references to the EU-NATO cooperation[20], but especially because the two organisations agreed on joint communication and acknowledged an urgent need to "build the defence and security capacity and foster the resilience of our partners in the East and South in a complementary way through specific projects in a variety of areas for individual recipient countries, including by strengthening maritime capacity.[21]"

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[16] J. Varwick & J. A. Koops, The European Union and NATO: 'Shrewd interorganizationalism' in the making?, The European Union and International Organizations, 1st Edition. ed. / Knud Erik Jørgensen. Routledge, 2009. p. 101-130

[17] Please see paragraphs 2 and 11 that encourage the Secretary General to continue to work with the European Union High Representative and to report to the Council on the ongoing efforts in time for the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in April 2011.

[18] Please see paragraphs 12 and 34 on the Kosovo reform efforts regarding the NATO's ongoing role with the Kosovo Security Force in cooperation with all relevant actors, including the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the EU Special Representative, as agreed, and the Kosovo authorities.

[19] Please see paragraph 102 to 106, where NATO recognizes that the EU remains a unique and essential partner for NATO, the importance of a stronger and more capable European defence and the need for a strengthened strategic partnership in issues of common concern, including security challenges like cyber defence, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, counter-terrorism, energy security, maritime security and hybrid threats.

[20] Please see paragraph 22 on the commitment to a continued coherent international approach and paragraphs 121 to 125 on further enhancement of the relationship between NATO and the EU. Also, there is a specific mention in paragraph 93 on the agreement on a possible NATO role in the Central Mediterranean, to complement and/or, upon European Union request, support, as appropriate, the EU's Operation Sophia through the provision of a range of capabilities including Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, and logistics support; through contribution to capacity building of the Libyan coastguard and navy, if requested by the legitimate Libyan authorities and/or the EU; and in the context of the implementation of UNSCR 2292 on the situation in Libya, in close coordination with the EU.

[21] Joint declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on July 8, 2016

On the side of the European Union, on 28-29 June 2016 European council[22] agreed that "Our relation with NATO is part and parcel of a wider and active CSDP partnership policy, consisting of policy dialogue, participation of third states in missions and operations and capacity-building through CSDP missions". Moreover, "[t]he further development of security and defence cooperation to live up to the Union's commitments and responsibilities across the world by strengthening the Common Security and Defence Policy, in full complementarity with NATO; by ensuring that Member States maintain and develop the necessary civilian and military capabilities, including through pooling and sharing; and with a stronger European defence industry».

> ❝ *The EU-NATO partnership must then be acknowledged as strategic in order to face the changing nature and the multiple threats of the opponent, counter them and build more resilience*

The European Council also welcomed the EU Global strategy[23], clearly illustrating the commitment of both organizations towards collective security:

"When it comes to collective defence, NATO remains the primary framework for most Member States. At the same time, EU-NATO relations shall not prejudice the security and defence policy of those Members, which are not in NATO. The EU will therefore deepen cooperation with the North Atlantic Alliance in complementarity, synergy, and full respect for the institutional framework, inclusiveness and decision-

making autonomy of the two. In this context, the EU needs to be strengthened as a security community: European security and defence efforts should enable the EU to act autonomously while also contributing to and undertaking actions in cooperation with NATO".

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

NATO´s Warsaw Summit and June 2016 European Council both represent a step forward to strengthen and enhance the relationship and concrete cooperation between both organisations and to proceed in areas such as strategic communication, information exchange, the ability to counter hybrid threats, cyber defence, civilian and military planning and capabilities of pooling and sharing.

Therefore, a holistic and comprehensive approach is required, based on partnerships with neighbourhood countries, as well as in multilateralism and coordination among local, regional and international players, addressing the root causes of conflicts along with prevention and state building. The EU-NATO partnership must then be acknowledged as strategic in order to face the changing nature and the multiple threats of the opponent, counter them and build more resilience. In fact, we can emphasise four key points to summarise and conclude:

First, the new impetus in EU-NATO strategic partnership should focus on enhancing and developing common areas of cooperation, also through EU's participation in NATO crisis management exercises, as well as in joint exercises, in order to test

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[22] European Council conclusions, 28 June 2016, Accessed at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/06/28-euco-conclusions/ (last accessed 10 October 2016)

[23] The European Union in a changing global environment, 2016, Accessed at: https://eeas.europa.eu/docs/strategic_review/eu-strategic-review_strategic_review_en.pdf (accessed 10 October 2016)

the procedures agreed between the two organizations and adjust the force structures at all levels.

Second, they should concentrate efforts on capacity building of countries, including understanding roots of the problems. A comprehensive approach can be very useful to the defence dimension of those responses, also through information gathering.

Third, it is important to assure complementarity and synergies between NATO and the EU in the new dimensions of defence, namely cyber and space, as well as in the area of maritime security, taking advantage of the lessons learned by both NATO and the EU in these regions.

At last, it is needed to adapt decision-making processes to the new security reality and develop a communication strategy on countering terrorism and other threats that have an impact on the daily life of the EU and NATO member states' citizens.

In brief, it is worth to remember how the expression 'an international order based on effective multilateralism' has been a part of the security international organizations narrative with a particular emphasis in the last few years[24]. Undoubtedly, the EU and NATO cooperation is a major proof of how effective multilateralism is only successful if member states agree on a comprehensive 360º approach that respects all the geographical priorities and concerns. In fact, despite the regions of allies' strategic priorities, both Eastern Flank assists in tackling southern threats and Southern Flank is involved in Easter flank security improvement[25]. One of the best examples is the Nordic-Baltic region, where the air forces of 16 different NATO member states have been involved since 2004 in securing Baltic air space. Moreover, NATO is cooperating with the European Union's border management agency Frontex to deal with the current refugee and migrant crisis, along with human trafficking and criminal networks. In fact, multinational, integrated maritime forces made up of vessels from various Allied countries are contributing to stem illegal trafficking and illegal migration in the Aegean Sea, through intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance in the Aegean Sea and at the Turkish-Syrian border.

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[24] For example, in the 2003 European Security Strategy as well as in the 2008 Implementation report.

[25] Portugal, for instance, has developed a solid F16 program with Romania. For more details, please watch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJcB_4-bapc (last accessed 28 October 2016)

NATO PROJECTING STABILITY BEYOND EASTERN FLANK — POPULATION CENTRIC OPERATIONS

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The article aims at assessing NATO Warsaw Summit outcomes for the Eastern Flank and the security environment shaped by the Russian-Ukrainian War. The author focuses on developing non-kinetic tasks in the operational art identified within the hybrid approach towards defence. The research presents the main categories and examples of required capabilities within the theatre of operation, influencing the response to hybrid warfare. The summary provides the perspective of sustainable stability achieved through resilience.

Introduction

NATO security environment has been rapidly changing due to the conflicts in its neighbourhood. The drive towards stability has been recognized as featuring two main elements: safety within the Alliance and increased security of the Eastern and Southern Flanks. The aims of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which are echoed in the Warsaw Summit communique, are to defend the territory and protect the population of the Member States. The territory has been safeguarded since the establishment of the Alliance. The population has been targeted with terrorist activities, networks surpassing the borders and information activities influencing its attitudes.

This article focuses on population-centric operations, which respond to the non-kinetic dimension of warfare.[1] The aim of population-centric operations is to decrease the negative influence on defensive efforts and increase the positive effects on offensive actions. To reach the objective of projecting stability, three questions have to be answered: what is the result aimed at, which capabilities need to be employed and how to use them in the Eastern Flank and beyond.

Projecting Stability

Within the Strategic Direction East, the main evolving concern is the hybrid warfare targeting both the territory and the population of affected area. NATO presented its stance towards the response to hybrid threats at the Warsaw Summit:

"We have taken steps to ensure our ability to effectively address the challenges posed by hybrid warfare, where a broad,

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[1] Kinetic capabilities focus on destroying the enemy forces through the application of physical effects, non-kinetic capabilities include the remaining areas of influence – mainly population. For further examples of the non-kinetic capabilities see: Hurley W.J, Non-kinetic capabilities for irregular warfare: Four case studies, Institute for Defence Analyses, 2009, p.1-3.

complex, and adaptive combination of conventional and non-conventional means, and overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures, are employed in a highly integrated design by state and non-state actors to achieve their objectives. Responding to this challenge, we have adopted a strategy and actionable implementation plans on NATO's role in countering hybrid warfare. "

To enhance its stance against hybrid warfare, NATO has proclaimed that projecting stability is one of its strategic tasks:

"Faced with an increasingly diverse, unpredictable, and demanding security environment, we have taken further action to defend our territory and protect our populations, project stability beyond our borders, and continue the political, military, and institutional adaptation of our Alliance."

Projecting stability in the current security environment is closely interrelated with the dimensions of warfare and peace. To install mechanisms promoting stability, the areas, which require improvement, have to be examined. Stability within a specific area depends on two dimensions: territory and population. The combined dimensions lead to the state of security environment and shape its characteristics: level of violence, social structures, territorial disputes, common narratives. Successful stabilization has to include both dimensions in planning and execution.

If the objective of the operation is stabilization, the use of attrition warfare to destroy the territory without addressing the population unrest will lead to either extermination or insurgency. Understanding the role of two interrelated dimensions is crucial to install stability mechanisms, which defend the territory as well as protect the population. The

response to new challenges is built on higher level of readiness of military forces and greater resilience of the governments responding to a crisis.

Resilience

What can be done to engage population and start the process of building resilience to hybrid warfare? Warsaw Summit Communique has stated that civil preparedness plays a central role in the process:

"We have made a commitment to continue to enhance our resilience and to maintain and further develop our individual and collective capacity to resist any form of armed attack. Civil preparedness is a central pillar of Allies' resilience."

Government has to be able to be a provider of services meeting basic human needs: food and water, shelter, work/income, education and health. If one (or more) of these needs are met by the enemy, population will be inclined to side with the provider. For a government to enhance resilience, seven baseline requirements are essential: assured continuity of government and critical government services; resilient energy supplies; ability to deal effectively with the uncontrolled movement of people; resilient food and water resources; ability to deal with mass casualties; resilient communication systems; resilient transportation systems.

> **"** *Government has to be able to be a provider of services meeting basic human needs: food and water, shelter, work/income, education and health. If one (or more) of these needs are met by the enemy, population will be inclined to side with the provider.*

Disruption in any of these capacities results in decreased resilience, which in turn leads to vulnerability of population.

Warsaw Summit reinforced three essential elements required to create the state resilience:

1. Complementarity — Coordination of NATO and EU efforts;

    The cooperation of EU and NATO has also been highlighted in the European Commission framework (European Commission, 2016) on countering hybrid threats. Due to the complexity of the issue, establishing a Centre of Excellence has been recommended;

2. Situational Awareness — Providing a common understanding of challenges perception among the population in the hybrid threat-affected area.

3. Sustainment — Creating state resilience must be based on the premise that the government installs structures which can be upheld over time;

The efforts within governmental structures need to be paired with military capabilities, which can influence the population within the area of operations.

Non-kinetic Capabilities

The mix of capabilities required to counter hybrid warfare goes beyond fire and manpower superiority. Numerous examples show that political weakness can displace military force. Mass may be no longer the best measure of power in a conflict. Overmatching power is more important than overmatching force.[2] Within the countries that went through a civil unrest, population remains a source of power.

> " *The positive leverage for the defensive campaign turns the social force into a guardian mechanism – responding to the first symptoms of threat*

Leveraging this power for an offensive campaign (increasing the effectiveness of an attack) or for the defensive efforts (increasing the resistance) is conditioned by the environment and rapidly evolving technology.[3] Population organizes through networks resembling military counterparts — hierarchical structures, logistics support, training camps. The positive leverage for the defensive campaign turns the social force into a guardian mechanism — responding to the first symptoms of threat. The negative leverage turns the social force into a destabilizing tool preceding, supporting and maintaining hybrid conflict.

The leverage system is as old as the war itself. What is changing is the way it turns. A structured approach towards the challenge requires a complex mix of capabilities. Population needs as well as its leading narrative rarely remain neutral to an ongoing competition over the area — most commonly, they translate to a hostile or friendly environment. How can these capabilities be developed and how can we distinguish which of them are dominant for the environment?

The main non-kinetic capabilities, which can be employed in the area of the operations, are: intelligence, civil-military cooperation, information operations (including strategic communications and

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2   AH. Cordesman, The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics and Military Lessons, pp.2 – ibid. will do R.Scales, Future Warfare. US Army War College, 1999, pp.4

3   For more information, visit www.cimic-coe.org.

psychological operations), security sector reform, and cyber security. The historical retrospect followed by extrapolation shows the reoccurring trends, but not the dominant factors, which vary from area to area. Different parameters linked to the population and their respective factors of relevance allow tailoring the mix of capabilities leveraged within the area. The efforts have been initiated within NATO Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence in order to allow the tailoring of non-kinetic capabilities for specific scenarios.[4]

The security environment shaped by Russian aggression against Ukraine has determined the requirement to enhance the defence of the Eastern Flank. Creating the resilience mechanisms has to get beyond the territories of NATO member countries and stabilize the area affected most by the use of hybrid warfare. A commonly recognized term of hybrid threat has been used to describe the mix of attrition warfare used on the border of Russia and Ukraine with an influence on the population aimed at creating unrest. Hybrid Warfare is characterized by advantage in offence and complexity in defence.

Hybrid Warfare's Characteristics in Offence and Defence

If we assume that hybrid warfare entails the territory and the population that resides within the area, both dimensions need to be addressed. The defence of the territory should be paired with a population-centric operation. Within this dimension, humans is the basic unit being influenced by both sides of the conflict and the external

> **"differentiation" principle should be levelled with real aspirations of the partner countries and their expectations in cooperation with the European Union**

forces involved in the area.[6] Offensive hybrid warfare is characterized by the advantage of the attacker. The advantage of the offence in hybrid warfare is linked to human association — once the person is pulled to one of the sides, the allegiance is established. Shifting allegiance is a long, complex process, often impossible.

The complexity of defensive hybrid warfare stems from the need to defend territory and protect population at the same time. There are three main principles, which need to be followed in order to succeed with a defensive campaign in hybrid warfare: sequence, linearity and sustainment.

1. Sequence

The effectiveness of a population-centric operation is close to zero if this territory is not secured. The advantage in offence is based on the premise that once the allegiance is established, the transfer is unlikely. To start the population-centric operation, the kinetic superiority has to be achieved to provide safe and secure environment for people in the area. The security extends beyond safeguarding the borders into the territory where the population resides and protecting against acts of violence.

2. Linearity

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4   Christopher Coker presented the phenomenologist perception of war as a human activity within different perspectives – further reading: "The Future of War. The Re-enchantment of War in the Twenty-First Century." Brachwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, pp. 6-33.

5   European Commission. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. Brussels: High Representative of the UE for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. (2016).

The nature of hybrid warfare is to push the lines of control of the enemy by employing all means possible to undermine their positions. It renders the forward line of the front limited to a kinetic duel and leaves the rest of the territory open to fight. The war resembles water, which stops at the furthest border, but continues to spill inside the area.

3. Sustainment

Continuous change in security providers and essential services creates a power void. The sustainment of stability requires mechanisms in place which extend beyond the establishment of a secure area. The main effort of a population-centric operation is the aftermath of the kinetic duel. The evolving ways of gaining advantage in the area require a constant review of security measures and an adaptation to new tactics employed within the battlespace.

4. Adaptation

Expect the unexpected — there is no solution that will fit all cases of hybrid warfare. The adaptation to evolving tactics remains the aim of all commanders. The tempo of adapting to changes of balance in the two dimensions of stability further decides the strategic advantage. The adaptation of the Alliance requires agility towards new challenges and especially the decisiveness to react. As the case of hybrid warfare waged beyond the Eastern Flank has proven, political decisiveness and military readiness have to complement the response to the crisis.

The case of defensive hybrid warfare remains open within the Eastern Flank of NATO, implementing the Readiness Action Plan to boost the military response to an attack and enhancing the non-kinetic capabilities which contribute to security.

Eastern Flank

NATO's Eastern Flank represents the borderline of member nations — Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania and the destabilization beyond it is mostly linked to hybrid warfare. Destabilization beyond Eastern Flank is a challenge since the negative influence on population can reach the furthest areas within member states. To prevent the hybrid threats, NATO aims at projecting stability. The effort needs to be focused on the area beyond Eastern Flank, where the conflicts are ongoing and the negative influence can resonate across their borders.

Beyond Eastern Flank

Projecting the stability beyond Eastern Flank requires coordinated efforts not only within the partnership with Ukraine, but also within other areas directly affected by negative influence on the population — Moldova and Georgia.

Projecting the stability beyond Eastern Flank can be translated into one main objective: implementing the mechanisms of resilience to prevent future crisis. Priority has to be given to the ongoing, casualty-bearing conflict in the Eastern Ukraine. As highlighted previously, the precondition to a successful population-centric operation is the provision of safety and security for the residents of the area. It does not exclude the need to develop the non-kinetic capabilities at the same time to allow their use upon the settlement of the hostilities.

Ukraine

Building up Ukraine's resilience can be boosted by participating in the Assurance and Adaptation Measures, which are aimed at defence of NATO eastern members against hybrid warfare. The main effort

has to lay with the exercises, which offer the chance to increase interoperability and connectivity, as recognized during the Warsaw Summit:

"NATO's added-value in contributing to the international community's efforts includes its ability to offer defence reform assistance and advice in a coherent way, its recognised track record in the training and development of local forces, including in more difficult circumstances, and defence education."

The commitment on political level not only to participate, but also develop Ukrainian capacities could initiate Kyiv's push for inner expertise in the field of population-centric operations. Hybrid warfare observed in Ukraine has become the basis for NATO to establish a policy and framework, which respond to the new challenges. It set back Ukraine, as the unknown tactics brought confusion to the war zone. It can be, however, leveraged to create specialized structures, which will act as frontrunners in the discipline. The European Union has postulated the need to establish a Centre of Excellence within Hybrid Warfare due to its complexity.[6] Ukraine could be the leading knowledge hub in the field — growing its capacities and capitalizing on its knowledge.

Ukraine has its own Eastern Flank, which remains the main area of Anti-Terrorist Operation. Starting with the build-up of its capacities, the military proficiency is increasing. At the same time, the population has been influenced for years of information campaign from the Russian Federation. As previously stated, shifting allegiances is complex and provides the advantage to the offensive campaign as the reversal is increasingly difficult.

Conclusions

Population-centric operations represent the link between dimensions of the warfare described within the article. In order to counter the threats within a challenging environment, adaptation has been prompted as the foundation of the response. It entails both development and improvement. It also points to the change that is required. As the overarching security objective remains to defend the territory and to protect the population, both dimensions have to be addressed through the most effective means. The shift from one-themed operations to the mix of capabilities applied within their area of influence would enable the possible positive results of projecting stability beyond NATO's Eastern Flank.

