

SYNERGING



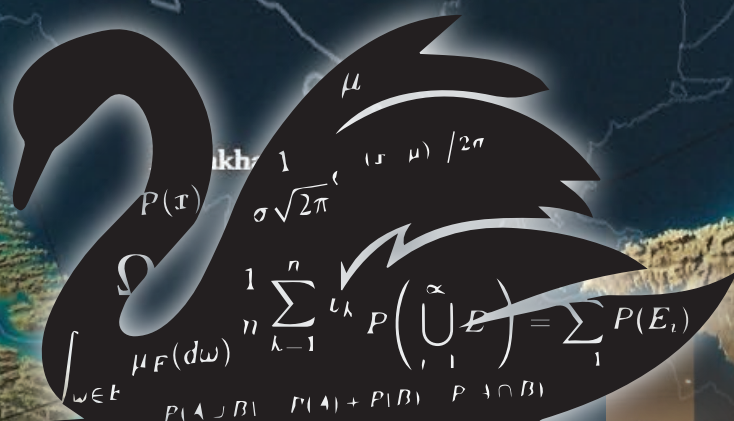
ENERGIES

BLACK SEA SECURITY

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FOCUS ON:

RUSSIAN HYBRESSION
IN THE BLACK SEA

NORTH CAUCASUS
CAULDRON OF RUSSIA

LITTLE-KNOWN PAGES
OF THE WORLD WAR II

Future map of North Eurasia



RUSSIAN REPRESSIONS IN OCCUPIED CRIMEA ARE GOING ON



Around 200 people are illegally detained in ORDLO and 115 in Crimea and Russia, including:



Oleksii Bessarabov



Dmytro Shtyblykov



Volodymyr Dudka

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INSTEAD OF FOREWORD

Spring 2020 on the wings of "black swans". Instead of Foreword

The abnormally warm winter of 2020 brought many anomalies to global politics and the world economy, tying new Gordian knots of interconnected problems. At the end of 2019, Europe was anticipating a large-scale Russian "gas attack" on Ukraine and the EU. Stymied by the US sanctions against the Nord Stream-2, Poland's opposition to the Russian project from within the EU, and the activity of Ukraine's Naftogaz in international courts, Russian Gazprom was unable to repeat the "blitzkrieg" of 2009. General *Moroz* was not on the Kremlin's side this past winter. By November of 2019, the US had become the largest exporter of LNG to Europe. In addition, warm temperatures reduced demand for heat across Europe, leaving natural gas storage inventories at record-high levels. Gas prices consequently plummeted, and there was no gas war for Russia to wage.

In January, the world braced for a new war in the Middle East. United States President Donald Trump authorized the killing of Iranian Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani and Iran retaliated with missile attacks on US military bases in Iraq. About four hours later, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) shot down a Ukrainian commercial airliner. However, none of this led to war between Iran and the US.

Russia and Turkey have also managed to avoid a military clash.. However, the destruction of a Turkish military column by Russian aircraft in Idlib on February 27, along with the swarm of Turkish drones attacking Assad's Russia-backed forces could lead to an escalation of the multi-ethnic conflict in Syria and a Turkish response.

The quickly-escalating COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrated how quickly globalization can give way to deglobalization. As democratic governments struggled to contain the virus, leaders reluctantly instituted varying restrictions to public life and movement. Democracy's lack of effectiveness in combating contagion has put it under pressure.

The decline in China's economic activity due to the pandemic caused stagnation in the oil market, which led to the collapse of the agreement under the OPEC+ super-cartel. It was already doomed due to

the US shale oil revolution. Russian oil "shot," i.e. the refusal to continue cooperation within OPEC+ to destroy the American shale industry, caused the oil prices collapse on March 9. It was indeed a collapse, happening suddenly one morning. Further downward movement ensued on April 1. The drop in oil prices caused price drops in other commodity markets. This was most evident in the gas market, where prices rapidly went down, reaching the lows we saw at the end of the last millennium and the beginning of this one. Global processes, of course, do not bypass the Black Sea region.

Despite the significant deterioration of Russia's economic situation, the pandemic, and sanctions, Russia has not stopped its expansionist policies and aggressive actions abroad, especially against Ukraine. The Normandy Format talks in December 2019 in the on the settlement of the "conflict in Ukraine" did not lead to an end to Russian aggression. Three months into 2020, forty-two servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were killed on the Eastern front. Russia's hybrid actions against Ukraine also intensified abruptly, aiming to destabilize the situation from within the country with the use of disinformation campaigns and agents of influence. The processes that we are seeing now in Ukraine are the result of the Russian government's leaders following the algorithm for solving the problem of the "war in the Donbas."

The abrupt increase in the dynamics of the Russian side's actions after the Munich Security Conference on February 15, 2020 is striking. In Munich, "*12 Steps for Peace in Ukraine*" was published. Many of these steps point to their Russian authorship, hidden by a wide range of pro-Russian foreign experts and politicians. The main goal of this document is to shift international efforts to resolve the Russian-Ukrainian conflict to focus on the "internal civil conflict in Ukraine" and to facilitate the lifting of the sanctions against Russia. It is logical that after this, the idea of the so-called National Platform for Reconciliation and Unity, which has received an extremely negative reaction from the Ukrainian public, is being updated.

On March 11, at a meeting of the TCG in Minsk, the Protocol of Kozak-Yermak was signed. It created prerequisites for recognizing the sovereignty of the "DPR" and "LPR" and officially made them parties to the "internal conflict in Ukraine." This

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erodes the previous 5-year position of Ukraine on non-recognition of the Russian proxies. This Minsk agreement was designed according to the template of the 2003 Kozak memorandum in Moldova for the Transnistrian settlement. If such a decision is approved, it will finally erode the status of the Russian Federation as an aggressor-country, provide it the status of a mediator, and put it on a par with France and Germany. Ukrainian civil society opposed the Kozak-Yermak Protocol and prevented its approval on March 25.

The hybrid aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is progressing generally in compliance with how it was formed by Russian military theorists even before it began, although not in the expected time frame. After being rebuffed in 2014-2015 in Eastern Ukraine, the aggressor is trying to transform the Ukrainian government from within, so that it stops considering Russia an enemy. The goal of the Russian Federation at this stage is to consolidate the achieved intermediate results of this war, forcing Kyiv capitulation under the guise of "peace at any cost." To this end, Russia has activated both old agents of influence in Ukrainian authorities and new channels of influence elsewhere.

Acting in the Ukrainian direction, Russia continues to destabilize the situation in the Mediterranean, and the Black and Azov seas. Its goal is to take advantage of the coronavirus pandemic and further splinter NATO and the EU. Russia's assistance to Italy in its fight against the coronavirus pandemic with **fifteen IL-76 Russian Federation aircraft** and a subsequent 600-km March through the country has signs of being a multi-purpose special operation. In practice, this is the legalized invasion of a limited military contingent on the territory of another state. Italy is a country that has long been a sore point within Europe as well as a weak link between the EU and NATO.

Such activity of the Russian Federation deserves special attention from Ukraine and the Alliance. Extrapolation of the special operation in Italy leads to the assumption that Russia may use a similar technique for a "legal invasion" of Ukraine with a "humanitarian mission." We do not rule out Russia's preparation of a special operation under the pretext of "providing humanitarian assistance to the population of the southern regions of Ukraine

in the fight against the pandemic in the conditions of paralysis of the Kyiv authorities." **The real goal is to seize control over the main gateway of the North Crimean Canal in the town of Tavriysk in the Kherson region and restore water supply to the occupied in 2014 Crimean Peninsula.**

It is no coincidence that Russia conducted military manoeuvres in occupied Crimea with the troops' landing in March. According to the Defence Blog on March 21: *"Paratroopers from Novorossiysk (1.5 thousand paratroopers and 300 units of equipment and 15 VTA IL-76 aircraft) conducted large-scale manoeuvres in the Crimea, during which they simulated the capture of the Kulbakino airfield in Mykolaiv."* Kulbakino is important for the defense of the South of Ukraine. The 204th and 299th tactical aviation brigades are stationed at this airfield. Mykolaiv Tavriysk are less than 150 km apart. Even closer to Tavriysk is Kherson Airport, only 90 km away. Although heavy aircraft like the IL-76 cannot land there, lightly armed troops can be landed using an An-26 transport aircraft and helicopters.

The January manoeuvres sessions were also indicative. According to the press service of the Southern Military District of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense dated January 21, 2020: *"Helicopters based on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula were involved in flights, during which pilots learned to cover strategic objects, provide fire support to transport helicopters that carry landing units. In particular, Ka-52 Alligator, Mi-28N Night Hunter, Mi-35 and Mi-8 AMTSH helicopters took to the sky."*

Actions from the sea are also possible through the landing of Azov and Black sea troops from both coasts in the direction of Tavriysk. It should also be remembered that in the South of Ukraine, specifically in Mykolaiv and Kherson, there are high-capacity elevators and ports that are of strategic importance for Ukrainian agricultural exports.

The above-mentioned manoeuvres of Russian troops in occupied Crimea are in the spirit of the thesis of one of the Kremlin's liberal mouth-pieces, Radio Echo of Moscow, expressed at the end of 2018: *"... It is not enough to take Crimea, just Crimea, and build the Crimean Bridge. Water supply. To do this, you need to pick up the ad-*

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ja cent areas... You cannot postpone water." The warm, low-precipitation winter of 2020 means a serious water shortage in Crimea. The Kremlin cannot solve this problem, unlike the issue of gas or electricity shortages on the Peninsula, without Ukraine.

On the official Ukrainian side, contradictory statements about the possibility of resuming water supplies from the Dnipro River to the occupied Crimea were made several times. They blurred the clear state position of Ukraine on the impossibility of such actions before the complete de-occupation of the Peninsula. Civil society in Ukraine, the expert community, and the pro-European political opposition confronted the revisionist approach to this issue. The attention of society and foreign partners of Ukraine is focused on the fact that Russia has not stopped its repression on the territory of Crimea, has not released political prisoners, but on the contrary—fabricates new cases and arrests Crimean Tatar activists, and continues to militarize the Peninsula. Therefore there is no reason to consider the issue of restoring the water supply.

Moreover, Russia continues to look for reasons to justify interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine. Sergei Markov, one of the pro-Putin political analysts close to the Kremlin, quite clearly formulated a possible scenario: *"I think that the situation with coronavirus could lead to the collapse of the political regime in Ukraine, because it, quite obviously, led the country to disaster... We need to prepare for the fact that at some point the regime will collapse altogether, and then a short fight for power will begin in Ukraine within a few days. That's what we need to be prepared for..."* How Russia can do this is evidenced by the statements of Vladislav Surkov from February 26: *"Coercion by force to fraternal relations is the only method that has historically proved effective in the Ukrainian direction. I don't think any other will be invented."*

Moscow has started sending messages to the West about the feasibility of lifting sanctions, citing the coronavirus pandemic, although the actual reasons are quite different—Russia's entry into a severe economic crisis associated with an abrupt drop in oil prices, the collapse of the Russian rouble and, of course, COVID-19. The real state of affairs with the spread of the epidemic in the Russian Federation is carefully hidden behind the "Chernobyl template" inherited from Soviet times. But there is another motive—despite the complexity of the internal and external situation, Putin's regime is not going to abandon its expansionist plans. The bet is simple—while the West and the rest of the world are busy coping with the pandemic and economic crisis, the Kremlin has a chance to implement its expansion plans to restore the empire within the borders of nineteenth century Tsarist Russia. The new terms of the Putin presidency should serve to achieve this goal. This is despite the fact that Putin's Russia is now a boiling cauldron of growing internal tensions, where the North Caucasus, Idel-Ural, and Sakha-Yakutia have a different worldview from what Moscow dictates to them.

The Gordian knot, as we know, cannot be solved. It is being cut up. It seems that Russia is increasingly inclined to use military means to resolve the issues of world order, as a way to cut the Gordian knot of accumulated problems. Putin's Russia is hungry for a war that it wants to wage with someone else's hands in Europe to destroy both the Ukrainian state and the remnants of Belarusian sovereignty; and in the Middle East, to destroy Saudi Arabia with the hands of proxies and to fill the remaining oil niche with its raw materials. All this, according to the plan, should push oil prices up and provide new terms for the "long Putin's state." We hope that soon we will see a completely different scenario—the collapse of the Russian Reich and the newest Fuhrer of the XXI century. New black swans are on the way. Meanwhile, please, read our latest issue of *Black Sea Security*!

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Aspects of Russia's Hybrid Peace à la Russe in the Black Sea Region¹

The ambiguity of the term “Russian world”, which Russia has used to ground its claim to leadership in the world since the “Soviet Camp” (one more ambiguous term!), reflects the ideologues’ cravings to transform the Russian Federation into a true heir of the Soviet Union with claims to global leadership on “specific reasons”. These reasons are allegedly peaceful, but the Kremlin seeks world domination using non-peaceful means, including accelerated Russian militarization. This is most strikingly observed in the Black Sea region, where Moscow believes it has inherited the right to a more powerful zone of influence, and where it seeks to secure its hegemony via military superiority.

The chauvinist junta in Moscow (if the term is used by analogy with the demonization of Kyiv, which much better corresponds to the military regime in modern Russia) burns the ambiguous term “the Russian world” (“Russkiy mir”) into the Russian mass consciousness. This term has an extensive context inherited from the term “fight for peace,” which was invented in the era of the USSR, and collapsed under the unbearable economic burden of peacetime militarization. However, the main message of the persistently preserved term is the idea of exclusivity of the “Russian world”. Among the other states on Earth, it depicts the Kremlin as the key planet in space, where other planets must gravitate to the largest one. By default, this is the Kremlin’s argument that the “Russian planet” (i.e. “Rus-

sian world”) is an exceptional centripetal force acting upon the satellites around it. They are forced to orbit a massive, yet unattractive, entity. And this is actually what the “Russian world” is.

This opposite-sign gravitation is the largest issue in the Russian mirror, in front of which Putin and company reiterate the question “Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?” The Western-manufactured mirror (in fact, it is a Venetian one as medieval and reborn Venice was the largest shipbuilder and the naval superpower) often responds to the stepmother of the Russian people: “You are the most influential and there are no other powers in the world”. Putin’s mirror serves him to feed the people these poisonous sentiments in line with Russian propaganda.

The Western media charts indicate that the sole master of the nuclear state is the most powerful on the Earth. Their intrigue is telling the truth, but paradoxically, reinforced by the fact the planet has no other nuclear autocrat, whose whims and orders make the country, stretched across two continents, so heavily dependent (upon who/what?). However, refutation of this false idea does not come to the minds of common Russians. They are bombarded with credible examples taken from the western context, where the big picture does not matter: the important parts are taken off the table of mass perception.

According to The *Economist* magazine, the fashionable line of Moscow’s propaganda implies that the West tends to Russian power and steadfastness. And that's why at the meeting with Pu-

¹ The publication was prepared in the framework of the project "Promoting Security in the Black Sea Region through Greater Engagement of Non-Governmental Organizations" with the support of the Black Sea Trust Fund, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Black Sea Trust Fund or its partners.

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tin in 2015 in Sochi, the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry did what he did not have to do. Being a Russian subjected to Putin's "grandeur" as a world-champion of political influence according to Western media ratings, you may believe that a visit of the American high-rank official is a sign of weakness yielding to Putin's power.

This is what the Russians have to believe. Their faith feeds the power of the autocrat, who is ready to orchestrate global circus routines to preserve power in the excited eyes of his vassals, applauding the Russian bear under the dome of the circus — as it seems to them that this bear leads the entire world.

The Kremlin's propaganda ensures that applauding viewers do not see the truth about the leader, who is so spectacular to them. He gradually but irrevocably strangles the Russian economy while deepening self-isolation.

Not only Russian but also Western experts sagaciously and analytically believe that the Russian people are patient and that new miracles could be expected from this terrible, masochist state. The people have been subjected to various trials, including the mass terror and the self-destruction of millions of people, whose current descendants are once again falling in love with Stalin the headman — blanketed with the blood of millions of Soviet slaves and spiritualized by propaganda as the greatest of the Russians. Thus, fully Russian ratings of the Russians are influenced by vengeful brainwashing campaigns that outline the history of the infamous "great" Soviet Union, which collapsed due to infirmity.

What are the heights achievable by propaganda when it is a national priority in a country where billions of people's roubles are uncontrollably spent on it?

At the same time, millions of citizens have fled from Russia. They are not members of the White Guard, pursued by the "red soldiers" during the civil war waged by Bolsheviks in Russia. Surprisingly, however, hundreds of thousands of Russians want to go and live in Bulgaria — a

small country suffering heavily under Western pressure, which gladly welcomed the huge waves of Russian refugees triggered by Soviet terror almost a century ago. This time, however, the Bulgarian communists are not calling to mutual credibility and flee for Russian valleys where hundreds found their violent death from their "brothers" repressions in the basements of the Inquisition or concentration camps.

Currently, the vast majority of the population flees from Russia. Almost anyone who can afford an escape leaves. Even the representatives of the middle class — the Russians who are not more stupid than Putin's and Lavrov's daughters — escape, including many Russian ruling chauvinists who imposed their beliefs on ordinary Russians and then decided to live in the West.

To add to this picture of absurdity, the discrepancy between the claims to the appeal of the "Russian world" and the reluctance of many to believe this claim, it is not only ethnic Russians who live aboard the sinking (again) Russian ship. The citizens from the Russian periphery escape as well. Whole peoples and settlements leave. They cannot be persuaded to board the Russian Titanic, which purposefully goes to its iceberg in the confrontation with the West.

Regarding the assessment of the forces in the Black Sea, this huge but poorly controlled Russian ship must consider the frequently changing moods of its Turkish counterpart and rival for regional influence. On one hand, Turkey does not recognize the "criminals," but plays with Putin until it accepts the risk of jeopardizing its strategic partnership with the United States. This also applies to the purchase of the Russian C-400 air-defense systems. Before reaching this level, Russian-Turkish ties have been frequently dwindling and rising for several years. Their huge amplitudes could have caused a heart attack in bilateral relations between normal states, but Russia and Turkey are the Eurasian authoritarian imperial fragments of the 19th century, with immunity against such anomalies in relations. They are content as long as they are not contaminated by the exceedingly great democracy that threatens their autocracy.

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Amid the long-standing rapprochement between Moscow and Ankara, many people may have forgotten that in 2015, President Erdogan blatantly blamed Russia for the genocide of the Armenian people recognized by Putin. This was done to avenge Turkey's indiscretion of the Turkish Stream project at that time. In an unprecedentedly harsh tone, which no Western state allows in relationships with Russia, Ankara recommended that Moscow first blame the Bolsheviks for the millions of victims at their courts, including the Holodomor in Ukraine in 1930s, before blaming its neighbors. As we know, in a moment of acute pain, the shock of it can make even the greatest hypocrite tell the truth.

Putin and Erdogan follow the footsteps of Sultan Mahmud II and Nicholas I across the Black Sea

In historical retrospect, it is noteworthy to mention the Russian-Turkish tradition of love and hatred in the coexistence of this Eurasian tandem in the imperial competition between the two powers over the centuries. There is one particularly interesting episode in the chapter of "Eternal Friendship" between the Ottomans and Muscovites. The reason for their rapprochement at the beginning of the 19th century was a common interest in the territory of modern Syria at that time, where today, despite lovely relations in other spheres within their alliance with the Russian air-defense systems, there is a dispute over who will command the parade and control the remnants of the Syrian state.

The Syrian Ottoman province was conquered in the early 1830s by the Turkish vassal Mehmet Ali, or rather his son Ibrahim Pasha, after his father rebelled against the Turkish Sultan Mahmud II (1831-1833). Despite the Russophile countries' idea that Western forces always defended the Ottoman Empire, they stood on the side of Mehmet Ali against the Ottoman Empire. Mehmet Ali, the Egyptian vassal of the Ottoman Empire, was a progressive ruler of his time, who supported European reforms and revolutions. This made him equally hated by the Sultan and Nicholas I, the Russian monarch and number one protector of the reactionary monarchies in Europe.

Sultan called his fellow obscurantist for help, and Nicholas I did not disappoint him. He sent almost all of his Black Sea Fleet (due to which Russia in the past was able to expand southwards through Turkey) in addition to the army of 30,000 Russian soldiers and officers led by Count Orlov. Mehmet Ali was impressed by this Russian demarche and stopped the attack in Syria toward Constantinople. Then the negotiations started. With the help of England and France, he managed to become a governor in Syria and Adana.

The Russian-Turkish friendship flourished due to mutual favors of the rulers. In the village of Hünkâr İskelesi, close to former Constantinople, the two Empires signed the treaty that turned the Black Sea into the Russian lake. The Sultan was bound not to allow any ships, except the Russian ones, enter the Black Sea. In turn, Nicholas I promised to protect his sworn brother's independence by "material forces", or military forces. The Ottoman Empire turned into a Russian protectorate, without releasing Slavic and Orthodox brothers who were under the Turkish authority.

That period was marked by the deliberate debulgarization of modern Eastern Bulgaria to avoid interference in the Russian military campaign by the indigenous population. As the territory's largest ethnic group and the basis for once-independent Bulgaria, Bulgarian identity was a dangerous obstacle to Russian interests in Bosphorus. To this end, tens and possibly hundreds of thousands of Bulgarians were encouraged by Turkey's Russian patrons to move from their land and settle in the desert on the South of the Russian Empire to populate and enrich it with their labour. And so that happened.

G. Rakowski, the founder of the Bulgarian national liberation movement, described it as the Russian reproach to the Bulgarians, who were betrayed (after the Crimean War, they were also "exchanged" for Circassians, who were driven from their land near Crimea and, under the treaty with the Ottomans, relocated to the Balkans to rob settlements, becoming a catalyst of the Haiduk movement from both ends of the Balkans).

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The Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi declared eternal Russian-Turkish friendship, but lasted only until 1841 in parts of the closed straits because of the “fault” of the Western states, which, after the negotiations in London, invalidated the status of the Black Sea as a Russian lake. With this, they blew up the friendship between Turkey and Russia, but the Turks appreciated the relationship. To this day, a monument to Russian-Turkish friendship stands near the straits.

An ordinary Russian, who can afford a vacation abroad, is the most pragmatic about Turkey, which has become a favorite destination for Russian tourists. The same refers to Bulgaria, which is demonized by Russian propaganda. It should have suffered from the outflow of Russian tourists, but they continue to come, despite their politicians, who viciously anticipate the exhaust of the “Russian stream”—especially after the death of the South Stream in 2014—for against which the European doors labelled “Bulgaria” appear formidably armed.

Once again, I would like to mention some quotes from reflections in the Russian magazine related Russian influence in our country through businessman Valentin Zlatev; they are unique in their honesty. The unchangeable head of the largest (Russian) company in Bulgaria provided recommendations at the time when, at the beginning of this century, Moscow's “fifth column” in Bulgaria launched a major offensive for liberation of Bulgaria from its pro-Western government, which prepared Bulgaria's membership in NATO and the EU. The same Bulgarian businessman, who for many years ranked first in his influence and weight in the economy of Bulgaria, appeared at the negotiations' table on resuscitation of NPP Belene in Bulgaria as a consultant to Russia, without changing his citizenship or leaving the Chair of Lukoil in Bulgaria. Meanwhile, he came to the fore at the dawn of his rise in the Bulgarian territory. That means Russian influence in the region will no longer rely on tanks, but on tankers (it was not too late to do this in Ukraine and Georgia, where Moscow had bet on tanks and “green men”).

“... Russia has not lost its geostrategic positions, the main of which is energy potential. However, the circles close to the Kremlin preach the idea of geopolitical revenge, using the power of national corporations: naturally, Gazprom and Lukoil are at the top of the list. These companies objectively prove to be the most effective political weapon of the Russian state. Moreover, they are a link between Russia and the EU, and a determining factor for Russia's presence in Europe in general and in the Balkans in particular. Before that, tanks were such a factor. (p. 140, Politics Magazine No. 3, Autumn 2000).”

Putin I seeks turning the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea into a “Russian lake”

This happened in late November 2018 in the Sea of Azov, where the Russian Special Forces deliberately attacked the Ukrainian ship, seized it with two others and imprisoned twenty-four Ukrainian marines, who were denied the P.O.W. status and declared criminals by Russia. They were judged by the same Russian laws, under which all opponents of the Kremlin regime are prisoned in Russia.

To answer the question about what motivates this state-funded act of piracy, we must return to the story beloved by Russian strategists and their propagandists, who present piracy as a form of self-defense against the Ukrainian Navy ridiculed by the Russian propaganda as “old rusty troughs”.

No, the state-sponsored act of piracy by the Russian Navy against Ukrainians in the Sea of Azov on November 25, 2018, cannot be compared in its magnitude to the attack on the U.S. port of Pearl Harbour by imperial Japan in 1941. However, in their recklessness, the two events are similar, showing the aggressiveness of the attacking side, selfishly convinced that it has the right given by a position of power. After all, the attacker has to only make sure it can afford such an opportunity.

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The current doctrine of Russian “exclusivity” feeds on irrational historical analogies. Putin postures himself as Peter I, in whose times Moscow became the Russian Empire. This happened in 1721 after the victorious end of the military campaign of the young Romanov to the North. However, the beginning of that conquering policy of the self-proclaimed Russian emperor was laid down twenty-five years before with the march of Muscovites to the Azov. That conquest of Crimea and access to the Sea of Azov announced to the world that Mongol vassals, captured on Moscow territory, claimed the state, which successfully flexed its muscles to the great powers in the West, as well as to the huge Ottoman Empire in the South.

Once again, we should note that the creation of Moscow's aggressive army promptly begins with Peter's victory over Azov Fortress on July 19, 1696. That was the initial salvo in the accelerated militarization of Muscovites, especially concerning the creation of the Navy. Does it bear resemblance to something that has been happening in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov for six years?

The long preface on the historical roots of the Russian imperial way of thinking is not a goal in itself. This is related to the fact that the modern Russian Empire, so-called a “Federation”, feeds its imperial self-esteem on military force. It is no coincidence that the main reason for Russia's national pride is not the current condition of the state compared to the developed world, almost like in the era of Peter I. Its pride is in being a parasite living on the territorial conquests of Russia, which made the country the largest in the world. What more vivid evidence of this pride could there be for the modern Russian, excited by a cursory glance at the geographical map and Russia's place on it, covering approximately one-seventh of the planet's land? Of course, the fact that such a huge state should be ashamed to fight for new territorial expansion at the expense of smaller neighbors (why do you think Russia made no attempts to seize Alaska from the United States?), is irrelevant to the *exi-tus acta probat* mentality.

It is easy to consider that a nineteen-kilometre bridge across the Kerch Strait aims to transform the Sea of Azov into Russian waters, which can be controlled and used to pickle domestic arguments, which justifies Moscow's occupation and the capture of Ukrainian Crimea. The testament of Peter I on the transformation of the Black Sea into a Russian lake probably echoes in the mind of Vladimir Vladimirovich. First, at the beginning of the century, he was perceived in the West as an educated president who sought to continue Russian opening to the West (almost like Peter I). But Putin was relieved to be a crook, bringing aggression in the Kerch Strait area and continuing his policy of opposition to the West, as declared in his speech in Munich in 2007, which led to his aggression in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014.

If we return to the question of why the Russian military decided to attack the Ukrainian ships, not to escort them as they did before (for example, on September 22 of that year, two Ukrainian warships were escorted without incidents to their exit from the artificial and narrow pass under the bridge). The only visible response is political. When Putin strives for more love from chauvinistic Russians—4% of which, according to a survey by the Levada agency, said they would vote for extreme chauvinist Zhirinovskiy—he chooses the well-known way to start a new nationalist wave, which subsided since the euphoria of “Krymnash”. The same Zhirinovskiy made a breakthrough in the tradition of electing the ruling Putin's party “Yedynaya Rossiya” in local elections. The results were impressive for autocracy: he had two wins in the Eastern regions, forcing Moscow to cancel the result of one of them.

The Kremlin does not understand, or ignores, the fact that by shifting the blame for the Sea of Azov incident to President Poroshenko, they do not provoke considerations within the thinking part of the Russian people (with the term “Russian,” Putin's ideologists try to create a new unifying concept of the multinational empire). Moscow indirectly recognizes that the authority in Ukraine depends on its people, who can

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replace the President through democratic elections. This is unthinkable in Putin's autocracy in Russia.

Any attempt to predict what Putin will accomplish in this dangerous game runs into his predictability. Putin is never inferior. Stronger and united Europeans and Americans are unlikely to put pressure on Moscow to threaten the world's peace. Putin relies on this democratic weakness for the sake of peace, which he views as a way of destroying the West.

We still need to understand to what extent the propaganda hook, used during the aggression against Georgia and Ukraine, has so far been swallowed by the Russian people, who are receptive to such lures. Journalist and human rights activist Anna Politkovskaya, who was killed on October 7, 2006, wrote about the affinity for fascism that quickly appears.

In the posthumous diaries of the journalist, published in the Russian Diary book, Politkovskaya said:

December 23:

“Ritual killings are taking place in Moscow. The second notched head for the last day has been found. This time it was in the eastern metropolitan area of Holyanovo. It was in a dump on Altai Street. Last night they found a head in a nylon package left on the table in the courtyard in front of apartment No. 3 on Krasnoyarskaya Street. Two men were dead for twenty-four hours before the heads were found. The circumstances of these cases are almost identical: victims are from the Caucasus, aged 30-40 years, dark-haired. Heads were at a distance of one kilometre apart. These are the results of racist propaganda in the election campaigns. Our people are very receptive to fascist propaganda and react immediately. Earlier this month, Dmitry Rogozin's Rodina Party won 15% Moscow.

From the Russian Diary, section “How Putin Was Re-Elected”, pages 55-56, BARD, Sofia, 2007 [1].

What is Bulgaria's official position as a NATO Black Sea country on linking Crimea's accession to the militarization of Russia in the region?

The answer is associated with a clearly fixed date: June 16, 2016. On this day, Prime Minister of Bulgaria Boyko Borisov very strongly reacted to the idea, expressed by Romanian President Klaus Johannis during his visit to Sofia, regarding the joint fleet of three NATO Black Sea countries—Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey. Catching this idea at the nascent stage, Borisov called for an urgent meeting with the mass-media and expressed his indignation in the presence of the three accused Bulgarian officials. According to the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence Nikolay Nenchev, Foreign Affairs Minister Mitov and President Rosen Plevneliev agreed to Romania's proposal without informing him. His reprimand was expressed in the presence of the journalists and he recommended sending their sons to serve on the warships in the Black Sea if they were so belligerent.

Borisov called Romania's proposal unacceptable and voiced confidence that Russia would never be hostile to Bulgaria. “We can carry out Bulgarian-Romanian military manoeuvres every day, but this is another matter—a direct step towards military conflict”, he said. According to him, Bulgaria's participation in the NATO flotilla would be poorly perceived from the Russian side.

“I have always said that historically there is no possibility that Bulgaria could be invaded by Russia. They have a different type of actions on the territory of Bulgaria, and they are, first of all, economic ones, against me. I am convinced that there will be no actions with rockets and tanks,” Borisov said [2].