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6   Кустарев А. Структурная геополитическая динамика: Ближний Восток // Журнальный клуб Интелрос «Космополис», №16, 2007. http://www.intelros.ru/index.php?newsid=332

CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL TRENDS IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

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The weakening of the US global influence in recent years has led to a formation of geopolitical vacuum in various regions of the World, where old and new regional players are rushing to fill their dominance. This led to regional instability, with which the US is already unable to cope. As a result, the international relations system is undergoing significant deformation toward multipolarity, accompanied by zones of instability, local and regional conflicts and geopolitical faults. One of such examples was the Wider Middle East explosion, manifested by the formation of the Islamic state and the civil war in Syria, which the United States alone are unable to cope with. Consequently, one can witness a loss of confidence in the US coming from the European allies and the destruction of Atlantic solidarity between them.

The Black Sea Region Turned Into the Epicentre of an Inter-Civilizational Conflict

Trends of the global system of international relations towards multipolarity opened a window of opportunity for Russia to regain the "world power" status, without which the Russian Federation does not imagine its future. The first step in restoring this status was the attempt to reintegrate the former Soviet Union and its complete absorption by Russia. The priority in the realization of this goal is to establish full control over the Black Sea region.

The installation of complete Russian domination in the Black Sea region is creating prerequisites for strategic objectives of geopolitical and civilizational character. Solving such problems is aimed at achieving the main goal of Russia — the restoration of the "world power" status with its own sphere of influence and the revision of the existing World Order. The priority

> *The installation of complete Russian domination in the Black Sea region is creating prerequisites for strategic objectives of geopolitical and civilizational character.*

of the Black Sea region to other regions of Russia's proximity are due to the fact that, *firstly*, the region is the most precarious and the least protected flank of NATO; *secondly*, the EU and the US are showing the least interest in this region; *thirdly*, NATO and the EU perceive this region as peripheral and heterogeneous in geopolitical and civilizational terms. However, the Black Sea region turned into the epicentre of an inter-civilizational conflict precisely because it is located at the intersection of three major geopolitical and civilization arrays: the Euro-Atlantic, Eurasian and Islamic massifs[1].

The Euro-Atlantic massif belongs to NATO and the EU Black Sea member-states, such as Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. This part of the Black Sea region is identified with the European cultural space, with common strategic goals, neoliberal ideology, shared democratic values, historical ties, common economic space, customs union and other integration agreements within the EU. This terrain is a thalassocratic formation sealed by military obligations within NATO and numerous inter-organizational structures and conventions. The United States plays a leading role in the organization and structuring of the Euro-Atlantic massif. The EU is showing less activity, but it has specific economic and political interests in this region, which are embodied by such initiatives and projects as the «Black Sea Synergy», TRACECA, Eastern Partnership, «Nabucco» pipeline project and other initiatives. The difference of the Euroatlantic part of the Black Sea region from the rest of the European civilizational space is that it consists of Orthodox countries. It provokes Russia to qualify this part of the Euro-Atlantic geopolitical terrain to be included in the Eurasian civilizational space.

The Eurasian geopolitical massif, specified in geopolitics as Heartland, is the ideal tellurocratic empire based on the ideological principles of society existence. The area is characterized by an incomplete cordon sanitaire that surrounds it.[2] The «Russian World» geopolitical doctrine presents the ideological justification of such claims for full control over this terrain. The doctrine of the «Russian world» was designed to implement two key requirements of modern historical development. On one hand, it serves as a justification for external expansion and interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries, especially Ukraine. On the other hand, it aims at the restoration of Russia as an empire, uniting and mobilizing Russians around their historic mission to transform the country to «Orthodox civilization», which should unite all the Orthodox Christians in their confrontation with the West.

The civilization component of this doctrine expresses the Russian claim to the role of a state-civilization that has to spread to the whole of Eurasia, which, in the Russian civilizational dimension, includes all Russian people. Thus, in our opinion, the Russian nation is not a nation, but a civilizational community. This community is distinguished from other civilizations by a unique cultural code. Thus, the main criterion of the civilizational identity of this community is a common cultural code but not a community or an ethnic factor of the economic and political life. At the same time, Putin awards this community with a state-making function in return for a refusal to identify as Russians by a principle of blood. «Russian people are state-forming by the fact of Russia's existence. Much of the Russian mission — to unite, fasten civilization. By language, culture, global sympathy ... to fasten in such a type of a civilization, where no "minority" and the principle of recognition of «friend or foe» is defined by common culture and shared values»[3].

On the other hand, the state-civilization called «Great Russia» with a large multi-ethnic civilization, in the opinion of Russian ideologists, as a «pan-region» may be able to withstand the process of globalization and successfully promote Russia's national

1   Степанова Г.В. Геополітична структура Чорноморського регіону та геополітичні інтереси акторів і гравців // Гілея (науковий вісник), №25, 2009

2   Владимир Путин. Россия и национальный вопрос. // Независимая газета.- 2012. – 23 января.

3   Михаил Ремизов. Русский национализм и российская геополитика // АПН, 18.07.2012 http://www.apn.ru/publications/article26892.htm.

interests in the global geopolitical space[4]. Regarding the Black Sea region, Russia considers it belonging to the Eurasian massif, which includes, except for its own territories, Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia, which share common historical ties, Orthodoxy, culture and population, a part of whom belongs to Slavic people.

The Islamic massif is a more tellurocratic formation, which occupies the southern part of the Black Sea region and is deeply entrenched in Russia's southern borders. It is a heterogeneous field of different status players and conflicting interests. Numerous ethnic conflicts and religious confrontations cause the mild impact of this geopolitical massif on the situation in the Black Sea region. Islamic geopolitical neighbourhood in this region is represented primarily by Turkey and Azerbaijan. At the same time, Turkey presents itself in the Black Sea region as a country that belongs to both the Atlantic (through NATO membership) and the Islamic geopolitical terrain.

Causes and Consequences of Changing the Balance of Power between Russia and the West in the Black Sea Region

Dynamic transformational processes in the Black Sea region were due to the change in the balance of power between Russia and the West. In the recent years, the Euro-Atlantic terrain in the Black Sea region has weakened. This happened after the end of NATO and the EU enlargement to the East. The financial crisis of 2008-2010 caused the increase in differences between the United States and European approaches. Europe entered the era of economic stagnation and political fragmentation, leading to the institutional and socio-economic crisis in the EU. The lack of consensus within the EU strategy and its relationship with Russia, a change of priorities in the US foreign policy and the weakening of the American influence has created a security vacuum in the Black Sea region.

Due to such tendencies, Russia has managed to negate the imbalance of power and deploy a new geopolitical offensive to Europe, aiming to establish dominance in the Black Sea area and Eastern Europe, which is not covered by membership in the EU and NATO. The strengthening of Russia as an influential actor on the global and regional levels is seen in its efforts not only to control the post-Soviet geopolitical space, but also to increase its impact on the surrounding areas of the Eastern and Central Europe.

Adding Ukraine and other Black Sea countries of the former Soviet Union to the Great Russian imperial project allows us to speak of it as a civilization project, comparable with the Western project of the «Euro-Atlantic civilization.» Without this part of the Black Sea region, Russia cannot be perceived as a Eurasian civilization, as in this case it loses its European identity and can be considered as one of the projects of the Asian country. If Russia establishes control over a large part of the Black Sea region, it will become a «Russian lake.» Thus, Russia is completing the restoration of the west facade as a state — civilization, which, on one hand, is an outpost against the Western civilization agents' impact on the territory of Russian interests, and on the other hand, which provides its capabilities and infrastructure that can be seen as a springboard for a geopolitical offensive to Europe and the Middle East.

The loss of US strategic interest in the Black Sea region and the weakening of their

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[4]   Росія поповнила Чорноморський флот 40 кораблями і не лише // Українська правда, 29.01.2016, http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/01/29/7097138/

influence in the region, the suspension of NATO and the EU enlargement to the East opened a window of opportunity to Russia to change the regional balance of power in their favour. To implement Russian imperial ambitions, the war was the most appropriate tool to change the balance of power in the Black Sea region. Therefore, the Russian-Ukrainian war changed the main development trend in the Black Sea region. Instead of integration in a unique civilizational space, the Black Sea region has become a zone of confrontation and deep civilizational fault. Moreover, the advantage was gained by the destructive processes in each of the three geopolitical massifs presented in the region.

The main result of these trends in the Black Sea region, which Russia stipulated by the Russian-Ukrainian war, was:

First, a significant expansion of the Eurasian geopolitical terrain through the annexation of Crimea, and occupation of Donbass, which accounted for 20% of Ukraine.

Second, Russia captured the main strategic position in the Black Sea region — the Crimean peninsula, located at the centre of the Black Sea. With this position, Russia turned the peninsula into a powerful military base. This dramatically changed the balance of power in the Black Sea region in favour of Russia. The number of Russian troops on the peninsula has increased to 30 thousand, while the Navy added 3 new submarines and 10 corvettes[5].

Third, due to the occupation of the Ukrainian territory, Russia increased its control over a coastline of the Black Sea from 500 to 1500 km., allowing it to fully control the whole Black Sea area, turning it into the «Russian lake».

> **The loss of US strategic interest in the Black Sea region and the weakening of their influence in the region, the suspension of NATO and the EU enlargement to the East opened a window of opportunity to Russia to change the regional balance of power**

Fourth, Russia completely destroyed the existing security regime in the Black Sea region and the existing elements of the regional security complex. The Navy Group «BLACKSEAFOR» virtually ceased its activity. Such organizations as BSEC, GUAM and initiatives as the «Black Sea Harmony» and «Black Sea Synergy» found their complete ineffectiveness and lost their value.

Fifth, Russia has forced to significantly reduce the NATO activity in the Black Sea and pressed the Euro-Atlantic terrain array in the Black Sea region, which is now limited maximum by the territorial waters of Romania and Bulgaria.

Sixth, Russia launched a strategic offensive against Islamic and Euro-Atlantic terrains aiming their full extrusion from the Black Sea region.

After the annexation of Crimea and increase of its military presence on the border with Ukraine, Russia launched an offensive against two strategic areas. The first strategic direction aims to complete the occupation and fragmentation of the Eastern and Southern Ukraine, followed by Transnistria and if possible Moldova joining the Eurasian geopolitical terrain. Achieving this strategic goal, Russia will be able to capture not only most of the coastline, but

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5   Юрій Ратковець. Особливості СКШН «Кавказ-2016» або репетиція війни Росії зі США, НАТО та Україною / "Борисфен Інтел", 25.09.2016, http://bintel.com.ua/uk/article/09-25-Caucasus/.

also the continental part of the Black Sea region. Thus, Russia will eliminate the so-called buffer zone and will turn the area into a staging ground for a further attack on the Euro-Atlantic geopolitical massif for its final surrender and displacement from the Black Sea region.

Exercises «Caucasus — 2016» held by Russia on 5-10 September 2016 was the evidence of direct preparation for such an attack in this strategic direction. As a well-known Ukrainian military expert, General Yuri Radkovets mentioned «*The analysis of the military and special events during the «Caucasus — 2016» suggests the Russians are working out a full-scale war scenario with the US / NATO and Ukraine in the South-Western strategic direction, including the use of nuclear weapons. In the framework of this scenario, two possible reasons were considered when sides could move from a «cold» to a «hot» (armed) conflict that is of war. The first one is the creation of a land corridor to Crimea and Transnistria, and under favourable conditions — the capture of the entire South-East of Ukraine (which, consequently, would cause the US and NATO interference in the situation on the side of Ukraine) by conducting a large-scale Russian operation on the Azov-Black Sea operational direction. The second one is the Russian reaction to Ukraine's actions, supported by the US and NATO, to forcefully regain control over the Crimea and in response to the Ukraine's subversive and terrorist activities in the Crimea*»[6].

Judging by the tasks that were set before the Russian Armed Forces at those exercises, Russia pursues the following military-strategic and military-political goals on the Southwestern strategic direction in the Black Sea region. **Firstly**, capturing the Eastern and Southern Ukraine in the framework of offensive operation and organizing defence against possible Ukrainian or the NATO forces invasion to Crimea. **Secondly**, blocking the Black Sea Straits and establishing full control over them. **Thirdly**, causing the defeat of the enemy on the NATO Southern flank and advance towards the Balkans in order to regain full control over this part of the Southeast Europe. In this way, Russia is planning to be completely done with the Euro-Atlantic geopolitical massif not only in the Black Sea region, but also throughout the South East Europe, including the Balkan region.

For this purpose, during the exercises, combined services formation of the Russian Armed Forces near the borders of Ukraine and North Caucasus Russia of up to 120 thousand people were established. In the airspace over the Southwestern part of Crimea, crews of Tu-95MS had worked to overcome enemy air defence system, followed by an application of rocket and bomb attacks (suspended) to block the Black Sea straits[7].

The Russian Federation has conducted activities aimed at the extension of military development of the Russian Armed Forces and its allies into the strategic depth of enemy territory on the NATO Southern flank — in the Balkans[8]. The testing of this phase was planned in the course of joint Russian-Belarusian-Serbian exercises «Slavic brotherhood-2016» and the Russian-Serbian exercises «Bars 2016» in Serbia at October 2016. The final stage of these exercises was training on causing nuclear-missile attacks on critical

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6   Юрій Ратковець. Особливості СКШН «Кавказ-2016» або репетиція війни Росії зі США, НАТО та Україною / "Борисфен Інтел", 25.09.2016, http://bintel.com.ua/uk/article/09-25-Caucasus/.

7   Ibid

8   Ibid.

infrastructure on the territory of the enemy — to hold the strategic initiative in war with the US / NATO and forcing the enemy to surrender on favourable for Russia terms. At the final stage of the active phase of the exercises «Caucasus-2016», within Command Post Exercise of Strategic Missile Forces (CPESMF) from the cosmodrome «Plesetsk» a real successful launch of an ICBM «Topol» toward a site in Kamchatka was made[9].

One can ask how the West should react to the Russian geopolitical offensive on the Euro-Atlantic geopolitical massif and the establishment of Russian control over the major part of the Black Sea region? Perhaps the Western reaction to Russia's actions in the Black Sea region will depend primarily on the consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The impact of the same hybrid and full-scale war of Russia against the US / NATO in the Black Sea region is ultimately driven by the ratio of goals, resources and claims, which Russia and the West have. Russian objectives in this hybrid and global war are to regain its status as a "world power" in the international relations hierarchy as well as changing the World Order that emerged after the end of the Cold War. The West, by contrast, is trying to keep the post-bipolar order, which ensures its comfortable enough existence and development. Claims of Russia on regaining dominance in the Black Sea region are not in the interests and values of the Western civilization, which, unlike Russia, has no such global ambitions and aggressive claims because it is satisfied with the existing status quo.

Hence, this ratio of purposes and claims determines the state of relations between the West and Russia, when the first dooms itself to a passive reactive policy with an

> **❝ this ratio of purposes and claims determines the state of relations between the West and Russia, when the first dooms itself to a passive reactive policy with an objective to prevent a return to the Cold War and to prevent another World War with Russia**

objective to prevent a return to the Cold War and to prevent another World War with Russia. Russia, by contrast, has a policy of destroying the existing World Order by hybrid war and blackmailing the West with a nuclear war. Obviously, in terms of resources, Russia is much inferior to the West, however, due to the well-planned war, it can be able to mobilize its resources for geopolitical and military revenge, while Western countries are in a state of stagnation, military and economic demobilization, and are afraid to provoke Russia even by making the smallest steps aimed to restore its defence. Western countries oppose the Russian aggressive foreign policy with their unprovocative policy of appeasement, thus demonstrating their weakness to Russia.

The apparent proof of this inadequacy and unprovocative policy is NATO and the EU response to Russia's actions in the Black Sea region. EU no longer perceives the region as a zone of stability and considers it more as a barrier to illegal immigration, refugees, human trafficking, drug trafficking and organized crime. The consequences of this policy for Brussels are losing its influence. The impact and the power do not brook vacuum and Russia is rushing to fill it.

NATO also demonstrates a flabby and inadequate response to threats on its

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9   Юрій Ратковець. Особливості СКШН «Кавказ-2016» або репетиція війни Росії зі США, НАТО та Україною / "Борисфен Інтел", 25.09.2016, http://bintel.com.ua/uk/article/09-25-Caucasus/.

southern flank in the Black Sea region. Warsaw Summit (2016) did not give answers to these challenges. Regarding the Black Sea region, it is confined by a decision to strengthen its presence there by supporting the initiative of Romania to create «a framework multinational brigade» (Nos. 41)[10]. Although it is likely that this decision will have a declarative character. Many provisions of the Warsaw declaration were devoted to the aggressive Russian actions in Ukraine, the Baltic, the Black and the Mediterranean Seas, and in Syria. It marked «provocative military activity in peripheral NATO territory» (Nos. 5, 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 19). It is stated that by its actions Russia violated a number of legal and political obligations, including the provisions of the Russia-NATO Founding Act 1997 (p.9)[11]. However, Russia can ignore this criticism, because in p.39 of the Summit communiqué it is stated: «deterrence has to be supplemented by meaningful dialogue and cooperation with Russia». Readiness for a dialogue is traditionally seen by the Kremlin as a sign of weakness, and weakness — as an incentive to intensify aggression. Russia did not hesitate to prove it in practice, and in one day after another unsuccessful meeting of the NATO-Russia Council at ambassadorial level, which took place in Brussels on July 13, 2016, the Russian military announced their intention to place anti-aircraft missile complexes C-400 "Triumph" in the Crimea in August 2016[12]. This was a response of Moscow to the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg calling for a dialogue, and Germany Minister of Foreign Affairs Frank Steinmeier calls to avoid «unnecessary aggravations,»[13] as well as words of French President Francois Hollande that Russia is not a threat, but «a partner who, though sometimes using force, as we saw in Ukraine»[14].

New NATO Member-States Initiatives

Understanding NATO's helplessness in the face of Russian real military threat, Poland and Romania launched an initiative on Stability of the NATO's southern flank[15]. Another Romanian initiative is creating the Black Sea flotilla led by NATO, which aims to reinforce the presence of the Alliance to strengthen security in the Black Sea[16]. President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, during his visit to Romania, confirmed Ukrainian intentions to join the flotilla at a joint news conference in Bucharest on April 21, 2016[17]. However, the initiative has almost finished on a declarative level, as Ukraine has no ships to join such a flotilla. After the occupation of Crimea by Russia, almost all ships of the Ukrainian Navy were blocked at the Crimean bases and incorporated in the Russian Black Sea Fleet.

[10] Warsaw Summit Communiqué. / NATO, 09.07.2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm

[11] Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France. 27 May 1997. Accessed at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm

[12] Крым в августе получит комплект зенитной ракетной системы С-400, / TASS, 15.07.2016 http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/3456809.

[13] Штайнмаєр застерігає проти "рецедиву конфронтації" між НАТО і РФ // Deutsche Well, 07.07.2016 http://dw.com/p/1JLKY

[14] Holland: Russia A Partner, Not A Threat / Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 08.07.2016 http://www.rferl.org/content/hollande-russia-is-a-partner-not-a-threat/27847690.html

[15] На шляху «перезавантаження» // Народна армія. – 2016. – 19 лютого. http://na.mil.gov.ua/30059-na-shlyaxu-perezavantazhennya.

[16] Румунія запропонувала створити Чорноморську флотилію під проводом НАТО / Espresso.TV, 21.04.2016, http://espreso.tv/news/2016/04/21/rumuniya_zaproponuvala_stvoryty_chornomorsku_flotyliyu_pid_provodom_nato.

[17] Україна готова приєднатися до Чорноморської флотилії під егідою НАТО / Interfax Ukraine, 21.04.2016, http://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/general/339166.html.

On the other hand, considering the Russian position, Bulgaria also refused to engage in such a flotilla[18]. NATO does not consider it necessary to build up its naval presence in the Black Sea region, allowing Russia to build-up in the region. The latest initiative launched by the President of Poland Andrzej Duda on the project «Intermarries» also remains an idea, enshrined in official statements and memoranda[19].

In the end, the weakest link in NATO's southern flank is Turkey. Formally, being a NATO member, the country is increasingly moving away from the values and principles that adhere to the Alliance. Suppressing the failed military coup Erdogan finally made it possible to consolidate an authoritarian regime in the country and go to war with the Islamic state. In fact, Turkey invaded the internal Islamic conflict with support from Russia. Therefore, there was a dramatic geopolitical rapprochement of Erdogan's authoritarian regime with Putin's authoritarian regime. Erdogan apologized for the Russian front-line bomber SU-24, first coming to a meeting in early August 2016 to Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg with an ordinary apology, as well as with suggestions and criticism of the West. The content of these proposals filled with real agreements between Russia and Turkey was signed during Putin's visit to Ankara on October 10, 2016 to attend the World Energy Congress. The agreement concerns constructing a two strands pipeline «Turkish Stream» under the Black Sea to the European part of Turkey and beyond the borders of Greece. The pipeline will be built by the end of 2019. The total project costs 11.4 billion Euro[20].

> **The Black Sea region itself demonstrates negative, destructive dynamics in the security sphere**

Turkey's rapprochement with Russia gives President Erdogan an opportunity to be independent from the EU and US policy in the Middle East and the Black Sea region, blackmailing them with energy issues, refugees and other problems painful for the West. Russia is able to subordinate Turkey's policy to its interests. Moscow managed to implement a situational alliance with Sunni Turkey and Shiite Iran and direct it against the West and against the Islamic state, while simultaneously weakening both.

Thus, through this alliance, Russia greatly expanded the arch of its influence in the Middle East and the Black Sea region, forming in these regions a quite wide anti-Western front, to which a part of the Islamic countries appended. This will mean in a medium to longer term, a significant narrowing until the full displacement of the Euro-Atlantic massif from the Black Sea region and a simultaneous marginalisation of the Islamic factor in the region. These trends will ultimately lead to Ukraine completely losing its subjectivity in the Black Sea region. Ukraine has lost almost all the instruments and mechanisms of its influence in the region. As a result of the Russian military aggression, Ukraine has lost not only a part of its territory and coastline, but also a part of the continental shelf and economic zone, which now Russia unchallengely enjoys. Ukraine has

18 Болгария отказалась присоединиться к флоту НАТО в Черном море / RBC, 16.06.2016, http://www.rbc.ru/politics/16/06/2016/5762b5f89a79473154678cc9.

19 «Міжмор'я»: новий польський президент – популіст? / Slovo i dilo, 07.08.2015, http://www.slovoidilo.ua/2015/08/07/novyna/suspilstvo/mizhmorya-novyj-polskyj-prezydent-populist/

20 Россия и Турция подписали соглашение по "Турецкому потоку" / RBC, 10.10.2016 https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/rossiya-turtsiya-podpisali-soglashenie-turetskomu-1476120639.html

lost a lot from its fishing fleet and Navy. GUAM Organization suffered its final collapse and BSEC has lost its meaning. In fact, this situation can be called a regional geopolitical catastrophe of Ukraine.

The Black Sea region itself demonstrates negative, destructive dynamics in the security sphere, which is characterized by such trends as the transformation of the region into a sphere of Russian unchallenged dominance, narrowing the Atlantic one and marginalizing the Islamic geopolitical massifs in the region, as well as the militarization of the region; transformation of the region into a zone of confrontation, local wars and regional conflicts; sharp weakening of the US, NATO and the EU influence; and strengthening civilization faults and confrontation. Such trends of the Black Sea region make the implementation of the EU and NATO international projects related to the further expansion to the East impossible and will lead to a new Cold War under conditions where Russia established a de facto control over much of the Black Sea region.

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DYNAMICS OF RUSSIAN CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR PRACTICAL STRATEGY[1]

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This paper analyses the evolution of post-Soviet Russian conceptual and doctrinal visions of conventional deterrence and its current status, prospects and impact on regional and global levels in the framework of Russian strategic military and political thinking. The paper argues that although neglected since the early post-Soviet period, Russian conventional (nonnuclear) deterrence has been revisited especially since 2014 when Russia's Military Doctrine gave it a new definition, soon applied in practice during the Syrian campaign. In its military strategy, conventional deterrence changed its standing over the last two decades from a subsidiary tactical/sub-strategic level warfighting tool to a separate military-political factor and a self-contained component of Russian strategic deterrence.

Against the backdrop of Ukrainian crisis, Syrian conflict and rising tension between Russia and NATO, Russian conventional deterrence fulfills the function of a regional and global military-political factor, while its application in warfighting is now happening on a new, more effective technological level based on new types of long-range precision-guided munitions (PGM).

The Parameters of "Second Conventional Age"

The development of greater accuracy, longer range and greater lethality of modern conventional weapons and, first of all, long-range precise ballistic and cruise missiles (in combination with advanced intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance systems) has contributed to the start of the new, so-called "Second Conventional Age" (after two World Wars and the appearance of nuclear weapons) and the renaissance of conventional deterrence.[2] According to Russian military experts, at the current stage, the technological development of many countries "has made such a progress that the destruction of single elements of infrastructure, communication and control systems can lead to a catastrophe, able to

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[1] This paper is based on the presentation originally presented by the author at the PONARS Eurasia 2016 Annual Conference on September 23-24, 2016 in Washington, DC.

[2] Christine M. Leah, "Deterrence and Arms Control in a Second Conventional Age", Comparative Strategy, Vol. 34, Issue 5, 2015, p.401-402.

throw a country back for many years in its development".[3]

The development of such military technologies creates the conditions when conventional weapons, even on a strategic level, do not only include classic strike platforms (ballistic and cruise missiles, artillery systems, other PGM munitions) or weapons based on new physical principles (hypersonic weapons, maneuvering reentry vehicles, anti-satellite and space weapons), but also assume the application of new types of nonnuclear weapons, based on non-kinetic or non-explosion damage (cyber, radio-electronic and electromagnetic weapons).

Conventional weapons have reached a complex combination of range, accuracy and lethality that allows even leading nuclear powers to more effectively rely on them for strategic deterrence. Even the most powerful conventional munitions (for example, Russian thermobaric warheads) do not have serious side effects (penetrating radiation, radioactive contamination) which accompany the use of every type of nuclear weapons, even so-called "mini-nukes". The "conventionalization" of strategic deterrence by the key nuclear powers — the United States, Russia and China — has led to the partial substitution of the regional-level nuclear deterrence by the conventional one, based on the long-range PGM.

Dynamics of the Soviet and Post-Soviet Russian Conceptual Approaches

Given the closed nature of military-strategic studies in the Soviet Union, the issue of conventional deterrence never received public attention in Soviet military and political theory. In contrast to the Western countries, where in the 1980s there was more interest in conventional deterrence, the Soviet Union devoted only limited attention to this issue. This absence of attention was mainly due to the fact that the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies enjoyed significant quantitative and even qualitative offensive superiority of conventional forces in Europe.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the neglected status of Russian conventional deterrence began to change, although only gradually. The main reason was the growing role of nuclear deterrence against the background of the decline of Russian conventional forces vis-à-vis opposite processes in the US and other leading NATO countries. Meanwhile, the interest of Russian academia to conventional deterrence was mainly focusing on the conventional arms control and the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty issues, with only very limited studies of the impact of the conventional PGM on strategic stability and nuclear deterrence, for example — considering issues of counterforce threats from the U.S. precision sea and air launch conventional cruise missiles (SLCM and ALCM) strikes against the Russian strategic nuclear silo-based and mobile ICBM forces.

Only since the beginning of the 2000s, has the role of conventional forces in Russian strategic deterrence been addressed and considered mainly as the initial element in early de-escalation of military conflicts, prior to the possible use of nuclear weapons. According to Russian military experts, one of the key advantages of the conventional (nonnuclear) deterrence was that it can increase the nuclear threshold: "conventional weapons are used to deter aggression beginning with the threat to

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[3] Burenok V.M., Achasov O.B., "Nonnuclear Deterrence", Military Thought, №12, 2007, p.12 (in Russian).

inflict sufficient damage to the adversary's forces and military and economic potential, and ending with the threat of nuclear escalation of the conflict to the extent of a massive nuclear exchange".[4]

From the very beginning, the post-Soviet Russian conceptual approaches to conventional deterrence did not consider it as much of a military-political tool. It was rather seen as a practical warfighting instrument, which was very relevant especially in low-scale local conflicts, in which nuclear weapons were useless to apply. Russian military theorists used to consider nonnuclear deterrence as a convenient military-political addition to tactical nuclear weapons. It is not accidental that since the 1990s, the Russian professional discourse has been applying the term nonnuclear (or "pre-nuclear") deterrence, but not just conventional deterrence (based on the conventional weapons).[5]

However, the development of further accuracy and lethality of conventional weapons and their delivery systems increased their role as an element of Russian strategic deterrence. The significance of conventional deterrence as a practical sub-strategic and operational-tactical level warfighting instrument also increased.

The development of Russian conceptual approaches to conventional deterrence in general advanced the development of its own technical capacities. Theoretical foundations of conventional deterrence have been developed in Russia since the late 1990s, while the practical testing and demonstration of its advanced technical

> **It can even be argued that Russia has developed an approach to conventional deterrence, totally different from the U.S. "Conventional Prompt Global Strike" (CPGS) program. According to one prominent American expert, the U.S. concept is one of "a missile in a search of a mission**

capacity has been conducted fairly recently. It refers especially to strategic level PGM, for example 3M54 "Kalibr" cruise missiles as well as weapons based on new physical principles (hypersonic and maneuvering reentry vehicles and warheads, for example the 3K22 "Zircon" project).

It can even be argued that Russia has developed an approach to conventional deterrence, totally different from the U.S. "Conventional Prompt Global Strike" (CPGS) program. According to one prominent American expert, the U.S. concept is one of "a missile in a search of a mission," meaning that the existence of detailed technical R&D products and perspective programs come before the strategic doctrine and the goals of missions that might be acquired CPGS while in the Russia's conventional deterrence approaches the opposite situation exists.[6]

The growing interest towards conventional deterrence in Russia was clearly reflected in the current Military Doctrine adopted in December 2014 that gives details on applying conventional PGM in strategic deterrence and has already been reflected in the views of Russian military specialists.

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[4]   See more: Chekinov S.G., Bogdanov S.A., "Strategic Deterrence and Russia's National Security Today", Military Thought, №3, 2012 (in Russian).

[5]   See more: Kokoshin A.A., On System of Nonnuclear (Pre-nuclear) Deterrence in the Defense Policy of Russia, Moscow, 2012 (in Russian).

[6]   James M. Acton, Silver Bullet? Asking the Right Questions About Conventional Prompt Global Strike, Washington: CEIP, 2013, p.9.

Self-Contained Component of Russian Strategic Deterrence

According to Russian officials, in the strategic context, the technical and conceptual development of Russian nonnuclear deterrence is mainly aimed in response to the U.S. CPGS.[7] The assessment of the American long-range conventional PGM counterforce capacity (for example, Block IV Tomahawk SLCM) indicates that at the current stage there is no guarantee for success of such strikes against the Russian nuclear silo-based and mobile ground missile launchers. However, American non-nuclear PGM can already complement tactical (non-strategic) nuclear weapons and undermine the general balance between two nuclear superpowers. Russian experts argue that any further technological development of the CPGS (together with the enhancement of the American BMD and appearance of a new generation PGM based on new physical principles) will create existential threats for the Russian strategic deterrence capacity.[8] According to some estimates of the U.S. Strategic command (STRATCOM), conventional PGM can already destroy from 10% to 30% of the possible nuclear weapons targets.[9]

For quite a long time the role of nonnuclear weapons in the framework of Russian strategic deterrence on global level was rather limited, in contrast to their practical military importance. Accordingly, initially Russian conventional deterrence provided warfighting tools to implement deterrence by denial. However, the technological development of conventional deterrence gives it a possibility to implement also deterrence by punishment and to play a growing political role in overall Russian strategic deterrence. Moreover, Russian nonnuclear deterrence can be considered as a significant strategic level military-political factor not only in the context of the so-called "central nuclear deterrence" between Russia and the US, but in the near future it can even reach a limited counterforce capacity towards China and other "second echelon" nuclear powers.

The further development of high-precision long-range strategic non-nuclear weapons (SNNW) will soon become a matter of arms control negotiations between Moscow and Washington, with mutual discussion on the development of ground-launch and sea-launch ballistic and cruise missiles, long-range attack UAVs, their compliance with the INF Treaty and other arms control agreements. If earlier the American side enjoyed an almost unilateral monopoly of "Tomahawk" SLCM and was not interested in discussing these topics during previous negotiations on the New START Treaty, now the situation has changed: the combat salvos of the Russian ''Kalibrs'' (even if there are some doubts on the sustainability of their domestic production) has significantly shifted the overall context of strategic arms control negotiations.

Despite active debate on concepts and prospects for technological development, many Russian experts argue that conventional deterrence is not capable to fully replace nuclear deterrence on both global and regional levels. However, the development of SNNW can make considerable changes in the overall concept

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7   See more: "Russia Forced to Develop Global Prompt Strike Weapons – Anatoly Antonov", Security Index, №2 (105), Volume 19, 2013 (in Russian); James M. Acton. "Russia and Strategic Conventional Weapons: Concerns and Responses", Nonproliferation Review, Vol.22, No2, 2015.

8   See more: Non-nuclear Factors of Nuclear Disarmament (Ballistic Missiles Defense, High-Precision Conventional Weapons, Space Arms), Moscow: IMEMO, 2010.

9   Dennis M. Gormley, "US Advanced Conventional Systems and Conventional Prompt Global Strike Ambitions: Assessing the Risks, Benefits, and Arms Control Implications", Nonproliferation Review, Vol. 22, No2, 2015, p. 129.

of Russian strategic deterrence. The SNWW may be able to cope with conventional de-escalation in case of a conflict situation between the nuclear superpowers (in the framework of the famous Russian concept of "de-escalation through escalation") as well as to deliver preventive strikes against nuclear and nonnuclear targets without relying on its own nuclear capacity. Meanwhile, there is a merging of functions and tasks between nuclear and nonnuclear weapons on strategic and even operational-tactic levels, which also increases the risk of accidental conflict between nuclear superpowers or between a nuclear superpower and regional nuclear powers.

In perspective, the Russian SNNW will not replace tactical (non-strategic) nuclear weapons but will turn into an important component of regional deterrence. The Ukrainian crisis has fostered this process while the Syrian campaign was the first time when Russia demonstrated its capacity to conduct regional nonnuclear deterrence by using SLCM and ALCM on the ground that followed with the deployment of "Iskander-M" tactical missiles during the peak of the escalation between Russia and Turkey.

For example, one should mention that while discussing the results of the first-time utilizing Russian "Kalibr" SLCM and Kh-101 ALCM in Syria with his minister of defense in November-December 2015, Vladimir Putin stated that these precision weapons "can be equipped with both conventional and special nuclear warheads." However, Putin noted that "of course, this is not necessary when fighting against terrorism, and, I hope, will never be."[10] Putin's message was addressed mainly

> **" *there is a merging of functions and tasks between nuclear and nonnuclear weapons on strategic and even operational-tactic levels, which also increases the risk of accidental conflict between nuclear superpowers or between a nuclear superpower and regional nuclear powers*

to possible rivals of Russia in the Middle East, rather than to radical Islamists. At first it was addressed to Turkey, which had quantitative superiority of conventional forces over Russia (as well as over the Syrian army and its allies) in Syria during the situation of growing tensions between Moscow and Ankara after shooting down the Russian Su-24 bomber on November 24, 2015.

In this respect, the possible limits on combination of Russian conventional deterrence capacity with the use of regional-level tactical nuclear weapons fit into the logic of Russia's de-escalation doctrine stating that "if Moscow faces a large-scale conventional attack exceeding its capacity for defense, it may respond with a limited nuclear strike."[11] Provisions of the main Russian conceptual documents restrained the first use of the nuclear weapons on the level of conventional war "when the existence of the state is under threat". However, the ambiguity of Russian doctrinal and practical approaches to the regional nuclear deterrence execution presumes a probability of using tactical nuclear weapons during the conventional *force majeure*.[12] The further development of

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[10]   Dave Majumdar, "Will Russia Nuke ISIS in Syria?" The National Interest, 10 December, 2015, http://nationalinter-est.org/blog/the-buzz/will-russia-nuke-isis-syria-14577

[11]   Sokov, Nikolai, "Why Russia Calls a Limited Nuclear Strike "De-escalation"", The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 13 March, 2014, http://thebulletin.org/why-russia-calls-limited-nuclear-strike-de-escalation

[12]   Adamsky, Dmitry (Dima), "If War Comes Tomorrow: Russian Thinking About 'Regional Nuclear Deterrence'", Journal of Slavic Military Studies, Vol.27, Issue 1, 2014, p.166-169.

Russian conventional deterrence capacity and doctrinal elements allows Moscow to use it in regional conflicts on a more enhanced level and with better efficiency.

Back to Practical Warfighting Mission?

Alongside its tasks in the framework of strategic deterrence, the Russian long-range PGM continue to develop in terms of their practical warfighting missions with close inter-services interaction of the Land Forces, Aerospace Forces and Navy. In particular, Russian nonnuclear deterrence is focusing on the measures of *anti access/ area denial* (A2/AD) aimed to effectively deny possible adversaries access to strategic regions, coastal areas and domestic sea waters, especially in the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea as well as near the Northern and Pacific Fleets strategic nuclear submarines bases.[13] By analogy with the concept of the so-called "Northern bastion" (zonal defense system of the Russian Northern Fleet nuclear undersea forces deployment bases), which was introduced in the 1990s, Russia has fostered the formation of the Baltic (Kaliningrad) and the Black Sea (Crimea) "sea bastions", equipping them with long-range A2/AD systems.[14] These joint inter-services measures are aimed to deny military access of rivals to the strategically important areas; the way they operate was recently illustrated in the Middle East during the Syrian campaign with building the Russian A2/AD "bubble" over Syria.

The counteraction against Russian and Chinese A2/AD systems serves as one of American professional community arguments for further development of the CGPS program. Therefore, it is clear that in order to counter the American conventional prompt strikes as well as to effectively implement its own A2/AD, Russian nonnuclear deterrence acquires a new meaning on operative-tactical and sub-strategic levels. For example, the development of an effective Russian A2/AD system can directly influence regional security issues in Europe. In this context, building a long-range conventional A2/AD capacity in Kaliningrad will create a new strategic reality in relations between Russia and NATO, especially towards the Baltic countries.[15]

After the Ukrainian crisis, some Western experts are keen to describe Russian conventional deterrence as part of a wider strategic approach (for instance, *cross-domain coercion*) and try to link it with "hybrid warfare" and other "new fangled" conceptions aimed to describe Russian policy on the post-Soviet space.[16] In addition, the professional discourse on whether NATO should be back to the implementation of its own conventional deterrence policy to react to the growing potential of Russian conventional forces and system of nonnuclear deterrence is also widely discussed. Some of them consider the probability of the Russian hybrid warfare and A2/AD conceptions combination that can reinforce each other

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[13] See more: Polegaev V.I., Alferov V.V, "On Nonnuclear Deterrence, Its Role and Place in the System of Strategic Deterrence", Military Thought, №9, 2015, (in Russian).