“The flotilla does not mean that we will unite Bulgarian and Romanian ships with Turkish ones if such an agreement has long existed. I want to see the sailboats, yachts, tourists, peace, and love in the Black Sea. I don't want military frigates to go back and forth across the resorts. We can do Bulgarian-Romanian manoeuvres every day. I suggest coming to Shabla for rocket

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manoeuvres we are preparing. But putting a fleet of warships against the Russian vessels will go beyond all limits,” The Prime Minister said, adding that he is looking forward to a meeting with the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs to study the origins of the issue. “I would be very disappointed if they committed. If my Ministers have lent the vain hopes, without telling me, they will have issues with me. I will send them on the ship to fight,” he added.

As “compensation” Borisov announced at the same special briefing that Bulgaria will involve up to 400 soldiers to participate in the NATO onshore manoeuvres in Romania. NATO’s scenario on the protection of our marine borders is possible only if our country becomes an object of massive waves of refugees, Borisov said then. “The agenda of NATO’s ships protecting our borders may arise only after a massive wave of refugees coming from the sea after closing the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas,” the Prime Minister said.

Only a day earlier, on June 15, Reuters quoted a senior Russian diplomat who warned NATO not to increase its naval presence in the Black Sea to prevent the undermining of regional security and further deterioration of the relations between the Alliance and Moscow. At the beginning of the same month, Russian media reported that the American destroyer (DD) Porter entered the Black Sea for a routine mission. This alarmed Moscow, as the vessel was equipped with a new missile system.

Unlike Borisov, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg gave another assessment of the situation in the Black Sea. At the opening of the Alliance Ministers’ meeting in Brussels on June 14, 2016, he stated that NATO countries were facing unprecedented security challenges from the east and the south [3]. At the same time, cited by Russian news agencies, the top official of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Andrey Kelin said that the decision to create a perma-

nent force will destabilize the situation as this is not NATO’s sea. “This is not a marine space of NATO. The Alliance has nothing to do with it... I do not think it will improve our relations with NATO,” Mr Kelin said [4].

The question related to Borisov’s reaction to these controversial assessments is whose side he is on, – Stoltenberg’s and NATO’s or that of Russia and its diplomat Kelin?

The moment of sincerity regarding the attitude of the Bulgarian Prime Minister to NATO’s defense in the Black Sea can be discussed more as Borisov has returned to it many times in recent years to confirm it. The highlight was his visit to the U.S. in October 2019. A few hours before the meeting with President Donald Trump, Borisov expressed his uncertainty about NATO’s fleet in the Black Sea or even a naval base of NATO in the Bulgarian territory. This means he has not changed his mind.

“The Americans know very well my attitude to this issue and they are unlikely to doubt it during our talks with Trump,” he said on October 24, 2019. The day after his conversation with Trump in the White House, the Bulgarian Prime Minister made it clear that NATO’s coordination centre could be built in Varna. And on December 12 of the same year, in connection with the visit of NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to Sofia, he said that the issue was raised for discussion, but “no pressure was made on Bulgaria” on its implementation. It sounded a bit as a joke about the Russian drunkard who recovered from alcoholism and had already had an aversion to alcohol.

The topic of security in the Black Sea region is not limited to military issues. Equally important are the Russian manoeuvres around gas pipelines, the obvious purpose of which is to bypass and harm Ukraine. And Bulgaria has joined the implementation of these projects, which are part of the Russian hybrid war.

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Expert Group of the Project

*"Russia's lobby in Ukraine
in the context of the 2019 elections:
sources, channels of penetrations,
mechanisms of prevention»,
Kyiv, Ukraine*

Russian Agents of Influence in Ukraine: Destruction of the Security and Defense Sector²

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of independence of the former Soviet Republics, Russia has developed a doctrine of "zones of influence"—similar to the Soviet doctrine of limited sovereignty for the countries of the Communist Camp. According to this doctrine, Ukraine should remain in the zone of influence of the Russian Federation. During the presidency of B. Yeltsin, the implementation of this doctrine was relatively mild, mainly via economic pressure and debt blackmail. Low oil prices and two Chechen campaigns in the North Caucasus narrowed Russia's ability to reincorporate Ukraine and other new independent states in the USSR 2.0, as a continuation of the CIS. With the coming of Vladimir Putin to power and the increase in oil prices and revenues from hydrocarbon exports, the actions in this direction became systematic and severe. New projects for the reintegration of the post-Soviet space—the Common Economic Space, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Customs Union—were only new facades for a USSR 2.0. Attempts to choose a different geopolitical vector—integration into NATO and the EU, were forcefully obstructed. Two examples of such obstruction are Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008 and the ongoing aggression against Ukraine since 2014.

Crypto-war

In fact, the hybrid war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine was not waged in 2014, but

much earlier and it took the form of a crypto-war—a hidden war with the use of non-military tools. On February 20, 2014, this war entered a "hot phase" with the use of a force component, the occupation of Crimea by "green men."

Before that, a crypto-war coordinated from a single centre was waged against Ukraine, the main tools of which were:

- the dependence of Ukrainian strategic enterprises on Russian raw materials or components for production;
- introduction of production technologies with mandatory binding to Russian suppliers;
- the dependence of some enterprises on Russian capital through the provision of loans and other financial instruments;
- the entry of Russian capital into Ukrainian enterprises of strategic importance with their subsequent purchase;
- implementation of Russian software and/or corporate IT services with cloud technologies;
- purchase of Ukrainian debt securities and concentration of the Ukrainian governmental debts in the Russian entities;
- obtaining commercial and other types of confidential information about the activities of enterprises;
- actions targeted to bring strategic and budget-forming enterprises to bankruptcy;

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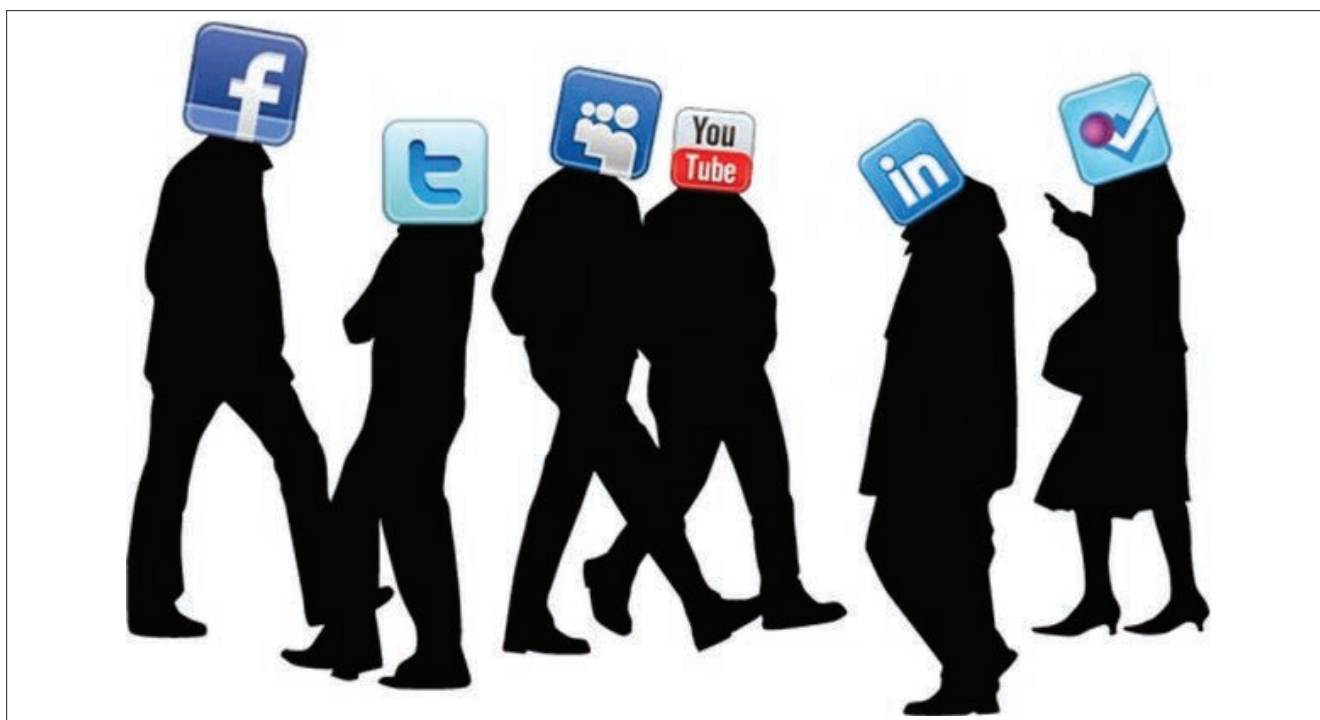
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- introduction of sanctions and restrictions on Ukrainian enterprises in the Russian market;
- introduction of direct and indirect agents of influence in the governing bodies of the Ukrainian strategic state-owned companies, central executive authorities, and the national security and defense sector.

The last listed aspect of crypto-war has been the most typical Russian action towards Ukraine during the entire period since the collapse of the USSR. The goal of this activity is to indirectly transform corporate and state strategies in a particular sector of the economy, security and defense, for the benefit of Russia, through the domestic efforts of the agents of influence. At the present stage, after the change of power

in Ukraine in 2019, like in the early 2010s with the coming of V. Yanukovych to power, Russia is mobilizing resistance from within Ukraine to the course of its integration into NATO, using agents of influence.

Agents of influence are persons who use their position in society, opportunities, power and authority to promote the interests of a foreign state but without unmasking this state. Their actions determine the unwillingness of a victim state to organize an external protection against direct aggression at a critical moment and to provide systemic resistance to various types of hybrid aggression as if from within a country. The tasks of the Russian agents of influence in Ukraine are to create a hidden system of "management" of the power and transform public opinion and attitudes in Russia's favour.



Society in networks

Source: <https://www.perunica.ru/otveti/vinovat/9448-setevye-voyny-i-agenty-vliyaniya-zapada.html>.

It should be noted that Russian intelligence services paid special attention to members of the Armed Forces and other law enforcement agencies of Ukraine. The collection of information on military personnel of the Ukrainian Navy, Army and Air Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine stationed in Crimea began in 1992. "The Appeal to the people's deputies of Ukraine made by the

Parliamentary Group "Derzhavnist" in connection with the consideration of the bills concerning the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, defense and security of Ukraine by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine" in 1996 stressed: *"The main method of agent work of the GRU and FSB was to implant their agents in the ranks of officers who returned to Ukraine after the collapse of the Soviet Army,*

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and recruiting military personnel who stayed and stay to serve in the Ukrainian territory <...> The most favorable conditions for the work of Russian secret services' agents have developed on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula. This region turned out to be the only place outside Russia where the GRU was able to work openly on a legal basis, relying on the intelligence structures of the Black Sea Fleet, which was allegedly in joint Russian-Ukrainian subordination <...> In General, the work of the Russian special services in Crimea was greatly facilitated by the presence of the agents of the KGB Central apparatus, which, due to the specifics of the region (the presence of a large number of party and state summer houses, sanatoriums, rest homes, etc.), was not subject to and was not known to local state security agencies, which later came under the jurisdiction of Ukraine."

In parallel, the formation of a powerful network of agents of influence at the highest levels of power was carried out. That culminated in Viktor Yanukovich coming to power. His personnel policy contributed to the movement of agents of influence to the power Olympus. In the context of its crypto-war against Ukraine, the Russian Federation benefits granting preferences through existing or specially initiated business projects to high-level politicians who covertly promote ideas and patronize projects. This has become Russia's mechanism for forming a fifth column.

As the experience of Ukraine and Europe shows, corruption schemes are the most effective in forming agents of influence. Russian opposition leader Harry Kasparov gave an apt description of the Kremlin's modern policy: "Europe failed to export democracy to Russia. But Putin managed to export corruption to Europe"; "Russia's biggest export is not gas or oil, but corruption." And this corruption contributes to the formation of agents of influence. In Europe, the projects of Russian gas streams - "Nord Stream" and "Nord Stream-2" - serve this purpose. Opaque corruption schemes such as "Eural Trans Gaz" and "RosUkrEnergo" were successfully implemented by the Kremlin in Ukraine in the early 2000s in exchange for Kyiv's rejection of the course for membership in NATO and the EU. However, that worked only to a certain extent. The 2004 Orange Revolution made its own adjustments, and the course for member-

ship in NATO and the EU was restored. It was interrupted again in 2010 after the Yanukovich came to power. However, in 2014, the Revolution of Dignity restored the status quo. Now, after the 2019 elections and the coming of Volodymyr Zelenskyy to power with his politically amorphous group of populist-servile types, Russia is making another attempt to destroy Ukraine by crypto-war methods. This time, the Kremlin is using both Russian special service agents, who were barely touched by the counterintelligence activities of 2014-2019, and agents of influence within Ukraine.

Agents of Russian influence

Agents of influence are among the most effective and stealthiest ways to influence an enemy. In their environment and within society, an agent of influence is perceived as a loyal citizen. The fact that his/her views, which are expressed in private or in public, are sometimes in line with the propaganda efforts of a foreign state is usually mistaken for coincidence. But the harm caused by an agent of influence can be significant, especially if he/she is an official or a recognized authority.

Due to the turbulent events at the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the complete change of leadership in the national security and defense sector, reasonable conclusions can be made about the high probability of widespread involvement of Russian agents of influence in the state leadership's top ranks. This influence may have rendered Ukraine unable to resist aggression.

Operations using agents of influence are strategic measures designed for years or even decades after the formation of a society's collective consciousness, and sometimes require the extinction of an entire generation. In particular, there were three Russian special operations at the strategic level: "Non-Bloc," "Federalization," and "Democracy". The special operation "Non-Bloc" succeeded in 2010 under President Yanukovich, with the adoption of the Bill on Basic Principles of Foreign and Domestic Policy". It proclaimed and consolidated the non-aligned status of Ukraine. Based on that, the steps were taken to destroy Ukraine's defense potential and disorganize the Armed Forces along with the entire security sector.

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Long before the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the idea that Russians are a "fraternal people" was propagated in Ukraine, and it followed that war with the Russian Federation is impossible because of the common values and special relations between the countries. Historically, in the armies of both countries there were officers who studied together in the same military schools. They were friends and even relatives. At the beginning of the power stage of the conflict, among the personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine there was no psychological readiness to use weapons. The perception of the Russian Army as a hostile army that killed Ukrainians came only after the direct attacks on the positions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine from the territory of the Russian Federation in the summer of 2014. Therefore, it is clear that Russian agents of influence achieved their results.

Also, the escape of the leaders of the defense and security sectors of Yanukovich's team to Russia actually unmasked their previous activities, and Russia itself. Partially, the information about their activities was made public during the litigation against former President Viktor Yanukovich, who was convicted of absentia of high treason.

A partial list of key officials of law enforcement structures and departments who have been an engine for the interests of Russia and, assumed by some media, its agents in the government and law enforcement agencies of Ukraine, includes:

- Head of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine Andriy Klyuyev (during the presidency of Yanukovich, he was Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, First Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, and escaped from Ukraine after the Revolution of Dignity);
- First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine Andriy Portnov (from April 2010 to the end of February 2014, he held positions in the Administration of President Viktor Yanukovich, and fled Ukraine, but returned after the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2019);
- Chairman of the State Security Service of Ukraine, member of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Major-General Oleksandr Yakymenko (January 9, 2013-February 24, 2014; he is hiding in Russia);
- Counsellor to the President of Ukraine, Colonel-General Ihor Kalinin (from January 9, 2013 till February 24, 2014, before that he held the positions of the Chairman of the State Security Service of Ukraine, the Head of the State Security Department of Ukraine; he fled to Russia);
- First Deputy Chairman of the SSU, Head of the SSU Anti-Terrorist Centre, Major-General Volodymyr Totsky (January 2013-February 2014; he fled to Russia);
- Chairman of the Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine Hryhoriy Illyashov (June 18, 2010-February 27, 2014; he escaped from Ukraine);
- Minister of Defense, Member of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Member of the Parliament of Ukraine of 3 convocations, Pavlo Lebedev (December 24, 2012-February 27, 2014; he fled to Russia);
- Ukraine's Ambassador to Belarus, Vice Admiral Mykhaylo Yezhel (2013-2015; before that, when V. Yanukovich was a President, he served as a Counsellor to the President of Ukraine from February 2012 till April 2013, and the Minister of Defense of Ukraine from March 2010 till February 8, 2012);
- Counsellor to the President of Ukraine Dmytro Salamatin (from December 2012 till February 2014; before that he was Minister of Defense of Ukraine, Director General of the Concern "Ukroboronprom"; he is hiding in Russia);
- Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Admiral Yuriy Ilyin (February 2014; before that he was Commander of the Ukrainian Navy in 2012-2014; as a deserter

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and collaborator he defected to Russia, and resides in the occupied Crimea now);

- Commander of the Ukrainian Navy Rear Admiral Denys Berezovsky (March 2014, before that he held a position of the Deputy Commander of the Navy for combat training - Head of the Combat Training Department; as a deserter and collaborator he defected to Russia, was appointed Deputy Commander of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation; since 2018, he has served Deputy Commander of the Pacific Fleet of the Russian Federation);
- First Deputy Commander of the Navy – Chief of Staff Rear Admiral Dmytro Shakuro (as a collaborator he defected to Russia and was appointed Deputy Commander of the Caspian Flotilla of the Russian Navy in July 2014);
- First Deputy Commander of the Ukrainian Navy, Chief of the Sevastopol Garrison Vice Admiral Sergiy Eliseev (as a collaborator he defected to the Russian side after the illegal annexation of Crimea, was appointed Deputy Commander of the Baltic Fleet of the Russian Navy in the summer of 2014);
- Minister of Internal Affairs, Member of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine General Vitaliy Zakharchenko (he was in office between November 7, 2011 and February 21, 2014; since February 2014, he has been hiding in Russia);
- Deputy Minister of the Internal Affairs, Chief of the Public Security Police Lieutenant-General Viktor Ratushnyak (from March 2010 till March 2014; he escaped to Russia);
- Deputy Chief of Main Department and Chief of Public Safety Militia of the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in Kyiv, Police Colonel Petro Fedchuk (from July 2013 till January 2014; he fled to Russia; now he is in the Russian Police).

A significant number of individuals from this list have been criminally convicted as organizers of the Maidan shootings. **The Maidan shootings in February 2014 were an FSB operation to further wreak havoc in Ukraine and to distract the public and authorities y from operation to occupy Crimea and Sevastopol.** The level of government positions held by the above-mentioned individuals leads to the conclusion that Russia had a near-critical mass of agents of influence whose activities caused a temporary power paralysis. This proved insufficient in conquering Ukraine, but managed to seize part of its territory — Crimea, Sevastopol, and ORDLO.

Early destruction of Ukraine's defence potential

According to the testimony of the participants in the litigation in ex-President Yanukovych's case of high treason, the destruction of the Ukrainian Navy began after his election as President. According to the testimony of Commander of the Navy Admiral Ihor Tenyukh, when Yanukovych came to power in 2010, a personnel sweep was launched in the Armed Forces of Ukraine starting with the Commander of the Navy, the position he held at that time. A month after the dismissal of Admiral Tenyukh, the Deputy Commander of the Ukrainian Navy in charge of the coastal defense forces Major-General Oleksandr Ostrovsky was also dismissed. He refused to sign an order to liquidate separate elite units of the Navy Coastal Defense Forces stationed in Crimea. After that, there were replacements of battalion commanders of the coastal defense forces and commanders of the Navy ships. It was not a coincidence that all of this happened in Crimea and Sevastopol. Pro-Ukrainian officers and commanders were replaced by Pro-Russian ones. The personnel of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Crimea was also changed. On October 14, 2013, the Navy already reported that there were no conscripts, and the ships and vessels were completed by contractors, who were mainly from Crimea. Commander of the Ukrainian Navy in 2014-2016 Vice Admiral Serhii Haiduk noted that 80% of the Navy personnel were natives of Sevastopol and the ARC at the beginning of the period of Crimean occupation. Given the prevalence of Russian disinfor-

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mation and propaganda in Crimea, such a decision led to the loss of Crimea, since it weakened Ukraine's ability to counteract the hybrid threat. The aforementioned long-term system developments of Russian special services and its local agents were used effectively by Russia in 2014 when the Zero Hour came. Vice Admiral Serhii Haiduk stated: "...There were many examples when the unit commanders, for example, the Commander of the Feodosia Marine Battalion, were told in plain text: "You live at that address, you've got a wife at home, and your child goes to that school. Aren't you afraid for your family? Make the right decision." "The right decision" meant going over to Russia's side. Only 3,991 of 13,468 soldiers in Crimea remained loyal to their oath and did not go over to the enemy.

In 2017, Member of the Parliament of Ukraine and Coordinator of the Information Resistance Group Dmytro Tymchuk (already deceased) published statistics on the number of Ukrainian law enforcement employees who defected to the Russian Federation during the occupation of Crimea, and those who remained loyal to Ukraine and went to the mainland after the annexation of the Peninsula by Russia.

On March 1, 2014, the Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine numbered 2,489 military personnel in Crimea. 1,398 military personnel came to the mainland. That is, the percentage of those who defected to Russia was 44%.

As of March 1, 2014, there were 13,468 military personnel (4,637 officers, 8,831 soldiers and sergeants) in the Ukrainian Armed Forces stationed on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula. Only 3,991 (1,649 officers, 2,342 soldiers and sergeants) of them went to the mainland. Thus, 70.4% of the personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine actually defected to the side of the aggressor-country.

As of March 1, 2014, the Security Service of Ukraine in Crimea and Sevastopol counted 1,619 military personnel, including 1,235 officers and 384 contractors in all divisions, agencies and institutions. 217 of them went to the mainland, including 210 officers and 7 contractors. The percentage of traitors in the SSU was the highest among all law enforcement agencies – 86.4%.

These figures are largely the result of HR policies implemented at the level of the Central government, the long-term work of Russian agents in Crimea, and the agents of influence in Kyiv.

The personnel sweep in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and, especially, in the Navy, was performed personally by Defense Minister Mykhaylo Yezhel, former Commander of the Ukrainian Navy. Two other former Defense Ministers Pavlo Lebedev and Dmytro Salamatin unreasonably reduced the Armed Forces of Ukraine from 180 thousand to 160 thousand people. In 2012, Lebedev announced reduction plans under which the Armed Forces of Ukraine had to be reduced to 60 thousand people by the end of 2015. At the same time, the same Chairs of the Defense Ministry liquidated the military commissariats (recruiting centres).

Dmytro Salamatin specialized in undermining the position of the Ukrainian defense industry in the world markets of armament and military techniques. In 2010-2012, he was Director-General of the State Concern "Ukroboronprom" and Minister of Defense from February 8, 2012 till December 24, 2012. According to the message of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine Yuriy Lutsenko dated January 14, 2019, "former Minister of Defense of Ukraine D. A. Salamatin was under the suspicion of the Department of International Legal Cooperation of the GPOU for participation in a criminal organization of Viktor Yanukovych, misappropriation of other property in especially large sizes by abuse of his office and committing treason in the interests of the Russian Federation, undermining the defense capabilities, state and economic security of Ukraine by committing intentional actions aimed at ousting of Ukraine with the world armament markets in favor of Russia. Only the deliberate actions of Salamatin to break the contract between the state-owned enterprise "A.A. Morozov Kharkiv Design Bureau for Mechanical Engineering", the State Enterprise "Antonov" and the state enterprise "Progress", from one side, and the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Iraq, from another side, for the supply, repair and maintenance of military equipment led to losses of 560 million USD for Ukraine."

The agents of Russian influence in the defense and security sector of the state have been accused of high treason and can be considered not only

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agents of influence, but also direct agents of Russian special services. If the state security system functioned in normal conditions, none of them would have been placed into key positions, and some of them would not even receive Ukrainian citizenship. But all this was made possible by a decision at the political level. Agents of influence among politicians deliberately promoted and appointed direct agents of the Russian Federation to key positions and did not interfere with their activities, which were destructive to the national interests of Ukraine. Therefore, the destruction of the state's security and defense systems was the result of the long-term interactions between the already exposed agents of the aggressor-state and new agents of influence, who acted or continued to act under the cover of legal political and social activity in Ukraine.

Undermining the defense capabilities

A lot of important information was made public during the work of the Temporary Investigative Commission of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to investigate theft in the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the undermining of the state's defense capabilities in 2004-2017. The striking period of the presidency of V. Yanukovich (2010-2014) was one of the most difficult periods in the Ukrainian Armed Forces' functioning. The Heads of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine and the Command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine ignored basic provisions in the theory of military art and the experience of previously achieved reforms in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The first stage of that period (2010-2011) was characterized by the disbanding of the Joint Operational Command (JOC) and The Command of the Ukrainian Support Forces. It was proved that the disbanding of the JOC almost destroyed the operational and strategic level of the Armed Forces of Ukraine's structure and disorganized management of the state defense at the operational and strategic level. The absence of the JOC became one of the main issues of the organization of defense of the territorial integrity of Ukraine in 2014. As a result of the disbanding of the JOC, the Armed Forces of Ukraine were deprived of a military management body that would be able to form joint groups of troops (forces), organize

training, plan and successfully conduct operations of the specified groups.

The research found that in early 2014, the mobility of military groups of the Armed Forces at the strategic and operational levels was completely paralysed. In 2014, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine had to hastily form the so-called Anti-Terrorist Operation Headquarters on the territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (to some extent it was an analogue of the Joint Operational Command), which acquired operational capabilities to manage a multi-service and interdepartmental grouping of troops already in the course of hostilities.

The Expert Commission concluded that the disbandment of the Command of the Support Forces of the Ukrainian Armed Forces led to the loss of centralized management of the system of comprehensive support and supply for the Armed Forces of Ukraine in peacetime and during preparation and conduct of operations. The lack of the centralized management of the system of logistics and operational support in the future led to disorganization of the provision of troops. This prompted the spontaneous development of a volunteer movement in the initial period of the use of the Armed Forces against illegal armed formations in Donetsk and Luhansk and against the Russian forces in 2014.

The second stage (2012) is characterized by the disorganization of the state's air defense system of, the revision of the military-administrative division of Ukraine, and groundless changes in the system of mobilization and planning for the transfer of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to the so-called "three-level management system"—which in fact created conditions for a critical imbalance of the control system of the forces during operations. The actions were planned and carried out without considering the requirements of the laws of Ukraine, resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers and other legislative acts. Currently, the structural units of the Ministry of Defense, General Staff, military research institutions and commands of the Armed Forces started a gradual transition to the development of specific interim guidelines for the so-called "legalization" of the decisions of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine

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and the Armed Forces Command, which did not conform to the laws of Ukraine, the theory of the military art and the experience of wars and military conflicts. These decisions, made by the Chairs of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff in 2012, subsequently adversely affected the organization of counteraction to the occupation of Crimea and the Eastern territories of Ukraine.

The creation of a separate operational command in Crimea, which resulted in the transfer of all military units stationed on its territory to the command of the Navy, was disorganizing in nature. That disrupted the functioning of the unified air defense, territorial defense and mobilization control systems, and deprived the commanders of the armed forces of Ukraine of the option to influence the implementation of target tasks for groups of troops (forces) of the Armed Forces of Ukraine on the territory of Crimea.

The third stage (2013-2014) is characterized by the completion of the disbandment of the army corps, as the basis for the tactical-level structure of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, disruption of command and control system at all levels - from the brigades to the entire Armed Forces of Ukraine (except for the Air Forces of Ukraine). The third stage of the military system "development" is characterized by an attempt to artificially distribute the Armed Forces of Ukraine in peacetime into three separate commands made by the organizers of defense planning. They had to be formed according to the interdepartmental and territorial principle, under the leadership of the respective commanders.

In fact, the leadership of the Ministry of Defense during Yanukovich's Presidency and the leadership of the General Staff adopted and implemented decisions that made a single command centre weak. The southern control zone was in Crimea, and in fact, the forces on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula were not subordinate to the Command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, but were under the Navy Command. The Eastern zone coincides with what Russian propaganda called "Novorossiia" and was cleared of the main Ukrainian military units in the second half of the 2000s. That zone became easy prey for illegal armed groups, and then for regular units of

the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. The Western zone covered the territory of Western and Central Ukraine.

As a result of Russian agents' long-term influence both in Kyiv and in Crimea, at the beginning of the Crimean campaign Moscow was confident that Ukraine would not dare to resist the interventionists. To prevent such resistance, a set of measures was carried out, starting from open psychological pressure on the top state leaders to inside actions through various channels of influence on primarily top politicians. This influenced decision-making and led to a virtual paralysis of power. Published verbatim at the meeting of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine on February 28, 2014, is an eloquent confirmation that the leadership of Ukraine and the leaders of political forces, which were in power after Yanukovich's escape, held the position of avoiding resistance to the aggressor. That was most clearly shown in the speech of the leader of the parliamentary faction "Batkivshchyna" led by Yulia Tymoshenko, who was present at the meeting of the National Security and Defense Council: "No tank should leave the barracks; no soldier should raise their weapons, because this will mean losing. No martial law and activation of our troops! We must become the most peaceful nation on the planet, and just behave like the doves of peace...»

Former Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Colonel-General Volodymyr Zamana, in his reflections on February 29, 2020, noted: "If the SSU declassified all agents of influence of the FSB in Ukraine, and especially among those who held the highest state positions, we would see completely clear why the NSDC made that decision then."

Relegalization of agents of influence

The lustration mechanism introduced during the presidency of Petro Poroshenko was extremely imperfect and it was criticized from different sides. According to the Law of Ukraine "On Lustration", meant the prevention of participation in governance for those who, by their decisions, actions, or omissions contributed to the implementation of measures aimed at the usurpation of power by Viktor Yanukovich, blasting bases of national security and defense of Ukraine, and the

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unlawful violation of the rights and freedoms of individuals. The law introduced a ban on holding certain positions for 10 years by persons who, in the period from February 25, 2010 (the beginning of the presidency of Yanukovich) until February 22, 2014, held certain public positions for a period of a year or more. The application of this imperfect law did not lead to a significant cleansing of power.

After the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2019, when a new power configuration was formed in Ukraine with an extremely low level of professionalism, loss of institutional memory, and favoritism in the selection of personnel, the conditions were set for the re-legalization of agents of influence and their penetration into the authorities. A certain number of fugitives of the Yanukovich regime returned to Ukraine. Persons who held responsible positions and lost them due to lustration were appointed to new positions in state agencies. A striking example is the appointment of a new Head of Economic Crime Combating Department in the SSU (must generally be eliminated in the reform of the SSU)—Major-General Anatoly Kaluzhnyak, who among other heads of the Security Service was accused of involvement in the FSB-guided Maidan shootings in February 2014. The former Chair of the Security Service of Ukraine Valentin Nalyvaychenko noted that there were grounds to believe that groups of Russian FSB employees participated in the planning and implementation of the so-called "anti-terrorist operation" in Kyiv during mass protests in February 2014. The FSB of the Russian Federation admitted that its employee Major-General Sergei Beseda was in Kyiv on February 20-21. Kaluzhnyak denies the charges. However, the fact that a person with a poor reputation and an unclear past was appointed to a responsible position in the SSU when he did not have to be appointed is indicative. According to media reports, he "coincidentally" turned out to be a long-time friend of Zelenskyy from school. Therefore, he was appointed to the SSU.