[14] The concept of so called "sea bastions", aimed to provide defense of the Soviets nuclear submarines deployment bases in the conditions of the USA and NATO navies sea superiority was developed during the Cold War period and was actively discussing by the expert community in the framework of the nuclear and conventional deterrence logic. See more: James J. Wirtz, "Strategic Conventional Deterrence: Lessons from the Maritime Strategy", Security Studies, Vol.3, Autumn, 1993, p.132-137.

[15] See more: Stephan Fruhling, Guillaume Lasconjarias, "NATO, A2/AD and Kaliningrad Challenge", Survival, Vol.58, No3, 2016.

[16] See more: Dmitry (Dima) Adamsky, "Cross-Domain Coercion. The Current Russian Art of Strategy", Proliferation Papers, IFRI, No 54, November, 2015.

in the context of Russian strategy towards Eastern European countries, enabling to "create a sort of double deterrence to NATO intervention in a military crisis".[17]

Finally, another area of Russian conventional deterrence application (especially traditional long-range PGM) can be the fight against terrorism, including targeted killing of their leadership[18]. Meanwhile, the fight against terrorism is also officially presented as one of the priorities of the American CPGS.

Conclusion

Conventional (nonnuclear) deterrence has seriously evolved in Russian military and strategic thinking. Starting as a subsidiary tactical/sub-strategic level warfighting tool it has become a separate military-political factor and a self-contained component of Russian strategic deterrence. The capacity of conventional deterrence as a warfighting tool and its influence on post-Soviet political space has also expanded. As a result, the current system of Russian conventional deterrence can be described as a combination of the following functions:

1. A self-contained element (in combination with strategic nuclear weapons) of the Russian global level strategic deterrence system, which on the regional levels can also be applied in combination with tactical (non-strategic) nuclear weapons and provides more flexibility to the overall Russian strategic deterrence conduction, especially in crisis situations when Moscow's political goals are limited or do not have higher priority;

2. A practical warfighting military instrument, especially contributing to strengthening A2/AD capacity of Russian conventional forces, and including the application of PGM in regional, low-intensity and asymmetric conflicts and in fight against terrorism.

3. A military-political factor, in which the Russian conventional deterrence is aimed at maintaining regional balance and promoting Russian geopolitical interests in the post-Soviet space, as well as in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

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[17] Luis Simon, "The 'Third' US Offset Strategy and Europe's 'Anti-access' Challenge", The Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol.39, No.3, p.434.

[18] See more: Matthew A. Morehouse, "The Claws of the Bear: Russia's Targeted Killing Program", Journal of the Slavic Military Studies, Vol.28, 2015.

THE BLACK SEA SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN TIMES OF COLLAPSE: THE CASE OF ANNEXED CRIMEA AND MILITARY CHALLENGES FOR THE US, NATO, EU, TURKEY, AND UKRAINE

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Once being annexed by Russia, Crimea with the rest of the Black Sea sub-region immediately broke through the front line of the global post-bipolar geopolitics. The author argues that there is an urgent need to re-estimate the traditional input of the key Black Sea actors. This initial reading suggests Russia, as well as NATO, the USA, the EU, and Turkey finding the new format of protecting their interests due to the new geopolitical challenges and changed military climate in the Black Sea basin.

Introduction

With the annexation of Crimea, followed by the hybrid war against Ukraine, the Black Sea security space since February-March 2014 has appeared on top of global concerns alongside Syria crisis and world terrorism. While states of the world are calculating the number of combat-ready vehicles of different types, the reality of today shows that in two and a half years after the annexation, security risks and military challenges threatening the whole Europe and the rest of the world should not be underestimated. We are witnessing the transformation of the Black Sea region from the backyard of the global politics into the "Black swan" of the new global risks. All of them are connected to military competition, which is taking place now in the wider Black Sea area, including the Crimean peninsula and the Azov Sea.

"NATO Syndrome" and "Russian Impregnable Fortress"

The annexation of Crimea happened rapidly, but not so unexpectedly. Besides political and diplomatic battles over the Black Sea Fleet and territorial claims to Ukraine in 1990s, which have been discussed a lot[1], there was also a risk of military clash between Russia and Ukraine in Kerch strait

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[1]   More on this S. Glebov, Russian Black Sea Fleet and Ukraine's Security Strategy: Agenda 2017, [in:] Luis Rodrigues & Sergiy Glebov (ed.), Military Bases: Historical Perspectives, Contemporary Challenges, IOS Press: Amsterdam 2009, pp. 181-187.

area back in 2003 during the crisis over Tuzla Island. Moreover, Ukraine could do nothing about those Black Sea Fleet battle ships departing from Sevastopol bays for a combat mission against Georgia in 2008 and safely coming back to Ukraine. A statement by the first Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk on 21 October 2015 about Russian navy ready to attack Odessa and combat shots by Ukrainian warships at Russian ships to stop it in 1992[2] leaves no doubts as to the potential readiness of Moscow to fight for Crimea even against the "ghost of NATO."

The annexation of Crimea was partly justified by introducing NATO as a threat according to the Russian President Putin: "If we don't do anything, Ukraine will be drawn into NATO sometime in the future... and NATO ships will dock in Sevastopol, the city of Russia's naval glory... if NATO troops walk in, they will immediately deploy these forces there"[3]. Even more instructive was the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov in his speech for Educational Youth Forum in August 2015, where he confessed that because of NATO and "NATO-centrism" which, to Lavrov's mind, "did not allow cooperating with Russia, the war in Ukraine became possible."[4]

The acute Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation as of 25 December 2014 says that Russia suspects NATO of aggressive intentions and considers it among key external military risks.[5] There are not only provocations with groups of Russian warplanes conducting large-scale manoeuvres in international airspace against NATO member-countries all over the Black, Baltic and North seas and the Atlantic Ocean, but also strategic plans of Kremlin to consider Crimea as the bridgehead against NATO.

> *We are witnessing the transformation of the Black Sea region from the backyard of the global politics into the "Black swan" of the new global risks*

Thus, one of the drills, which took place on 26-27 October 2015 in the Crimean Opuk training area with ships and aircrafts of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, was practicing repelling an air attack against the Crimean peninsula and delivering a missile strike against simulated enemy's ships as well as engaging in an artillery battle with a naval strike force. What made Reuters to conclude that "latest military exercises provide a vivid demonstration that Russia can, and will protect its new territory, despite the protests".[6] The same Opuk training area

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[2] Леонид Кравчук: "Не внутри украинца сидит война, а внутри россиянина, который пытается считать украинца младшим братом" - интервью Леонида Кравчука газете Сегодня. (Leonid Kravchuk: "The war is not inside Ukrainian, but inside Russian, who is tending to see Ukrainian as the elder brother" – Leonid Kravchuk's interview to the Segodnia (Today) newspaper), "Segodnia", 21 October 2015 [http://www.segodnya.ua/politics/pnews/leonid-kravchuk-ne-vnutri-ukrainca-sidit-voyna-a-vnutri-rossiyanina-kotoryy-pytaetsya-schitat-ukrain-ca-mladshim-bratom-659799.html, access: 03 October 2016]

[3] Transcript: Vladimir Putin's April 17 Q&A, "The Washington Post", 17 April 2014 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-vladimir-putins-april-17-qanda/2014/04/17/ff77b4a2-c635-11e3-8b9a-8e0977a24aeb_story.html, access: 30 October 2016]

[4] Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks and replies to questions at the Russian Terra Scientia Educational Youth Forum on Klyazma River, August 24, 2015, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2015 [http://en.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/1680936, access: 28 October 2016]

[5] The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, December 25, 2014, Embassy of the Russian Federation in the UK, 2014 [http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029, access: 29 October 2015].

[6] Russia holds military exercises in Crimea, "Reuters", 29 October 2015 [http://in.reuters.com/video/2015/10/29/russia-holds-military-exercises-in-crime?videoId=366212434, access: 4 November 2015].

became the main firing field for Russian forces to simulate Crimea as a Russian fortress defending it from external enemies, like NATO. Yet in January 2015, the Russian Federation naval aviation started training and combat operations involving bombing and launching unguided rockets against ground targets on Opuk training ground.[7] Next month, in February 2015, a special military exercise of the Black Sea Fleet and naval aviation to launch an anti-cruise missile training took place near Sevastopol to defend the main Black Sea Fleet navy base from air attack.[8] According to the Russian Defence Ministry, in July 2015 the crews of Su-27 of the Russian Air Forces trained to intercept air targets in order to perform "the antimissile constant manoeuvring, detection and attacking the enemy with aircraft sighting system and electronic firing missiles" while "helicopters were training to detect and recognize various ground targets and low-flying aircraft and also progressed to destroy the slow flights with missiles and gun armament."[9] Along with aircraft exercises, a tactical training of Artillery Regiment was held.

The 2016 Russian military exercises in Crimea repeated the same tactical scenarios as in 2014-2015 involving the same Opuk training area. The most recent Caucasus-2016 exercises in September 2016 demonstrated a clear intention of the Russian Federation to deter any military attack in the area from the South Caucasus to Crimea. In general,

there is an impression that Russia has taken an unprecedented decision to strengthen the defence of the recently seized Crimean peninsula, also by sending missile submarines to the occupied Crimea.

Nuclearization of Crimea: Offensive Implications for the US, NATO, and the East

Current Russian politics towards the Black Sea is generating far-stretched global effects, thus an issue of nuclear safety and non-proliferation regime should be raised. Russia's aggressive policy towards nuclear objects in Crimea leaves no place for underestimation of the threat of nuclear rivalry in the Black Sea region. Hence, Moscow's attempt to nuclearize Crimea, particularly near Feodosia, is in focus. Such trend is just prolonging a strategy to create not just a conventional "Russian impregnable fortress" in Crimea, but a nuclear one. As Mikhail Ulyanov, the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's non-proliferation department, said in March 2015, "Russia can deploy nuclear weapons in Crimea as the peninsula is part of its territory."[10] Yet in November, 2014 NATO's top commander U.S. General Philip Breedlove reported such suspicions, saying that Russian forces "capable of being nuclear" are being moved to the Crimean Peninsula", even though NATO didn't know if nuclear weapons were actually in place.[11]

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7   Морская авиация ВМФ РФ приступила к учебно-боевым полетам в Крым (Black Sea Fleets' Naval aviation started training and combat адшпреы in Crimea), "РИА Новости", 23 January 2015 [https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150123/1043901595.html, access: 18 October 2016].

8   Источник: ЧФ России начал учения по отражению крылатых ракет (Source: the Black Sea Fleet started anti-cruise missile drills), "РИА Новости", 19 February 2015 [https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150219/1048523007.html, access: 31 October 2016].

9   Russia conducted military trainings in occupied Crimea. The crews of Su-27 trained to intercept the air targets, "112 TV Channel, Ukraine", 16 July 2015 [http://112.international/politics/Russia-conducted-military-trainings-in-occupied-Crimea-191.html, access: 9 November 2016].

10   Deployment of Russian nuclear weapons in Crimea possible – Foreign Ministry, "TACC", 11 March 2015 [http://tass.ru/en/russia/782071, access: 20 November 2015].

11   Russian forces "capable of being nuclear" moving to Crimea, NATO chief says, "CBSnews.com", 2 November 2014 [http://www.cbsnews.com/news/russian-forces-capable-of-being-nuclear-moving-to-crimea-nato-chief-says, access: 5 November 2015].

The EU representatives are also concerned. For instance, in an interview for RBC-Ukraine in June 2015 several Members of Parliaments of the EU countries named the issue of the Russian nuclear weapons in Crimea as the most challenging one for NATO and the USA.[12]

Even outside the discourse on Crimea, there is a strong signal for nuclear rivalry from the Russian side. Speaking at the opening of a weapons exhibition "Army 2015" in June, 2015, President Putin said: "This year the size of our nuclear forces will increase by over 40 new inter-continental ballistic missiles that will be able to overcome any, even the most technologically advanced, missile defence systems."[13] Putting Crimea into the game, BBC News defence and diplomatic correspondent Jonathan Marcus admits that "Russian President Vladimir Putin has placed a renewed emphasis upon his country's nuclear arsenal" not accidentally: "This is in part a reflection of Russia's continuing conventional military weakness… What most alarms the West is the renewed emphasis in Russian rhetoric on nuclear rather than conventional forces. Threats to deploy short-range nuclear weapons in Crimea have been accompanied by veiled warnings of nuclear targeting against NATO members who might host ballistic missile defences."[14] The same vision is shared by Michaela Dodge, a policy analyst at The Heritage Foundation: "The deployment of nuclear platforms within striking distance of NATO forces including Iskander tactical ballistic missile systems to the Kaliningrad region, highlights the role of nuclear weapons in Russia's national security strategy".[15] "Russia does think about NATO as one of its primary adversaries, threatens NATO allies with a nuclear attack, and states that nuclear weapons use can be de-escalatory under some circumstances," Dodge said.[16]

As to the practical implementation of intentions "under some circumstances", it was reported that "Russia plans to station state-of-the art missiles in its westernmost Baltic exclave" and deploy long-range, nuclear-capable supersonic Tu-22M3 bombers to Crimea "as part of massive war games to showcase its resurgent military power amid bitter tensions with the West over Ukraine."[17] Developing further such thesis, a Russian expert Artem Kureev is confident that "sitting of long-range supersonic bombers in Crimea makes all military installations of Russia's potential foes in the Black Sea region extremely vulnerable, and pre-empts the formation of a combined hostile fleet in the Black Sea."[18] As it was confirmed in March 2015 by the Russian Defence Minister, stationing of the Tu-22M3 and operational-tactical "Iskander-M" systems on the peninsula is

12 T. Шпайхер, Европейские парламентарии обеспокоены угрозами РФ разместить в Крыму ядерное оружие (European MPs worry towards RF's threats to station nuclear arms in Crimea), «RBC-Ukraine», 9 June 2015 [http://www.rbc.ua/rus/analytics/evropeyskie-parlamentarii-obespokoeny-ugrozami-1433848437.html, access: 20 November 2015].

13 T. Parfitt and D. Blair, Vladimir Putin accused of 'nuclear sabre-rattling' as he promises 40 new Russian missiles, "The Telegraph", 16 June 2015 [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11678521/Vladimir-Putin-says-Russia-beefing-up-nuclear-arsenal-with-40-new-ballistic-missiles.html, access: 9 November 2015].

14 Ibid.

15 N. Peterson, Russia Sends Nuclear-Capable Bombers to Crimea, "The Daily Signal", 20 March 2015 [http://dailysignal.com/2015/03/20/russia-sends-nuclear-capable-bombers-to-crimea/ access: 10 November 2015].

16 Ibid.

17 Russia to send new missiles to Baltic exclave on maneuvers, 17 March 2015 [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-2998590/Russian-military-brings-forces-combat-readiness-drills.html, access: 10 November 2015].

18 A. Kureev, Russia's military overtures in Crimea provoke a NATO response, "RussiaDirect.org", 28 July 2015 [http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/russias-military-overtures-crimea-provoke-nato-response, access: 10 November 2015].

the next step to restore the Russian presence in the Black Sea region.[19] Dmitry Litovkin, a Russian military expert, indicates that "the stationing of these systems in Crimea guarantees, if required, the destruction of US interceptor missiles based in Romania. A Tu-22M3 will not only be able to support the strike with cruise missiles X-22 and X-15, but also to eliminate the naval presence of the US in the Black Sea."[20]

At the same time, Artem Kureev explains NATO's vulnerability vis-à-vis Tu-22M3s also by saying that "if Russian long-range bombers were to take off from Crimea, NATO commanders would not be able to figure out their destination until they started turning above the neutral waters of the Black Sea."[21] In general, as Artem Kureev continues, "…the decision to deploy Tu-22M3s in Crimea "will significantly reduce the capacity of the southern sector of the Euro ABM anti-missile defence shield and, undoubtedly, prompt similar countermeasures from NATO," so Russia's plan to deploy bombers in Crimea "may be seen as a warning sign to NATO and accelerate the renewed arms race between Moscow and the West…".[22]

Thus, it is the right time to discuss all possible risks of Russia's gaining control over Ukrainian nuclear objects in Crimea within the frame of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regulations and not only them. There is a need to investigate if Russia is serious about possible deployment of nuclear weapons in Crimea, which could ruin the existing balance of nuclear power as well as the whole regime of non-proliferation. So far, there are just official

statements from different sides, including EU concerns, but taking into account current Russian involvement into Syria and clash with NATO/EU/US strategies, as well as outspoken Russian plans towards further "nuclearization" of Crimea, things could become more dangerous.

NATO's Response: the Warsaw Summit

Answering a question "what look may NATO's counter measures towards Russian potential threat to the NATO Black Sea members-states have", Artem Kureev predicts: "Accordingly, in order to protect its missile defence systems, NATO will likely be forced into the retaliatory step of placing more modern air defence systems and fighter aircraft in Romania, Bulgaria and other Black Sea countries".[23] At the same time, the costs involved in deploying the new missile defence systems and locating additional aircraft will be many times more than those incurred by Russia. Is NATO ready to face such challenges?

The answer partly was articulated at the NATO Warsaw Summit. In order to keep the balance of power with Russia and to be ready to "hike their own outlays on protecting the airspace of the Black Sea members" properly, NATO had to change its strategy in the Black Sea region. Together with "retaliatory step of placing more modern air defence systems and fighter aircraft in Romania, Bulgaria and other Black Sea countries" that was on the agenda of the NATO Summit in Warsaw. Key NATO's reflections on the changed

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[19]   Russia to send new missiles to Baltic exclave on maneuvers, 17 March 2015 [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-2998590/Russian-military-brings-forces-combat-readiness-drills.html, access: 10 November 2015].

[20]   D. Litovkin, Russia steps up its military presence in Crimea, "Russia & India Report", 9 April 2015 [http://in.rbth.com/economics/2015/04/09/russia_steps_up_its_military_presence_in_crimea_42505, access: 9 November 2015].

[21]   A. Kureev, 2015

[22]   Ibid.

[23]   A. Kureev, 2015

military environment in the Black Sea region can be found in the Warsaw Summit Communiqué.[24]

In NATO's vision, Russia's "destabilizing actions and policies" among others include "the ongoing illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea", "the violation of sovereign borders by force", "large-scale snap exercises contrary to the spirit of the Vienna Document, and provocative military activities near NATO borders, including those in the Baltic and Black Sea regions and the Eastern Mediterranean", Russia's "irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric, military concept and underlying posture", and "its repeated violations of NATO Allied airspace."[25] Acknowledging that "Russia continues to strengthen its military posture, increase its military activities, deploy new high-end capabilities, and challenge regional security", NATO has warned and informed that it "will also develop tailored forward presence in the southeast part of the Alliance territory" while "options for a strengthened NATO air and maritime presence will be assessed."[26]

One of such options was assessed without a delay. During the Warsaw NATO Summit, Allies declared Initial Operational Capability of NATO Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD), which has been seen as a capability to defend Alliance populations, territory, and forces across southern Europe against a potential ballistic missile attack, including the most dangerous Russian "Iskander" units. Since Aegis Ashore is the first operational land-based version of the Aegis Combat System, a sophisticated collection of phased-array radars, fire control directors, computers and missiles, it is important that along with the Aegis Ashore site in Deveselu, Romania NATO also will be strengthened by a forward-based early-warning BMD radar at Kürecik, Turkey and an Aegis Ashore site at the Redzikowo military base in Poland.[27] Will it be fully enough to deter Russia and counterbalance its far-going military intentions in the Black Sea region? The answer must be negative, but such BMD strategy in the Black Sea area is already an alarming signal for Russia. According to Alexander Khramchikhin, director of the Institute of Political and Military Analysis, the key threat of the US missile defence system in Eastern Europe to Russia is the ability to convert instantly a missile defence base into an offensive one,[28] what should be taking uniquely into global consideration by all sides. At the same time, the future of the Black Sea security also depends on the on-going navy competition in the Black Sea.

Russian Naval Strategy and the Turkish Factor

If nuclear challenges from the Black Sea region directly fall into global discourse, the naval competition in the Black Sea still has a regional focus. The decision of 1997 to leave Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Crimea until 2017, the Five-Day war against Georgia in 2008, the so-called "Kharkiv agreements" of 2010 went hand in hand with Kremlin's strategy to strengthen Russia's military presence in the Black Sea. No doubt that the annexation of Crimea facilitated this

[24] Warsaw Summit Communiqué, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016. Press Release (2016) 100, NATO [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm, access: 31 October 2016].

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Warsaw Summit Communiqué, 2016

[28] N. Litovkin, Russia to open new naval base in Black Sea to counter NATO, "RBTH", 29 June 2016 [http://rbth.com/defence/2016/06/29/russia-to-open-new-naval-base-in-black-sea-to-counter-nato_607229, access: 15 October 2016].

process. It was reported that "in 2015, the Black Sea fleet added approximately 200 units of military equipment, including 40 ships, 30 aircraft (multi-role SU-30SM's), and Crimea was delivered more than 100 units of modern armoured vehicles."[29]

Of all the vessels deserving special attention, there are Admiral Grigorovich class frigates and diesel-electric submarines of the 636 Varshavyianka projects both armed with Kalibr cruise missiles, the first one arrived to Sevastopol in June 2016. This was the first vessel for distant water operations, which the Black Sea Fleet received over the past 35 years.[30] The original plan was to provide the Black Sea Fleet with six Admiral Grigorovich class frigates. These frigates are equipped with Kalibr long range land attack cruise missiles (first used operationally last year from Russian Navy ships in the Caspian Sea to strike targets in Syria, and possessing ability to hit targets at a distance of up to 2,500 km[31]), supersonic Oniks anti-ship missiles, Shtil anti-aircraft missiles (a naval variant of the well-known Buk missile system) and a Kamov KA26 helicopter.[32] The ship's arrival is part of a planned $2.43 billion expansion of the Black Sea Fleet, announced in 2014.[33] As Alexander Mercouris admits these class frigates are only the most visible reinforcement of the Black Sea Fleet. Of at least equal importance is the deployment of six advanced Varshavyanka diesel-electric submarines to the Black Sea Fleet,

which has taken place since 2014. Diesel-electric submarines are inherently quieter than nuclear powered submarines and are arguably more suited to the confined waters of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean".[34] At the moment, there are three of them in the new Novorossiysk military base out of the planned six that "allows Russia to control potential threats in Europe and the Middle East."[35]

In order to estimate the perspectives of the Russian naval strategy to deter potential threats in the Black Sea one should also consider a wider interregional focus. In late February 2015, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Cypriot counterpart Nicos Anastasiades signed an agreement about the presence of Russian vessels in Cyprus ports. As some experts argues the West should pay close attention to Russian initiatives to "sort out their way forward into the 21st century" and "build naval support capabilities in both the Eastern and Western Mediterranean… And whatever the cause of the seizure of Crimea and its inclusion in Russia, the impact on the Russian navy is clear… By ending the treaty and taking full control of Sevastopol, the Russians can now focus on the expansion of facilities in the area and preparing for a significant modernization effort."[36] In general, as Pavel Koshkin admits, in focus of Russia's Navy expansion is the Syrian port of Tartus, a key port for the Russian navy, and Egypt, which, according to Laird,

[29] S. Knyazev, "Russia's Lake": The Black Sea Fleet vs. the New Ukraine-Turkey Naval Coalition. Kiev and Ankara have become official military partners, "Global Research", 20 May 2016 [http://www.globalresearch.ca/russias-lake-the-black-sea-fleet-vs-the-new-ukraine-turkey-naval-coalition/5526310, access: 30 September 2016].

[30] S. LaGrone, Russian Black Sea Fleet Gets First New Frigate since Cold War, "USNI News", 9 June 2016 [https://news.usni.org/2016/06/09/russian-first-new-frigate, access 19 October 2016].

[31] N. Litovkin, 2016

[32] A. Mercouris, Russia Strengthens its Black Sea Fleet, "The Duran", 12 June 2016 [http://theduran.com/russia-strengthens-black-sea-fleet/, access: 29 October 2016].

[33] S. LaGrone, 2016

[34] A. Mercouris, 2016

[35] N. Litovkin, 2016

[36] P. Koshkin, Does Russia pose a naval threat for the West in Mediterranean,"Russia Direct", 4 March 2015. [http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/west-doesnt-see-russia-naval-threat-mediterranean-0, access: 16 October 2016].

might become a headache for Washington because "the military has returned to power" there.[37]

One should not also write off Montreux Convention, serving the interests of Russia and Turkey since 1936 (even though besides enjoyable rights for the Kremlin, it also imposes duties on Russia to respect international law and Convention itself). It may be supplementary to Russia's naval strategy against Ukraine and Georgia, but when touching upon naval confrontation against other Black Sea littoral NATO-members, it turns into a regional and even global challenge involving NATO, USA, and the EU. In this respect, Montreux Convention even inside the Black Sea water area could give fewer benefits for Russia's current domination in the Northeast part of the Black Sea in case additional battle ships are donated from the side of other NATO-countries to the flags of Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey.

Montreux Convention as the comfortable instrument for the Russian sub-regional conventional policy inside the Black Sea may almost totally lose its defensive effect once potential military conflict expands outside the Black Sea area. If Turkey — a NATO member — is involved, Russian Black Sea Fleet will be locked inside the sea without permission to pass through the Turkish straights. At the same time, it appears to be a military target for the NATO striking forces located in Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and with US 6th Fleet. With the latest decisions of the Warsaw NATO Summit and NATO BMD perspectives in the Black Sea region and in Poland, the

> **One should not also write off Montreux Convention, serving the interests of Russia and Turkey since 1936**

Russian Black Sea Fleet, probably the most powerful in the basin by now, and Russian sea-side appear to be fragile at the end. Naturally, Russia has enough capacities like atomic submarines, for example, to respond from outside of the Black Sea, including the Mediterranean one, what makes potential sub-regional conflict as the interregional one; taking into account the nuclear factor, it may automatically turn into global. That is why naval competition in the Black Sea region has to be examined in global terms since 2014, even if from the sub-regional Black Sea point of view on conventional arms "the only existing threat to Russia is presented by Turkish forces."[38]

In this respect and despite the fact that Turkey's NATO allies suspected that both Turkey and Russia previously opposed NATO's presence in the Black Sea in order to share the sea between the two,[39] it is important to outline NATO-Turkish strategic perspective when talking about future military competition in the region. Thus, even without taking into account a coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016 and a current stage of "warmer" relations with Russia, the Turkish foreign policy seems to be returning back to the original Euro-Atlantic track to "tighten Turkish bonds with NATO".[40] It was not accidental,

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[37] P. Koshkin, Does Russia pose a naval threat for the West in Mediterranean,"Russia Direct", 4 March 2015. [http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/west-doesnt-see-russia-naval-threat-mediterranean-0, access: 16 October 2016].

[38] S. Knyazev, 2016

[39] Turkey, Russia oppose to NATO presence in Black Sea, "Sunday's Zaman", 2 March 2006 [http://www.todayszaman.com/international_turkey-russia-oppose-to-nato-presence-in-black-sea_30409.html, access: 15 November 2015].

[40] B. E. Bekdil and A. Mustafa, Russian Actions Tighten Turkish Bonds with NATO, Qatar, "DefenseNews", 11 October 2015 [http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/2015/10/11/russian-actions-turkish-bonds-with-nato-qatar/73665990/, access: 16 November 2015].

when reacting to violations of Turkish sovereign airspace in October 2015 by Russian side, that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recalled Article V of the Washington Treaty saying that "an attack on Turkey means an attack on NATO."[41] Ankara, in the words of Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, clearly showed its readiness to respond to any threat no matter what side it was coming from.[42] NATO backed Turkey vis-à-vis Russia. As NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg hastened to assure, NATO is ready to defend Turkey — including sending in troops "if needed"... "NATO is ready and able to defend all allies, including Turkey against any threats".[43]

> **Regional scenario is developing according to neorealism, which is based on the assumption about egoistic interests of states, and balance of power**

The Black Sea Security Architecture in Collapse: Security Perspectives in the Military Field

Instead of an idealistic scenario of the 1990s to have the Black Sea basin demilitarized at all and "...to ensure that the Black Sea becomes a sea of peace, stability and prosperity, striving to promote friendly and good-neighbourly relations...,"[44] we are witnessing a new regional arms race trend, which is triggering global confrontation. This is an alarming situation. Regional scenario is developing according to neorealism, which is based on the assumption about egoistic interests of states, and balance of power. Since early 2014, the balance of power among Russia, Turkey, NATO, EU, and USA has been ruined.

Attempt to prevent Russian domination in the Black Sea with the Romanian initiative "to establish a multinational framework brigade to help improve integrated training of Allied units under Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast" in order to "contribute to the Alliance's strengthened deterrence and defence posture, situational awareness, and peacetime demonstration of NATO's intent to operate without constraint,"[45] could prove insufficient. This is not only due to the Russian navy dominance over the rest of the Black Sea littoral states, but also because of passivity of the countries possibly involved into its implementation. The Romanian initiative has been addressed to Turkey, Bulgaria, and Ukraine by Romanian President Klaus Iohannis at the beginning of 2016. It offered to take part in a joint "common NATO" fleet to deter Russia in the Black Sea and so far did not get support from Bulgaria[46]. The Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov announced in June 2016 that "our country

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[41] B. E. Bekdil and A. Mustafa, Russian Actions Tighten Turkish Bonds with NATO, Qatar, "DefenseNews", 11 October 2015 [http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/2015/10/11/russian-actions-turkish-bonds-with-nato-qatar/73665990/, access: 16 November 2015].

[42] NATO warns Russia after jet strays into Turkey, "Al Jazeera", 6 October 2015 [http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/nato-warns-russia-jet-strays-turkey-151005155403930.html, access: 16 November 2015].

[43] V. Richards, Nato 'ready to send troops into Turkey' following Russian violation of airspace, "Independent", 12 October 2015 [http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/nato-is-ready-to-send-troops-into-turkey-a6685576.html, access: 16 October 2016].

[44] Summit Declaration of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Istanbul, 25 June 1992, PABSEC, 2016 [http://www.pabsec.org/Documents.asp?id=6, access: 29 October 2016].

[45] Warsaw Summit Communiqué, 2016

[46] G. Gotev, Bulgaria refuses to join NATO Black Sea fleet against Russia, "EurActiv.com", 16 June 2016 [https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/bulgaria-refuses-to-join-nato-black-sea-fleet-against-russia/, access: 13 October 2016].

will not become part of the Black Sea fleet being prepared against Russia", but added that this didn't prevent his country's navy from conducting common exercises with Romania "every day".[47]

Without mentioning a U-turn in Russian-Turkish relations during the last year (Fall 2015 — Fall 2016), one should not forget about a Plan of Military Cooperation between the armed forces of Turkey and Ukraine until 2020 signed on 17 May 2016, which made Kyiv and Ankara "official military partners". The document deals with general as well as rather specific problems and issues in the sphere of defence planning, advisory and consultative assistance, and cooperation between parties' armed forces in general and individual sectors in particular. Experts say that this is not so much about Ukraine preparing to join the alliance as it is about NATO's "supervision" of Ukraine's armed forces through the medium of the Turkish military. US-led annual "Sea Breeze" military exercises as well as the Black Sea Harmony under the leadership of Turkey are still operational and could strengthen NATO's presence and new military initiatives in the region, even though one should not overestimate such efforts for the actual deterrence of Russia.

The effectiveness of the sub-regional cooperative initiatives like BLACKSEAFOR is now under question with regard to Russia's official postponement of its participation in such projects. That means Russia's self-isolation and refusal to keep cooperative efforts in making Black Sea safer, and makes impossible further naval cooperation within regional security system in a peaceful way. At the same time, without Russian participation any successful implementation of any naval operation with the common security interest will fail. All these challenges will inevitably involve all Black Sea littoral states into interregional confrontation and arms race, but also into a dialogue. The thing is that such dialogue could hardly be successful without the participation of both the USA and NATO, that turns talks on future security architecture in the Black Sea region from a sub-regional challenge into global affairs' agenda.

Conclusions

When examining visible shortcomings of the Black Sea security architecture, the main accent should be made on the following:

1. More or less stable before 2014, the Black Sea security system has been rapidly moving from the multilateral cooperative military mechanisms to the bipolar balance of power format.

2. The main trend of such bipolarity — regional deterrence of Russia, which has strengthened its naval and other military capabilities in the Black Sea, including in the annexed Crimea, as compared to the rest of the five Black Sea littoral states, three of which are members of NATO.

3. Principal political and military confrontation in the Black Sea region touches upon not only non-NATO Black Sea littoral states — Ukraine and Georgia, but is also between Russia and NATO.

4. Russia-NATO tensions within emerging Black Sea sub-regional bipolarity risk to bring military threats out from the

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[47] G. Gotev, Bulgaria refuses to join NATO Black Sea fleet against Russia, "EurActiv.com", 16 June 2016 [https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/bulgaria-refuses-to-join-nato-black-sea-fleet-against-russia/, access: 13 October 2016].

[48] S. Knyazev, 2016

[49] Ibid.

sub-regional level to the global one due to hard-security capabilities and needs of protection from them on the global level of international system.

5. Due to specific nature of the crisis in the bilateral Russian-Turkish relations after the Su-24 incident in November, 2015 and despite a new period of friendship between Putin and Erdogan after its resolution in summer 2016, the future Turkey's role in the region vis-à-vis Russia and other security challenges in the Black Sea region could be just supplementary to NATO's strategy.

6. Following this, by strengthening its positions in Romania and Turkey with its new BMD, NATO is able only to preserve the new balance of regional power in order to escape a direct military clash with Russia in the sea, land and air.

7. Involving two non-NATO Black Sea littoral states — Georgia and Ukraine — into any joint NATO naval projects to deter Russia may appear counterproductive due to the risk of provoking Russian aggression against Kyiv and Tbilisi. Defending both of them from the side of NATO is also not realistic. It minimizes NATO involvement into confrontation with Russia beyond the territorial waters of the Black Sea NATO member-countries.

8. In general, as to the success of the deterrence mechanisms from the side of NATO inside the Black Sea even without symbolic participation of Georgia and Ukraine, things are not that inspiring: Russia simply achieved its maximum in pursuing its own interests in the Black Sea region since the annexation of Crimea. At this point, after Georgia and Ukraine it is NATO, which appeared to be Russia's next potential target. In this case, future military climate in the Black Sea region is inevitably dependent on the supra-system relations between West and Russia.

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RUSSIA'S ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA IN THE LIGHT OF RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN AGREEMENTS ON THE BLACK SEA FLEET

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This article examines the circumstances of the armed attack; the first stage of the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine aiming and eventually leading to the occupation and annexation of Crimea in February-March 2014. These events are considered against the background of the role of the Russian Federation Black Sea Fleet deployed on the territory of Ukraine, the provisions of bilateral interstate and intergovernmental agreements on the Black Sea Fleet deployment, and the interrelation of the aggressor state actions with treaty rules. The study addresses the breaches of the above agreements, the qualification of the Russian side actions, and possible decisions of Ukraine in this regard.

Black Sea Fleet Partition, Its Implications and Further Developments

Following the Soviet Union dissolution, the development of the relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation has been controversial, complicated, with increase of tension and conflict potential in certain areas. One of such traditionally sensitive and crucial areas for international legal regulation was the issue of the USSR Black Sea Fleet partition. The relations were complicated because of the Russia's intention to preserve its influence on the political and social situations at the Crimean Peninsula belonging to Ukraine and thus to have influence on domestic and foreign policies of Ukraine.

In accordance with Ukraine-Russia agreements, the Black Sea Fleet was divided between the two states, with the Russian part still stationed in Crimea. Generally, three bilateral agreements were signed on 28 May 1997: Interstate agreement on the status of the Russia's Black Sea Fleet and the terms of its location on the territory of Ukraine,[1] and Agreement on the specifics of the partition of the Black Sea Fleet[2] and

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[1]   Угода між Україною і Російською Федерацією про статус та умови перебування Чорноморського флоту Російської Федерації на території України від 28.05.1997 р. // Верховна Рада України: [офіційний веб-сайт]. — Режим доступу: http://zakon1.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/643_076. [Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on status and condition of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation deployment on the territory of Ukraine of 28 May 1997, Parliament of Ukraine — http://zakon1.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/643_076.]

[2]   Угода між Україною і Російською Федерацією про параметри поділу Чорноморського флоту від 28.05.1997 р. // Дипломатический вестник МИД Российской Федерации. — 1997. — № 8 [Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on parameters of the Black Sea Fleet division of 28 May 1997, Dyplomatycheskyy vestnyk MYD Rossyyskoy Federatsyy. — 1997. — No.8].

Intergovernmental agreement on mutual payments connected with fleet partition and location of the Russia's Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine.[3]

The main provisions relating to operation of Russia's military forces on the territory of Ukraine were stipulated in the Agreement on status and terms of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation deployment on the territory of Ukraine. The main provisions of its military units functioning on the Ukrainian territory were also fixed. This agreement was concluded for a twenty-year period (i.e. until 2017) with an automatic extension for successive five-year periods unless either party notified the other in writing of termination at least one year before it expired.[4]

In 2000s, the Russian Black Sea Fleet still played an extremely negative role in Crimea being one of the factors destabilizing the situation on the peninsula. In 2010, in return for a gas discount for President Yanukovych's enterprises and taking advantage of his openly anti-state policy in the field of security, the Russian government managed to sign the so-called Kharkiv Agreement — an interstate agreement on extension of the Russian Black Sea Fleet deployment in Crimea until 2042.[5]

The armed attack and military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine started in February 2014 and forced Ukraine to revisit international legal approaches to the issue of the Russian Federation Black Sea Fleet deployment with proper attention devoted to its role in the occupation and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula.