There has been a public activation of a number of politicians and officials from the Pro-Russian kleptocratic regime of V. Yanukovich. Former Deputy Head of the President Administration Andrii Portnov, Ex-Minister of Justice O. Lukash and former MP O. Bondarenko represent a Pro-

Russian and anti-Western policy through their media activities, trying to influence the administration of V. Zelensky to persuade him to capitulate to Russia and turn Ukraine geopolitically toward Russia. As a rule, the media and political activities of pro-Russian activists are carried out under the aegis of the "Opposition Platform" headed by Yuri Boyko, who was a Minister of the Government of N. Azarov, and proxy-platform "Ukrainskyi Vybir" owned by Viktor Medvedchuk. "Ukrainskyi Vybir" promotes the idea of "real democracy" through the adoption of the Law "On All-Ukrainian and Local Referendums on People's Initiative," the Federal structure of Ukraine, changing the vector of foreign economic integration, and the resumption of trade and economic cooperation with the Russian Federation and the CIS countries. In other words, all their tasks are included in the system of the aforementioned Russian special operations at the strategic level — "Non-Bloc", "Federalization," and "People's Power". The purpose of these operations is the dilution of Ukraine, corruption of its power, and the transformation of the country into a zone of chaos in Europe. These political and public associations represent the tip of the iceberg, which is the roof for the activities of the agents of influence, and the media resources controlled by them serve a platform for mass disinformation and manipulation.

Certain conclusions

The best way to protect the state from the activities of agents of influence is a consistent and systematic unmasking of any detected manipulation, and providing citizens constant access to reliable information. Agents of influence do not steal state secrets like intelligence agencies, but instead they influence public opinion and consequently impact political decisions. Therefore it is difficult for counterintelligence agencies to collect evidence that could be presented in a court. An agent of influence can also impact political decision-making in the role of counsellor, expert, public activist or accuser journalist. In all these cases, he/she acts indirectly. And it is also possible to indirectly counteract its activities (counterintelligence) through public unmasking and refutation by other representatives of the professional environment, state or non-state organizations.

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It is much more difficult to counteract the destructive activities of direct agents. They make managerial decisions on their own behalf, but usually under opaque political cover, and sometimes under direct political guidance. Therefore, counterintelligence work against them is rather complicated because of political influences.

Mature states with strong counterintelligence agencies virtually do not allow direct foreign agents, especially from hostile states, to penetrate the political level. In Ukraine the situation is different. We've witnessed a whole galaxy of direct Russian agents and its gradual penetration, first in Ukrainian society, then in public space and the parliamentary hall, and finally in top government positions in national security and defense. But such operations are not fast; they require time for implementation and deployment, they demand means and resources. Recovering mass consciousness from aggression also does not happen quickly; it is also an inertial system.

Such strategic-level operations are initiated at the moment of a democratic change of power in the victim country. It is at this time that both Russian agents of influence and direct agents of the special services of the aggressor-country can appear

through the mechanism of elections and waves of appointments at the political level. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully monitor the appointments in the field of national security and defense, and remember that all agents will not show themselves immediately.

It is important that they appear ahead of the game because this would destroy the strategic plans of the special services to use them. A good method of de-masking can be an open game on the part of the civil society: direct questions, maximum truth, and an unbiased presentation of facts. When an agent of Russian influence realizes that he is unmasked, he either curtails all activities or openly switches to the Pro-Russian political camp.

Ideally, a broad information campaign must be launched to protect society from Russian influence through public awareness of Russian agents' activities.

Civil society organizations should develop and implement internal ethical rules and procedures for their activities aimed at preventing the aggressor's agents from using them to increase internal influence in Ukraine or destabilize the situation.

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Telecommunications in Occupied Crimea as Means of Russian Aggression against Ukraine³

Modern society has become completely informational, and, therefore, any interstate conflicts become primarily a virtual confrontation, where information itself and the means of its distribution and storage are important. At the same time, in the context of the six-year occupation of Crimea and large-scale Russian aggression, the issues of informatization and communications in the occupied territories remain ignored by both authorities and the public.

Similar observations were made by NGOs covering the issue of broadcasting efficiency from Ukrainian government-controlled territory to the occupied areas. Separate analytical work has been carried out by the Representation of the President of Ukraine in ARC in 2018, followed by a discussion of the proposals by Parliamentary Committees [1]. At the same time, the state has not taken any consistent steps in this direction [2]. The introduction of several structures in the field of communications, controlled by the Russian Federation, to the sanctions list under the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine on March 19, 2019, put into effect by Presidential Decree No. 82/2019, has been the only practical response [3].

This decision imposed sanctions on the Russian federal state unitary enterprise "All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company", its representative office in Kyiv, the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Communications

of the Russian Federation, and the Russian entities involved in the sphere of Internet communications including Yandex LLC, Reksoft LLC, Labyrinth.Ru LLC, and LitRes LLC, as well as Russian and offshore structures in the field of telephony including Satellite Innovation LLC, ITX LLC, Bimersano Services LTD (Cyprus), Demosena Investments LTD (Cyprus) and SPitch AG Joint-Stock Company (Switzerland). However, this list is, of course, extremely incomplete and selective.

Since 2014, Russia has been illegitimately extending its actual legislation in the sphere of informatization and communications to Crimea, implementing the Russian Information Technology Development Strategy for 2014-2020 and till 2025 on the Peninsula, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2036-R of November 11, 2013, and the Russian Federation State Programme for Information Society (2011-2020), approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 313 of April 15, 2014. The RF then formed corresponding occupation authorities in the area, such as the "Committee of the State Council of the Republic of Crimea on Information Policy, Communication and Mass Communications" and "Ministry of Internal Policy, Information and Communications of the Republic of Crimea".

In 2015, the "Concept of Informatization of the Republic of Crimea" was approved for implementation of the above mentioned resolutions in Crimea, and in 2017 the "Convention on Informatization of the State Council of the Republic of Crimea", which did not differ in specifics, have been adopted. For example, the Concept of 2015 provided for the creation of a "Republican Educational Network", the introduction of the GLONASS system in Crimea, the creation

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of “multi-portals for the medical institutions of Crimea”, a unified automated information system “Crimea – the territory of tourism”, and the automation of social payments, etc. [1].

Within the framework of information policy and informatization, in 2017 the “Ministry of the Republic of Crimea” also initiated the approval of the State Programme “Information Society” for 2018-2020, which was approved by Resolution No. 702 of the occupation authorities. Its implementation was divided into seven areas: “Information and Telecommunications Infrastructure of the Information Society and the Services Rendered”, “Development of the Republican State Television and Radio Broadcasting”, “Informatization of the Executive Authorities of the Republic of Crimea and Bodies of Local Self-government”, “Electronic Government of the Republic of Crimea”, “The Introduction of Satellite Navigation Technologies with the use of the GLONASS System and Other Results of Space Activity in the Interests of Social and Economic and Innovative Development of the Republic of Crimea”, “Development of Mass Media, Publishing Houses and Printing Houses of the Republic of Crimea, Social Focus on the Cultural, Historical and Informational Events and Achievements of the Republic of Crimea”, “The Establishment of a Technological Park in the Sphere of Advanced Technologies on the Territory of the Republic of Crimea” [1].

Funding for this Programme from the “republican budget” should amount to 3.85-4.23 million Russian roubles annually, which, of course, is not a significant indicator. The previous similar programme “Information Society” for 2016-2018, however, contributed to the formation of the “State Information System” called the “Data Centre of the Republic of Crimea” by the occupiers, the commissioning of interdepartmental “Data Transfer Network between the Executive Authorities” via a secure channel, the formation of the informational system of the “Executive State Bodies” and the “Regional System of Interdepartmental Electronic Interaction” and the “Portal of State and Municipal Services of the Republic of Crimea”.

Consequently, this activity, which was supervised by the Deputy Chairman of the “Council of

Ministers of the Republic of Crimea” and, at the same time, the Chair of “the Ministry” Dmitriy Polonskiy, practically led to the information and technological support of the occupation authorities in accordance with the standards of the Russian Federation in this area. However, this “Ministry” is responsible not only for informatization but also for the appropriate means for media controlled by the occupiers and for the organization of their work.

In particular, before 2018 “the Ministry” founded “Autonomous Non-Profit Organization “TV and Radio Company “Crimea” and on its basis formed five media channels: TV channels “First Crimean” and “Crimea 24” and three radio channels “Crimea/100.1 FM, “Crimea.Point,” and “Sea”. Indirectly, “the Ministry” also organized the formation of Crimean Tatar channels controlled by the occupiers, such as the “Public Crimean Tatar TV and Radio Company”, the “Millet” TV Channel, and the “Vetan” Radio Channel. These media tools and ensuring their broadcasting is an optional task of “the Ministry,” as the main content for Crimea were three packages of Russian TV channels. In Crimea, there are also electronic media, in particular, more than ten news agencies, including the Crimean News Agency and others [1].

The first such multiplex includes Russian mandatory public TV channels (Channel One, Russia-1, TV-Center, etc.); the second one includes a number of federal channels (SPAS, NTV+Sport, Zvezda, etc.). Regional channels are concentrated on the third multiplex, in particular for Sevastopol they are The 1st Sevastopol and STV. The corresponding broadcasting is carried out by more than 250 transmitters, and digital broadcasting is carried out by 18 broadcasting facilities covering up to 85% of the population. In addition, under the control of “the Ministry” and occupation authorities in Crimea, there are up to 200 cable operators and more than 30 radio channels, including federal retransmissions.

It should be noted that all Ukrainian-organized means of analogue broadcasting and radio broadcasting to Crimea from TV towers in Chaplynka and Chongar are completely blocked by the occupiers; the signal can only be received by certain localities of Crimea close to the administrative line (*Figure 1*).

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Figure 1. Ukrainian TV and Radio broadcasting to occupied Crimea
Source: <https://ru.krymr.com/a/tv-borba-za-umy-krymchan/30207638.html>

In 2019, radio broadcasting from Ukraine to the Crimea on medium waves with the use of a powerful radio centre in Mykolaiv was stopped because of alleged extra power costs. The satellite broadcasting of Ukrainian TV channels to Crimea lost its effectiveness after broadcasters introduced coding of their signal in 2020.

Instead, after the construction of the Salt lake broadcasting facility in Crimea near Chongar by the occupiers and its commissioning in 2018, the Russian TV and radio broadcasting covers a significant part of the Kherson region neighboring to Crimea (Figure 2).

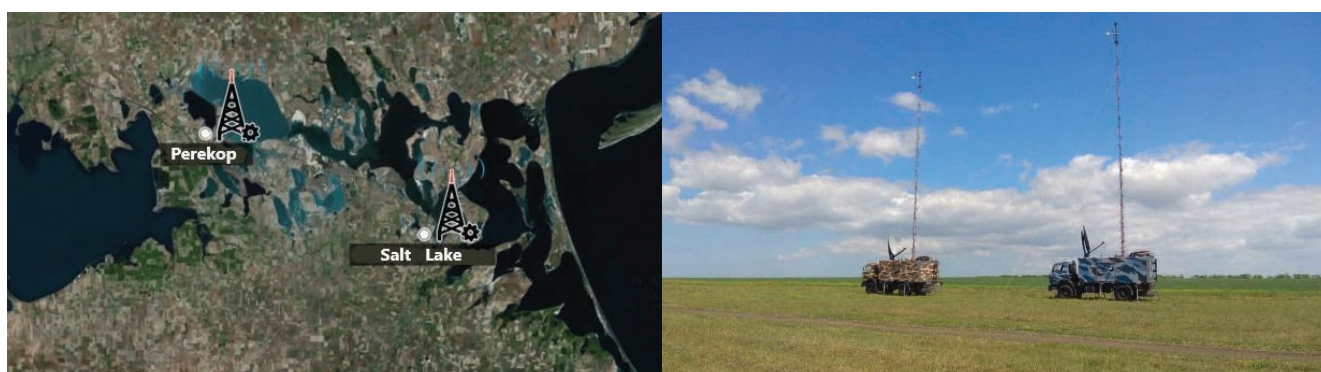


Figure 2. Russian retransmission stations in the North of Crimea
Source: <https://investigator.org.ua/publication/221300/>

This problem is completely hushed up and ignored by the Ukrainian authorities, despite all the changes that have occurred since 2018 in the government and the National Television and Radio

Broadcasting Agency. The easiest way to resolve it, which is to jam the signal from the Peninsula with existing equipment, is not being implemented for unknown reasons.

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If the information policy of the aggressor in the Crimea is carried out almost without hindrance in the sphere of TV and radio broadcasting, certain problems arise for the occupiers in the sphere of cellular and mobile communications and Internet coverage. These issues are caused by the unwillingness of mobile operators to provide services to subscribers and use existing equipment that in 2014 was "nationalized" or simply seized by the occupation authorities, or even remains under the actual control of the same mobile operators.

In particular, such Russian structures as Mega-Phone and Beeline do not directly participate in providing mobile communications in Crimea. Subscribers of such networks, being in occupied Crimea, now find themselves in "internal network roaming". After the spring of 2014, Crimeans were offered packages of the Mobile Telesystem Operator that worked using the existing MTS infrastructure in Crimea. But when the EU and other states introduced sanctions, another company—K-Telecom (the Win Mobile trademark) began to work on the same infrastructure. MTS sim-cards that remained with subscribers began to work in the K-Telecom system with Russian roaming numbers and were registered in the Krasnodar region of the Russian Federation [2].

Later, MTS had problems related to the cost of "roaming" procedures at a time when the occupation regime constantly required operators not to raise tariffs for the population. Also, the KTK-Telecom operator ("Volna Mobile" trademark) with a similar "roaming" scheme entered Crimea using the property of Ukrainian Telecom operators. A little later, on the basis of "nationalized" Ukrtelecom PJSC facilities in the ARC and Sevastopol, and using the corresponding fixed-line network in occupied Crimea, local occupier-controlled mobile operators appeared to provide services by their own powers, allegedly without Federal networks and without using the property of Ukrainian mobile operators [1; 2].

These companies, "Krymtelecom" and "Sevmobile," operate in the ARC and Sevastopol, respectively, in parallel with K-Telecom and KTK-Telecom. A minority operator, "Elemte-Invest," also operates in Crimea. At the same time, during the provision of mobile Internet, Krymtelecom

and Sevmobile are only able to provide 3G traffic, while K-Telecom and KTK-Telecom are able to provide both 3G and 4G traffic (in cities). By 2019, the number of powerful mobile communication stations in Crimea increased by 200, most of which belong K-Telecom claims to own. In total, in 2018, there were more than seven thousand mobile communication translators in Crimea, including as many as three thousand for K-Telecom and up to thirty five hundred for KTK-Telecom; this includes LTE-capable stations, which number up to one hundred fifty per company.

Due to the expenses of roaming and the constant risk of Western sanctions for the beneficiaries of federal companies— which K-Telecom and KTK-Telecom are daughter companies—after the end of 2019, to save costs, these operators are planning to gradually leave the Peninsula and transfer services to Krymtelecom and Sevmobile. Currently, Krymtelecom and Sevmobile hold licenses in the Krasnodar territory of the Russian Federation to organize mobile communications. With such a transfer, subscriber numbers (about two hundred thousand for K-Telecom and KTK-Telecom) will not be lost.

For example, State Unitary Enterprise of the Republic of Crimea Krymtelecom started working in February 2016, and its UMTS (3G) network operates in the main cities and districts of Crimea at base stations that can provide mobile Internet speeds of up to 42 Mbit/sec. But in the future, Krymtelecom has planned to deploy more than one thousand stations, which will completely cover the cities, roads, and the southern coast of Crimea; now there are up to seven hundred such stations, which are property of Ukrtelecom.

In the field of Internet communications, most so-called Crimean providers are Russian legal entities. They are still technically registered in the international organization RIPE NCC as Ukrainian entities. They buy Internet traffic in Ukraine, which still freely comes to Crimea via three fibre-optic lines through Chongar and Armyansk. There are about twenty Internet service providers in Crimea (Miranda-media subsidiary of Ros-telecom), KST, TeleSystems, Er-Telecom, Apex-Crimea, Ardinvest, Gigabyte, SevStar, SuperSky, EvpaNet, Krymtelecom, and others) [1; 2].

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Since 2014, cable-fixed telephone line service in Crimea has switched to the Russian telephone numbering system. Telephone operators were provided with more than five hundred thirty thousand numbers in the ABC-365 code, which are served now by the aforementioned Krymtelecom and Sevtelecom respectively. Since 2014, satellite communications services on the Peninsula have been provided by TIS LLC, which uses network resources on the Yamal-402 and Yamal-300K spacecraft.

It should be mentioned that in the Act of the Government of Ukraine No. 218-R of March 28, 2018, the Actions Plan aimed at implementing some of the principles of state internal policy in respect of the temporarily occupied territory of the ARC and Sevastopol, certain information and communication aspects are provided in task 6: "Creating conditions for the implementation of the rights of persons who reside on the temporarily occupied territory (TOT), on the free choice of language of information products consumption"; and task 10: "Providing access to Ukrainian and world information products to the TOT through television and radio broadcasting, print media, and the Internet".

The Plan includes the following activities:

- ensuring stable broadcasting of national TV and radio broadcasting organisations on the temporarily occupied territories in the state language and other languages (including the languages of indigenous peoples and national minorities of Ukraine living in the TOT) (action 1, task 6);
- creation and/or restoration of broadcasting infrastructure and installation of necessary technical equipment (transmitters, amplifiers, TV towers, etc.) to expand the coverage area of radio broadcasting, TV organizations of Ukraine in the TOT (action 1, task 10);
- installation of telecommunications equipment for access to high-speed mobile Internet (4G) in the service areas in front of and near CEEP (control entry-exit point) (action 2, Task 10) [4].

As of 2020, these tasks have not been implemented, and the funds for their implementation have not been allocated from the budgets of any levels.

The Plan of urgent measures to counter Russian aggression from the TOT of Ukraine in Crimea, protection of the state's interests, Ukrainian citizens, and Ukrainian legal entities in Crimea for 2018-2019, which was approved by Act of the Permanent Representative of the President of Ukraine to the ARC No. 17 of June 20, 2018, includes the following tasks in the informatization and communications sphere:

- combating illegal broadcasting from Crimea to the neighboring areas of the Kherson region, providing TV broadcasting from the territory of the Kherson region to Crimea (task 9.2);
- taking measures to restrict access to the websites of the occupation authorities and other web resources of the Internet (task 9.4);
- implementation of an effective comprehensive legal prosecution of the companies that facilitate the provision of stationary and mobile communications services in Crimea (task 9.5) [5].

These measures have not been implemented, except for certain restrictions on access to the websites of the occupation authorities and other web resources of the Internet, which were implemented in 2018. There are also questions about the completeness of Internet traffic termination through fibre-optic lines (FOL). Although, in 2017, the SSU (SBU) reported the dismantling of the FOL infrastructure in the direction of Crimea, it remains unknown how this was completed and if the dismantling was complete [6].

To sum up, it should be noted that there are no real actions taken by the government structures of Ukraine to protect information and communications, not only in terms of preparing for the de-occupation of Crimea but also in countering the current aggression of the Russian Federation from Crimea. At the same time, the only lever of influence that prevents the occupiers from full

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implementation of its Informatization policy on the Peninsula is the fear of sanctions from Western countries against key enterprises of the Russian information industry.

The key possible actions of Ukraine that would significantly affect the further negative development of the situation should include:

- blocking Russian TV and radio broadcasting from Crimea to the Kherson region;
- complete termination of Internet communication with the Peninsula through the total dismantling of technical connections of the exist-

ing main FOL connection with their Crimean segment;

- introduction of sanctions against mobile and Internet companies operating in Crimea and their beneficiaries;
- discussion of these issues within the framework of the World Telecommunication Union;
- filing a claim by Ukrtelecom and the national mobile operators of Ukraine in international arbitration against the Russian Federation in the framework of the current bilateral agreement on investment protection.

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Scenarios of Sea Wars for 2020⁴

The Russian Federation does not plan to stop its occupation of the Black Sea. Therefore, it is important to predict the worst case scenario for 2020 in the Black Sea and offer a set of measures to prevent it.

The situation can be analyzed by considering the marine risks in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, related to possible actions of the Russian Federation. Based on the experience of 2014-2019, possible actions of the Russian Federation can be predicted not only in the Ukrainian-Russian case, but also in the macro-regional context of the Black Sea and Mediterranean.

The Russian attack on Georgia in 2008 and the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 shook the entire geopolitical landscape from Gibraltar to Mariupol. Such tectonic shifts don't stop on their own, especially since "Putin's political machine is only gaining momentum and setting for a long, difficult and interesting work. Its full capacity is far ahead. Therefore, Russia will still be Putin's state for many years." [1].

In 2020, Russia's obstacles to freedom of navigation in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea will reflect the strategy of using military capacities created on the occupied Peninsula. Briefly, this can be described as a projection of the military threat and imperial expansion not only to Ukraine, but also to the entire Southeast of Europe, the South Caucasus, Turkey, and the "Syrian knot" in the Middle East with projection to North Africa. The sense of this power projection is to create Moscow-controlled chaos wherever possible, not only in Ukraine, Moldova and the Caucasus, but also in the EU and NATO countries, and separately in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. We see the consequences and manifestations of these processes more often. In this exact context we are considering the problem

of freedom of navigation in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait, which "unexpectedly" arose in April-May 2018 [2].

In 2020, Russia will continue to test the acquiescence and patience of the civilized world and its readiness to respond to its further whims.

Based on this experience, 2020 scenarios can be modeled to predict possible Russian actions in the pursuit of safe navigation on the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and the consequent reactions of Ukraine and the civilized world.

We have predicted that **the blocking (under various pretexts) of ships in the Kerch Strait will continue and will be used by the Russian Federation for the secrecy of military transport to Crimea in 2020.** But our main forecast doesn't only concern the Sea of Azov, for which the future is almost certain after it came under almost complete Russian control, but the situation with freedom of navigation in the Black Sea.

It is almost certain that the Azov crisis was a deliberate drill. In 2020, further Russian obstacles to Ukrainian ports should be expected not only in the Sea of Azov, but also in the Black Sea.

Exports and imports from and to the Ukrainian ports on the Sea of Azov are only a small share (5%) compared to exports and imports from and to numerous Black Sea ports in Odessa, Mykolaiv and Kherson. The main export and import routes of Ukraine are located in the Black Sea and lead to/from the Bosphorus.

On the Black sea—next to the recommended sea routes from Odessa to the Bosphorus and from Odessa to Batumi and the Turkish ports on the Black Sea—there are gas platforms on the Ukrainian sea shelf that were seized by Russia during the occupation of Crimea [2]. If earlier the auxiliary ships of the Russian Federation were patrolling the region around Odessa, Holitsynske, Arkhangelske and Shtormove gas fields, after June 1, 2018, security

⁴ The publication was prepared in the framework of the project "Promoting Security in the Black Sea Region through Greater Engagement of Non-Governmental Organizations" with the support of the Black Sea Trust Fund, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Black Sea Trust Fund or its partners.

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of the captured Ukrainian rigs on the occupied offshore was officially handed over to the 41st brigade of the small missile ships of the Black Sea Navy. They are continuously rotated. It must be noted that these are warships with significant strike potential.

Therefore, it is logical to predict a scenario if the **Russian Federation starts using "Azov technology" to detain ships going to or from the ports of Chernomorsk, Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson for inspection.** The FSB would easily report, for example, that one of the vessels plying this route may have a sabotage group that wants to blow up, for instance, drilling platforms at the stolen Odeske field (which the Russian Federation already consid-

ers its own, as well as the entire Ukrainian shelf around Crimea, from which it produces up to 2 bcm of gas annually). If Russia does this once, twice, or three times, we can only imagine what will happen to sea traffic in this area. This may not happen if there is an appropriate response to prejudice, but this scenario should be taken into consideration.

The recommended navigation routes from the Bosphorus to Ukrainian ports run through the narrow passage between the Zmiyiny Island and the Russian-occupied Ukrainian shelf around the Odeske field. This is a bottleneck of only 13.5 miles (25 km) wide (*Figure 1*).

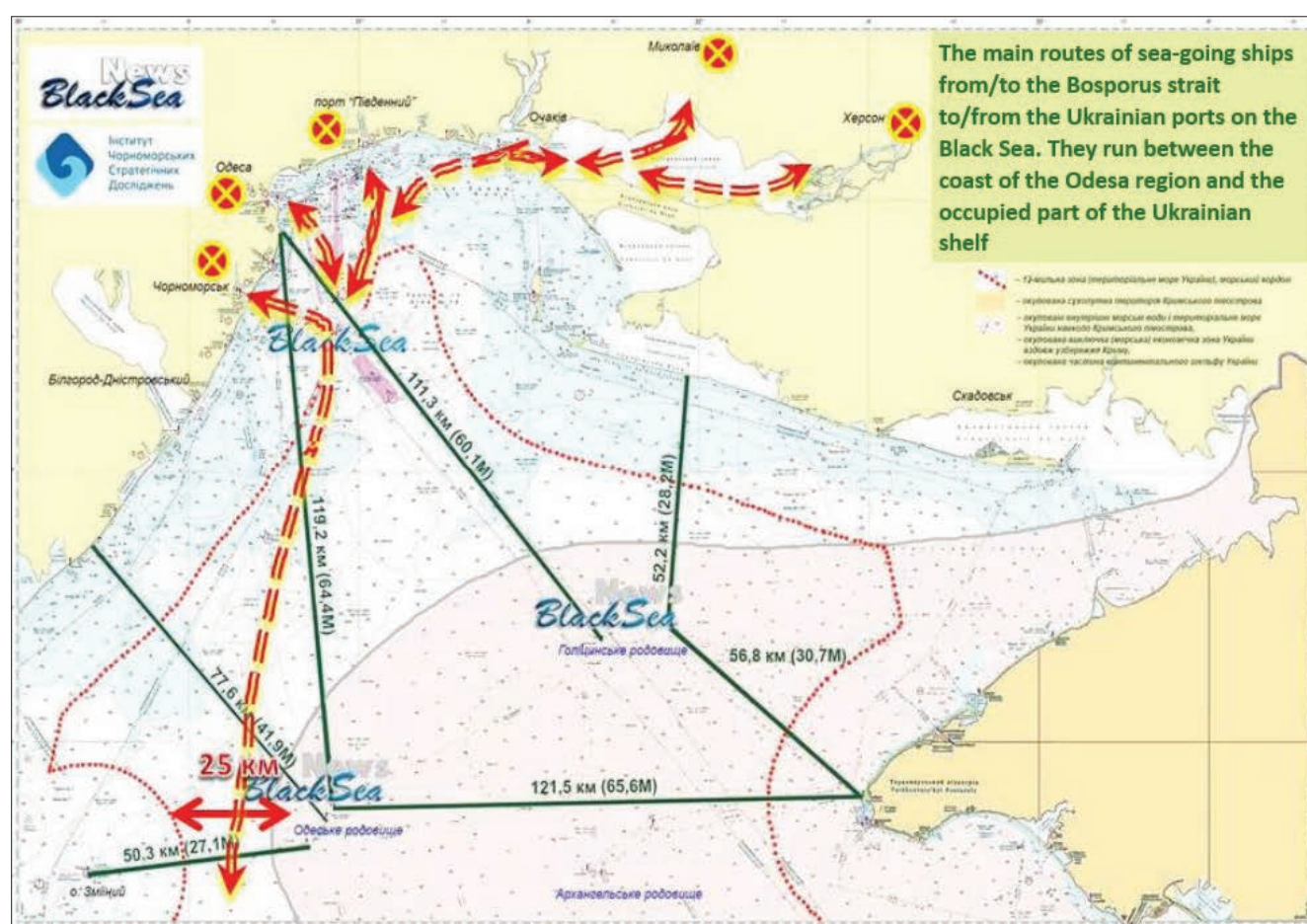


Figure 1. Narrow passage to the Black Sea ports of Ukraine.

Another forecast, which is also based on monitoring and analysis of the dynamics of the Russian Black Sea experiments in 2019, is given below. One of the Russian Federation's methods of creating obstacles to Black Sea navigation in 2020 **will be the extension of "closed" areas in the Western regions of the sea for manoeuvres of the Russian Federation with combat firing (real or fake).**

Another forecast, which is also based on monitoring and analysis of the dynamics of the Russian Black Sea experiments in 2019, is given below. One of the Russian Federation's methods of creating obstacles to Black Sea navigation in 2020 **will be the extension of "closed" areas in the Western regions of the sea for manoeuvres of the Russian Federation with combat firing (real or fake).**

Note. On July 1-12, 2019, during the Ukrainian-American naval exercise Sea Breeze 2019, Russia blocked one of the planned

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exercise areas on the Black Sea from the Ukrainian Zmiyiny Island near Odesa coast to Cape Tarkhankut in Crimea; in other words, in the area of the occupied shelf with gas fields. The Russian Federation published an international warning about the dangers of navigation there. And starting from July 24, 2019, the Russian Federation blocked five areas in the Black Sea, including the exclusive Maritime economic zone of Bulgaria and Romania, and almost the entire Eastern part of the Black

Sea from Sochi to Turkey to obstruct the Georgian-American exercise Agile Spirit 2019. The total area of the Black Sea parts closed by the Russian Navy in July 2019 alone significantly exceeded one hundred twenty thousand square kilometres, which is more than one-fourth of the Black Sea's total area. The purpose of these actions is to manifest the perception that the entire Black Sea is a zone of Russian influence. This is Russia's strategy to oust NATO from the Black Sea (Figure 2).

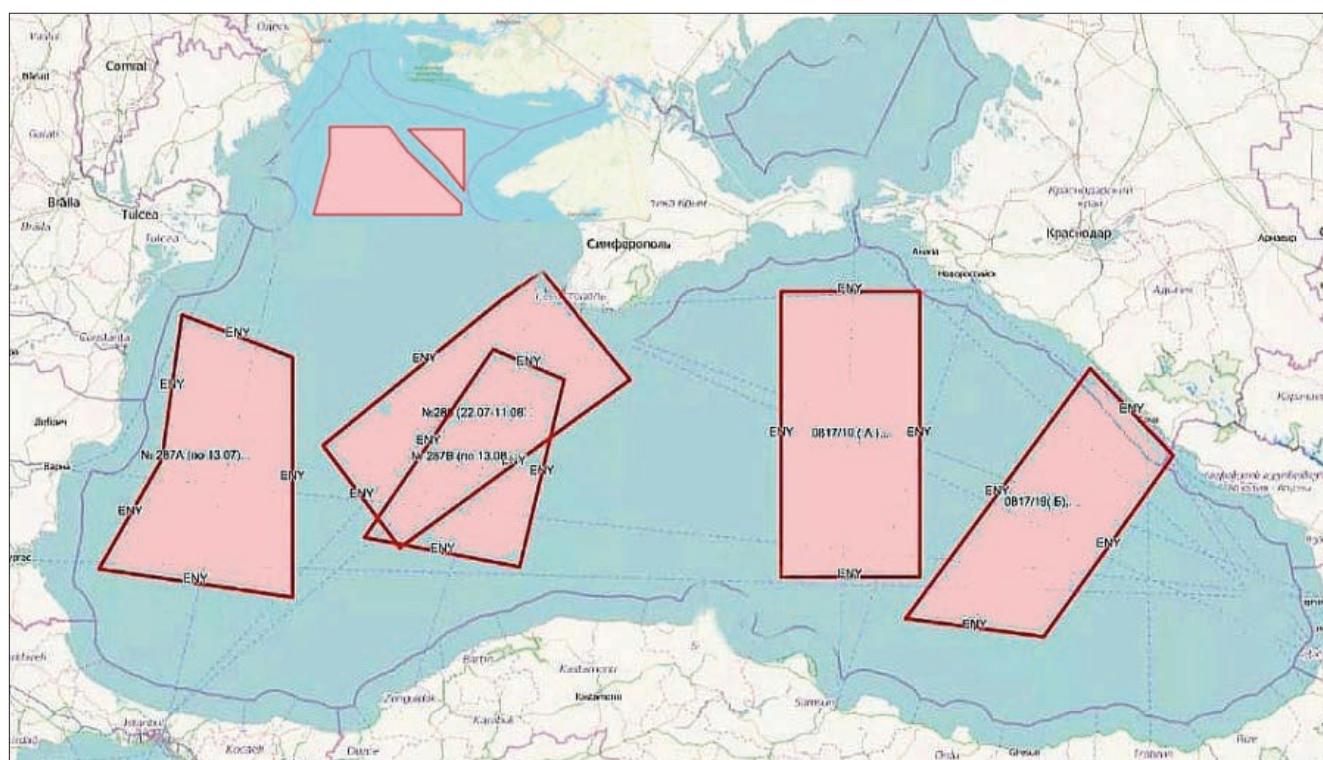


Figure 2. Areas blocked by Russia in July 2019

Since the first days of 2020, we have been seeing a similar picture and even significant development. Below is an image showing the closure of areas on the Black Sea on January 2. These closures were due to the spread of NAVTEX international maritime warnings about the hazards related to combat firing and naval manoeuvres looked as shown in Figure 3.

In the largest of these areas to the South and Southwest of the occupied Crimean Peninsula,

on January 9, the Black Sea and Northern Sea Fleets performed joint exercises of unprecedented scale, with missile firing drills from land, air, and sea. These exercises are worth mentioning separately. Such a large-scale Russian naval exercise on the Black Sea hadn't been seen since Soviet times: about 40 ships, a submarine, and more than 40 aircraft and helicopters of various types were involved.

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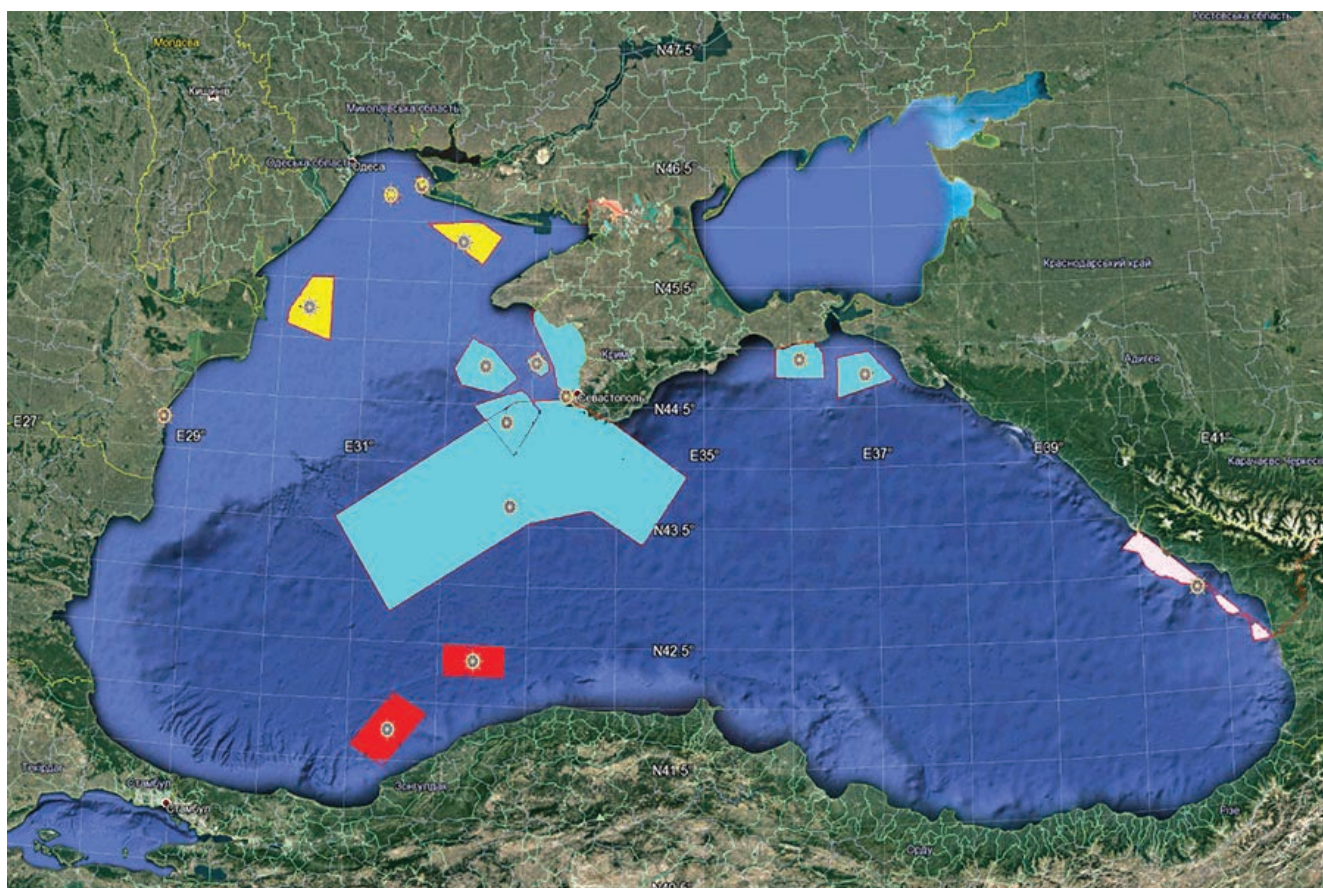


Figure 3. Areas blocked by Russia in January 2020

Closure areas: yellow – Ukrainian Navy, pink – Georgian Coast Guard, red – Turkish Navy, blue – Russian Black Sea Fleet.

It is worth listing them all (the names are given in the original language):

- from the Black Sea Fleet: new missile frigates "Admiral Grigorovich", "Admiral Makarov" (carriers of Kalibr cruise missiles), small missile ships "Orehovo-Zuyevo", "Ingushetia", "Vyshny Volochek" (carriers of Kalibr cruise missiles), missile boats "Naberezhnye Chelny", "Ivanovets", "Shuya", "R-60", large landing ships "Caesar Kunikov", "Orsk", "Saratov", "Novocherkassk" and "Azov", new patrol ships "Dmitry Rogachev" and "Vasily Bykov", new submarine "Kolpino" (carrier of Kalibr cruise missiles), air-cushion missile ship "Samum", small anti-submarine ships "Kasimov", "Muromets", mine sweeper "Ivan Antonov", counter-terror boats P-355 "Yunarmets Cryma", "P-834", "P-835", "P-838", "P-845", landing boat "D-296", tanker "Ivan Bubnov", floating maintenance station "PM-56", rescue and towing ships "Sergey Balk", "Captain Guryev", "SB-739", "Epron", "PZHS-123»;
- from the Northern Fleet: the missile cruiser "Marshal Ustinov" (on its board the headquarters was deployed and President Putin, Minister of Defense Shoigu and Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy Yevmenov were onboard), and a large anti-submarine ship of the Black Sea Fleet "Vice Admiral Kulakov";
- aviation: multi-purpose Su-30SM fighters, MiG-31k fighters, Su-24M front-line bombers and Tu-95 strategic bombers, Black Sea Fleet helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles; IL-38 anti-submarine aircraft of the Northern Fleet (its participation in the exercises is noteworthy).

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Photo 1. United squadron of the Black Sea and Northern Fleets of the Russian Federation in the main Bay of Sevastopol. Berths of the 30th Division of surface vessels. Beginning of January 2020.

Photo from the archive of www.blackseanews.net

In the course of the exercises, a pair of MiG-31K fighters fired an aeroballistics (hypersonic) Kinzhal missile at a target on one of the polygons. We remind that in 2019, we used to witness demonstration (simulated) air attacks by Russian military aircraft on NATO vessels during their stay in the Black Sea, and simulated attacks on Ukrainian Black Sea ports (on July 10, 2019, the Russian Tu-22M3 missile carrier simulated a missile strike on Odesa from a distance of 60 km) that became usual.

The "Admiral Grigorovich" frigate, the "Orehovo-Zuyevo" small missile ship, and the "Kolpino" submarine launched Kalibr cruise missiles from surface and underwater positions, while the "Ivanovets" and "Naberezhnye Chelny" missile boats launched Mosquito anti-ship missiles. Onshore shaft missile complex "Utes" (Figure 4) performed two missile launches on targets that simulated enemy ships.



Figure 4. Launch of the Russian missile system "Utes"
Source: Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation

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Note. In November 2016, the "Utes" shaft coastal missile system of the Soviet era was reactivated and restored by the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation. It is located in the area of Cape Aya (Balaklava district of the city of Sevastopol). Since 2016, regular firing of anti-ship "Progress" missiles (an upgraded version of the Soviet P-35 anti-ship missile) has been performed. Its range is up to 460 km. It is equipped with a 560-kilogram high-explosive warhead or a nuclear warhead of up to 20 kilotons. In the next few years, the "Utes" complex will be replaced by the first stationary coastal missile system, the "Bastion-C" shaft system (up to 36 "Onyx" missiles).

After the exercises of the Black Sea and Northern Fleets were completed in January, Russian

activity in the Black Sea did not slow down. On February 1, 2020, the Russian Federation issued an international Maritime hazard warning in the NAVTEX system—NAVAREA III 134/20—about missile and artillery firing in the area of the Karkinit Bay of the Black Sea between occupied Crimea and the coast of the Kherson region (coordinates 45-42N, 032-18E, 45-49N, 032-28E, 45-41N, 032-43E, 45-34N 032-33E). At the same time, the Russian military could not but know that this area has already been blocked since December 1, 2019 by similar warnings from the Ukrainian Navy—NAVAREA III 1374/19. That means there was an extremely dangerous overlap of firing areas between the Ukrainian Navy and the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation (*Figure 5*). But the situation wasn't over. The overlap of firing areas expanded. Another case was recorded on February 25, 2020 in the same area.

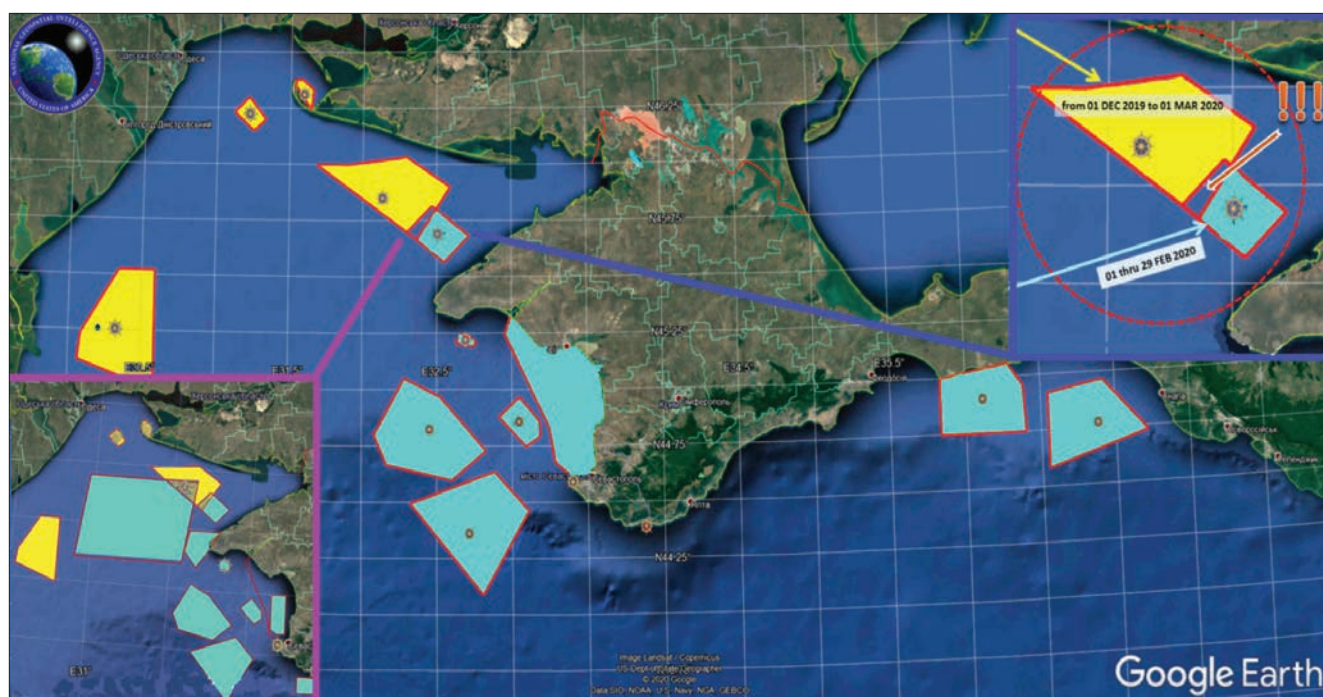


Figure 5. "Overlapping" of firing areas of the Ukrainian Navy and the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation

Note. Closure areas: yellow – the Ukrainian Navy, blue – the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation.

In the latter case, a dangerous situation of intentional overlap of the firing areas of the Black Sea Fleet and the firing areas of Ukrainian Navy became more acute.

In September-October 2020, the whole Southern Military District of the Russian Federation (and, it seems, not only it) will participate in the giant **strategic command and control** exercise (TTX) "**Caucasus-2020**". About 100 warships

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and support vessels will be involved. As we can already predict, they will not just be the ships of the Black Sea Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla. The main goal of such manoeuvres is to work out the great joint-force military actions in the Southern and Southwestern theatres of military actions.

There is no doubt that the joint exercise of the Black Sea Fleet and Northern Fleet suggest another 2020 feature: the interaction of the headquarters of various fleets and joint-force groups has already started. This practice is being actively implemented in the Russian Army based on the results of the Syrian experience.

The forecast does not exclude the possibility of active Russian operations on the Ukrainian coast of the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov, and the Danube River— this includes landings and

combined operations from the territory of occupied Crimea in the direction of Kakhovka, where the main gateway of the North Crimean Water Channel is located (to unblock water supplies to the Crimean Peninsula).

It is no coincidence that landing training by the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation is held constantly and in significant numbers at the *Opuk* military training center in occupied Crimea. According to the results of our research, during 2014-2019, at least ninety nine military manoeuvres, exercises, and training sessions were held at the military training center *Opuk*. There were manoeuvres in the immediate vicinity of Opuk-sky reserved land. In total, eighty nine cases of combat firing, practical bombing, and missile launches during the military exercises and manoeuvres were recorded (*Figure 6*) [3].

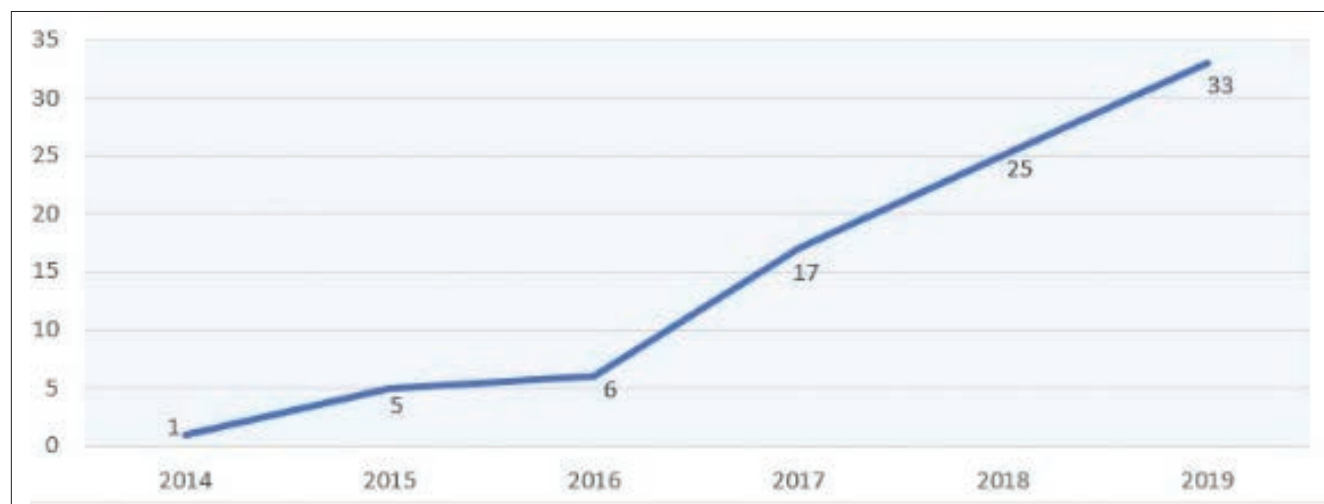


Figure 6. Military exercises at the Opuk training center in occupied Crimea in 2014-2019

Especially dangerous is the period that will start in May 2020, during or after the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Victory over fascism, and will end in October-November 2020, during or after the Caucasus-2020 manoeuvres. In the South—on the sea, on land and in the air—the Russian military advantage is absolute, and the Russian Federation cannot help but plan the appropriate options, whether the appropriate circumstances are either already in place or artificially created.

Unless the Ukrainian Navy is **significantly strengthened**, the Ukrainian authorities will have to address the U.S. and NATO with proposals to continue and increase the permanent patrolling groups of the NATO Maritime Command and the U.S. 6th Fleet in the Black Sea.

It is worth mentioning that in the period of March-December 2014, almost 90% of the all-day ships of non-Black Sea NATO countries regularly patrolled the Black Sea. This may also be why the so-called Odesa People's Republic did not appear in Ukraine.

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Further, NATO's naval presence in the Black Sea changed depending on different circumstances, but in general, from 1991 to 2019 NATO not

only recognized the Black Sea threat but found the resources to significantly increase its presence in the region in 2019 (*Figure 7*).

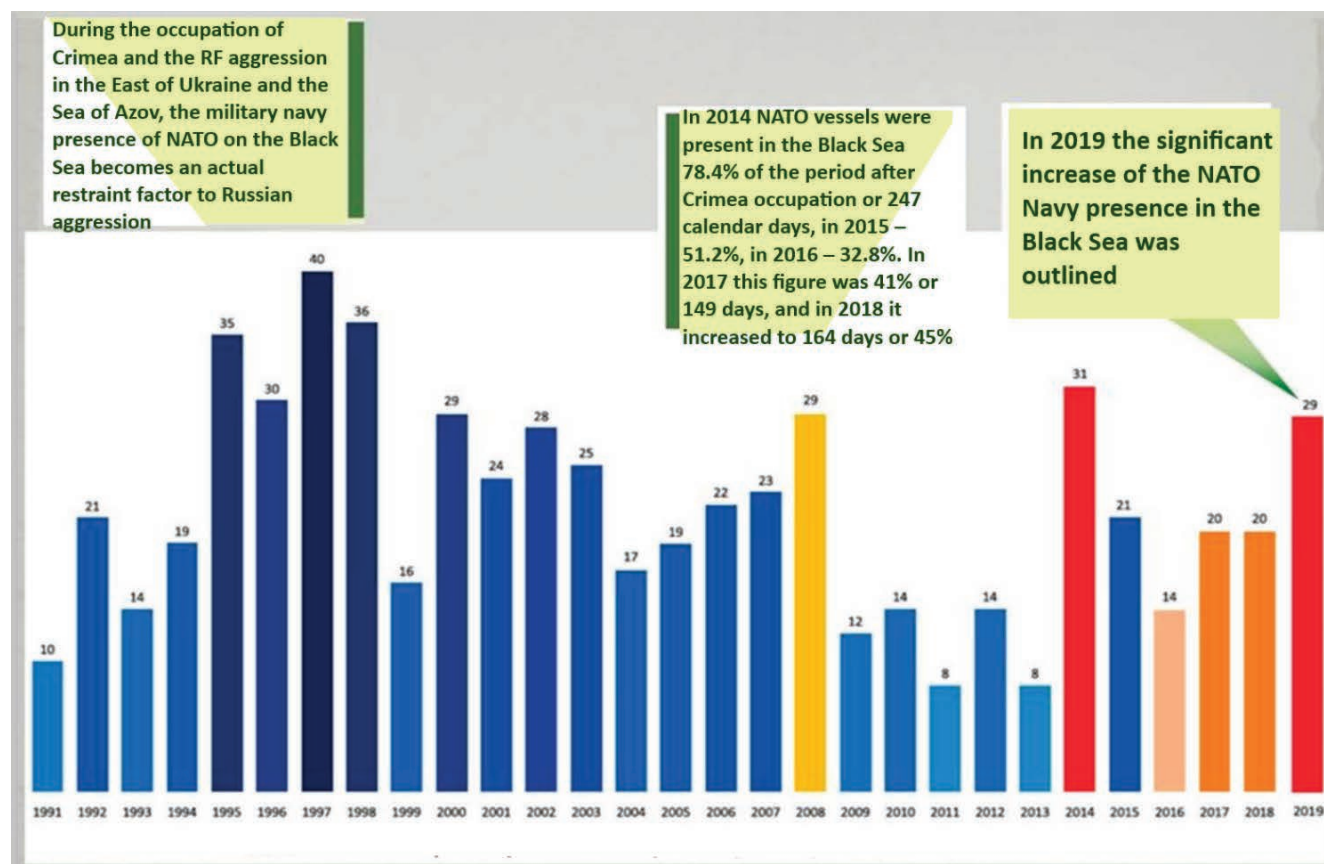


Figure 7. NATO warships' visits to the Black Sea

At the same time, NATO's naval presence in the Black Sea will, of course, depend on the situation in neighboring regions of the world—Syria, Iraq, Iran, and North Africa, etc.

If the situation in the Black Sea develops according to the scenario outlined above, it may be necessary to apply the experience gained in the Sea of Azov starting in October 2018 to the main routes in the Black Sea. The Azov crisis showed that the detention of merchant ships at sea stopped when the Ukrainian Navy provided escorts to commercial vessels from Mariupol to Kerch. **In 2020, Ukraine may have to resort to military support for commercial navigation or patrolling international sailing routes in the Black Sea, and NATO must be asked to do so as well. The best way to do this would be to launch a special naval format in the Black Sea called "operations for freedom of navigation".**

Certainly, Ukraine will continue to strengthen its maritime capacities in 2020.

There is a possibility that against the background of the real threats to freedom of navigation in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, in 2018-2019 those threats were finally recognized both domestically and abroad. A comprehensive Naval policy may be implemented in Ukraine. So far, Ukraine is still focused on its land territory, where people are used to moving and fighting on oxen, horses, wheelbarrows, armored carriers, and tanks.

An encouraging factor, which the Russian strategists seem to have missed, is that freedom of navigation is one of the fundamental principles of the civilized world. It enables the freedom of trade and human rights. Therefore, the involvement of the international community in blocking these threats leaves hope for some positive results in 2020.

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Security Issues of the Republic of Moldova in the Context of Militarization of the Black Sea Region⁵

The increasing militarization of the Black Sea region creates grounds for revisiting regional security issues from a new perspective and for defining new approaches to addressing them. The changed landscape of inter-state interaction within the Black Sea region has reignited questions pertaining to ensuring and maintaining security, including strengthening the military potential of states in light of asymmetric military power, regulation of armed and frozen conflicts, addressing the issue of separatist regimes and other forms of their manifestation. Special attention is now being paid to the role of NATO and the U.S. in balancing the military power in the region, given the Russian military's potential. In addition, the maritime dimension of regional security has come to the fore.

The crisis in the Kerch Strait became a new milestone in the escalation of the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine, characterized by violations of international law. Russia breached peremptory norms of international law, particularly those pertaining to prohibition on aggression, enshrined in the UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 of 1974, the norms of law of the sea governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, the Bilateral Treaty between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on Cooperation in the Use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait.

Russia's hard power, which conditioned the Kerch crisis, revealed the complexity of the situation in the Black Sea region. As a part of this region subject to the continuous influence of Russian soft power, the Republic of Moldova cannot ignore the issues related to regional security and show indifference towards the new political interactions between the countries of the Black Sea region.

Given the fact that the future prospects of Russia crossing red lines is still open, it is necessary to contain the aggressive acts of the Russian Federation and to strengthen the defense potential of the countries in the Black Sea region through the efforts of the NATO member states. In this context, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova must become more involved in NATO's security system in this region. After the Kerch crisis, Ukraine urged for the presence of NATO in the Black Sea. In turn, NATO was preparing a package of measures to contain Russia's activities in the Black Sea basin, which caused discontent and critique from the Russian Federation. According to the official position of the Russian Federation: "[...] any NATO attempts to strengthen its position in the Black Sea region are pointless from a military perspective, will not strengthen the security of either the region or NATO, and will only be fraught with additional military risks" [1].

Unlike the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine expressed its readiness to become a member of NATO and enshrined in its Constitution the irreversible Euro-Atlantic vector. In Moldova, however, a different perception about NATO's policies has been formed.

⁵ The publication was prepared in the framework of the project "Promoting Security in the Black Sea Region through Greater Engagement of Non-Governmental Organizations" with the support of the Black Sea Trust Fund, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Black Sea Trust Fund or its partners.

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NATO and EU support for Moldova's security sector reforms

The bilateral cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and NATO are based on the support of the Alliance in Moldovan security reform processes, upgrading its defense capabilities, and in offering technical and advisory assistance in the framework of the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative. The NATO Defence Education Enhancement Programme also played a significant role in reforming the military education institutions. In addition, Moldova is part of the Interoperability Platform.

Nevertheless, the status of neutrality remains a highly sensitive issue and is often the subject

of discussions and debates in the interaction between Moldova and NATO. On several occasions, President I. Dodon pointed out that he intended to obtain international recognition of the constitutional status of permanent neutrality of the Republic of Moldova, which would entail nonparticipation in military blocs, such as NATO [2].

In addition, Moldovan citizens also oppose Moldova's possible membership in NATO. According to the data of the Public Opinion Barometer in Moldova, which regularly publishes statistical reports: in 2018, 53.8% of citizens voted against Moldova joining NATO; 20.8% supported the idea; 8.7% would not vote in such a poll; 13.1% answered they did not know or were undecided; 3.5% refrained from answering (*Figure 1*) [3].

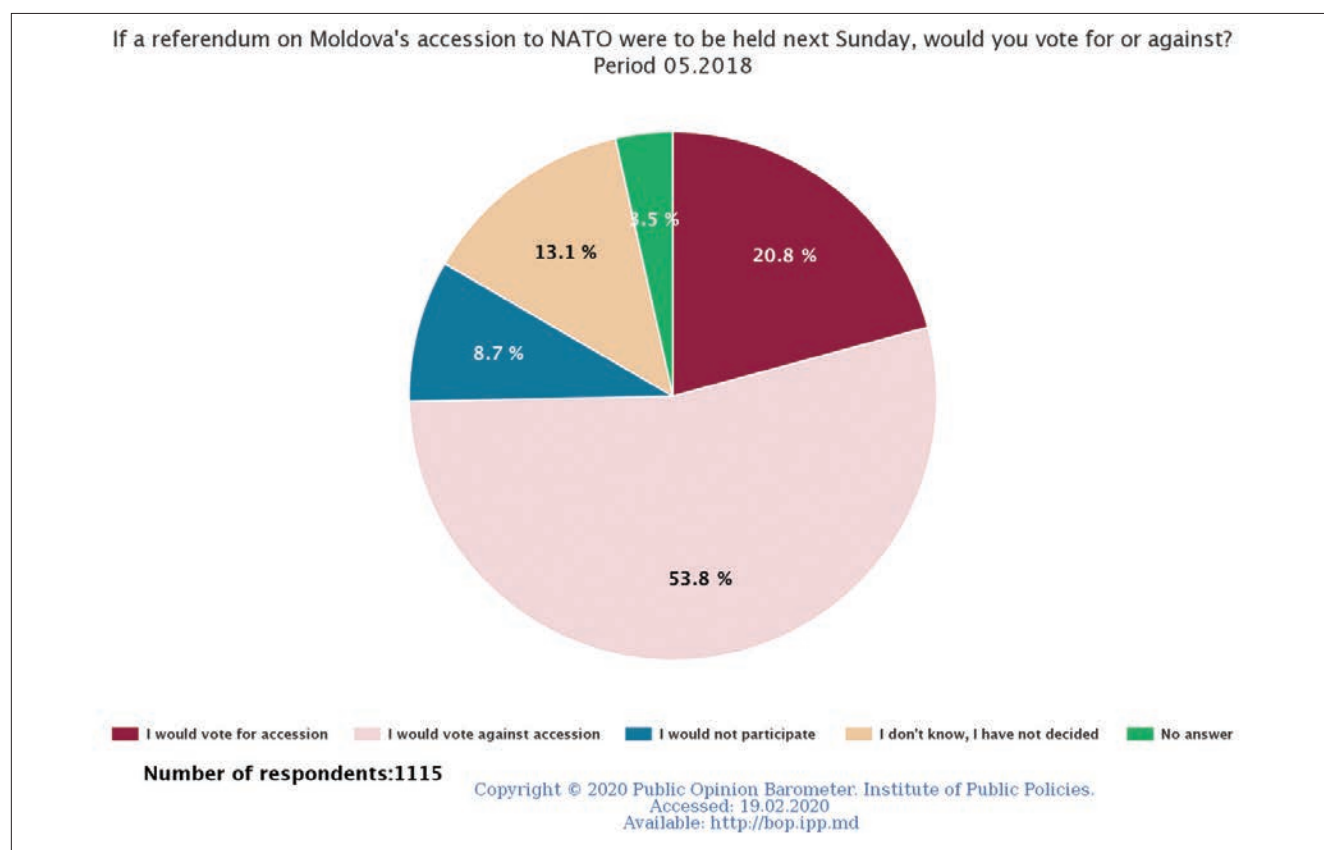


Figure 1. Public opinion on possible accession of Moldova to NATO

To the question “What do you think is the best solution to ensure the national security of the Republic of Moldova?”, 56.1% of the respondents answered that neutrality was a principle; 11.8% said adher-

ing to Collective Security Treaty Organization is the best solution; 13.9% said they did not know (*Figure 2*).