Factual Circumstances of 2014 Events

The open stage of Russia's aggression against Ukraine began on 23 February 2014, when the Russian "activists" attacked the representatives of the Ukrainian and the Crimean Tatar communities in Simferopol. On the same day, at a rally in Sevastopol a businessman Aleksei Chaly was "elected" "people's mayor" (the laws of Ukraine provide for the appointment to this post).[6] On the night of 27 February 2014, unidentified armed militants seized the premises of the Parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) and the Council of Ministers of Crimea in Simferopol and planted Russian flags atop.[7] The Russian military, assisted by the armed Russian "self-defence" units, continued to seize key administrative buildings.[8]

On 1 March, after the self-proclaimed leadership of Crimea represented by Serhei Aksenov addressed the President of Russia Vladimir Putin, calling for assistance "in ensuring peace and security in Crimea",[9]

3   Угода між Урядом України і Урядом Російської Федерації про взаємні розрахунки, пов'язані з поділом Чорноморського флоту та перебуванням Чорноморського флоту Російської Федерації на території України від 28.05.1997 р. // Дипломатический вестник МИД Российской Федерации. — 1997. — № [The Agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the Russian Federation on the mutual settlement of accounts relating to the Black Sea Fleet division and the Russian Federation Black Sea Fleet stationing on the territory of Ukraine of 28 May 1997, 8 Dyplomatycheskyy vestnyk MYD Rossyyskoy Federatsyy. — 1997. — № 8].

4   Kimball S. Bound by Treaty: Russia, Ukraine and Crimea // Deutsche Welle, 11 March 2014.

5   Угода між Україною та Російською Федерацією з питань перебування Чорноморського флоту Російської Федерації на території України від 21.04.2010 р. // Офіційний вісник України. –2010. — № 39. — Ст. 1154. [The Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the matters of the Russian Federation Black Sea Fleet presence on the territory of Ukraine of 21 April 2010, Ofitsiynyy visnyk Ukrayiny. –2010. — № 39. — St. 1154].

6   За Севастополь // Севастопольская газета. — 23.02.2014 [For Sevastopol, Sevastopol'skaja gazeta. — 23.02.2014].

7   У Криму по тривозі підняли внутрішні війська і весь особовий склад міліції // Тиждень. — 27.02.2014 [In Crimea, the alarm raised internal troops and all personnel of police, Tyzhden. — 27.02.2014].

Putin requested a permission from the Council of Federation to use military forces in the territory of Ukraine.[10] He explained his request by "the threat to the life of citizens of the Russian Federation, of our compatriots, of the personnel of the military contingent of the armed forces of Russia deployed in the territory of Ukraine". The Council of Federation immediately gave its permission.[11]

Since 1 March, the Russian army ('green men') blocked units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine as well as ports, gained control over the main civil infrastructure of Crimea, and seized most of the vessels of the Black Sea Fleet of Ukraine and all of its military bases.[12] [13] On 16 March 2014 under the control of the military forces, a hastily organized so-called 'referendum' on the Crimean 'entry' to the Russian Federation was held and by April, the annexation was completed.[14]

Initially, Russian officials had repeatedly denied the role of the Russian army, however, in April 2014 they admitted the use of Russia's troops "to ensure the exercise of will of the people of the Crimea".[15] In October 2014 Putin said, "I will not deny we used our armed forces to block the Ukrainian military units deployed in Crimea".[16] Several important confessions were also made by Vladimir Putin in an interview for the film Crimea. The Way Home (2015).[17] In particular, the following:

1. On 22 February 2014, Putin ordered to "commence the return of the Crimea to Russia" and gave relevant instructions to the armed forces, foreign policy and all other institutions that acted 'coherently';

2. Under the guise of enhancing security of the military objects of the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, the President of the Russian Federation ordered to deploy Special Forces of the Central Intelligence Service, Marines, and paratroopers;

8   Мешканці Криму збираються захистити кримськотатарський телеканал ATR від захоплення // Повідомлення Іpress. — 28.02.2014 [The residents of Crimea are going to protect the Crimean Tatar TV-channel ATR from occupation, Povidomlennia Ipress. — 28.02.2014)].

9   Прем'єр Криму перепідпорядкував собі силові структури і попросив допомоги у Путіна // Лівий берег. — 01.03.2014

10   Путин обратился к СФ об использовании ВС РФ в Крыму // Российская газета. — 01.03.2014 [Putin addressed the CF on the use of AF of RF in Crimea, Rossijskaja gazeta. — 01.03.2014] .

11   Постановление Совета Федерации от 1 марта 2014 г. №48-СФ «Об использовании Вооруженных Сил Российской Федерации на территории Украины» // Российская газета. — 5.03.2014 [Decree the Council of Federation of 1 March 2014 No.48-CF "On the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine, Rossijskaja gazeta. — 5.03.2014].

12   Крымская война. 1 марта // Грани – Режим доступу: http://grani.ru/Politics/World/Europe/ Ukraine/m.225836.html [Crimean War. March 1, Grani].

13   Задорожній О. В. Порушення агресивною війною Російської Федерації проти України основних принципів міжнародного права: монографія /О. В. Задорожній / Укр. асоц. міжнар. права, Ін-т міжнар. відносин Київ. нац.ун-ту ім. Тараса Шевченка, каф. міжнар. права. — Київ: К.І.С, 2015. — 712 с. [O. V. Zadorozhnij, Violations accompanying Russian war of aggression against Ukraine of fundamental principles of international law (the monograph), — Kyiv: K.I.S, 2015. — 712 p.].

14   Подписан Договор о принятии Республики Крым в Российскую Федерацию // Президент России — Режим доступу: http://kremlin.ru/news/20604–18.03.2014 [Agreement on the accession of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation is signed].

15   Путин: наши военные «встали за спиной» самообороны Крыма // Сообщение «Русской службы ВВС». — 17.04.2014 [Putin: our armed forces stood behind the self-defense of Crimea, Russian Service BBC -17.04.2014].

16   Заседание Международного дискуссионного клуба "Валдай" // Президент России: [офіційний веб-сайт]. — Режим доступу: http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/46860 [The meeting of the International Discussion Club "Valdai", Russian President (official website), 22.10.2015].

17   Путин: нарушений со стороны России при смене власти в Крыму не было // Новая газета. — 15.03.2015. [There were no violations by the RF while transition of power in Crimea, Novaia Gazeta. 15.03.2015].

3. The units of the Russian army participated in the military occupation of Crimea and took part in the operation, Russian secret services forced members of the Crimean parliament to vote for "cessation" from Ukraine (these words were confirmed by Russia's secret service personnel);[18]

4. Under the order of the President of Russia, the representatives of the Russian army exercised pressure on the Ukrainian armed forces by means of 'educational conversations' forcing them to exempt and switch sides;[19]

5. Russia deployed a significant number of heavy weapons on the peninsula and threatened to use them as well as nuclear weapons in case of resistance.[20]

These confessions are supported by official statements and actions of the Russian side. On 26 February 2015, Vladimir Putin signed a Decree "On establishment of the Special Operations Forces Day" on February 27. The Official paper of the Russian government "Rossiyskaya Gazeta" stated that the date was chosen because on 27 February 2014 the Crimean Parliament and strategic facilities on the peninsula were taken over by Russian forces.[21] In October 2014, "Rossiyskaya Gazeta"

recalled that in September the Minister of Defence of Russia Sergey Shoygu, rewarding the personnel of the 76th Airborne Division Guards deployed in Pskov with Order of Suvorov, thanked the paratroopers for the operation of the return of the Crimea to Russia".[22]

According to Admiral Ihor Kasatonov, the former commander of the Russian Black Sea Fleet "the Black Sea Fleet coped with their tasks — "polite people" were brought, the Supreme Council of Crimea was besieged on the night of 28 February ... 'polite people' are the Special Operations Forces". Revealing details, Ihor Kasatonov quoted Colonel General Volkov: "Special Forces and equipment were brilliantly deployed in the Crimea. Everything was concealed from random Ukrainians perfectly; the advance disinformation of adversary was presented".[23]

These facts were approved by other statements as well. Adomeit Hannes, who studied these events pointed to the following: "Military occupation of the Crimea was, without any doubt, carefully well-prepared, pre-planned and professionally executed".[24] Anton Bebler stressed on the factors that contributed to the success of the secret operation carried

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[18] Гиркин: Мы насильно сгоняли депутатов Крыма голосовать за отделение от Украины // Укринформ. — Режим доступу: http://www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-lastnews/1807260-girkin_mi_nasilno_sgonyali_deputatov_kri-ma_golosovat_za_otdelenie_ot_ukraini_1706251.html [Hirkin: We forced Crimean deputies to vote for secession from Ukraine, UKRINFORM, 25.01.2015]

[19] Путин: в Крым для разоружения украинских частей были направлены силы ГРУ // Сообщение ТАСС. — 15.03.2015 [Putin: units of the Russian Military Intelligence were sent to Crimea for disarmament of Ukrainian units, TASS. — 15.03.2015]

[20] Путин заявил, что готов был задействовать ядерное оружие во время аннексии Крыма // Зеркало недели. — 15.03.2015. [Putin said he was ready to use nuclear weapons at the time of the annexation of the Crimea, Zerkalo nedeli. – 15.03.2015].

[21] Птичкин С. Вежливые люди получили свой День // Российская газета. – 27.02.2015. [S. Ptichkin, Polite people have got their holiday, Rossijskaya gazeta. – 27.02.2015].

[22] Петров И. У «вежливых людей» появится свой праздничный день // Российская газета. – 3.10.2014. [The "polite people" will get their holiday, (Petrov I., Rossiiskaia hazeta. – 3.10.2014].

[23] Адмирал Касатонов заявил, что НАТО не успела год назад отследить блокировку украинских частей // Московский комсомолец: новостной портал – Режим доступу: http://www.mk.ru/politics/2015/03/13/admiral-kasatonov-zayavil-chto-nato-ne-uspela-god-nazad-otsledit-blokirovku-ukrainskikh-chastey.html [Admiral Kasatonov said that NATO did not have time to track down the blocking of Ukrainian military facilities a year ago, Moskovskyj komsomolec, 13.03.2015].

out by Russia. First, the Russian Marines had already been deployed in Sevastopol under the international treaties of Ukraine, surveying the situation without any armed resistance from the Ukrainian military. Second, short distance to the strategic locations in Crimea allowed troops to quickly take over infrastructural facilities.[25]

Legal Characterization of Russia's Actions in Crimea in February — March 2014

First of all, we should stress that Russia's actions may be construed only as annexation, inter alia, because UNGA in its Resolution 68/262 "Territorial integrity of Ukraine" (27 March 2014) devoted to these events recalled the obligations of all States under Article 2 of the UN Charter to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, and to settle their international disputes by peaceful means. It also recalled the Declaration on Principles of International Law (1970); reaffirmed the principles contained therein that the territory of a State should not be the object of acquisition by another State resulting from the threat or use of force (that is the very definition of annexation), and that any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of a State or country or at its political independence was incompatible with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. Based on these principles UNGA underscored that the referendum in Crimea (16 March 2014) had no validity, could not form the basis

for any alteration of the status of the ARC or Sevastopol; and called upon all States, international organizations and specialized agencies not to recognize any alteration of the status of the ARC and Sevastopol on the basis of the referendum of 16 March 2014 and to refrain from any action or dealing that might be interpreted as recognizing any such altered status.[26]

> **In general, during February-March 2014, on the Crimean Peninsula the Russian Federation committed most of the violations considered as acts of aggression by the Resolution of the UN GA**

According to information available to us, we could define the role, which the Russian Black Sea Fleet played in the annexation of Crimea. It was directly involved in taking over facilities and occupying the territory; blocking Navy ships and units of Ukraine; trying to force the Ukrainian military to join the forces of Russia; and deploying other units to the peninsula. The Russian Black Sea Fleet, therefore, in one form or another, actively participated in all major operations carried out in the first phase of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea.

In general, during February-March 2014, on the Crimean Peninsula the Russian Federation committed most of the violations considered as acts of aggression by the Resolution of the UN GA "Definition of aggression" of 1974 (Article 3) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998 (Article 8 was adopted at the Kampala Conference in 2010):

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[24] Hannes A. Die Lehren der Russischen Generale // Neue Zuricher Zeitung. — 18.7.2014. — P. 7.

[25] Bebler A. Crimea and the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict // Romanian Journal of European Affairs. — Vol. 15, No.1, March 2015. — P. 41.

[26] Resolution 68/262 "Territorial integrity of Ukraine" adopted by the General Assembly on 27 March 2014 (without reference to a Main Committee (A/68/L.39 and Add.1)) // United Nations. – A/RES/68/262. – 2014. – 2 p.

- The invasion or attack by the armed forces of a State of the territory of another State, or any military occupation, however temporary, resulting from such invasion or attack, or any annexation by the use of force of the territory of another State or part thereof;

- The blockade of the ports or coasts of a State by the armed forces of another State;

- An attack by the armed forces of a State on the land, sea or air forces, or marine and air fleets of another State;

- The use of armed forces of one State, which are within the territory of another State, with the agreement of the receiving State, in contravention of the conditions provided for in the agreement or any extension of their presence in such territory beyond the termination of the agreement;

- Sending by or on behalf of a State of armed bands, groups, irregulars or mercenaries, which carry out acts of armed force against another State of such gravity as to amount to the acts listed above, or its substantial involvement therein.[27]

In the context of this study, it is also important to determine how the Russian Federation's actions are interrelated with the provisions of bilateral agreements on the deployment of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine, particularly, with the Agreement on the Status and Conditions of Deployment of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on the Territory of Ukraine (due to the content and nature of the relationship, governed by the treaty). Analysing the actual circumstances allows us to claim there are serious violations at hand, as the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine, which is contrary to the nature of 1997 and 2010 accords in general, is at stake. However, we can also refer to the violations of specific agreement provisions.

Based on the facts, one should examine each and every type of violations of these provisions. First, one can confidently assert the violation of Article 4 (1) of the Agreement on the Status and Conditions, according to which the total personnel strength and the number of ships, vessels, arms, and military hardware of the Black Sea Fleet located on Ukrainian territory will not exceed the levels defined in the Agreement on the Parameters of the Black Sea Fleet's Division of 1997. The RF has uncontrollably increased the level of its armed presence: the number of troops of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea was 25 000 as defined in 1997 Agreement,[28] but in February — March additionally 22 000 soldiers of the Special Forces and the Southern Military District of Russia were deployed to engage in the operation.[29]

Second, there is a violation of the provisions of Article 6 (1) of the Agreement providing for the military formations to carry out their activity at stationing locations in accordance with Russian Federation legislation, respect the sovereignty of Ukraine, abide by its legislation, and do not allow interference in Ukraine's internal affairs. The armed attack, military aggression against Ukraine, the occupation and annexation of Crimea are clear and flagrant violations of the mentioned provisions.

Third, there is a violation of Article 8 (2) under which military ships and vessels of military formations may, with prior notification to the competent Ukrainian

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27 Wilmshurst E. Definition of Aggression // United Nations. — 2008. — 4 p.

28 Шойгу: действия Минобороны РФ в Крыму были вызваны угрозой жизни мирного населения //ТАСС. – 4.04.2014 [Shoygu: The actions of Russian Ministry of Defense in Crimea were caused by the threat to life of civilian population // TASS. – 4.04.2014]

29 Hannes A. Die Lehren der Russischen Generale // Neue Zuricher Zeitung. — 18.7.2014. — P. 7.

bodies, sail in the Ukrainian territorial waters for the purpose of putting into (leaving) Ukrainian ports, in which military formations are stationed. There had been no prior notification by the Russian side.

Fourth, there is a violation of Article 8 (4) on military formations at their stationing locations and during transfers that may implement protection measures in accordance with the procedure established in the Russian Federation Armed Forces and in cooperation with the competent Ukrainian institutions. Russia has not cooperated at all.

Fifth, the violation of Article 12 (1) on the obligation to provide service vehicles of the Russian Black Sea Fleet with a registration number and a clear sign. Russian troops moved in vehicles without any signs.

Sixth, the violation of the provision of Article (1) 15 concerning compliance with military formations of the Black Sea Fleet border, customs and other state control while crossing the Ukrainian-Russian border. Russian troops crossed the border without any control.

Seventh, there is a breach of Article 15 (5) on the right of military forces to move for the purposes of conducting their activities outside the areas of deployment only pursuant to authorization by the competent authorities of Ukraine. Russian armed forces moved within Crimea without any hurdles and waged the aggression.

With regard to the Agreement on Parameters of the Black Sea Fleet Partition, the Russian Federation violated Article 1 (1), according to which the number of armoured combat vehicles as a part of the Black Sea Fleet may not exceed 132 units; Article 7 (3), which provides that the number of personnel in units of marines and naval aviation may not exceed 1 987 persons[30] and a number of provisions of the agreements on the Black Sea Fleet, which provide for compliance with legislation of Ukraine in the territory of Crimea.

In the context agreement provisions on the Black Sea Fleet and other rules of the international law, one should pay attention to the unfounded claims of the Russian side allegedly proving that it did not carry out an armed attack and aggression against Ukraine, and abided by the rules of the treaty.

On 12 March 2015, a Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said (earlier Putin expressed a similar view): "...in the Budapest Memorandum we committed to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine. This position is fully complied with. Neither before, nor in the course of the adoption by the population of the Crimea and Sevastopol of fateful decisions on the status of the peninsula was there a single shot in its territory".[31] However, under international law 'shots' is only one of the manifestations of force, others are, for example, a blockade of military units of the Ukrainian army by the Russian forces in Crimea, the seizure of airports and other infrastructure. Even the assertion about the absence of shots does not correspond to the facts at hand.[32]

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[30] Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on parameters of the Black Sea Fleet division, supra note iii.

[31] В МИД РФ заявили, что аннексия Крыма и конфликт в Донбассе – это не нарушение Будапештского меморандума // Сегодня. – 13.03.2014 [The Russian Foreign Ministry said that the annexation of the Crimea and the conflict in the Donbass - is not a violation of the Budapest Memorandum, Segodnja. – 13.03.2014]

[32] Василь М. «Когда прозвучал первый выстрел в воздух, украинские военнослужащие, не сговариваясь, запели национальный гимн» // Факты. – 7.03.2014 [Vasil M. "When the first shots were fired in the air, the Ukrainian armed forces, not saying a word, began to sing the national anthem", Fakty. – 7.03.2014)]; Ukraine: Russian troops fire 'warning shots' at Crimea airbase // The Telegraph. – 4.03.2014; Crimea: 'Shots fired' at military base in Simferopol // BBC News. – 18.03.2014

> **Thus, Russia denounced bilateral agreements of 1997 and 2010 in violation with the international law as an unfounded refusal to perform a treaty does not lead to its termination**

Second, in its "Legal justification of the Russia's position on the Crimea and Ukraine", the Russian Foreign Ministry stated: "The presence of armed forces in the territory, which proclaims independence, does not affect the legitimacy of the vote. Kosovo is the case in point. At the time of the proclamation of its independence, there were approximately 14 000 troops from 34 countries under the NATO mission on its territory". This statement is indisputable in general; however, it only emphasizes the illegality of actions of Russia itself because according to the facts we mentioned and the statements of Putin and other officials, the case at hand was not about only "the mere presence", but acts of aggression against Ukraine.