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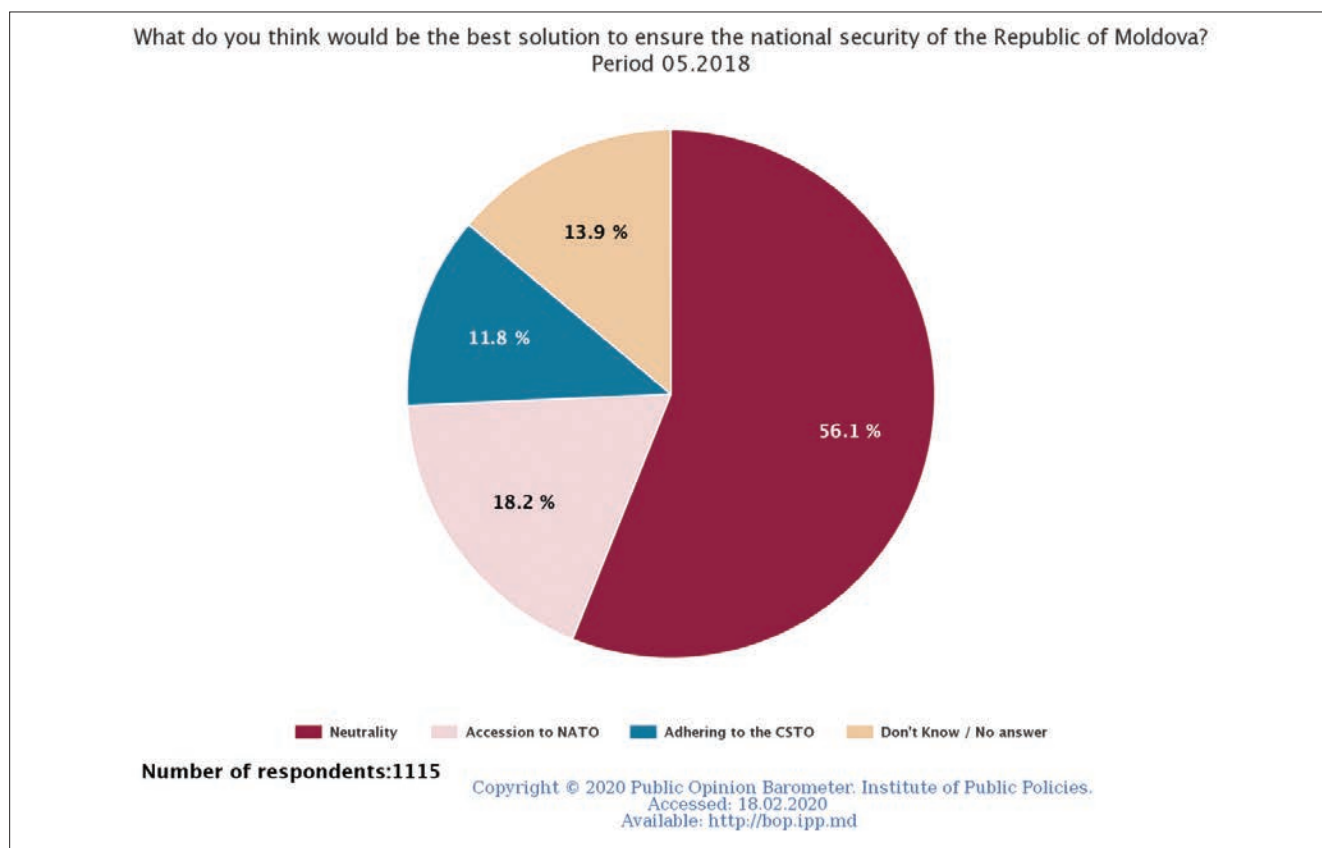


Figure 2. Public opinion on Moldova's security model

At the same time, it seems obvious that, given the increasing attention given to regional security issues, the Republic of Moldova will continue its cooperation with NATO, based on respect of the neutrality principle of the Moldovan state.

Among the reforms conducted in the area of defense, widely supported by NATO and the EU, one should mention a review of security legislation and national defense, including development of policy documents: the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, Cyber Security Strategy, the revision the Law on National Defense and military legislation package. The Military Strategy and the Action Plan on its implementation for 2018-2022 [4] define the main aim of the National Army—security and national defense through the prevention and combat of military aggression or other military threats, including hybrid threats. Among the threats and vulnerabilities of Moldovan national security, the Transnistrian conflict and foreign military presence on the state's territory are mentioned.

As a result, from 2014 to 2020, the Republic of Moldova received comprehensive support in security from its Euro-Atlantic partners, who have repeatedly voiced the importance of cooperation in ensuring stability, security and prosperity of the Republic of Moldova and the entire region. However, given the current circumstances, the regional security context has significantly changed and now requires the development of new approaches in the foreign policies of the countries in the Black Sea region.

The issue of the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict

The security issues associated with the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict remain unresolved. The same applies to the question of withdrawal of the Russian troops, located in Transnistria, and to the disposal of ammunition stored in Cobasna warehouses. The lack of clarity in the selection of a conflict settlement mechanism leads to further difficulties and to divergent opinions of the population of the two banks of the Dniester River. Speculations on the topic of federalization increase these

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internal contradictions. As a result, it is important to concentrate efforts on defining a clear stance on an appropriate conflict settlement mechanism. Despite certain achievements and significant efforts aimed at the reintegration of the Republic of Moldova and the return of the region of the left bank of Dniester [5], within the framework of various EU programs and projects, results have not been delivered. This proves that in order to achieve a breakthrough, the “small step” policy should be

abandoned. However, this requires political will, which the authorities lack.

Paradoxical as it may seem, in 2012, according to national polls results, an overwhelming proportion of the Moldovan population considered that Putin's win in the presidential elections will contribute to the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict (*Figure 3*).

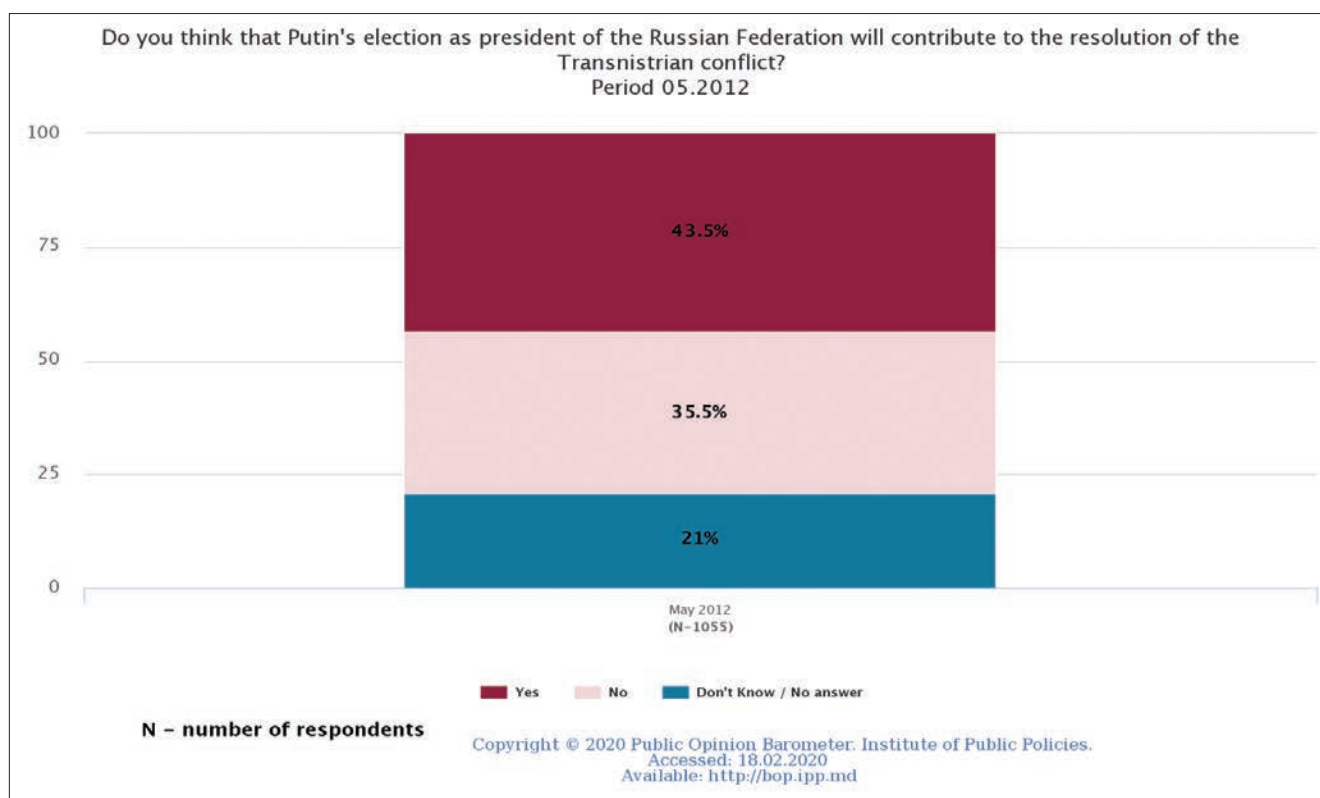


Figure 3. Public opinion on the impact of the presidential election in Russia on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict

Eight years later, neither progress in that area, nor an increased interest on behalf of Russia in solving the Transnistrian conflict could be observed. On the contrary, in recent years, the military training and exercises, which are conducted by the Operational Group of the Russian Forces in Transnistria (OGRF) in the conflict region, were significantly intensified, while Russia's reluctance to withdraw its troops remains. All of this takes place in the context of deepening regional and international security issues, the annexation of Crimea, the Kerch crisis, the revival of the issues in the Black Sea region, as well as the emergence of new challenges and threats to security. Under these circumstances, one might assume that public opinion on this issue

might change. However, the Russian instruments of soft power, including political propaganda, are very influential and impactful. As a result, public perception remains unchanged.

At the same time, in 2024, new Presidential elections are expected in Russia. Given the increasing number of internal issues in the Russian Federation and the weakening of its position in the international arena, the chances of resolving the Transnistrian conflict in line with the interests of the Republic of Moldova are increasing. However, this is possible only if the Moldovan authorities develop a clear position and a good regulatory framework for conflict settlement.

The strategic importance of the Black Sea region

Given the strategic importance of the Black Sea region for the EU, the EU Council called on numerous occasions for the increased cooperation in the region in line with the principles provided in the EU Global Strategy and the revised EU Neighborhood Policy [6]. Of fundamental importance is compliance with international law, the provisions of the UN Convention on Law of the Sea, including the freedom of navigation enshrined in it, as well as the political decisions of the EU and its non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea.

Europeans are increasingly expressing skepticism about the need to confront Russia, and question whether that serves the interests of Europe. The reinstatement of Russia's membership in the Council of Europe is a vivid example. Despite the fact that the West understands that a new architecture based on trust cannot be developed because Russia cannot be a reliable political partner, it still considers the possibility and desirability of a stable economic partnership with Russia.

There is an active adaptation process to new realities, in which, despite the existing conflict scenarios between the most important actors in the world politics—Russia and the West—a pragmatic approach and economic interests prevail over political risks. There are plenty of arguments and proof that support this proposition—from resuming the trade cooperation between the EU and Russia in the context of international sanctions, to the implementation of joint projects in the area of culture, science, and education. This goes on despite the massive propagandistic confrontations between them. One of the latest examples was the voting results of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly concerning the limitation of sanctions imposed against Russia. There were 118 votes for, 62 against, and 10 abstained [7]. It should be noted that Germany, France, and other Western European countries voted for, while countries as Ukraine, Georgia, Poland, and the Baltic States voted against the resolution. Russia was deprived of its membership in PACE in 2014 after the annexation of Crimea and the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

The votes of the Moldovan representatives were divided, but the overall result was in favor of Russia regaining its membership in PACE. Moldova's position may be analyzed not only from the perspective of divergent views of the political parties. It may seem reasonable to also consider the evolving internal logic of understanding the changing dynamics in the international arena and the key driving forces that set the tone for these changes, as well as the consequences of the sanctions imposed on Russia. If the resolution had not passed, the Council of Europe would have lost the key leverage on Moscow, because it would have led to Russia's withdrawal from the Council of Europe and all its structures, including the European Court of Human Rights.

The majority of European parliamentarians were in favor of dialogue, despite the fact that the reasons which led to the sanctions being imposed on Russia continued to exist — namely, the violation of international law as a result of the annexation of Crimea and the military occupation of the Ukrainian territory. By doing that, the Council of Europe gave up the principles and rules that were the cornerstone of the organization since its foundation. Russia perceived this as a 'diplomatic win' of Moscow. The Republic of Moldova preferred to support the European majority, thereby departing from the regional solidarity, which it exhibited over the past years along with Ukraine and Georgia. Common European interests prevailed.

The report of the Munich security conference, which took place during February 14-16, 2020, states the following: "In practical terms, the EU no longer has the monopoly on the regional integration agenda. The balance of power is being modified on the huge Eurasian continent, primarily due to the new centers in the Asia Pacific region" [8]. During the Western sanctions period and the protracted confidence crisis, Moscow revived its activity in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. However, the most significant is the consolidation of its cooperation with China in various areas—from trade and commerce to technical and military cooperation, which significantly changes the balance of power in the international arena. This cannot be left without attention by the West, as it affects the regional and global field of the so-called "big game" between the leading actors of

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world politics. It is worth noting that, among the top ten conflict zones that depict global trends, the report mentions Ukraine. It can thus be concluded that the Black Sea region is at the core of strategic interests and competition at the regional and global levels.

Conclusions and recommendations

The security issues faced by the Republic of Moldova in the context of the militarization of the Black Sea region are escalating and require new result-oriented approaches in order to identify solutions. The policies of the Black Sea region states are changing under the influence of military power balancing, based on the juxtaposition of NATO and Russian forces. The open use of hard power by the Russian Federation leaves open the question regarding its quest to dominate the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. In turn, this requires that the states in the region dedicate more efforts to increase cooperation in the area of security.

In the context of increasing security issues in the Black Sea region, the Republic of Moldova should focus its efforts on the following:

- to undertake a more active search of an appropriate settlement mechanism for the Transnistrian

- conflict and be consistent in its demands for the withdrawal of the Russian armed forces from Transnistria and the removal of ammunition from Cobasna;

- to enhance the measures aimed at completing the initiated reforms in the security and military sectors and ensure their implementation;

- to increase Moldova's participation in EU operations on crisis management, increase activity in the framework of the Common Security and Defense Policy of the EU, as well as develop a mechanism for participation in the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in order to expand preventive measures for crisis management, as well as inclusion in the programs and processes aimed at ensuring regional and international security initiated by the EU;

- to avoid the politicization of the issue on the status of neutrality, continue the cooperation with NATO, while developing a well-rounded military sector, focused inter alia on addressing hybrid threats;

- to promote consistent regional solidarity in security matters pertaining to the Black Sea Region.



Figure 4. Consequences of Russian aggression in the Black Sea region [9]

FOCUS ON: RUSSIAN HYBRESSION IN THE BLACK SEA

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The United Caucasus Emirates:

The North Caucasus after Political Transformations in the Russian Federation⁶

In the period of turbulent transformations, with changes to the constitution and the incorporation of the definition of a state-forming nation, Russia faces the need to maintain control over traditionally rebellious territories with a bright national identity, in particular over the North Caucasus, where protest movements can break out with new force.

From time to time, the Russian Federal Government brings up a discussion of the idea that the republics of the North Caucasus should be united to strengthen the Kremlin's control. Two interesting antagonistic questions arise. Firstly, what will the future borders of today's Caucasian republics be when the Federal authorities launch the process of administrative border revision in the North Caucasus to strengthen the Kremlin's control over them? Secondly, in the context of radical political transformations [1] and the historical precedent of Sharia-based public entities in the region—i.e. the Emirate—are North Caucasus republics now capable of self-determination and unification into a single decentralized state entity?

"Consolidation" of the regions

The process of the Russian regions' unification by combining neighboring and economically close subjects of the Federation was started under Putin's instructions in the 2000s. The unification has primarily concerned the "complex" Russian subjects—the territories and regions with autonomous districts. As a result, eight federal districts were

created. They are not a part of the territorial and administrative division of the Russian Federation, nor are they subjects of the Federation, and they are also not defined by the Constitution. The institute of presidential plenipotentiaries was introduced, creating another administrative layer in the vertical of power that is directly controlled by the President of the Russian Federation. A little economic sense was therein, but presidential control was strengthened.

Recently, interesting processes have been taking place in the North Caucasus Federal District (NCFD). At the beginning of January 2020, Putin signed a decree appointing the former presidential plenipotentiary to the North Caucasus Federal District, Alexander Matovnikov, a Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Russian land forces. Putin appointed the former Russian Prosecutor General Yuriy Chaika to the plenipotentiary position, which Matovnikov has held since June 2018. There is an opinion that as the presidential plenipotentiary, Alexander Matovnikov did not cope with the task of defining the borders between Chechnya and Dagestan, and the clarification of the borders with Ingushetia, although completed, has brought serious damage to the image of the Federal Government. Thus, the protests in the fall of 2018 in the capital of Ingushetia, Magas, and in the spring of 2019 against the unequal division of the administrative border and the exchange of territories with Chechnya based on the agreements between the heads of the republics, Ramzan Kadyrov, and the then head of Ingushetia, Yunus-Bek Evkurov, were unprecedented for the Russian Federation [2].

Behind the scenes, meetings between representatives of Chechnya and Dagestan continue to discuss the issue of border demarcation. The backstage nature of the negotiations on the borders between Chechnya and Dagestan is explained by

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the Federal Centre's attempts to avoid mass protests, as was the case in Ingushetia. In January this year, the speaker of the Chechen Parliament, Magomed Daudov, announced the completion of negotiations on the borders with neighboring republics and input of the data in the State Register, while the authorities of Dagestan did not report the completion of border demarcation. Accordingly, the Chechen side unilaterally input the disputed areas in the State Register, which created additional tension between the republics [3].

Back in early 2019, Ramzan Kadyrov reported that the clarification of the borders of Chechnya with neighboring regions was performed under the Kremlin's instructions. The Unified State Register contains data on only two of the twenty-seven borders between the regions of the North Caucasus Federal District—the border of Karachay-Cherkessia with the Krasnodar Territory and the border of Chechnya with North Ossetia. At the same time, the regional authorities received the task to approve the borders by 2021 [3]. This looks like a deliberate attempt to roll out the situation in the North Caucasus. According to Ahmed Zakayev, acting diplomatic representative of the unrecognized Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, who is in exile in London, the border incident was deliberately provoked by the authorities of Chechnya and Dagestan per the instructions of the Federal Government. Neither Ramzan Kadyrov, nor the Head of Dagestan, Vladimir Vasiliev, nor the Head of Ingushetia, Mahmud-Ali Kalimatov, who play the role of Kremlin supervisors for the preservation of apparent stability, are independent, and would never initiate a provocation of such a situation on their own initiative. **Therefore the conclusion could be made that the Kremlin seeks to revise the administrative borders between the republics to aggravate enmity based on land issues, and to exclude their union beyond Moscow's control during the upcoming political transformations.**

At the Federal level, in previous years, the options for incorporating Adygea into the Krasnodar Territory and Karachay-Cherkessia into the Stavropol Territory were discussed. Another option is to unite Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia into a single region. Another actively discussed scenario was the new reunification of the Chechen Republic and Ingushetia

within the Chechen-Ingush Republic as during the Soviet period. Dagestan was not mentioned in the plans to unite the regions until this time, as it is already the most difficult Caucasian republic and the leader among the Caucasian republics in the deployment of a clandestine resistance movement.

In recent years, drafts of regional development strategies justifying the economic feasibility of combining the neighboring regions started to arrive in the North Caucasus republics from Moscow. In addition, for several years, Russia has been discussing the possibility of complete abandonment of the republican government form and transforming all regions of the country into new entities similar to provinces. Many influential politicians and experts believe that one of the reasons of the Soviet Union collapse was the fact that it consisted of republics with a distinct national identity. Therefore, modern Russia is interested in "unification of the regions" to blur these identities. In post-Soviet Russia, the idea of eliminating the republics and turning them into provinces equal in status and devoid of national ties seems necessary to many [4].

Unification is an avoidance of national problems. It is a decrease in the importance of the issue of national identity in the status. According to Putin's vision, many issues in the North Caucasus are reduced to ethnic exclusivity, derivative of the existence of each ethnic group within its closed borders. If the status of administrative borders is reduced and people are left to understand that they are all citizens of one large country, regardless of their ethnicity and religion, then, according to the Kremlin's logic, numerous ethnic and religious contradictions will automatically disappear. Modern Russia believes that the current territorial conflicts are the result of the voluntary split of these territories during Stalin's time [5].

On February 13, 2019, the Russian government approved the "2025 Territorial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation" [6], which lays out the concept of creating twelve macro-regions for the next five years (*Figure 1*). They correspond with the economic zoning of Russia. It is obvious that the essence of the reform is not to strengthen the regions, but to strengthen the structures of the presidential vertical.

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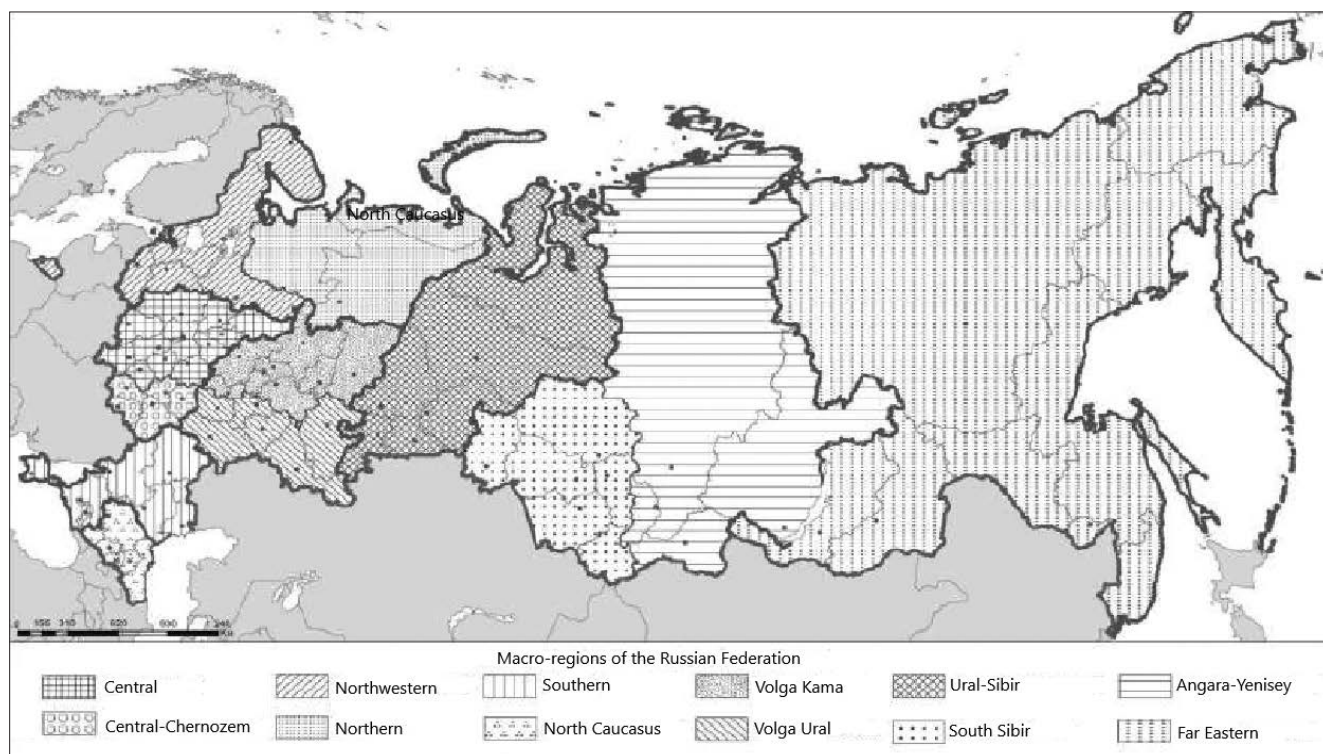


Figure 1. Scheme of the macro-regions of the Russian Federation

The strategy is an extremely imperfect document. However, it can be the first step towards the **defederalization of Russia**, the weakening of the Federation's subjects from a political standpoint, and, as a result, the reformatting of administrative borders under the project of economic and geographical integration of the regions, thus solving the issue of national republics [7]. At the same time, if we talk about the North Caucasus Federal District, the Strategy does not provide for changes thereto. Instead, all the Caucasian republics are subsidized. The only donor region is Stavropol Krai with its powerful agricultural economy. The essence of the reform is to ease the burden on the Federal Budget, reduce the burden of subsidies, and shift it to the donor regions, such as Stavropol, which will eventually fund neighboring republics.

It should be noted that the constitutional sovereignty of the North Caucasian republics, and Bashkiria, Tatarstan and others, is being attacked. The abolition of direct elections, the law on voluntary study of the national languages, the proposal of the Communists to introduce the recognition of the Russian nation as the title one in the Constitution, and the appointment of heads of republics by Moscow is the foundation upon which macro-regions

are promoted [8]. In such circumstances, it will be almost impossible to talk about the preservation of peoples, their languages, and culture. Instead of a diverse and colourful picture of Caucasian cultures, we will see something pseudo-Caucasian and devoid of national identity a few generations from now. This approach is wrong from a historical point of view. Over the past few centuries, despite the rule of tsarist and Soviet Russia in the North Caucasus, and despite russification and sovietization policies, national identity has not been lost. It will be almost impossible to do this now in the conditions of the re-islamization of the North Caucasus. However, Moscow has a different vision.

Chechen wars and national resistance movement in the North Caucasus

Today, it is difficult to say whether it is possible to restore national resistance in the North Caucasus. Most of the Chechen groups that fought in the 1994-2000s against Russia have either sided with Kadyrov or declared their loyalty to his regime. Many Chechens explain their actions as follows: active military operations today are a war to exterminate the Chechen nation; Kadyrov's rule is a respite for the supporters of Chechen independence

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and a way to wait until the generations grow up, and a time for the restoration and physical recovery of Chechnya. By the way, the restoration is at Russia's expense [9].

Having come to power on the wave of the idea of anti-Chechen revenge (with threats to "kill Chechens in the toilet"), Putin created maximum comfort for the North Caucasian peoples. First, this was embodied in the transfer policies (the budgets of Chechnya, Dagestan, and other ethnic republics of the North Caucasus Federal District are the most subsidized from the Federal Budget). Now thousands of recruits from Chechnya and Dagestan are dismissed from military duty. Therefore, we should not be surprised at the results of the 90% vote for Putin's "YedRo" in the North Caucasus—such comfort has been unknown to the subsidized North Caucasus even at Yeltsin times. The Russian budget at that time did not receive enough revenue from oil and gas exports since global oil prices were low.

After the collapse of the USSR, the North Caucasus was not a hot spot. Back then, the hot spots were the Volga region, Tatarstan, and Bashkortostan. The exception was the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI), which declared its independence and made a statement that it could not remain part of the Russian Federation. This was done under a Soviet law passed in February 1990, when Gorbachev proposed equalizing the rights of autonomous and union republics. Based on this law, the ChRI declared its secession from the Russian Federation, declared itself a union entity, and after the collapse of the USSR declared its secession. This resulted in two military campaigns by the Russian Federal Centre that changed the overall picture of the North Caucasus.

The first Chechen campaign showed that armed formations numbering several thousand fighters are able to defeat the regular army of the Russian Federation. Ichkeria won, because the Khasavyurt agreements signed by representatives of the ChRI and the Russian Federation on the development of the "Principles of determining the foundations of relations between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic" dated August 31, 1996 [10], have put an end to the First Chechen War. The Federal troops were not just stopped, but expelled from the territory of the ChRI.

The first Chechen war of 1994-1996 was one of the largest in recent history, and the battle of Grozny was the largest battle in Europe since the end of World War II. During the military campaign, a large number of settlements in the ChRI were destroyed. During the war, about one hundred twenty thousand civilians were killed, most of them children. About two hundred thousand were injured. Almost half of the Chechen population has become refugees.

During the war, Russian troops carried out targeted mass killings of ethnic Chechens, as extermination was the way the Russian troops carried out combat operations (in particular, massive aerial bombings and firing, which resulted in almost complete destruction of the city of Argun and Grozny) [11].

It was Chechnya that became the catalyst for a radical change of moods in the North Caucasus and motivated a resistance wave in all the Caucasian republics—Kabardino-Balkaria, Ingushetia, and Dagestan. They started thinking about getting their own statehood. For example, in Dagestan, where several ethnic groups live, there are issues, the resolution of which Moscow has suspended since the Soviet era [12].

In the early 1990s, Moscow "overlooked" and failed to control what was later dubbed the "Islamic Renaissance" in the Caucasus. This is how radical Islam and Salaphites emerged. They later became one of the main issues of the Federal Centre in the North Caucasus. Salaphites categorically do not perceive non-Muslim power. The very fact that Moscow manages the North Caucasus territories is itself a reason not to recognize the Kremlin's authority. Now, in Chechnya, Kadyrov has done his best to change the Chechen society and adjust it to his own, rather peculiar, concept of "traditional" Islam [13]. The resistance movement in Chechnya today is deeply underground. Ramzan Kadyrov managed to achieve significant results in neutralizing the organized resistance of the North Caucasus Mujahedeen, who today are fewer in number. They are located exclusively in the mountainous area. There are few actions of armed resistance in Chechnya, in contrast to neighboring Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia.

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Modern Islam

Islam in the North Caucasus has always been very heterogeneous [14]. In recent years, the differences in its interpretations have only increased. This area in religious terms is clearly divided into two parts: Northeastern Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Chechnya, and Northwestern – Stavropol Krai, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Caucasus was dominated by Sunnis of the Hanafite school, who mainly lived in Adyghea, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, in the North of Dagestan and Northeast of Chechnya. Sunnis of the Shafi's school dominated the rest of the Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia territories.

Yet during the collapse of the Soviet Union, the growth of interest in Islam in the republics of the North Caucasus took various forms shaped by local contexts. The Western part of the region was more secularized, and Islam was considered primarily a part of an ethnic identity. There were a few qualified and educated religious clergymen (mullahs, Efendi, Alima), and "popular Islam" (a simplified understanding of faith that differs greatly from fundamental Islam) was widely spread among the population. This is why re-islamization began here in the early 1990s. Muslims had to actually remember the basics of the faith from scratch. It was initially carried out by the local clergy, who were few and weak. Therefore, missionaries from Chechnya, Dagestan, and Turkey (descendants of the Adygs who moved to the Ottoman Empire in the middle of the 19th century) played a crucial role in this process.

The situation was quite different in the Eastern part of the North Caucasus. Even under the Soviet regime, Islam maintained a strong presence here. There were influential Sufi groups, and there were authoritative theologians (Alima). In contrast to the West of the region, a full-fledged system of religious education survived here. For these reasons, after 1989, Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan had favorable conditions for Islamic revival.

Wahhabi and Salaphite versions of Islam have strongly influenced the centrifugal moods in the region. There is no single form of the so-called traditional Islam in the North Caucasus. The region has long been characterized by a wide variety of religious movements and groups. They all have the

right to be considered traditional and cannot claim priority in the region. And this is one of the key issues of Russian policy in the Caucasus. Moscow has long tried to make a bet on the opposition of "traditional" and "non-traditional Islam" in the fight against radicals.

The emergence of Salaphite groups in the North Caucasus has made a profound contribution to the mosaic picture of local Islam. There are many Salaphite movements — young Jamaats (communities) of "new Muslims", "bezmazkhabniki" (those *without a Madhhab*, i.e. *without certain religious school*), Dagestani Salaphites of the "Ahl As-Sunnah Wa'l-Jamaa'ah" Association, madhalites (moderate Salaphite, supporters of cooperation with the government) and the so-called "Ikhwanized" (*Ikhwan—militarized religious group*), Salaphite (influenced by the ideas of the famous Islamic theologian from Qatar, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi), and others. All of this creates a picture of a "bubbling religious cauldron" in the North Caucasus. We must understand that there is no single Salaphite group with a unified mindset and a coherent ideology.

The Islamic landscape of the region is in constant flux numerous —religious movements sometimes conflict with each other and then try to establish contacts with each other.

Nevertheless, the region is now characterized by the growth of national consciousness. The current development of Islam in the North Caucasus is very uneven. Most likely, the division between region's Western and Eastern parts will continue to deepen. In one way or another, Islam contributes to the integration of the North Caucasus and creates the basis for the formation of a regional entity independent of Moscow. The historical experience of such a state is that of Imam Shamil. Later it was the Emirate of Uzun-Khair Haji Khan. An example of a modernist approach to this type of state is the UAE. So, is a United Caucasus Emirate possible?

Caucasus Emirate

The North Caucasus Imamate (Imamate of Shamil) was a theocratic Islamic power that existed on the territory of Dagestan and Chechnya in 1829-1859 and was conquered by the Russian Empire during the Caucasian war [15]. The prerequisite for

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the creation of the Imamate was the movement of Sheikh Mansur in 1785-1791. He is sometimes called the first Imam of the Caucasus. Sheikh Mansur and his followers resisted the attempts of tsarist Russia to conquer the North Caucasus, which eventually resulted in the open wars of 1785-1791 and 1817-1864—the so-called Great Caucasian war. During the first war, Sheikh Mansur was captured by the tsarist troops, but in general the war ended with the victory of the mountaineers, who retook Chechnya, part of Dagestan and Circassia. United in defense against Russia, different mountain peoples concluded several military alliances, and then created a single state, the Imamate (there are also designations of the North Caucasus Imamate and Shamil Imamate, etc.).

Since September of 1919, the Islamic state of the North Caucasus Emirate existed on the territory of Dagestan and Chechnya, and Uzun-Khair Haji Khan was elected Emir. It was announced that "the North Caucasus Emirate is an independent Sharia monarchy headed by Emir Uzun-Khair-Haji Khan under the protectorate of the Ottoman Caliph Amir al-Mu'minin Sultan of the Ottoman Empire Mehmed VI Vahideddin". The state was divided into the posts of naib and based on Sharia rule. However, it did not last long. It existed until March of 1920. The North Caucasus Emirate ceased to exist with the death of Uzun Khan, after whose rule the Soviet power of the Bolsheviks was established.

In 2007, after the assassination of ChRI President Aslan Maskhadov, who led the country from 1997 to 2005, Doku Umarov came to power, who decided to Islamize the state, transforming it into the Caucasus Emirate (*Caucasus Emirate*). He resigned as President of the CHRI, outlawed "the ethnic, territorial and colonial zones called "North Caucasian republics" and declared himself the Supreme Amir of the Mujahedeen of the Caucasus. Thus, the new leader of the Caucasian resistance to Moscow tried to resolve the existing territorial disputes between the representatives of various peoples in the North Caucasus and engage not only Chechens, but also representatives of other nationalities, in the struggle. By his decree, Doku Umarov introduced Sharia rule in the entire territory of the Caucasus Emirate, and obliged all state structures of the Caucasus Emirate to coordinate their activities with Sharia norms. The supreme advisory body was the Majlis, which con-

sisted of the leaders of the "Vilayats" (provinces) and Jamaats (*Figure 2*).

The new entity was designated not only by Russia, but also by Western countries as an international terrorist jihadist organization. Both the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States and the reorientation of the Caucasus Emirate to radical Islam had an impact, which qualitatively changed the nature of the Chechen national liberation project. Many former national establishment members of the ChRI — first of all, Ahmed Zakayev — dissociated themselves from the Caucasus Emirate, declaring it a "FSB project," and continued to appeal to national, not Islamic, values [16].

On March 18, 2014, the Caucasian underground issued a statement about the death of Doku Umarov. His successor as Supreme Amir of the Caucasus Emirate was Ali Abu Muhammad (Aliaskhab Kebekov).

As of March 2020, there is no reliable data on the size and structure of the organization.

A researcher of Salaphite movements, Orhan Jemal, once expressed the opinion that the Caucasus Emirate had lost its organizational structure, and the connection between individual Jamaats had been broken. According to other experts, the organization remains with a minimal number of Mujahedeen, or has ceased to exist at all.

Amir Majlis Ul-Shura in the Vilayat of Nokhchiycho Abu Hamza (Ahmed Umarov) in an interview with the Georgian NEW CAUCASUS edition on October 18, 2017 stated that the information silence around the Caucasus Emirate is related to the fact that most of the military wing took an oath to the Islamic State, and the Caucasus Emirate itself is undergoing a reorganization. According to various estimates, about two thousand militants moved to the side of the Islamic state to complete the Hijri, the migration to the Middle East to commit armed Jihad. Therefore, those Islamists who managed to survive will sooner or later return to their homeland with rich combat experience. They will be able to use the experience of their predecessors in creating an Islamic state with the conditional name of the United Caucasus Emirate.

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Figure 2. Vilayats of the Caucasus Emirate

To prevent such a scenario Russia actively resorts to the neutralization and destruction of the Chechen leaders abroad. On January 30, a Chechen Imran Aliyev ("Mansur the Old"), known for his harsh criticism of the Kadyrov regime in social networks, was found murdered in a hotel on the border with Belgium in Northern France. According to sources, he received political asylum in Belgium, and the political motive is now a priority for the investigation. On August 23, 2019, a Chechen named Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, who was a close associate of Aslan Maskhadov and participated in the second Chechen war, was killed by Russian special services in Berlin.

Conclusions

Tsarist and Soviet Russia at the time of establishment of the borders had the priority of the "divide and rule" principle to facilitate the management of the conquered territories. There have almost never been any real borders in the North Caucasus. With the advent of Russia, "time bombs" were laid in the Caucasus, so that the detonator could be pressed at any moment to lead to an explosion, which, however, would be difficult to determine as controlled.

Today, Putin is preparing to prolong his stay in power. Therefore, in the Caucasus, managed zones of instability are required to prevent the current

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Caucasian republics from uniting during political turbulence. In the event of the rise of national movements, there are prerequisites for the introduction of an emergency state or the formation of a single governing body for the republics.

Today's incidents are associated with provocations and borders are necessary for preparing public opinion—the republics are unable to solve their issues, and therefore the Federal government shall intervene by cancelling the borders of these republics and creating a single entity similar to, for example, the Gorska Republic in 1919.

Today, in the North Caucasus, the heads of republics are protégés of the security forces. Due

to provocations with administrative borders, an active part of the population is being identified to oppose them.

One of the possible scenarios is the transformation of Russia into a new quasi-federation, which could potentially consist of nine subjects. One of them will be the North Caucasus. In other words, it could potentially be not a Federal district, but one of the subjects of the new state structure in Russia transformed by Putin. In this scenario, Putin will be able to solve two issues simultaneously. First, he will be able to preserve his power. Second, he will lay the foundation for the joining of Belarus and Ukraine to the neo-imperial conglomerate, which remains an idea fixe for the Kremlin.

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Regional Initiatives in the Black Sea Region: More Alive than Dead or More Dead than Alive?⁷

The Black Sea region is neither homogeneous nor stable, and it is not even safe. Although the struggle for regional influence has been ongoing for centuries, the current situation in the Black Sea region can be described as explosive. This is despite the fact that there is a fairly long list of regional initiatives aimed to ensure, or at least promote, the development of cooperation and mutual understanding between the Black Sea countries. A part of these initiatives exists today formally, a part has practical content, another part has prospects for further development, and some of them do not have any prospects.

The policy of the Russian Federation towards the Black Sea region has always been a determining factor in the functioning of particular initiatives. Its main goal is to control the region and turn it exclusively into its sphere of influence for the further projection of power to the West — namely, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, North Africa, and Southern Europe. The open (military) phase of Russian aggression against Ukraine with the occupation of Crimea and intervention in Donbas began when the Kremlin realized that it was unable to achieve its goal neither through regional initiatives, in which it participated, nor through competition or mutually beneficial partnership.

Russia's current policy does not bring anything to the countries of the region but destabilization and threats to their sovereignty. The Black Sea region is a zone of constant Russian efforts to destabilize Europe in general and split the European Union and NATO in particular. Russia works from within multilateral initiatives and individual countries in

the region. Being unable to offer effective and mutually beneficial projects to participants in existing regional initiatives, Russia has resorted to making groups of countries based on some interests, which are harmful for other countries, while destroying regional cooperation. This situation requires the development of effective counteraction and prevention mechanisms. Since Russia uses hidden methods and tools, under the slogans of "caring" for Russian-speaking and/or Orthodox citizens, fraternal peoples, maintaining peace, implementing economic and energy projects, and so on, adapting them to a specific situation, the countries of the region can and should establish cooperation and develop coordinated measures to identify and counter these hidden methods.

The analysis of the state and prospects for further functioning of the key initiatives of the Black Sea region allows us to form views on their possible use in order to stabilize the situation and move to cooperation in the interests of developing fair competition, as well as security and prosperity of the Black Sea countries.

First in the list of regional initiatives is the **Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)**, established in 1992 by the Istanbul Declaration as a mechanism for intergovernmental interaction and transformed into a full-fledged regional organization after its Charter was approved in 1998. The BSEC consists of 12 countries—Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine, making it the largest regional organization in the Black Sea region, with a total area of about 20 million square kilometres and a population of about 337 million people. The importance of the Organization, which belongs to a realm of economy, for Ukraine is demonstrated by the indicators of foreign trade: the volume of exports of Ukraine to the BSEC countries in 2019

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amounted to 9.5 billion USD (19.08% of total exports of Ukraine), and imports totaled 11.6 billion USD (19.09% of total imports) [1]. Although the BSEC is a non-political organization, its significance for the stability of the region is determined by the fact that it covers all the Black Sea countries in a broad sense, has a parliamentary component—the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC (PABSEC)—and is designed to develop fair competition and partnership. It's not by chance that the priorities of the Romanian Chairmanship in BSEC for the period from 1 January to 30 June 2020 include: *"Romania's actions in its capacity as BSEC Chairmanship will aim at ensuring that intergovernmental economic cooperation can bring its due share to the sustainable development of the wider Black Sea region and to enhancing its peace, stability and prosperity, in accordance to the commitments embodied in the BSEC Charter"* [2].

However, the work of the organization was ineffective because of the diverse composition of participants, their different foreign policy orientations, and relative poverty. Subsequently, the situation became more complicated due to a number of problems in relations between the countries and numerous conflicts, in particular, in the post-Soviet space. The Russian aggression against Ukraine and occupation of Crimea slowed down the work of the Organization. Some of the key reasons are: sanctions on the Russian Federation; changing the geography of transit traffic with the reorientation of traditional land cargo flows to alternative routes due to the impossibility of cooperation with the occupied Crimean ports; restricting the passage of vessels through the Kerch Strait; increasing the number of unjustified checks by the Russian security forces of vessels going to the ports of Mariupol and Berdyansk, and others. Ukraine boycotted the Russian Chairmanship of the BSEC in the first half of 2016 and the 47th General Assembly of the BSEC Parliamentary Assembly, which was held on June 28-30 of the same year in Moscow.

In the period of its BSEC Chairmanship in 2017, Ukraine proposed that the participating countries officially identify Russia as an "aggressor," but that proposal was rejected. The Russian Federation and Armenia insisted on depoliticizing the work of the Organization, and Turkey also demonstrated its interest in a careful way as it considers the BSEC its main platform for regional leadership. Despite the

presence of Russia in the Organization, Ukraine is interested in participating in multilateral projects, primarily with the EU and NATO member states, which are part of it. In particular, it cooperates with Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece on the construction of a motorway (from Odesa to Bucharest in two directions: Reni-Giurgiulești-Galați and Chișinău-Ungheni), which is a part of the Black Sea Ring Highway and the Trans-European Network (TEN-T). The construction of an international checkpoint across the Ukrainian-Romanian border "Orlivka-Isaccea" for ferry, passenger, and cargo traffic has been completed. Three BSEC events are planned in 2020 in Ukraine: two meetings of Directors and managers of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB), and a meeting of the Executive Board of the Black Sea Universities Network. However, Turkey's position as the initiator of the founding of the BSEC and its relations with Russia, especially against the background of the aggravation of the situation in Syria, will influence the further functioning of the Organization.

The infrastructure and transport sphere defines the role of the Black Sea region as a hub between Europe and Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, the Caucasus region and the Balkans, the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean. In 1998 in Baku, the Basic Multilateral Agreement on International Transport for Development of the Europe-the Caucasus-Asia Corridor [3] was signed, based on which, in the framework of the Baku initiative of the EU on cooperation in the fields of energy and transport, the Intergovernmental Commission on Transport corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia was established (TRACECA) was established. It consists of 13 states—Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Moldova, Ukraine, and Iran (since 2009). Its Secretariat is located in Baku, and the TRACECA regional office operates in Odesa, Ukraine. TRACECA meets annually and its activities are carried out jointly with the EU. In 2006, a long-term strategy for the development of the Corridor was adopted in cooperation with the European Commission as well as two Plans on the security and safety of transport within TRACECA and between its members and the EU for the period until 2021. After the beginning of Russian aggression, Ukraine stepped up its participation in this initiative through its interest in

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creating a link between the basins of the Caspian and Black Seas bypassing Russia [4]. On June 1, 2016 in Odesa, the Intergovernmental Commission approved the Strategy for development of the international transport corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia for 2016-2026 and its Annex—the Master Plan, which identified priority projects aimed at developing transport infrastructure and logistics, and promoting multi-modal transportation along the TRACECA corridor.

Founded in 1997 in Strasbourg, the organization of **GUAM**—Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova (from 1999 to 2005, it was GUUAM including Uzbekistan), was reformatted into the "Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM" with the Secretariat in Kyiv after signing of the Kyiv Declaration on May 23, 2006. The organization's goals are quite broad, from economic cooperation to ensuring security. GUAM and its Parliamentary Assembly are actively functioning, and regular meetings are held at the level of Ministers, MPs and national coordinators. However, the activity of the Organisation was not effective, because its member states had different priorities and economic and political interests, and it was significantly slowed down after the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Russia initially viewed GUAM as an association created to oppose it with the support of the United States, and has always hindered its work in various ways. Although Russian actions have led to all participating countries losing control over parts of their sovereign territory, GUAM has not become a platform for achieving the goal of de-occupation. The countries have, however, coordinated their positions in international organizations such as the UN, OSCE, CoE and PACE. Since 2017, cooperation has somewhat intensified, in particular, thanks to Ukraine and Azerbaijan, which in 2019-2020 chairs the GUAM and is also the coordinator of the working groups on cyber-security and transport. Projects of the GUAM-USA Framework Program are being implemented: the Trade and Transport Facilitation Project (TFTP) and the project to create the GUAM Virtual Centre to combat terrorism, organized crime, drugs and other dangerous crimes and the Interstate Information and Analytical System (VC/IIAS) [5]. Ukraine has recently agreed to resume the project of supplying Azerbaijani oil using the Odesa-Brody and Druzhba oil pipelines. A promising area of cooperation, in particular with

Azerbaijan, is the implementation of the Brody-Adamova Zastava oil pipeline project as the key element of the Euro-Asian Oil Transport Corridor (EAOTC), as well as the plans of MTP Sarmatia LLC for 2020 and subsequent years [6].

The Commission on the protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (or the Black Sea Commission) was established to implement the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (the so-called "Bucharest Convention"), signed by Ukraine in April 1992 together with five states including Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation and Turkey. In June 2019, the EU Council adopted a decision on the intention to acquire full membership in the Commission at the level of foreign ministers of the member countries. In addition to the Convention, the Commission's activities are based on three Protocols (Control of Land-Based Sources of Pollution; Waste Dumping; Joint Action in the Case of Accidents) and the Strategic action plan for the protection of the natural environment and restoration of the Black Sea, adopted in 2009. They provide for the achievement of environmental goals: saving commercial living marine resources, biodiversity, and habitats of the Black Sea; reducing eutrophication; ensuring good water quality for human health, recreational use, and aquatic biota. The Commission has a meeting once a year and extraordinary meetings are held at the request of any of the member countries. The Permanent Secretariat of the Commission is located in Istanbul. **Despite the Commission's purely environmental mission, Russia is trying to use its format to legalize the annexation of Crimea. In particular, it regularly tries to involve residents from occupied Crimea into the work of the Commission's subsidiary bodies as representatives of the Russian Federation, but Ukraine opposed it [7].**

A more pronounced security initiative is the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group **BLACKSEAFOR**, which was established in early 2001 on the initiative of Turkey. The group includes forces from all Black Sea countries, specifically Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia and Georgia. Since the original goal of BLACKSEAFOR was to jointly promote security and stability in the Black Sea, strengthen friendship and good neighborly relations between the countries of the region and interaction between the naval forces of these coun-

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tries, Russia's unleashing of war against Ukraine made this Group incapable. Since March 2014, Ukraine has stopped participating in this initiative.

The work of the group took into account the results of another security initiative, the **Black Sea Harmony**, which has been an operation of the Turkish Navy since March 2004, and which was joined by Russia (2006), Ukraine (2007) and Romania (2009). The purpose of the operation is to constantly monitor the movement of suspicious vessels in order to prevent their illegal activities, including terrorist ones. The components of the Black Sea Harmony are direct actions of the signatory countries' warships at sea; exchange of traffic and general situation data; exchange of delegations for coordination and execution of tasks. Unlike BLACKSEAFOR, as noted by the editor of the BlackSeaNews Andriy Klymenko in an interview with the Uryadovy Courier ("Governmental Courier") [8], Ukraine has not yet left the Black Sea Harmony format, although it has stopped participating in the exchange of data and delegations with the Russian Federation. For example, in March 2016, Ukrainian and Turkish warships completed tasks in the framework of this operation, and in May 2019 in Istanbul, the commander of the Naval Forces of Ukraine Armed Forces Admiral Igor Voronchenko and his Turkish counterpart Admiral A. Ozbal discussed the exchange of information on the shore situation in the framework of the Black Sea Harmony operation. For Ukraine, its further participation in it is dangerous, since Russia can stop civilian vessels at any point in the Black Sea, including the Ukrainian water area, justifying such actions with the goals of the Black Sea Harmony operation.

The Black Sea region has not been without the attention of the European Union, a vivid example of which was the "**Black Sea Synergy**" initiated by the European Union, which united the EU and the Black Sea countries. The Black Sea Synergy was intended to indicate the EU's transformation into an actor in the Black Sea region and its growing interest in regional processes. The priority areas of the initiative, implemented through joint funding, are energy, maritime transport, fishing, environment, development of democracy and justice, protection of human rights, education, and promotion of free movement of people, migration and the fight against cross-border organised crime.

Initially, Ukraine showed a high interest in this initiative, which was officially launched in Kyiv in 2008. However, without proper institutional and financial support, this initiative has gradually become a formality.

Later, with the launch of another EU regional initiative, the **Eastern Partnership**, in 2009, the EU switched all its attention to this dimension, and the Black Sea Synergy continued to exist mainly on paper and in various EU policy documents. For example, among its priorities the Romanian Presidency of the EU in 2019 declared "*promoting coordinated and coherent actions in the EU's neighborhood, while celebrating 10 years since the launch of the Eastern Partnership, through reaffirming the importance of the Black Sea on EU agenda, including from the perspective of reinvigorating the Black Sea Synergy*" [9]. The Eastern partnership has not been able to replace the Black Sea Synergy in the context of the EU's activity in the Black Sea, and therefore we can state that the EU has not received an effective policy specially focused on this region. However, in June 2019, the EU Council adopted conclusions on strengthening the EU's involvement in the Black Sea regional cooperation on the basis of the Black Sea Synergy to use new opportunities for economic development, risk tolerance and communication in the region and beyond [10]. The EU Council called on the High Representative and the European Commission to carefully consider the Black Sea Synergy Initiative in future programming of financial and technical cooperation and to focus on joint actions in the field of environment, transport, and energy. This decision of the EU is favorable for Ukraine, as it will balance Russia's influence in the Black Sea region by enhancing regional cooperation under the aegis and with the support of the European Union.

Tangent to the Black Sea region is the EU **Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), or the Danube Strategy**, approved in 2011. This initiative applies to all countries of the Danube river basin, is quite actively functioning, and covers a number of important areas of regional cooperation. Among them, it is worth highlighting those that concern the Black Sea region: achieving political stability in the region; joint actions to ensure security; fighting criminality; developing transport infrastructure and sustainable energy; countering

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environmental threats. The EUSDR Implementation Report 2016-2018 listed 24 projects that were launched and successfully implemented by the participating countries, including the mentioned areas [11]. For the Black Sea region, this initiative is important because the implementation of projects in the Danube region has direct and indirect impacts on the Black Sea region. For example: transport flows from the Danube ports go to the Black Sea ports; increased environmental or transport security affects the situation in these areas in the Western part of the Black Sea; interaction and cooperation between the Black Sea countries of the Danube basin increase. One more aspect of the EU's Danube Strategy is that Russia's actions to restrict navigation in the Black Sea, the threat of which is actively discussed in Ukraine, threaten restriction of navigation on the Danube. It is no wonder that during the international Sea Breeze 2019 exercise, the tasks of protecting the mouth of the Danube River with the use of warships and other means were performed.

The Black Sea region is also influenced by the **Three Seas Initiative** (3SI), economic and infrastructure projects of which unite 12 countries of the European Union (Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia, and the Czech Republic). During the first summit in Dubrovnik on August 25-26, 2016, the decision was made to include only EU members in the initiative, preventing Ukraine from fully participating. Since then, there have been four summits attended by representatives of governments of the EU and the U.S., including American President Trump in 2017. The Initiative includes, among other things, the creation of transport and energy infrastructure between the Black, Baltic, and Adriatic Seas. The initiative is rapidly developing. Attention is paid to the development of a network of marine liquefied gas terminals (Poland, Lithuania, and Croatia), gas pipeline systems, the implementation of highway projects (Via Carpatia and Via Baltica/European route E67) and railway passenger and cargo routes (Baltic-Adriatic corridor, Rail Baltica, and Amber Rail Freight Corridor). The 3SI Investment Fund is expected to be the main source of funding in addition to the financial resources of the EU. It can guarantee expenses of up to five billion euros [12]. For its part, the U.S. announced its intention to invest up to one billion USD in the 3SI projects,

in particular in the energy sector [13]. But Russia perceives the Initiative negatively, as a platform for deterring the expansion of Russian influence on the participating countries [14].

The Black Sea region does not have its own security-related initiatives, and therefore the key organization which can balance Russian military aggression and strengthen security is **NATO**, as three Black Sea countries are NATO members. The Alliance pays great attention to Black Sea security, considering the region as the southern flank to deter Russia's aggressive militaristic policy. During a meeting with Romanian Prime Minister Ludovic Orban on January 9, 2020 in Brussels, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said: *"The Black Sea Region is of importance, great importance for NATO. And we have to remember that what triggered the adaptation, the strengthening of NATO's collective defense, which we have seen over the last years, was actually the illegal annexation of Crimea in the Black Sea."* [15] In the Black Sea, NATO is carrying out the air patrol missions, NATO warships are there on a temporary basis (in 2019, 29 warships of non-Black Sea member countries of NATO visited the Black Sea, according to the Monitoring group of the BSNews and the Institute for Black Sea Strategic Studies), Bulgaria is preparing to accommodate the NATO Naval Coordination Centre, and NATO conducts annual multilateral trainings and exercises, in particular, Sea Breeze. In addition, the Alliance has deployed the Multinational Brigade subordinated to the Multinational Division Southeast Headquarters located in Bucharest, Romania, that acquired operational capability in the summer of 2017.

In this context, we should pay attention to the initiative to strengthen cooperation between some NATO member countries within the framework of the **Bucharest Nine Initiative (B9)**. B9 is a formation of nine NATO member states located on the Eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance. It was established in 2015 in Bucharest, on the initiative of Romania and Poland. During the Bucharest summit, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic signed a Joint Declaration stating that the countries of the Bucharest Nine would join their "efforts to secure, where needed, a robust, credible, tailored and sustainable Allied military presence in our region" [16]. B9 focuses on Black Sea

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security. So, in April 2019, the Defense Ministers of the Bucharest Nine discussed with the Polish President A. Duda security of the Southeastern flank of NATO, in particular, Romania and Bulgaria, as well as measures to strengthen security in the Black Sea region [17]. B9 is a format within the framework of the Alliance and only complements its security architecture in Europe and in the Black Sea region in particular. Therefore, Ukraine is not included in this format, but, as noted Serhiy Herasymchuk, Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism", it is looking for opportunities to develop its cooperation in the realm of security [18]. This will allow Ukraine to expand cooperation with NATO and bring additional dividends in the context of prospects for gaining membership in the Alliance and coordinating efforts to ensure security in the Black Sea region.

Black Sea initiatives without the participation of the Russian Federation will contribute to countering Russia's aggressive policy aimed at turning the Black Sea into a "Russian lake", and, therefore, should be supported and developed in every possible way.

The Black Sea region is an area of constant effort by the Russian Federation. Its strategic goal is to bring the countries of all of Southeastern Europe under its complete control. Therefore, the Kremlin actively promotes the recognition of the countries of the region as a space "in between", which creates prerequisites for Russia to spread its influence over them, and tries to prevent the implementation of any regional initiatives where the Russian Federation is not involved. At the same time, an analysis of the implementation of multilateral initiatives in the Black Sea region has shown that those initiatives where Russia is involved have decreased or are gradually decreasing their level of activity. These include BLACKSEAFOR and Black Sea Harmony. More and more problems arise in the work of those initiatives, which Russia attempts to use to legalize the illegal annexation of Ukrainian Crimea, like in the Black Sea Commission, that require more careful monitoring by Ukraine.

Other initiatives that do not have the support of the EU or NATO also have problems in achieving practical results. Thus, GUAM has become a platform more for consultation and coordination of efforts than for practical implementation of proj-

ects. Meanwhile, the recent activities of GUAM give hope for the development of at least sectoral cooperation in the fields of energy, logistics, and cyber security.

The EU initiatives, or those in the framework of the EU, have prospects for active implementation in the future, even if they have so far been in a state of zero efficiency. The example of Black Sea Synergy showed that this initiative was underestimated by the European Union, which, against the background of the expansion of Russian aggression in the Black Sea region, revised its approaches and decided to revive it in 2019, filling it with practical content. This should strengthen the EU activities in the Black Sea and balance the negative influence of Russia.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region is being developed and shows practical results in the form of implemented or initiated projects. In the future, Ukraine should be included in all its fourteen priority areas, and the Strategy itself should become an example for the Black Sea Synergy and be developed in close coordination of efforts, in particular, on water transport, environmental issues, navigation safety, sustainable energy, and countering non-military threats.

The Three Seas Initiative covers not the entire Black Sea region, but the Black Sea countries of the EU, and therefore it is now difficult to extend the implementation of this initiative to the entire Black Sea region. However, the involvement of Ukraine in the implementation of some 3SI projects, in particular in the fields of energy and transport, expands the geography of the initiative and strengthens its Black Sea component.

In General, the EU should clearly define the directions of its regional policy in the Black Sea region, so that Russia cannot use this vacuum to continue to negatively influence the situation in the region. By supporting regional initiatives and projects, as well as paying attention to the security of the region, the EU can become a centre of attraction for the entire region, because it is able to counter Russia, which has nothing to offer the countries of the region except destabilization. In addition, NATO as a whole, including through the active activities of the Bucharest Nine, is able to stabilize the situa-

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tion in the Black Sea region, which should include the active involvement of Ukraine and Georgia.

The Black Sea region is a zone of direct strategic interests of Ukraine. Therefore, active foreign policy activity and interaction of Ukraine with the states within the region is a necessary condition for moving away from the model of dependent behavior

since it contributes to increasing the relative power of the state, strengthening its negotiating ability, and increasing its international position. Ukraine's active policy in this region, including through regional initiatives, can potentially contribute to creating an effective platform for strengthening the relative capabilities of our state and its ability to resist Russian aggression.

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Is Georgia Doomed to Have a Deep Seaport?⁸

Karl Clausewitz's statement that politics is a concentrated expression of economics became a truism long ago. However, the reversed statement is also true: almost always the economy is a manifestation of politics. This is particularly evident in the case of the Black Sea region, where the political scene determines the structure of economic interaction between countries.

After the occupation and annexation of Crimea by Russia, a fundamentally new situation has developed in Eastern Europe. The European Union could have considered the aggression against Georgia and the occupation of its two regions as an exception to the rules (at least, many people would like to see it that way). The annexation of territory from a state that borders the European Union did not call a halt to illusions about the possibility of "negotiating" with Russia but greatly shook them. The annexation of Crimea has brought the issue of the Black Sea region security to the foreground. The Russian Federation had a military base in Crimea before 2014. However, after annexing Crimea, Moscow claimed control over a large part of the Black Sea, which is one of the key components of the world's logistics routes from Asia to Europe, or, in other words, the pass from the world's largest factory to its largest market. General-to-specific, the establishment of a deep-water port on the Eastern coast of the Black Sea will inevitably lead to changes in both the logistics and the security architecture in the Black Sea region.

How did Lazika differ from Anaklia?

The project on construction of a deep-water port close to the village of Anaklia was first announced in 2010. It was a rather ambitious plan, which provided for the construction of the port and a new city – Lazika. The project was part of a large Georgia government program aimed at creating three multi-modal logistic hubs Tbilisi-Vardabani, Batumi-Akhalkalaki, and Lazika-Kutaisi (*Figure 1*). The program included the modernization of railway and highway infrastructure, energy and information communications systems, and the creation of industrial zones.

The idea was to make Georgia attractive to investors due to modern infrastructure and freedom of business, in particular low taxes and the absence of regulations. Additional bonuses were planned for each zone. For example, a proposal to make Lazika a zone of international law, which would provide resolution of all disputes in international courts, bypassing the national level, was made. Chinese companies almost immediately showed the greatest interest in the project. However, their desire to lead it, according to unofficial information, was blocked by Washington. From the Potomac bank, the Georgian authorities were given guarantees of the American companies' participation that, by the way, did not prevent the Chinese from participating in the project as subcontractors. Realising the importance of the project, the Georgian government at that time was in a hurry and managed to create the initial infrastructure before 2012, and even construct the ambitious building of the local administration, designed by the famous German architect Jurgen Mayer. A bridge was built over the Inguri River, connecting Anaklia with the village of Ganmukhuri, and a Boulevard on the coast.

⁸ The publication was prepared in the framework of the project "Promoting Security in the Black Sea Region through Greater Engagement of Non-Governmental Organizations" with the support of the Black Sea Trust Fund, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Black Sea Trust Fund or its partners.