Another aspect concerning Ukrainian-Russian international agreements on the fleet deserves special attention. All agreements on the Black Sea Fleet of 1997 stipulate for the Joint Commission to be established to resolve disputes concerning the interpretation and application of these agreements. It shall operate under the rules it approves. Should the Joint Committee fail to resolve a dispute submitted to it, the dispute will be resolved diplomatically as quickly as possible. By refusing to contact Ukraine when it reported on certain violations of a number of other provisions of the 1997 agreements in February 2014, Russia breached the accords.

Moreover, in early April 2014 the parliament of the Russian Federation decided to denounce the treaties of 1997 and 2010,[33] what the Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev explained by the alleged "fundamental change of circumstances".[34] However, in accordance with the Article 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties of 1969, a fundamental change of circumstances may not be invoked as grounds for termination or withdrawal from a treaty: (a) If the treaty establishes a boundary; or (b) If the fundamental change is the result of a breach by the party invoking it either of an obligation under the treaty or of any other international obligation owed to any other party to the treaty.[35] The armed attack and military aggression of Russia against Ukraine are self-evident breaches mentioned in paragraph "b" and factual circumstances indicate numerous violations of the agreements.

Thus, Russia denounced bilateral agreements of 1997 and 2010 in violation with the international law as an unfounded refusal to perform a treaty does not lead to its termination (it was confirmed by the International Court of Justice in its judgment in the "Gabcikovo-Nagymaros" case),[36] these agreements remain in force and provide for relevant obligations of the Russian side in respect of Ukrainian

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33 Прекращено действие соглашений, касающихся пребывания Черноморского флота на Украине // Официальный сайт Президента России – Режим доступа: http://www.kremlin.ru/news/20673 2.04.2014 [The agreements on deployment of the Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine are terminated, President of Russuian Federation official website, 2.04.2014].

34 Медведев Д.: «Харьковские соглашения между Россией и Украиной подлежат денонсации» // Сообщение ИТАР-ТАСС. — 21.03.2014 [Medvedev D.: Kharkiv agreements between Ukraine and Russia are subject to denunciation, ITAR-TASS. — 21.03.2014].

35 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. Done at Vienna on 23 May 1969. Entered into force on 27 January 1980 // United Nations, Treaty Series. — Vol. 1155. — P. 331

36 Gabcikovo-Nagymaros case. Merits // ICJ Reports. — 1997. — P. 69.

side. However, the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine, the military occupation and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula are fundamental changes of circumstances and may be regarded as sufficient security, humanitarian, political, and clear international legal basis for the denunciation of these agreements and grounds for the withdrawal of all units of the Black Sea Fleet from the territory of the Crimean Peninsula.

Conclusions

Therefore, the analysis of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and other actions Russia performed in Crimea in 2014 and in 2015-2016 clearly indicates the violation of all fundamental principles of the international law. The examined example of actions related to relations specifically governed by the agreements on the Black Sea Fleet shows numerous gross, systematic, deliberate violations not only of these accords, but also of the principle of good faith performance of international obligations. In fact, the Russian Federation breached the majority of international legal norms that reinforce this principle, in particular, the UN Charter (Article 2 (2)), the Declaration on Principles of International Law of 1970, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the Vienna Convention on the Law of treaties of 1969 (Article 26 and other provisions).

At the same time, practically all the responsibilities of a state, forming the basis of the normative content of the above principle, are ignored: good faith fulfilment of the obligations in full conformity with relevant international law; compliance with all international obligations it assumes, regardless of its origin or character; obligation to comply with commitments to the fullest possible extent; bringing its domestic legislation in line with international obligations (actions of the Russian leadership are opposite); and ensuring proper functioning of internal mechanisms for implementing its international obligations.

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WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR NAVY COOPERATION IN THE BLACK SEA?

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Since 2014, the Black Sea regional navy cooperation has seen a dramatic change. From the "Turkish lake concept" and idea of active navy cooperation of littoral states, it has come to the freeze of all original cooperation such as BLACKSEAFOR and Black Sea Harmony and a possibility of a greater NATO involvement in the region. Crisis in the Russian-Turkish relations also presented a chance for the Ukrainian-Turkish military relations intensification, and Romanian initiative on the Black Sea Fleet. Author argues that it is still early to speak about future navy configurations and frameworks of the cooperation in the Black Sea region, but it already should be considered not as an isolated war theatre but in a conjunction with the Caspian and Mediterranean basins.

The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014 has changed a security and military balance in the Black Sea region, not only by violating the basic principles of the international law (territorial integrity) but also by shifting the existed force deployments and frameworks. The Black Sea region is returning to the times of confrontation existed during the Cold War, but with a new paradigm of regional relations. Militarization of Crimea, possibility for nuclear weapon deployment, changes in the spheres of navigation responsibility, navy modernization in Romania, Ukraine and Georgia, break in the Russian-Turkish relations are just few elements of the new evolving order.

Navy cooperation in the Black Sea region

For a decade, there have been two navy cooperative initiatives in the Black Sea region — BLACKSEAFOR — a multinational naval task force that includes Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Romania, Turkey and Bulgaria, and Black Sea Harmony — multinational naval operation initiated by Turkey, includes Turkey, Russia, Ukraine and Romania. Both aimed for cooperation in a specific sphere — navy, in a limited geography — the Black Sea, and were perceived as a positive element of the military cooperation between the regional states, some of which had competing interests or conflicting views towards security.

Black Sea Harmony and BLACKSEAFOR had been in many things duplicating each other, rather than supplementing. For several years already, experts have been talking about a necessity to unite efforts and capacities of two initiatives. However, this process have not been started, and in a current situation, it will be beyond implementation. With the development of the Ukrainian crisis, it is possible to state that future cooperation in current formats is impossible, as Ukraine and Russia have been participated in both. Creation of a new format is not being considered yet, as if the Russian Federation excluded, so all other

states can concentrate their cooperation within the NATO framework.

It is worth mentioning that Turkey's views on maritime security in the Black Sea area have been for many years much closer to Russia's than to those of the United States. Ankara essentially regarded the Black Sea as a "Turkish lake" and opposed an expansion of both the NATO and the U.S. military presence there[1]. Turkish officials usually argued that the Black Sea security should be provided by the littoral countries of the Black Sea. Instead of increasing the U.S. or NATO military presence, Ankara de facto blocked U.S. initiatives designed to increase the role of NATO's Operation Active Endeavour in the Black Sea in 2006, and proposed expanding of the BLACKSEAFOR and Operation Black Sea Harmony, which were almost copying Active Endeavour operation in Mediterranean. In this regard, Russia and Turkey found a perfect compromise, preventing others to be involved in regional affairs. The Romanian disagreement to such a state was mostly ignored.

Turkish dominance in the Black Sea and desire to lead and overview the region, resulted in a situation, when in 2014 there were lack of understanding of the threats and challenges in the Black Sea region by the NATO authorities. Despite the regular navy and military trainings, they have not resulted neither in a strategy, not in an action plan in case of a crisis. Having three member-states in the Black Sea, it has not turned in the NATO presence in the region. In some way it was suitable for Alliance to rely solemnly on Turkey, delegating the responsibility, as no real threats or challenges had been expected.

Changes, triggered by the illegal annexation of Crimea, raised awareness among many European states, which believed that the EU must have a security response and reconsider their foreign and security policies, which must be reflected in a reviewed European Security Strategy, in the European Maritime Security Strategy and in the EU Strategy for the Black Sea[2]. No such reaction was noticed within the NATO framework, which considered the Black Sea risks in a wider European context, emphasizing and enhancing security in the Baltics and at the Eastern flank, with the sea mostly left for the individual countries initiatives. The Allies failed to develop an effective Black Sea security architecture that could deter Russia's advances, which should be considered within the larger anti-NATO strategy in which naval forces play a significant and growing role[3]. However, the EU has also almost did not pay attention to the Black Sea region in its updated Global Strategy of 2016, concentrating mostly on global issues.

On the eve of the NATO Warsaw Summit, more and more experts urged for greater NATO involvement in the Black Sea region. A. Cohen from Atlantic council insists that NATO possesses economic and technological superiority over Russia, that does not translate into a regional military superiority that is sufficient to deter Russia, as it lacks an adequate policy, force structure, coordination, and command and

1   Larrabee, F. Stephen, Peter A. Wilson and John Gordon IV. 2015. The Ukrainian Crisis and European Security: Implications for the United States and US Army. RAND Corporation, Accessed February 25, 2016. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR900/RR903/RAND_RR903.pdf

2   European Parliament. 2015. Motion for a European Parliament Resolution on the strategic military situation in the Black Sea Basin following the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia (2015/2036(INI)). May 21. Accessed February 25, 2016. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A8-2015-0171&language=EN

3   Bugajski, Janusz, and Peter B. Doran. 2016. "Black Sea Rising. Russia's Strategy in Southeast Europe." Black Sea Strategic Report No. 1. Center for European Policy Analysis. February. Accessed February 25, 2016. http://cepa.org/sites/default/files/Black%20Sea%20Rising.pdf

control system in the Black Sea region[4]. Thus in the Black Sea it is generally present within a bilateral framework of cooperation with separate states. For example, the ideas to support Ukrainian Navy modernization is sound from time to time, but no information on a comprehensive NATO strategy development for the region, still predominantly focusing on a land and air defence of the Eastern Flank.

> ❝ *the ideas to support Ukrainian Navy modernization is sound from time to time, but no information on a comprehensive NATO strategy development for the region, still predominantly focusing on a land and air defence of the Eastern Flank*

In 2016, Romania's President Klaus Iohannis expressed idea of the so-called "Black Sea Fleet", which could unite Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Ukraine's fleet. While Ukraine actively supported the idea of a new naval cooperation initiative, Bulgaria backed the idea by President Rosen Plevneliev and rejected by Prime Minister Boyko Borissov, afraid of irritating Russia. The absence of the clear concept, how this initiative would look like, made President Iohannis to explain, stating that an initiative designed for cooperation in the area of joint exercises and joint training and should be deployed under the NATO umbrella, because all the three Black Sea countries — Romania, Bulgaria and Tukey — are NATO allies, but not be seen as a creation of a new structure or a joint fleet.

Russian-Turkish relations and Montreux Convention

Neither Russian-Georgian conflict of 2008, nor the illegal annexation of Crimea had serious influence on the Russian-Turkish relations. It has been Syria and conflicting interests of two partners that shook and almost derailed their engagement. For the opinion of the Russian military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer, it seems clear that Putin was sure that the Turks would be amenable and somehow two countries would divide things up, that was a fundamental mistake[5]. Additional reason for such considerations were Turkish adherence to Montreux Convention and previous behaviour during the Russian-Georgian conflict in August 2008.

Ankara is strongly opposed to any initiative that might imply a change in the status of the convention or that could disturb the maritime status quo in the Black Sea region. In August 2008, Turkey declined entrance to the Black Sea for two U.S. Navy hospital ships, the USNS Comfort and the USNS Mercy, through the Dardanelles with humanitarian aid for Georgia, because their tonnage exceeded the limits allowed for foreign warships under the Montreux Convention. The United States eventually sent the aid aboard the destroyer USS McFaul, the USCGC Dallas, and the USS Mount Whitney, all of which were well below the tonnage limits allowed under the Montreux Convention[6]. Even after the annexation of Crimea, when many experts started to search variants on greater US or NATO Navy presence in the Black Sea

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4 Cohen, Ariel. 2016. NATO Should Stand Up Black Sea Command Before It's Too Late. The Huffington Post. July 6. Accessed July 6, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-ariel-cohen/nato-should-stand-up-blac_b_10831440.html

5 Coalson, Robert. 2016. "News Analysis: Russian Buildup Focuses Concerns around the Black Sea." Radio Free Europe, February 23. Accessed February 25, 2016. http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-black-sea-military-build-up-turkey/27569877.html

6 Larrabee, F. Stephen, Peter A. Wilson and John Gordon IV. 2015. The Ukrainian Crisis and European Security: Implications for the United States and US Army. RAND Corporation, Accessed February 25, 2016. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR900/RR903/RAND_RR903.pdf

region, the Turkish position remained the same, any presence only according to the Montreux Convention, no changes to which are envisaged.

Russia's build-up in the Black Sea occurred during the time of good relations between Moscow and Ankara, complemented with the personal relationship between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The incidents with Russian military airplanes and different perception of the Syrian conflict has changed these relations dramatically, and influenced not only the Middle East, but even more — the Black Sea region possible scenarios. Despite the recent change of the situation and improvement in the Russian-Turkish relations, the previous example of the rapid transformation and absence of a compromise on main conflicting points (Syria, Crimea, etc.), still allow to separate economic-political dimension, from military-security and navy cooperation between the two states.

Some experts suggests that with both countries prominently present in the Black Sea, the possibilities for more dangerous incidents are high[7]. Considering the fact that Turkey is a NATO member, any serious incidents can involve the Alliance. Clear Turkish orientation and reliance on NATO[8] rather than searching excuse from Russia, demonstrated Turkish security priorities. This rift in Russian-Turkish relations presented a chance for the deeper NATO involvement in the Black Sea region, and for a search of a new security configurations and partnerships in the region.

The opinion exists, that in the case of the Black Sea, Russia can concentrate its forces in a relatively small area to gain advantage, whereas NATO has limited access to these waters largely because of stipulations in the 1936 Montreux Convention, which limits the naval presence of non-littoral states in the Black Sea[9]. As a result, most of the existed research are comparing only Russian-Turkish military balance in the Black Sea region, not considering accumulative efforts of three NATO littoral member states that currently received better stimulus for enhanced cooperation both on bilateral and multilateral basis. Despite the fact that according to the Montreux Convention, Vessels of war belonging to non-Black Sea Powers shall not remain in the Black Sea more than twenty-one days, whatever be the object of their presence there[10], the NATO ships can elaborate an operation based on a continuous rotation of the different states' ships. Another option can be reinforcement of the littoral NATO members by the additional ships and arms, for example, on a leasing basis, what will not be considered under the Convention's restrictions. Some experts propose establishment of a NATO regional command capable of coordinating all defensive activities in the theatre[11].

7   Coalson, Robert. 2016. "News Analysis: Russian Buildup Focuses Concerns around the Black Sea." Radio Free Europe, February 23. Accessed February 25, 2016. http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-black-sea-military-build-up-turkey/27569877.html

8   MacFarquhar, Neil, and Steven Erlangernov. 2015. "NATO-Russia Tensions Rise After Turkey Downs Jet". New York Times, November 24. Accessed February 25, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/25/world/europe/tur-key-syria-russia-military-plane.html?_r=0

9   Bugajski, Janusz, and Peter B. Doran. 2016. "Black Sea Rising. Russia's Strategy in Southeast Europe." Black Sea Strategic Report No. 1. Center for European Policy Analysis. February. Accessed February 25, 2016. http://cepa.org/sites/default/files/Black%20Sea%20Rising.pdf

10 Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits Signed at Montreux. July 20. 1936

11 Cohen, Ariel. 2016. NATO Should Stand Up Black Sea Command Before It's Too Late. The Huffington Post. July 6. Accessed July 6, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-ariel-cohen/nato-should-stand-up-blac_b_10831440.html

> **" Big ships of war within the Black Sea waters is more an issue of the prestige rather than effectiveness.**

In addition, Ukraine and Turkey received a chance to add significant military and security component to their relations, which were mostly based on economic interests. According to Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council Secretary O. Turchynov, "Ukraine and Turkey have a unique historical opportunity to combine political, diplomatic, military-technical and economic resources for the efficient and coordinated response to the destruction of the balance of forces in the Black Sea region"[12]. This idea was supported by his Turkish counterpart Seyfullah Hacımüftüoğlu, stating that two countries must play a leading role in creation of the efficient system of regional security, where combination of the potentials of countries can provide a very efficient synergy[13].

As for the Russian Federation, the Black Sea region is not perceived as a separate region, but as a part of the Black Sea-Mediterranean zone, so the operation is impossible without smooth passage of Bosporus and Dardanelle. Despite the demonstration of force by launching missiles from the Caspian Sea to reach targets in Syria[14], possibilities of such operations are very limited and not very effective in a current combat situation. However, for the opinion of the US officials: "this launch from the Caspian Sea was more

than just hitting targets in Syria, they have assets in Syria that could have handled this. It was really about messaging to the world and us that this is a capability that they have and they can use it"[15]. In some way, it was a response to the appeared propositions, to close the Black Sea straits to the Russian Fleet, so not to allow Crimean base to be a headquarter for the Syrian operation. Some experts explained it by high-cost and timing that Russia would need for sending forces from the Northern Fleet navy bases, so hoping it would either prevent or limit Moscow engagement in Syria. Strike from the Caspian Fleet to Syria proved that closing the straits is not an option. Neither from the legal point of view, nor strategic one.

This incident demonstrated that the Black Sea could not be considered anymore as a single-sea security system. For years, there were definitions of the Black Sea — Caspian cooperation, or the Black Sea-Mediterranean marine system, but in terms of security, it is time to consider three seas as a package.

As all regional countries currently consider navy modernization and increase training, one of the conclusions can be made, that most of the tasks can be done by smaller ships but with a proper equipment and rapid reaction. Big ships of war within the Black Sea waters is more an issue of the prestige rather than effectiveness. However, their existence should be considered, in case possibility of spreading the conflict to the Mediterranean is envisaged. The

[12] Censor. 2016. "Turchynov and Turkish NSC Secretary-General Seyfullah Hacımüftüoğlu discussed cooperation in military-technical sphere." January 21. Accessed February 23, 2016. http://en.censor.net.ua/p370364

[13] Censor. 2016. "Turchynov and Turkish NSC Secretary-General Seyfullah Hacımüftüoğlu discussed cooperation in military-technical sphere." January 21. Accessed February 23, 2016. http://en.censor.net.ua/p370364

[14] BBC. 2015. "Russian missiles 'hit IS in Syria from Caspian Sea'." October 7. Accessed February 25, 2016. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34465425

[15] Cavas, Christopher P. 2015. "Is Caspian Sea Fleet a Game-Changer?" Defence news, October 11. Accessed February 20, 2016. http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/ships/2015/10/11/caspian-sea-russia-navy-missiles-attack-strike-military-naval-syria-frigate-corvette-lcs-littoral-combat-ship/73671188

future implementation of the new ships acquisitions (type, tonnage, weaponry) will be the main indicators for the countries' strategies evaluation, including such plans as extension of the navy power beyond the Black Sea region.

At the current stage, it is early to speak about future navy configuration in the Black Sea region. While the old arrangements of the BLACKSEAFOR and Black Sea Harmony are frozen, the new initiatives, such as the Romanian Black Sea Fleet idea, have not been elaborated properly to envisage their future effectiveness. NATO coming to a conclusion that its role in the Black Sea region should be increased, does not have a strategy and a vision of its regional presence and policy, due to the long reliance on Turkey as a leading actor in the region. Nevertheless, the recent crisis in Ukraine and Syria, as well as fleet modernization plans and understanding of the challenges, has been leading to a necessity to start considering the Black Sea region and possible navy cooperation in it, not as a single theatre but in conjunction with the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.

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BELARUS IN THE CONTEXT OF A NEW COLD WAR: CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS

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The NATO-Russia confrontation as one of New Cold War's manifestations has direct implications for the independence, sovereignty and national security of Belarus. There is a risk Russia will manage to transform Belarus into its outpost in the New Cold War in order to generate conventional and hybrid threats to NATO states and Ukraine. Kremlin may also destabilize the political and military situation in Belarus if it is decided that President Lukashenko is overcrossing imposed red lines or Moscow is losing control to influence political processes (for example, transit of power).

Russia's Nuclear Diplomacy

Analysts and experts have been having a lot of discussions since the beginning of Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2014 whether relations between Russia and the West may be characterized as a New Cold War. Yet, on 9 October 2016, after the Russian president Vladimir Putin tried to provoke Cuban-like Missile Crisis in the Eastern Europe by deploying nuclear-capable missile systems "Iskander" in Kaliningrad, it is without doubt at its height now. Every large-scale military exercise of the Russian Armed Forces, especially in the Western military district, has not been without the use of at least tactical nuclear weapons. For example, on October 12, 2016, Russian strategic nuclear forces successfully launched three intercontinental ballistic missiles during the exercises[1]. It is not for the first time that Russia is sending nuclear messages to the West. Sudden readiness checks of the Russian strategic nuclear forces have become the new normal since the beginning of Russia-Ukraine conflict[2].

> **Kremlin is sophisticated in exploiting Western strategic fears connected with nuclear war scenarios.**

On one hand, Moscow is sending such messages to the West in order to demonstrate its resolute willingness to defend Russia's strategic interests by any means. On the other hand, Kremlin is sophisticated in exploiting Western strategic fears connected with nuclear war scenarios. In this regard, it serves as

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1   Россия провела пуск трех межконтинентальных баллистических ракет / Loga.net, 13 October, 2016, Accessed at: http://news.liga.net/news/world/13142333-rossiya_provela_pusk_trekh_mezhkontinentalnykh_ballistich-eskikh_raket.htm

2   Ten regiments of Russia's Strategic Missile Force placed on highest alert / TASS. 26 January 2016, Accessed at: http://tass.com/defense/852158

a psychological leverage to undermine the unity and solidarity within Euro-Atlantic allies.

New Cuban-Like Missile Crisis and Escalation Strategy

Normandy format, Syrian military campaign, MH17 investigation are complicating Russia's international position and possess risks of imposing new sanctions against Moscow. In this context, the Kremlin is escalating confrontation with the West in order to persuade it into making concessions.

The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 resulted in the compromise between the U.S. and the USSR. Moscow refused its plans to deploy Soviet medium-range (SS-4) and intermediate-range (R-14) ballistic missiles in Cuba while Washington agreed to dismantle medium-range ballistic missiles (PGM-19 Jupiter) in Turkey and Italy against the Soviet Union and gave guaranties of nonaggression against Cuba. The Moscow–Washington hotline was established and a series of agreements sharply reduced U.S.–Soviet tensions during the following years.

By provoking Cuban-like missile crisis in the Eastern Europe, Vladimir Putin urges the West to seat down at the negotiating table to find a new compromise in the World powers style. On October 21, Russia already announced the agenda of these negotiations. The Russian parliament adopted a bill suspending the plutonium disposal agreement with the U.S.[3] According to the bill, Russian President Vladimir Putin may make a decision to renew cooperation with the US in this sphere if Washington reduces military infrastructure and the number

of U.S. troops in NATO member-states that joined the Alliance after September 1, 2000, to the level at which they were when the plutonium deal entered into force. Moreover, the U.S. should reject its hostile policy toward Russia by abolishing Sergei Magnitsky Act, as well as lift all sanctions against Russia and cancel Ukraine Freedom Support Act. The bill also stipulates that the U.S. should compensate losses Russia sustained during sanctions, including the damage as a result of Moscow's countersanctions and present a detailed plan on plutonium disposal.

This bill demonstrates Russia's strategic intention to be recognized as a world power like the USSR with its exclusive sphere of interest. Thus, it demands the reduction of the NATO military infrastructure and forces in the Eastern and Central Europe. However, it also illustrates Kremlin's strategic fear to lose the influence and control over the post-Soviet space.

Russia's Strategic Fear and Its Implications

Obviously until the Euro-Atlantic community is united, it will not negotiate with Russia in terms of sphere of influences. Russian strategists understand that. That is why they are working on undermining the Euro-Atlantic unity, promoting disintegration of the EU and NATO. The Kremlin is actively interfering in the electoral process in U.S., Germany and France, conducting cyber and disinformation operations, supporting populist far right and left political parties and movements.

On the other hand, Moscow is causing instability in the countries along its border as a way of reducing the influence and presence

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3   Mike Eckel, Putin Suspends U.S.-Russia Plutonium Deal, Blaming NATO, Sanctions, Magnitsky Act / Radio Free Europe, 3 October 2016, Accessed at: http://www.rferl.org/a/russia-us-putin-cancels-plutonium-agreement/28029368.html

of other world and regional powers in those regions, because Russia is not able to maintain its influence in the region through economic cooperation and «soft power». In the case of Ukraine, Kremlin openly supported (and/or organized) the destabilization of a formally friendly state in 2014. This became the first well-known manifestation of Russia's new geostrategy. That is why Belarus may be the next target of Russia.

On 3 November 2016, Sergey Shoigu, Russian minister of defence, suddenly visited Minsk to discuss Russia-Belarus bilateral military cooperation during the joint board of Defence ministries, which usually takes place once a year[4]. Nevertheless, the visit was not announced beforehand and seemed to be urgent. During the meeting he stated that the US and NATO are increasing their offensive capabilities on the western borders of the Union State of Belarus and Russia. He also defined NATO's plan to deploy four multinational battalions on its Eastern flank as measures for undermining the strategic stability in the region. According to Shoigu, it means that the Union State has to formulate a joint response[5]. In this context, Russia has already taken "defensive" measures on the Western strategic direction. Moreover, Kremlin is persuading Minsk to join these steps now.

Without doubt, Kremlin is trying to increase its political and military control over Belarus, involving Minsk in different initiatives like deploying Russian air, land and missile bases on Belarusian ground. The forming of the joint military organization of the Union State (to 2018) and conducting joint large scale military drills "West"/ "Zapad" (2009, 2013, 2017) help Moscow to undermine Belarus' image

as an open and reliable partner with an independent, predictable and peaceful military and foreign policy.

Current Military Balance in the Region and Belarus

Russia began to increase its military capabilities in the Western strategic direction right away after the Crimean annexation and destabilization of the Eastern Ukraine. Moscow has already established the 1st Guards tank army in the Belarusian direction and redeployed the 20th Guards Army to the border with Ukraine to assist the hybrid war conflict in Donbass. In the context of these processes, Kremlin is going to form new motorized (mechanized) and tank divisions in the Western military district and one motorized (mechanized) division in the South military district. Moscow is also rearranging the 11th Army Corps in Kaliningrad[6], providing it with additional facilities to enforce two motorized (mechanized) brigades to division level. According to official statements, Russia undertakes such military steps as an adequate defensive response to NATO's increasing activities in Central Europe and the Baltic. Kremlin motivates the deployment of two motorized brigades close to the border with Belarus in this way as well.

Obviously, Russia is undertaking superfluous and disproportionate measures from the point of view of military balance in the region. Especially because Belarus and Russia still remain allies. According to the statements of Belarusian military officials, Minsk does not assess the deployment of four NATO battalions in Poland and the Baltic as a direct military threat to security of Belarus[7].

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[4] Shoigu Visits Minsk To Intensify Military Cooperation / Charter 97, 2 November 2016, Accessed at: https://charter97.org/en/news/2016/11/2/229741/

[5] Shoigu Promises Counter-Measures Against NATO Strengthening At Belarusian Borders / Charter 97, 2 November 2016, Accessed at: https://charter97.org/en/news/2016/11/2/229756/

[6] Marek Menkiszak, Piotr Żochowski, Russia's reaction to the NATO summit in Warsaw / OSW, 13 July 2016, Accessed at: https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-07-13/russias-reaction-to-nato-summit-warsaw

These steps will not significantly change the current military balance between Belarus and neighbouring NATO states. According to the Global militarization index[8], Belarus remains among the ten most militarized countries in Europe, occupying the 12th place in the overall ranking of 152 countries, leaving far behind Poland (68), Latvia (85) Lithuania (63) and Estonia (25). From this point of view, Minsk does not possess any reasons for concern.

If NATO's activities in its Eastern flank do not generate a direct military threat even to Belarus, the same is true for Russia as well. Nevertheless, Kremlin has been escalating the military situation in the region since the annexation of Crimea using any NATO's decision or move as pretext. Russia has already conducted sudden readiness checks of armed forces in the Western military district with the amount of troops about 100 000, exercising large-scale conflict with NATO on the Baltic and Scandinavian theatres. Sending to Kaliningrad nuclear-capable missile systems "Iskander" and deploying "Kalibr"-capable long-range missile warships and submarines in the Baltic Sea support the fear that Russia may use nuclear weapon in the hypothetical conflict with NATO.

Full-spectrum pressure from the Kremlin to Belarus

In fact, Belarus is in a position of uncertainty with regards to what to expect from Russia. Permanent trade wars between Belarus and Russia have become the new normal since the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Moreover, there is also a possibility of gas and oil wars because there is still no consensus on a new agreement. This is why Minsk has voiced

profound dissatisfaction with the efforts of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Union State. These sore spots in Belarus-Russia relations have given reason for the Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko to heavily criticise various integration programmes with Russia. He has also expressed his concerns about certain unfriendly actions as "pressure that he would not tolerate"[9].

> **If NATO's activities in its Eastern flank do not generate a direct military threat even to Belarus, the same is true for Russia as well.**

What's more, at the beginning of this year Kremlin decided to deploy two mechanised brigades not far from the Belarus-Russia border. One of them is stationed in Klintsy, Briansk region, 40 km from the Belarusian border and will be upgraded to a mechanised regiment. The other one is located in Yelnya, Smolensk region, 90 km from the Belarusian border, and will be reinforced to a mechanised division at the beginning of 2017. Because this will be the first time the Kremlin deploys mechanised formations directed towards Belarus, it is necessary to speak about a full-spectrum pressure on Belarus, not only economic one, but political and military as well.

Obviously, the hardliners, who are behind the destabilization of Eastern Ukraine and confrontation with the West, perceive the normalization process of Belarus with the EU and the US as a threat to Russia's influence. For example, Russian military analysts believe that the West will finally separate Belarus and other Eastern Partnership countries from Russia and fix them in its sphere of influence

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7   Belarus does not see the deployment of NATO troops in the Baltic States as a threat / UAWIRE, 8 July 2016, Accessed at: http://uawire.org/news/belarus-does-not-see-the-deployment-of-nato-troops-in-the-baltic-states-as-a-threat

8   Global Militarization Index / Bonn International Center for Conversion, Accessed at: http://gmi.bicc.de

9   Lukashenko "sick and tired" of Moscow's procrastination / Commonspace.eu, 21 September 2016, Accessed at: http://www.commonspace.eu/index.php?m=23&news_id=3904

till the end of this year.[10] Such analysis sounds problematic, because the normalization with the West has obvious limits, on one hand. On the other hand, Belarus is not planning to join the EU and NATO and even sign an Association agreement with the EU in the mid-term. At the same time, such analysis provides the Kremlin with arguments to put more pressure upon Belarus and even to destabilise the country if Moscow does not manage to stop its shift towards the West and China or lose its political influence as result of power transit to a new independent leader.

Military option for Belarus?

Russia has already developed a military option for Belarus. Moscow will use it if Kremlin's strategists believe that Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko is overcrossing the red lines. In particular, tactical characteristics of Russia's military build-up close to the border with Belarus demonstrates that Moscow is preparing to project its military power on the territory of Belarus in a very rapid manner. In terms of tactical standards for mechanized formations it will take no longer than 8 hours for the brigade in Klintsy to reach the Belarusian city Homel (distance 90 km) by marching. As well as the brigade in Yelnya will pass the distance of 180 km to another Belarusian city Orsha no longer than in 16 hours.

Direct highways and railways connect Yelnya with Orsha and Klintsy with Homel. These two cities, Homel and Orhsa, play a strategically important role because they are the largest railway junctions in Belarus. If you control them, you control at least the Eastern and Central parts of Belarus, as well as have an operational space to redeploy troops to Ukraine and Latvia.

Because Kremlin deploys mechanized formations directed towards Belarus for the first time during the last 25 years, we need to look for some extra covert motivations. These troops are not enough to represent a direct military threat to Belarus. Nevertheless, after their reinforcement to a regiment and division level in 2017 they will generate about 10 tactical battalion groups, which are enough to conduct hybrid warfare against Belarus (for example, about 15 tactical battalion battle groups from the Russian Armed Forces are operating in Donbass).

Belarus is Preparing for a Possible Donbass-Like Hybrid Conflict

Belarus has recently adopted a new Military doctrine, which pays a lot of attention to countering hybrid warfare. Therefore, the Belarusian Armed Forces are now conducting exercises in preventing hybrid conflicts in order to put the basic provisions of the new Military doctrine into practise. Incidentally, the new Military doctrine of Belarus does not mention "hybrid conflict", favouring the term "internal armed conflict." Since the Ukraine-Russia conflict, they have been conducting drills, which include elements of Donbass-like hybrid scenario. Recent military exercises were completely dedicated to this.

On 14-20 September 2016, the Belarusian Armed Forces conducted large-scale military drills[11]. Despite the fact that these military exercises were planned, they demonstrate a significant shift in security policy as Minsk increasingly takes into consideration possible risks and challenges from Russia. It confirmed that the Belarusian Armed Forces are preparing for a possible Donbass-like hybrid conflict in the light of increasing

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[10] Вице-адмирал Г. Молчанов, Развитие военно-политической обстановки в мире и угрозы национальной безопасности России (2016) // Зарубежное военное обозрение, №1, 2016

[11] Arseni Sivitski, Belarus Is Preparing For A Donbass-Like Hybrid War Conflict / Belarus Digest, 28 September 2016, Accessed at: http://belarusdigest.com/story/belarus-preparing-donbass-hybrid-war-conflict-27390

pressure from the Kremlin. According to this scenario, Belarusian military strategists simulated a situation in which a hypothetical foreign adversary provoked an internal armed conflict in the country with the help of reconnaissance and sabotage groups and illegal armed formations.

The Belarusian Armed Forces have been practising neutralising illegal armed groups, securing and releasing captured critical infrastructure objects, and neutralising separatist groups backed from abroad. Assigned tasks also included establishing temporary checkpoints on the state border and main road routes and conducting surveillance along the border. Without doubt, such measures remain necessary only on the Belarus-Russia border due to the absence of any border control, in contrast with the NATO countries and Ukraine. This was the first time that military drills were held over the entire territory of Belarus: officials achieved a uniform distribution of forces in the Western and Eastern parts of the country. What's more, the General Staff emphasised that the main idea behind the exercises was to ensure Belarus is capable of maintaining independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity with its own forces.

It also differs from previous military exercises before the Ukrainian crisis (for example "West"/ "Zapad" in 2009 and 2013 or "Shield of the Union" in 2011 and 2015) when Belarus and Russia formed the Regional army group in order to defend Belarus from possible attacks from the West.

Many elements of the recent military drills bear strong resemblance to the actions of the so-called DNR and LNR separatist groups in Eastern Ukraine. At the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine hybrid conflict, separatists under the command of Igor Strelkov (Girkin) successfully seized towns and cities such as Slavyansk. They captured important infrastructure objects including the railway stations Debaltsevo and Avdiyivka and Donetsk airport. They crossed the Russia-Ukraine border and received military support from Russia without any problems. It seems that Belarusian military strategists are considering this experience. All formations of the Belarusian Armed Forces were assisted by heavy artillery and Air Forces, which indicates that they were preparing for confrontation with illegal armed formations and separatist groups backed by the armed forces of a hypothetical foreign state. The same situation can be seen in Donbass where the illegal armed formations DNR and LNR are operating with the military support of at least 15 tactical battalion battle groups from the Russian Armed Forces. By conducting such military drills Minsk is expressing its concerns over the economic, political and military pressure on Belarus from Russia and demonstrating its readiness for any scenario, including a coercive one.

> **Russia is ready to use any destabilization of the military-political situation in Belarus launched by mythic far right nationalists as an excuse to intervene in the internal affairs.**

Montenegro case

Nevertheless, it seems that the Kremlin is not going to invade Belarus in Crimea or Donbass-like style. The scenarios of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) exercise "Interaction — 2015 as well as the joint military exercise of Russia, Serbia and Belarus "Slavonic Brotherhood — 2015" demonstrated another option. Russia is ready to use any destabilization of the military-political situation in Belarus launched by mythic far right nationalists as an excuse to intervene in the internal affairs. This option includes sending troops to Belarus in order "to restore the constitutional order and political stability".

At the same time such scenarios are clearly exaggerated and do not correspond to the real situation with the Belarusian far-right nationalist movements, which are very small to be a destabilizing factor. The hypothetical infiltration of illegal armed groups from the territory of Ukraine is impossible because of the special political relations between the official Minsk and Kyiv. Nevertheless, even if the situation is being changed and some irregular armed units uncontrolled by the Ukrainian government try to attack Belarus, Minsk has recently strengthened border infrastructure with Ukraine and several military drills with special operation and border guard forces were successfully conducted to prevent such hypothetical attacks. Thus such scenarios developed by Russian General Staff illustrates clear Kremlin's intention to destabilize and then project military power rather than to improve security situation in the region.

It means that first of all Kremlin needs to launch destabilization in Belarus, as well as agents of influence among Belarusian political elite, who will request official military support from Russia. Recent activities of Russian secret services in Serbia and Montenegro show the possible sabotage tools and terrorist tactics, including a coup attempt and killing the prime minister of Montenegro[12], among the possible scenarios. This is fully applicable in Belarus if Kremlin feels it is losing control over here.

Implications and Conclusions

After Russia might implement such scenario, Kremlin would receive unlimited military and political control over the territory of Belarus to operate against NATO states and Ukraine from it. Belarus plays a crucial role in Russia's strategic military planning as a buffer zone with the NATO, operational

space and land bridge to Kaliningrad in the case of conflict. That is why political and military control over Belarus is an issue of great importance for the Kremlin.

Obviously, Minsk is not interested to join Russia's confrontation efforts with the NATO and the West. Belarus is no longer seen as the "last dictatorship in Europe" but rather as a regional security and stability provider. Minsk's status as a peacemaker and intermediary in negotiations in the Ukraine crisis would be called into question, if Belarus is involved in a new Cold war. Moreover, it will undermine the neutrality of Belarus from a military and political points of view, so it will lose all the dividends connected with its foreign policy.

Threat perception has changed significantly since the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Belarus takes into consideration possible coercive scenarios in relations with Russia. Nevertheless, Moscow has all the necessary means to destabilize the situation in Belarus and even launch a coup attempt. The regime-change scenario is the most relevant one if the Kremlin is not able to involve Minsk in confrontation with the West and NATO or does not manage to take under control the power transit from Alexander Lukashenko to an independent and self-sufficient successor.

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[12] Montenegro Prosecutor: Russian Nationalists Behind Alleged Coup Attempt / The Wall Street Journal, 6 November 2016, Accessed at: http://www.wsj.com/articles/montenegro-prosecutor-russian-nationalists-behind-alleged-coup-attempt-1478473032