FOCUS ON: BLACK SEA INITIATIVES

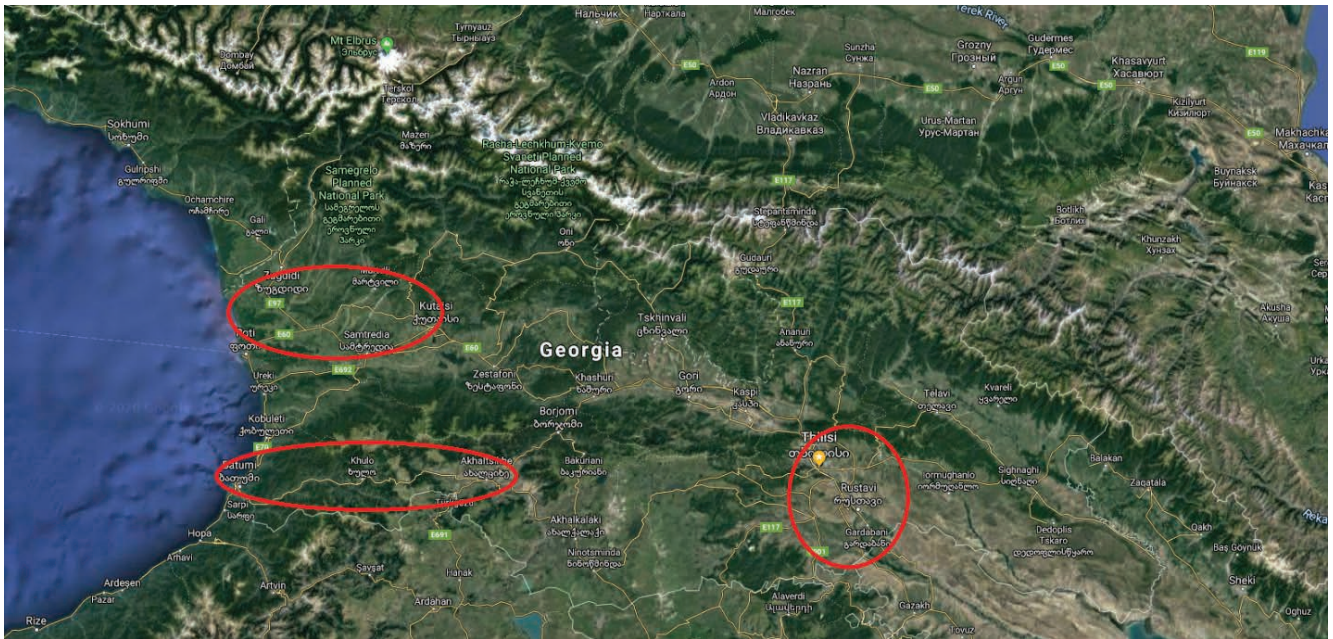


Figure 1. Multimodal logistics hubs Tbilisi-Gardabani, Batumi-Akhalkalaki, and Lazika-Kutaisi

At that time, Georgia was considered an attractive investment country. The consequences of the war and the global financial crisis were relatively painless due to financial assistance from the Western partners, especially the United States. However, an increase in private investment was required to maintain the economic growth rate in 2012. The project was designed for this. In addition, it had political significance, as Anaklia was located a few kilometres from the occupation line, and the emergence of a powerful economic centre in that area would resolve the problem of urbanization of both the Samegrelo-Upper Svanetia region and the Gali region of Abkhazia, where more than 40 thousand Georgians, which were deprived of any civil rights, lived.

It would seem that the idea was great, but from the very beginning, the project had irreconcilable opponents. Since its inception, the Georgian Dream coalition declared it "Saakashvili's Potemkin village." It was stated that they, still the opposition at the time, would do everything possible to stop this project. However, the Georgian Dream did not suggest any rationale. At that time, few people spoke about the fact that the project already contradicted Russia's interests, and the unwillingness to quarrel with the Russian Federation could have caused such an aggressive attitude of the Georgian Dream. One

way or another, the project was stopped immediately after the Georgian Dream came to power. It was clear that the reasons were not explained. Suspension of the new city of Lazika construction, and another American project – the establishment of the American Technology University in Batumi, intended to train engineering personnel under the program of one of the American universities by foreign teachers, caused irreparable damage to Georgia's development. The educational project was funded by the Millennium Program, which had already completed its mission in Georgia. But immediately after the Georgian Dream coming to power, Georgia increased its trade with Russia, mainly in agricultural sector.

Anaklia: from resuscitation to death

The Georgian authorities were forced to return to the project of a deep-water port in 2017, following the persistent recommendations of the Americans. That year was a "honeymoon" between the Georgian authorities, i.e. Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, and the new administration of the United States. Kvirikashvili established good personal relations with the U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, who deeply respected the role of Georgia as a historical Bastion of Christian civilization in the Middle East. At the

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same time, a large delegation of hierarchs of the Georgian Apostolic Church visited Washington. Those were the hierarchs very sceptical of the West. After returning from Washington, the hierarchs declared that there was no such faith anywhere in the world as in the United States and that the U.S., in general, was a stronghold of healthy conservatism. However, as we know, business goes before ideology. The real actual content of the new stage of Georgian-American relations was the reanimation of the deep-water port project in Anaklia. The name "Lazika", certainly, was not mentioned, not to look absolutely stupid in the eyes of the people, who remembered everything perfectly.

To implement the project, the "Anaklia Development Consortium" was established. It included TBC Holding. Its controlling stake at that time belonged to entrepreneurs close to Kvirikashvili, Badri Japaridze and Mamuka Khazaradze, American companies Conti International LLC and SSA Marine, British Wondernet Expres and Bulgarian G-Star Ltd. To be honest, many people in Georgia breathed a sigh of relief, as project implementation was more important than its participants and their names. However, no revision has been performed. In 2018, either fearing a too big Kvirikashvili's friendship with the Americans or for some other reason, the actual owner of the ruling Georgian Dream Bidzina Ivanishvili released the Prime Minister. This resignation triggered issues for the project.

To stay focused on details, we will indicate the project milestones. In 2018, sensing no good, the main investor – the American Conti Company – demands additional guarantees from the government. At the beginning of 2019, the authorities opened an obviously pointless criminal case against Badri Japaridze and Mamuka Khazaradze, accusing them of money laundering. During his speech in Parliament, Khazaradze explained in detail why the debts were written off immediately after the 2008 war, but the case was not stopped. In June 2019, during the visit of the Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze to the United States, the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo publicly stated that the strengthening of Russia's position in Georgia could not but cause concern, and in this regard he recalled the issues of the deep-water port of

Anaklia. Pompeo expresses hope that the government of Georgia will bring it to the end, as it was strategically important for both Georgia and its partners.

On August 15, 2019, without waiting for guarantees from the Georgian government, Conti International LLC announced its withdrawal from the project. After that, the Consortium offers other investors to the government, but under various pretexts the government blocked the proposals. And at the very beginning of 2020, the government announced the termination of the contract with Anaklia Development Consortium under the pretext of the Consortium's failure to fulfil the terms of the contract and to attract investors. Hence the project is suspended for an indefinite term.

What's next?

The Georgian government assures that the Anaklia project will be implemented, new investors will be attracted, and everything will come right. Any third-party observer will inevitably have serious questions about the last statement. For example, what is about the fact that the Consortium members have already spent significant funds exceeding USD 80 million, and will not yield the project just without a trial? Whether someone will invest in a project that faces a lengthy trial is a rhetorical question. There are only two reasons why the Georgian authorities have blocked the project. Both are on the table. One is internal. Ivanishvili did not want such an important project to be controlled by his political opponents. We should not also discard the economic component. The alliance of large capital, Church hierarchs and representatives of the American establishment has been too dangerous for the Georgian authorities. The other reason is external. It is the reluctance of Georgian officials to ruin relations with Russia, especially on the eve of parliamentary elections. It is without mentioning that the topic of mutual business interests of the Georgian authorities' representatives and Russian business is the subject of a separate discussion.

However, despite everything, the deep-water port of Anaklia project will be implemented. And here's why. Georgia and the entire region

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need a deep-water port, which really does not exist. Those, who say that there is no cargo, just do not follow the situation on the freight market, both in the region and in the world, at least at the level of interested amateurs. The depth of the Anaklia port will be 20.5 meters, which will allow accepting large container ships. The fact that the Bosphorus waterway is 13 meters deep imposes restrictions on vessels entering the Black Sea, regardless of the depth of the destination ports. However, vessels of this type may well be used for transportation within the Black Sea. For comparison, the depth of berths for transshipment of bulk loads, containers and general cargoes in Novorossiysk is about 14.5 meters, in Batumi – 14 meters, and in Poti – 8.5 meters. According to the project, 32 berths are planned to be built in Anaklia. The planned capacity of the port will exceed 100 million tonnes.

These indicators cannot but raise questions, because today the cargo turnover of the Georgian railway is almost ten times less. And here we come to the main issue of the "middle corridor" – the need to modernize the Railways of Georgia and Azerbaijan. The perfect solution would be to build a high-speed railway of the European standard from the Azerbaijani port of Alat to Anaklia with access to a large project for the construction of the equivalent railway in Kazakhstan from the Chinese border to the port of Aktau, the completion of the Iran-Azerbaijan railway and the construction of a new railway line from Odessa to the border with Poland. It is clear that such a mega-project requires thorough study and significant investment. However, giv-

en the growth dynamics of container shipments in the near future, the volume of shipments will depend not mainly on demand, but on the availability of the most convenient infrastructure along the entire route from China and India to the European Union countries. Turkey, Iran and Pakistan already have a modern transport infrastructure. However, the situation in the Middle East is unlikely to allow using the "southern corridor" of the initiative "One belt – One way" at full capacity in the near future. Even with a port like Izmir the connection between Iran and Turkey may not be sufficient, especially for the countries of Northwestern Europe. Therefore, the routes through Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine may be very popular. In this situation, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the construction of the Anaklia port. This is the case when global thinking and local actions are required.

No doubt, we should not forget the military significance of the deep-water port in the Eastern part of the Black Sea. The ability to accept ships with a large displacement makes Anaklia an important point of the security strategy in the Black Sea. And here we go back to where we started. The economic importance of Anaklia and Georgia's integration into international logistics routes is an additional argument for the country's security.

There is no doubt that sooner or later the port of Anaklia will be built. The main question is when. After all, time also matters and it is often crucial.

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Ukraine and the Russian Energy Blackmail¹⁰

A destabilized Ukraine by stopping gas supply by the Russian Federation would create a much more risky situation for the European Union and NATO than a destabilized Russian Federation. The costs of preventing such a scenario are much lower than the costs that the EU (and NATO) would pay for an imminent Kremlin aggression on Kyiv. This is also the reason for the attempt to mediate the EU in the dispute between the transport prices to the west and the internal supply of Ukraine with gas supplied by Russia through the Ukrainian pipelines.

A scenario of the significant reduction of imports from Russia by the EU is unlikely because it would create budgetary problems that would turn into domestic policy issues, which in turn would translate into foreign policy issues for the Kremlin, transforming their relationship into a conflict generator.

Blood drip around the Black Sea

With the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Republic of Moldova inherited the Transnistrian conflict, and Azerbaijan and Armenia inherited the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Both have three common characteristics: they are secessionists; Russian troops are present in the respective territories with the role of "pacification and offering security guarantees"; conflicts whenever they can re-arise.

Since 2008, the Russian Federation has initiated several latent conflicts in the immediate vicinity of the Black Sea, and subsequently freezing them.

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Georgia on the border with the Russian Federation has two secessionist territories, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which generated an armed conflict in 2008. In 2014 the Russian Federation occupied and annexed Crimea in Ukraine that was followed by the conflict in Donbas (*Figure 1*).

If we refer to the extended area of the Black Sea, the Syrian conflict, in which Russia is present, is ongoing and could have the same characteristics in the near future.

We can also deduce a pattern of Russian action: the media coverage of the territory by the Russian media; the corruption of authorities and the takeover of power by Russian political forces; the acquisition of energy companies or the strategic industry; sometimes the local use of armed forces of Russian origin, but without signs.

In addition to secessionism, relative peace, latency of the resurgence of hostilities, and the presence of Russian armed forces, whether or not they are assumed, we can add one more common factor: there are energy resources or energy routes not (yet) controlled by the Russian Federation near the mentioned conflicts.

"Power pliers" and Ukraine

The first pipeline that crossed Ukraine to transport oil to the West was put into service in 1964, being called the Druzhba (Friendship) Pipeline. Later, in 1967 the USSR started exporting the natural gas to Czechoslovakia and the next year – to Austria. In 1973 the natural gas reached Eastern and Western Germany through the territory of Ukraine. In 1987 the first gas deliveries were made through the southern part of Ukraine to the Trans Balkan Pipeline, which crossed Romania (Isaccea - Negru Voda), Bulgaria and Turkey. Gas sources were mainly from the Russian Federation but also from the former Soviet Republics - Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

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Figure 1. Pressure directions of the Russian Federation

The gas distribution system, inherited from the USSR, made Ukraine largely dependent on gas supplies from Russia. Ukraine's rulers have been making compromise after compromise with the Russian Federation to stay in power, against low gas prices.

In January 2006, the gas supply to the West was stopped for the first time, as a result of misunderstandings about the price of gas for Ukrainian domestic consumption and the price of transportation to the West. History repeated itself in winter 2008 - 2009. In April 2014 Ukraine took the first step towards energy independence from Russia, signing an agreement with Slovakia to receive gas from the Eustream Company. That agreement was signed due to the fact that Gazprom failed to comply with its contract signed in December 2013, increasing the gas price to almost 500 USD

per 1000 cubic meters, immediately after the invasion in Crimea and initialization of the conflict in Donbas.

After the first gas cessation in 2006, the Russian Federation and Germany began designing the North Stream gas pipeline under the Baltic Sea, which was launched in 2011. The existing gas route through Ukraine to Central Europe competes North Stream II, which would double its capacity by the 55 billion cubic meters of gas to be transported to Germany.

We recall that the Southern Blue Stream gas pipeline linking Russia with Turkey was launched in 2005. The southern route was planned to be completed with the South Stream, transformed later into the Turk Stream, which was put into operation in January 2020.

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In early 2012, Russia published its new Energy strategy. The Strategy, elaborated under the direct leadership of Vladimir Putin, outlines the most important actions of Russia in this field [1]:

1. European Union countries become as dependent on Russian gas as possible;
2. The Russian Federation is to make giant investments in pipelines;
3. Increasing the transport capacity from the countries of the former USSR: Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan to the West, thus increasing the Russian monopoly;
4. The creation of intermediary companies in the western countries dealing with gas imports;
5. Gazprom's association with its "old business partners" in various companies;
6. The entry in the shareholding of as many gas production and distribution companies or rolling stock manufacturers for the western gas extraction and transport industry;
7. Purchase of national gas transmission and distribution companies from as many European countries;

8. The acquisition or association with as many infrastructure companies from the European countries (communications, rail transport, etc.) in exchange for a lower gas price.

In 2013, Russian General Valeriy Gerasimov, the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Army, launched a theory about a new type of war. It was developed and transformed into the "Gerasimov Doctrine". Only one passage is relevant: "In the case of current conflicts, the role of non-military means in achieving political and strategic objectives has increased, which in many cases have exceeded the power and efficiency of weapons, which become irrelevant in the modern reality: the use of information and cyber components, special forces, internal opposition, misinformation, subversive actions of the 5th column. (...) The new conflicts will be asymmetrical and less expensive, (...) today the combination of traditional and hybrid methods has become a feature of any armed conflict" [2]. In the arsenal of this type of war there is also the energy blackmail.

Thus, Ukraine has become a victim of this new type of asymmetric war, also known as hybrid, by its circumvention by the new energy routes (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Russian energy power pliers

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Europe is divided on energy security

Energy security is an integral part of the security doctrine and can be reduced to practically relevant issues:

1. The ability of the European Union and the Member States to maintain their independent production units in a global market;
2. The ability of the Union and the Member States to have access to energy sources and strategic materials;
3. The possibility that the economic dependence on the global market will be used for political purposes;
4. The possibility of the global market to increase economic inequalities between states;
5. The risk that the economic globalization will lead to the diminution of the economic functions of the state and to generate underground economy, illicit trade, traffic with technology, environmental damage;
6. The risk that the global economy will enter into a crisis due to the wrong economic policies, the weak political leadership, the weak international institutions, the financial instability.

The Russian Federation prefers to discuss separately with the member states of the European Union and not directly with the European Commission. Also, Gazprom has set up many companies in the European energy industry, and it has entered into the shareholding of the big European companies of extraction, transport or trade with energy products and not only [3].

The Russian Federation has a pattern in managing the export prices according to the Russian interests in the respective country, the Russian capital penetration, the quantity of gas exported and the balance of payments and depending on the level of dependence on Russian gas. These are the reasons why some countries, Germany being the main one, benefit from low Russian gas import prices. We must specify that the German

economy is the largest in Europe and a major importer of energy: coal - 44.5%, oil - 96.1% and gas - 86.9% (also the largest European gas consumer), and 80% of all these imports come from Russia. It turns out that Russian gas is strategic for the Germans and appears to be non-negotiable within the EU.

On the other hand, the European Commission is trying to create a unitary energy policy of the member countries, imposing a set of rules on energy saving, in the interconnection of national gas or electricity transmission systems and in the implementation of alternative energy supply projects. The problem with the European Commission is that member countries resist by delaying or not complying with the decisions and recommendations issued in this field.

It is known that the greatest risk of the European energy security is increasing dependence on Russian gas, for the EU in general and Germany in particular by eliminating the production of nuclear electricity in 2020s.

Other higher risks

The problems that the EU has to solve are: what would happen in the case of destabilization of the Russian Federation, or what would happen in the case of destabilization of Ukraine, or both of them.

In the case of Russia, the drop in energy exports would lead to a crisis by lowering GDP and entering the Federation inability to pay, which would create a major security problem to the East from NATO and the EU.

The same situation would produce the reduction of the volumes of transport of energy products through the routes that cross Ukraine, by increasing the transport capacities of the Nord Stream and building the Turk Stream. The reduction of the volumes transported and the volumes of domestic consumption would lead to the decrease of the GDP of Ukraine and to the decrease of the standard of living of its citizens. This security risk refers to the possibility of generating political and economic instability that could lead to the dissolution of power in Kyiv and the contamination of the

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Donbas conflict to other directions on the Ukrainian territory. Obviously, the weakening of Ukraine is more harmful than that of the Russian Federation, which is continuing its *Novorussia* project,

i.e. the annexation and / or creation of a „secessionist state” in eastern Ukraine, up to the border with Romania (*Figure 3*).



Figure 3. Dividing Ukraine into the Kremlin's vision

Source: <https://www.geopolitica.ru/en/article/there-are-no-valid-arguments-against-liberation-novorossia>

Any comparative - historical analysis revealed that the EU and the neighboring countries, including the enlarged Black Sea area, are becoming more dependent on Russia each year. Every forecast will confirm this fact. The International Energy Agency shows that there will be an increase of the energy requirement by 1.5% per year and in 2030 Europe will import over 66% of the necessary energy resources. In other words, this agency predicts that Russian gas imports will double in three decades: in 2000 they were 33% of gas consumption, in 2008 they were 40%, and in 2030 they would be 66%.

We can only draw one conclusion: the European Union can lose the energy war started by the Russian Federation!

Steps to a common strategy are made in the form of a snail. It is true that in January 2019 the European Commission allocated 800 million euros for the adaptation of the Baltic countries' energy systems to the EU standards, which still work on Russian technical standards. This will disconnect Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia from the Russian energy system, and implicitly from the dependence of the electricity transmission system of the Russian Federation.

Regarding the problem of an integrated European energy system and a common energy security strategy, we can say that the Baltic States, together with Poland and Romania, have common views on the defense policy against dependence on Russia and the creation of a smart dependen-

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cy system of the whole EU through interconnections between gas and electricity transmission systems.

We cannot forget that Poland is investing in a new alternative corridor, Baltic Pipe, with gas from the North Sea (*Figure 4*) [4].

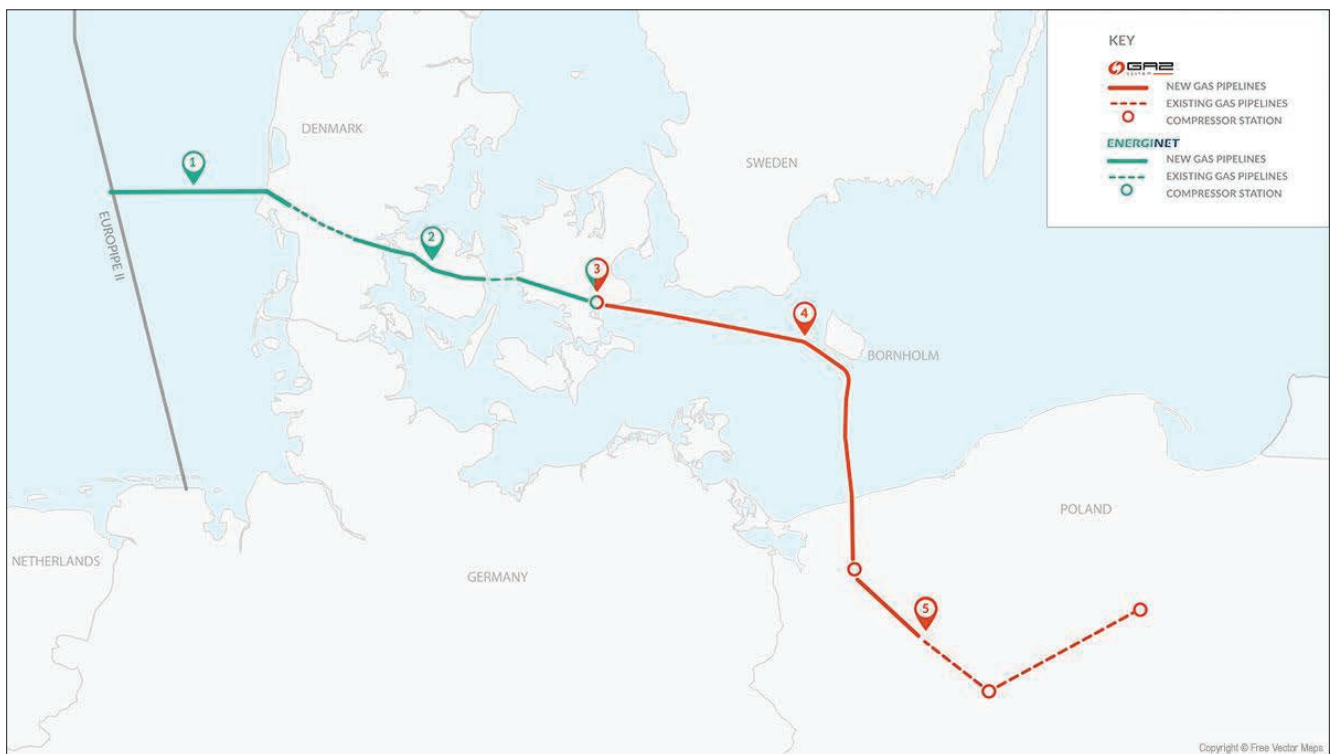


Figure 4. Baltic Pipe Project
Source: <https://www.baltic-pipe.eu/the-project/>

The U.S. wants to become a player in Europe

The two northern and southern routes – Nord Stream and TurkStream, with a capacity of over 130 billion cubic meters per year, have the possibility to close the routes that pass through Ukraine (and Belarus) to the West at any time, making it even more vulnerable to Russia with which they are in full hybrid warfare. Romania, Poland and the Baltic countries know very well what means unstable Ukraine, which is another fact that Germany probably does not foresee.

The situation has not been settled yet. Earlier, Romania proposed that all gas pipelines in the EU, including those for Russian gas supplies, would be submitted to a common law that would strengthen consumer rights and increase competition for price transparency on extraction, transport and energy trading services. Such a measure is not primarily suited to Gazprom, as well as to Germany. In the anti-North Stream II group, there are Denmark, Slovakia, Ireland, Sweden, Italy, Luxembourg,

Croatia and the Great Britain. On the other side, only Austria and the Netherlands are on the Germany side, i.e. the countries, from which the companies are designated to build the second northern section. France has at one point understood what geopolitical games are, but still does not tip the balance in favor of the common energy security policy, especially now, after the last year meeting of Vladimir Putin with Emmanuel Macron and announced desire to waive the EU sanctions. In other words, it is possible for the Russian Federation to win the energy war with Europe.

In the United States, a new Intelligence Strategy was recently published, in which the Russian Federation is indicated as a threat to world stability and not due to military danger but to the policy of accumulating influence at a global level through elements of hybrid war.

Likewise, the European capacity of receiving liquefied natural gas exceeded the liquefaction capacity on the east coast of the United States. Poland

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and Greece have put into operation two major terminals for taking in American gas, and there are such terminals in Holland and Belgium. It is a timely solution for the EU to take over the U.S. gas surplus as the Russian energy threat diminishes.

All in all, the U.S. energy companies are the only ones with gas and oil extraction technology in deep-sea areas. Thus the Russian Federation, Romania and Ukraine will have to resort to them for a possible extraction of the gas deposits in the Black Sea, which would lead to the stabilization of the situation in the area. Meanwhile, in recent

years, large U.S. companies have refused a presence and investments in unsafe and risky areas.

Because of the fiscal instability in Romania, the U.S. Exxon Company announced that it would like to give up the investments made in the Black Sea. Romanian President Iohannis's visit to the White House, in the summer of 2019, brought back to the Romanian government's work desk the revision of the tax and offshore legislation, impelling the start of the American investments in the Romanian gas extraction in the Black Sea (Figure 5) [5].

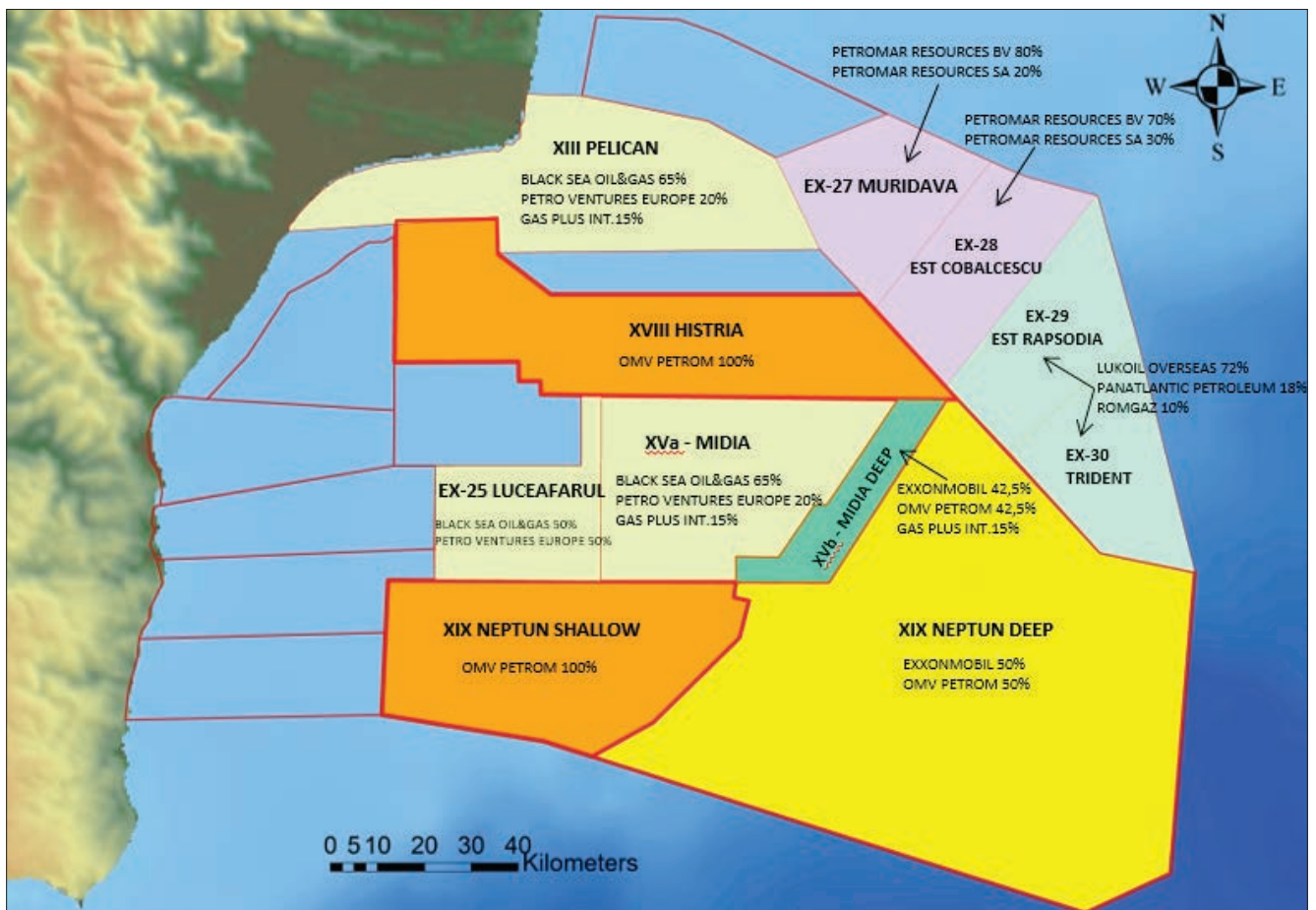


Figure 5. Concessions of Romania's gas resources in the Black Sea
Source: <http://rbsta.ro/en/map-concessions-offshore-romania/>

Ukraine at the negotiating table

Even after Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his party won the presidential and parliamentary election, Ukraine has not solved all problems with Gazprom. Interruption of Russian gas transportation to the West, as a result of Gazprom's policy, could create problems not only for the European countries but also for Ukraine. Thus the European Commission as a me-

diator made enormous efforts to promote a Russian-Ukrainian gas transit contract after January 1, 2020.

Moreover, Ukraine is modernizing the pipelines that would allow imports from Romania, preparing for the eventual cessation of Russian gas. These routes would also benefit the Republic of Moldova, which is 100% dependent now and could be paralyzed without Russian gas (Figure 6) [6].

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Figure 6. Alternative gas supply routes to Ukraine

Source: <http://uaprom.info/news/170807-ukrtransgaz-moldo-vagaz-gotovyat-novyy-marshrut-importa-gaza-rumynii.html>

Ukraine knows the pattern of aggression of the Russian Federation, which, besides the energy blackmail, also includes: the development of a corrupt system by buying or imposing controllable by the Kremlin political figures; imposing an autocratic system; intrusion into elections; creating revisionist and the Kremlin-friendly political forces; acquiring active in the strategic industries, especially the energy one; occupying the media space and social networks - the "fake - news" assault, generated by the "trolley factories" attached to the Russian intelligence

services, starting from the social networks and up to the quality press; and even the emergence of "green little men" in the territories still "unexplored" by them. Ukraine has gone through all these hostile actions of the asymmetrical war and did as it could. The aggression that it continues to face is energy blackmail.

Conclusions

Destabilized Ukraine, because of stopping gas supply by the Russian Federation, would create a much more risky situation for the European Union and NATO than the destabilized Russian Federation. The costs of preventing such a scenario are much lower than the costs that the EU (and NATO) would pay for an imminent aggression of the Kremlin against Kyiv. This is also the reason for the attempt of the EU to mediate in the dispute on the transport of Russian gas through the Ukrainian pipelines to the West and provide gas supplies for the internal demand in Ukraine.

A scenario of the significant reduction of imports from Russia by the EU is unlikely because it would create budgetary problems that would turn into domestic policy issues. These kinds of problems are always transformed by the Kremlin into foreign policy issues, being conflict generators in turn.

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Priority Gas Projects in the Black Sea and the Balkan Regions. The Issue of Coordination¹¹

The European gas market is becoming more integrated. This is facilitated by a single legislative field, which is constantly being improved, and the in-time emphasis on security of supplies (SoS). This is well-understood after the gas crises provoked by the Russian Federation. The development of competition and the strengthening of gas network connections between different countries, the elimination of isolated markets increase the reliability of supplies and, respectively, have a positive impact on consumers.

Note: An isolated market, according to the Gas Directive 2009/73/EC, is a market, which is not connected to the EU gas transportation system and has one main external gas supplier (with a share exceeding 75 %).

Gas transportation infrastructure is an important component of the market. According to the EU's estimates, modernization and development of the energy infrastructure are necessary. The estimated volume of investments is about 140 billion euros, of which more than 70 billion euros are investments in gas infrastructure. For 2014-2020 spending exceeding 5.35 billion euros were planned for energy infrastructure projects under the "CEF Energy" program exclusively.

Note: The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) is a key EU funding instrument, including the funding of the infrastructure projects in the energy sector.

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe face a particularly urgent need to improve infrastructure compatibility and connectivity, because of their dependence on a single gas source. In 2018, according to Eurostat, eleven EU Member States (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland) received over 75% of total national natural gas imports from Russia.

The vulnerable position of the Balkan and Black Sea countries is noted in the latest version of the EU Energy Security Strategy [1], and it is confirmed by regular stress tests.

The European Commission believes that a significant contribution has been made recently to strengthen energy security of Europe. This was achieved through a set of actions including increasing the share of renewable energy sources, implementing energy efficiency measures and a favorable investment environment. Improving the connectivity of the national markets and further diversification of energy sources were among the main actions [2].

Therefore, gas infrastructure is a security factor, whereas cooperation in this area to promote regional and bilateral solidarity is carried out to ensure it.

Instruments for coordination of actions and plans

Currently, there are several instruments/centres that address the issues of planning and political support for existing and new gas infrastructure projects.

¹¹ The publication was prepared in the framework of the project "Promoting Security in the Black Sea Region through Greater Engagement of Non-Governmental Organizations" with the support of the Black Sea Trust Fund, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Black Sea Trust Fund or its partners.

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First of all, the EU Gas Directive 2009/73/EC provides long-term planning at both the network operators level and the EU level [3].

ENTSOG (European Network of Transmission System Operators for Gas) is responsible for drafting and regular updating of a non-binding ten-year plan for development of the gas network at the EU level, including the European supply adequacy outlook [4].

Note: The European Network of Transmission System Operators for Gas (ENTSOG) has been established to ensure the best management of the EU gas transportation network.

According to the EU Gas Directive (p. 22, art. 5), national regulators shall monitor the consistency of the national network development plans and ten-year plans at the EU level. If there is a discrepancy between the national and pan-European plans, the regulator may require appropriate adjustments.

Second, the EU legal framework also provides for the preparation of a list of Projects of Common interest (PCI), which is periodically updated. The PCI list, approved in 2017, is currently valid [5]. It includes important projects of new terminals in Greece and Croatia (Krk), the implementation of which will allow the Black Sea countries an access to gasified LNG.

Third, the **CESEC Initiative** (Central and South-Eastern Europe Energy Connectivity) has been created to promote energy efficiency in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe [6]. With the support of the European Commission, the *CESEC* high-level working group was set up in 2015 to develop priority areas for the regional infrastructure development and promotion of their implementation to improve the security of gas supplies. It is declared that, as a result, each state of the region should have access to at least three different gas sources. The working group includes the Ministers/Representatives of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia, and the European Commission.

The Initiative focuses on both external and internal aspects of the gas supplies situation in the region, with a special focus on the development of inter-connectivity and the best use of existing

infrastructure. The CESEC Initiative is designed to provide a political momentum to finish market fragmentation and prevent potential supply crises. Representatives of Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia and other parties to the Energy Community Agreement can only participate if they are specifically invited.

In 2015, the Memorandum of understanding on a Joint approach to address the natural gas diversification and security of supply challenges as part of the CESEC Initiative [7] was adopted. It has also been signed by some countries of the Energy Community, in particular Ukraine and Serbia. A List of Priority Projects, which provided full support, was also adopted. It was agreed that to achieve the goals of the Initiative, regional solutions will include reverse flows in existing infrastructure and access to the LNG market through a combination of transportation, storage and regasification infrastructure.

The CESEC Actions Plan contains a list of infrastructure projects that consists of three categories: Priority Projects, Conditional Priority Projects, and Other Projects.

Among the projects of CESEC, we again see LNG terminals in Croatia and Greece, providing the physical Romania-Ukraine reverse (via Isaccea Gas Metering Station (GMS)) and the Firm capacity upgrade on the interconnector Hungary-Ukraine, which will potentially affect the security of gas supplies to Ukraine.

Fourth, the **Three Seas Initiative (3SI)**, was established in 2015 and has become a flexible political platform at the level of the Heads of states and governments. The initiative includes twelve EU member states located between the Adriatic, Baltic and Black Seas: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Initiative is declared open for partnership with Ukraine and other countries of the Eastern partnership. Annual summits are held. The initiative identifies Priority Interconnection Projects – 48 projects in the energy, transport and digital spheres. Progress in project implementation is reviewed at each Summit. It is noted that the financial structure of the registered projects is quite complex and not clear in some cases. Over a half of the registered projects are co-financed by the EU, EBRD

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or EIB instruments (*Figure 1*). The biggest share of financial support expected from the EU is for multilateral energy projects. This is due to the fact that some projects also have the PCI status, which, according to the Regulation 347/2013 (Guidelines for Trans-European Energy Infrastructure), provides a possibility of the EU funding, including the already mentioned "CEF Energy" Program.

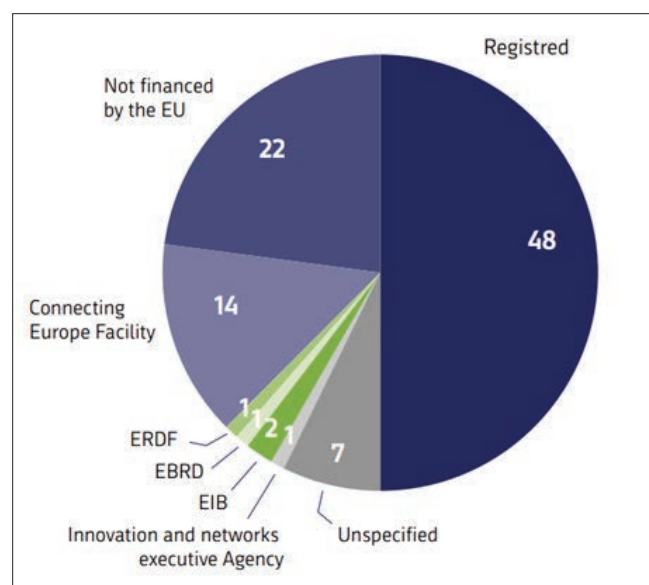


Figure 1. Funding of 3SI Priority Projects (quantity)
Source: *Priority Interconnection Projects, 2019 Status Report*

The previous 3SI Summit in Slovenia (June 2019), where representatives of Germany, the United States and the European Commission participated [8], confirmed that the modernization of gas infrastructure is critical for stimulation of the economic development, strengthening of the EU cohesion, and enriching of the transatlantic ties. The decision to create an Investment Fund for gas infrastructure – 3SI Investment Fund – has been made. Interestingly, at the 2020 Munich Security Conference, this topic was recalled by the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [9], who announced the intention to provide up to 1 billion USD of the U.S. investments in the energy sector of the Three Seas Initiative.

The status of a Priority Interconnection Project (PIP) provides that the 3SI participating states express general political support for the list of these projects. Regarding funding, it is assumed that

projects can be assessed by regional, European or international financial institutions in accordance with their specific rules, based on the benefits of each project.

The 3SI PIP list includes the projects of the LNG terminal (Croatia, Krk), the LNG terminal expansion (Poland, Swinojuscie) and development of related transport infrastructure. It is assumed that the implementation of the projects will positively change the modern architecture of gas flows in the Central and Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, and will open access to the liquefied gas market.

Note: The project for expansion of the terminal in Swinojuscie will increase its capacity from 5 to 7.5 billion cubic meters per year (by November 2021), increase operational flexibility by adding another berth and expand the storage capacity and the range of services - LNG bunkering, loading ISO containers and railway tanks (by May 2023).

Fifth, the **Energy Community** exists to expand the EU energy market to Ukraine, the Black Sea region and Southeast Europe in general. The priority projects of the Energy Community are infrastructure projects that meet the criteria defined in the adapted Regulation (EU) 347/2013 on the Guidelines for Trans-European Energy Infrastructure [10]. In 2018, a List of PECE/PMI Priority Projects - Projects of Energy Community Interest/Projects of Mutual Interests, was created.

The Energy Community has introduced the Infrastructure Transparency Platform - Project library & interactive map application (PLIMA) [11]. As of July 16, 2019, PLIMA demonstrated a set of PECE/PMI Projects (*Figure 2*) in the 2018 edition¹². Projects, which directly concern Ukraine, are the Poland-Ukraine Interconnector (GAS_14, PMI status – Project of Mutual Interests); the Trans-Balkan Interconnector - ensuring two-way flow Moldova-Ukraine (GAS_25, PECE status - Project of Energy Community Interests).

¹² In 2020, the Energy Community is working to update priority infrastructure projects. Applications were submitted until February 28.

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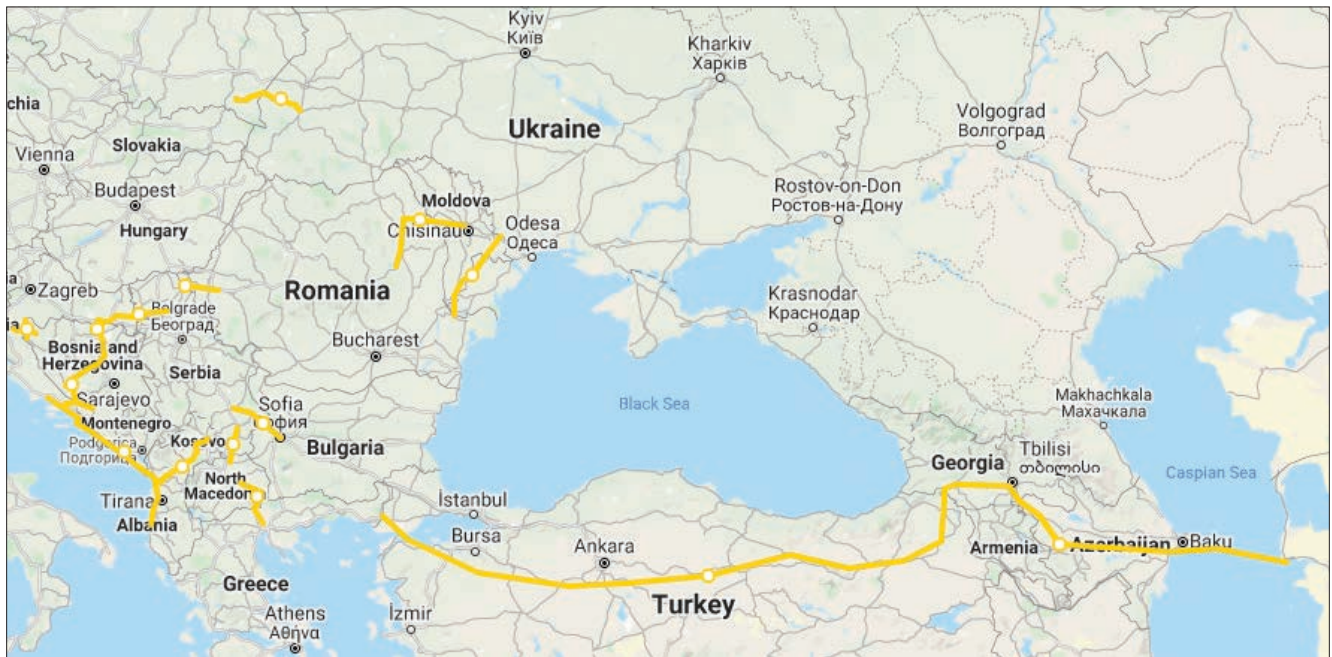


Figure 2. The PECI/PMI projects of the Energy Community
Source: PLIMA (www.energy-community.org)

The main goals of the project Gas_14/Gas Inter-connection Poland-Ukraine are: (i) improving the security and stability of cross-border gas transmission between Poland and Ukraine, and therefore in the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe; (ii) reducing the vulnerability of the gas systems of Poland and Ukraine in the case of supply interruptions from the Russian side; (iii) diversifying gas sources and routes for the region of Central and Eastern Europe by providing access to the global LNG market (via the LNG terminal in Świnoujście), (iv) access to gas storage infrastructure in Ukraine. Currently, the final investment decision on the Ukrainian part of this project has not been made. Moreover, the elimination of Gazprom from cross-border gas transmission points in Western Ukraine allowed unblocking existing capacities. In January 2020, the GTS Operator of Ukraine (GTSOU) stated that it was not feasible to implement the Ukrainian section of the project and that it was necessary to continue work on the Polish side. This was justified by the fact that after the reconstruction, carried out last year, the Ukrainian infrastructure was ready to physically receive 6.6 bcm of gas from Poland, including gasified LNG, through the Drozdovychi and Germanovychi GMS.

Note: The establishment of a new contractual relationship with Gazprom allowed the virtual reverse operations. Now under this scheme, it is possible to receive about 9 million m³ per day from Poland. Since March 1, 2020, virtual reverse operations (backhaul) with a volume of up to 10 million m³ per day on the Ukraine-Slovakia border (Uzhhorod GMS - Velki Kapushany GMS) became available [12]. The power of the virtual reverse is not constant since it depends on the availability of the physical flow in the Ukraine-Slovakia direction.

The GAS_25 project (Gas_25 Trans-Balkan Corridor Bi-directional Flow between Moldova and Ukraine) should facilitate the export of natural gas from Romania through Ukraine to the Central and Eastern Europe, in particular, provide access from Romanian offshore production platforms to the gas infrastructure and the European gas market, and develop connectivity in the Balkans and CEE regions. But the main goal is to maximize the use of existing infrastructure.

The project implementation is planned in stages. According to the latest project implementation

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report – the Report to the Ministerial Council on the Implementation of Projects of Energy Community Interest Energy Community Secretary 10 Oct 2019, the main work should be completed in 2020-2024. It is noted that, regarding the main stages, the final investment decisions (FID) should be made as soon as possible. On the Ukrainian side, among others, works at the compressor and metering stations of Orlivka GMS, Berezhivka GMS and Hrebnyky GMS are planned. On the Moldovan side, it is necessary to reconstruct the Vulcănești CS and the Căușeni GMS. The final implementation of the project is possible after the completion of contracts with Gazprom for gas transit, in particular via the territory of Romania.

From March till May 2018, Ukrtransgaz JSC has carried out a preliminary study of the demand for capacity at the Isakcha-Orlivka entrance point in the direction from Romania to Ukraine. Eleven European and Ukrainian companies expressed interest in using capacities up to 10 billion m³ per year, exceeding the proposed capacity twice.

Currently, members of CESEC working group - the Ukrainian, Moldovan, Romanian, Bulgarian and Greek GTS Operators, are consulting on the start of works and the necessary implementation measures.

The Ukraine-EU Association Agreement, which contains special requirements for cooperation in the use of gas infrastructure, should be an important instrument for coordinating actions in the gas market [13]. Ukraine and the European Union have to promote the use of existing gas transportation and storage infrastructure, coordinate plans and actions for infrastructure development, and consider existing opportunities in plans and strategies for infrastructure development. Unfortunately, these requirements have not fully been met yet.

The Eastern Partnership is a joint political initiative aimed at deepening and strengthening relations between the European Union (EU) and its six Eastern neighbors: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. This also includes the process of creating a list of projects important for the Eastern Partnership countries - PEPI (Projects of Eastern Partnership Interest). The implementation of these projects should improve the infrastructure connection between the Eastern Partnership countries.

The new relationships in the field of natural gas transportation increase the need for coordination of plans and actions

Since January 1, 2020, gas transportation through the territory of Ukraine is carried out under the new conditions that are harmonized with the EU gas legislation. This became possible due to a set of factors, including efficient work in the Stockholm Arbitration, careful preparation of infrastructure, gas reserves in the gas storage facilities, and the U.S. sanctions against the Nord Stream 2. The trilateral negotiations with the Russian Federation, in which Ukraine and the European Commission had a consolidated position, were a successful example of coordination.

The new relations with Gazprom, the conclusion of new interconnection agreements with operators of neighboring countries allowed unblocking transportation capacities previously controlled by Gazprom (acting as a super-operator and regulating gas flows). Virtual reverse operations, which had been blocked by Gazprom until January 01, 2020, became possible.

Thus, Ukraine has a positive impact on the processes of creating a single European gas market that is currently intensified. Ukrainian legislation is harmonized with the European legislation – the main requirements of the EU legislation in the gas sector have already been implemented [14].

Ukraine and other the EU-associated countries should be parts of this market – with rights/liabilities at the level of the EU member states. This will significantly strengthen the coordination of plans and actions both for the efficient use of existing gas infrastructure and for the development of a new one. If gas "flows" similar to the Nord Stream and the Turkish Stream, which contradict the EU legislation and damage the existing gas infrastructure, the European solidarity and energy security, are allowed, the existing mechanisms will not provide effective control and coordination and need to be improved.

The existing tools for coordinating the development of gas infrastructure do not correspond to modern reality, when the territory of the single European gas market significantly exceeds the territory of the European Union. This requires in-

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creased coordination of plans and actions for the development and use of gas infrastructure.

The EU gas legislation, which is also applied in Ukraine, imposes on ENTSOG the responsibility for long-term planning of gas infrastructure development only within the European Union. Therefore, important issues of coordination of plans and actions, in particular with Ukraine, remain out of attention. For example, plans to expand existing and build new gas storages in neighboring to Ukraine countries are not coordinated with the existing underground gas storages in Ukraine and the existing gas transport interconnections between neighboring countries.

The changes to the EU regulations, which will allow ENTSOG and ACER (Agency for the Co-

operation of Energy Regulators) obtaining the appropriate obligations and powers to consider the proposals and opportunities of Ukraine in the long-term planning of gas infrastructure development and the adequacy of gas supplies, are necessary. The measures to implement the norms of the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement (Article 274), which have not been being performed yet, are required.

Ukraine should receive the regime of a part of the EU internal gas market, which will also provide an opportunity to participate in the process of creating and coordinating the EU plans, in particular, full membership in ENTSOG. The same applies to the other EU-associated states - members of the Energy Community and the Eastern Partnership.

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Energy Resources of the Black Sea: Unexplored Threats¹³

The article analyses the ecological situation in the Black Sea. The scenario of a possible catastrophe of a planetary scale is determined. This scenario is based on the events of 1927 that led to a fire of released hydrogen sulfide and methane, damages to the towns of the Crimean Peninsula. The authors of the article made a scientific approach in the possible localization of dangerous phenomena and their aftermaths in the entire Black Sea region. Specific technologies to reduce the hydrogen sulfide content in the Black Sea are proposed. Cautions have been made for the methane recovery from rich deposits of methane hydrate in the Black Sea, which could lead to disaster and death of many people.

Introduction

The modern Black Sea is a fairly large water basin with an area of 420,325 square kilometres. The average depth of the Black Sea is about 1,290 meters, the maximum is 2,212 meters. The water volume is 547,015 cubic kilometres. The Black Sea coast-

line is smooth, with creeks and bays only in the Northwestern part. The islands are not well shaped and resemble a series of sand banks and shoals.

Large Islands are Snake Island (the largest island), located 45 kilometres from the Danube Delta with an area of about 1.5 square kilometres; Lieutenant Schmidt Island (Berezan), located near Ochakiv, and Kefken (in Turkish waters) close to the Bosphorus Strait [1].

The Black Sea is replenished with fresh water from the large rivers: the Danube, the Dnieper, and the Dniester. They largely replenish it with oxygen. At the same time, their harmful inclusions – heavy metals, hydrocarbons, and pesticides – cause irreparable damage. The main damage is caused by the entire range of organic substances – this is one of the main reasons for the expansion of the hydrogen sulfide sea zone. The Bosphorus Strait drives an increase in the salinity of the Black Sea. The Strait is not deep-water and this allows bringing its waters to the surface layers of the Sea, keeping oxygen exchange in the populated layers of fauna and flora. The Black Sea contains huge reserves of hydrocarbons in its waters and bottom sediments. The risk of the Sea over-saturation with methane (CH₄) and hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) can inevitably lead to a global catastrophe against the background

¹³ The publication was prepared in the framework of the project "Promoting Security in the Black Sea Region through Greater Engagement of Non-Governmental Organizations" with the support of the Black Sea Trust Fund, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Black Sea Trust Fund or its partners.

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of global warming and a constant increase in the discharge of organic substances by the rivers flowing into the Black Sea.

Unresolved problem

According to scientists, hydrogen sulfide in the Black Sea water amounts to about 3 billion tons, significantly exceeding its reserves in any other water basin on the planet. The content of hydrogen sulfide increases in depth. At a depth of 2,000 meters, its content is 9.6 mg per 1 dm³ of water.

No more than 15% of hydrogen sulfide is in the free state. The rest of it is dissolved, i.e. chemically bound. Every year, the amount of hydrogen sulfide increases by 4-9 million tons, and its increase can significantly exceed the value of this indicator due to discharge of waste waters brought by the tributary rivers, the influx of saline water from the Bosphorus and the underwater current of the Marmara Sea. It is impossible to ignore tectonic seabed changes in the Black Sea with periodic

earthquakes that spew large volumes of gas into the water and atmosphere.

Given that the hydrogen sulfide lens in certain areas of the sea comes up to the water surface by 15-10 metres, and waves, the nature of which could not be explained, reaching 25 meters in various sea areas, there is a threat of hydrogen sulfide air emissions.

In fact, the appearance of such waves is quite rare, but with the change of the planet's climate, there is a threat of the water tornadoes' formation. The risk of such releases of highly toxic and explosive H₂S gas will lead to irreversible processes. The dose of human poisoning is 0.05-0.07 mg/m³. The maximum allowable dose of hydrogen sulfide concentration in the air, not dangerous for humans, is 0,008 mg/m³ [1].

Now the Black Sea is becoming lifeless and dangerous for the normal reproduction of its fish resources (*Figure 1*).

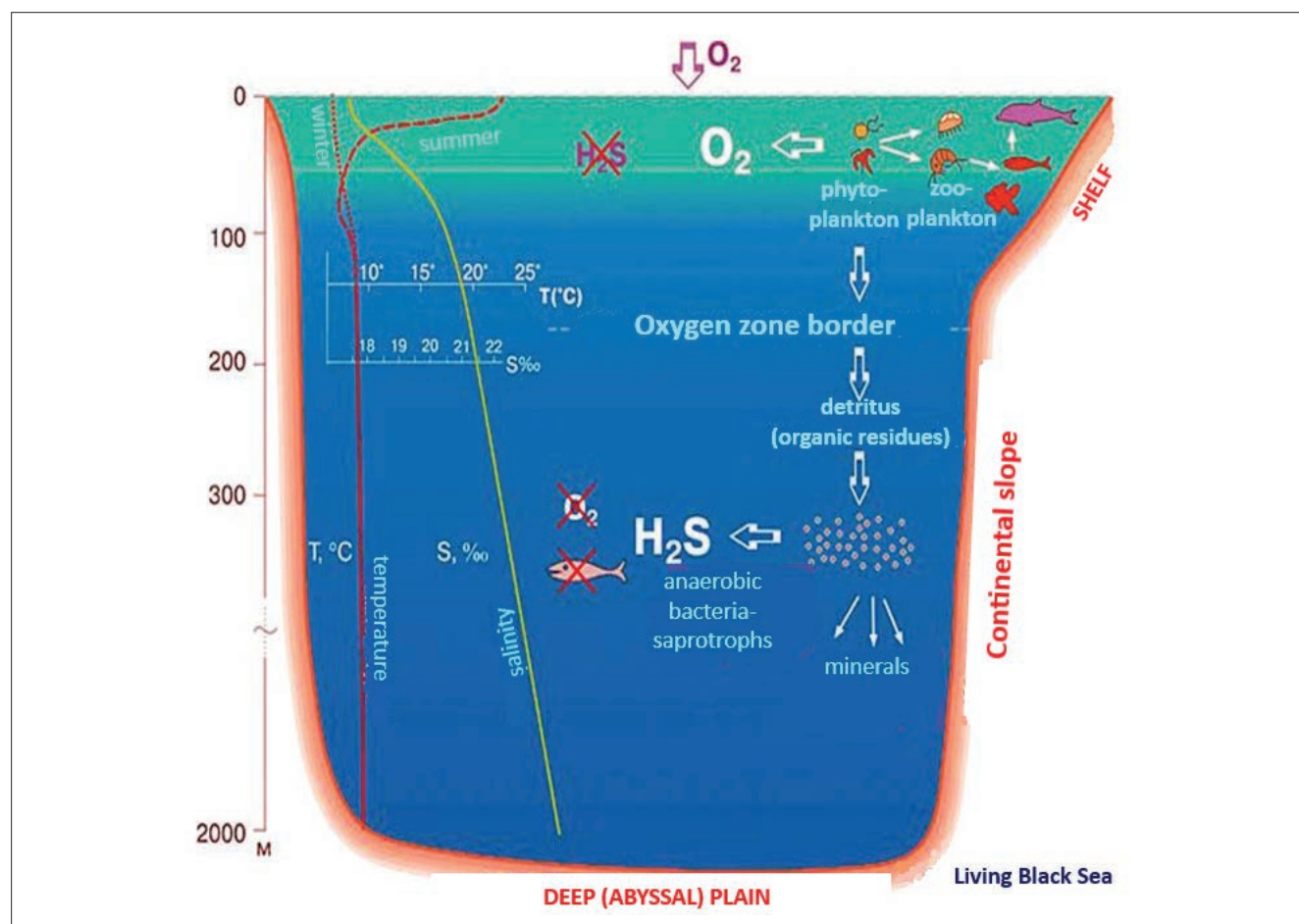


Figure 1. Black Sea layers, considering the oxygen-saturated water [1]

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Partially entasis of the water layer inhabited by the living organisms led to an abrupt decrease in fish resources and their food supply. In the 1950s, the number of dolphins was about 8 million individuals. Now dolphins in the Black Sea waters are rare. By the late 1990s, industrial fishing for sturgeon, mackerel, horse mackerel, and pelamida was completely stopped.

According to the conclusions of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the use of Black Sea shellfish, including mussels and rapan, still found in the trade network of the Black Sea states, is of particular danger to human health. Previously, Black Sea shellfish

was widely reported to be useful and environmentally friendly. Unfortunately, recent studies have shown that their "meat" has a high content of heavy metals and pesticides.

The progressive increase of hydrogen sulfide in seawater leads to a large fish die-off, and there are constant fish discards. The sea wind and waves become bigger and stronger, hydrogen sulfide emits into the air, poisoning it and damaging the entire habitat. All areas of the Black Sea coastline are under threat. The question of evacuation and relocation of people may rise in the coming years (it is difficult to assume when exactly).



Figure 2. Active burning of hydrogen sulfide and methane on the surface of the Black [2]

On September 11, 1927, an earthquake of 8 points on the Richter scale occurred in Crimea. Yalta and several Crimean towns were significantly destroyed. A huge fire with a height of 500 metres and a length exceeding 2 kilometres was recorded between Sevastopol and Cape Lucullus (*Figure 2*). The probable sources of combustion were $\frac{2}{3}$ methane and $\frac{1}{3}$ hydrogen sulfide. During the earthquake, according to the witnesses, the sea was pierced by lightning strikes that could have ignited hydrogen, which erupted from the water surface in large volumes during the earthquake. The mixture of hydrogen sulfide and oxygen in the air instantly leads to an explosion. Here, according to the authors of the article, a multifactorial phenomenon was observed. It included the emission of hydrogen sulfide and methane due to tectonic disturbances of the sea-

bed resulting from an earthquake and the release of methane, easily igniting even with a small lightning discharge, to the sea surface [2].

The earthquake, which occurred, should have been a major lesson for the inhabitants of the Black Sea region and for all mankind. A repeat of such a case could prove fatal for half of the world's humanity, given that the Black Sea and its coast are in a zone of increased seismic danger. The most gigantic lens (hydrogen sulfide blister), swelling from the constant influx of deadly gas, tends to break out to the surface. According to a group of Ukrainian and foreign scientists, the explosion of all the Black Sea methane reserves will lead to a planetary catastrophe. They compare it to a collision of the Earth with a meteorite of half-Moon in mass.

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Possible solutions of the problem

The origin of hydrogen sulfide in the Black Sea was first described in 1887 by the scientist N. I. Andrusov. Supporters of his scientific beliefs have long agreed that the inflow of hydrogen sulfide occurs from the bottom tectonic faults [3]. That was confirmed by the content of hydrogen sulfide in the ground waters found on the Eastern coast of the Black Sea (near the Matsesta resort), in Jurassic limestones. And this is probably the case if we consider that during the earthquake along the coast of Crimea, a sudden release of hydrogen sulfide occurred from the tectonic plate faults, which increased its critical mass of content in the sea water [4].

In contrast to this scientific assumption of many venerable scientists, at the end of the last century, there were quite a lot of supporters of the biogenic origin of hydrogen sulfide in the waters of the Black Sea.

N. D. Zelynsky suggested that the Black Sea hydrogen sulfide was generated by specific bacteria oxidizing organic matter with oxygen from sulfates, reduced to hydrogen sulfide. Organic matter formed during photosynthesis in surface waters continuously deposits, and sulfates are replenished mainly due to the deterioration of the environmental situation, which is recently almost poorly controlled. The rivers that flow into the Black Sea – the Danube and the Dniester – are the main suppliers of a large mass of pollutants, i.e. organic substances and mineral salts,

which activate biochemical and bacterial processes in water and bottom sediments.

Over the past 20 years, the Russian Academy of Sciences has carried out the studies of water and bottom sediments. The results have clearly confirmed the microbiological processes of hydrogen sulfide formation in the Black Sea. A large scientific contribution was made by a team of scientists from Belgium, Italy, Germany and the United States, who published a more-than-half-century research work on the Black Sea in 2016. Their results were disappointing. The forecast determined the short-term prospect of sea death. It could turn into a poisonous swamp in the center of Eurasia [5].

As stated above, methane in the Black Sea has long been noticed by the residents of the Black Sea coast. Methane deposits of the Black Sea started manifesting as mud griffon yet in ancient times. However, they were little studied, and only in the last two decades have become an object of research of the scientists.

Based on the results of two expeditions (1988-1989) and (2002-2006) on the “Professor Vodyanytsky” ship, an attempt was made to explain the origin of methane at different depths of bottom sediments. Scientists have long known methanotrophic bacteria. However, the mechanism of anaerobic oxidation and methane absorption defies scientific explanation (*Figure 3*) [6].

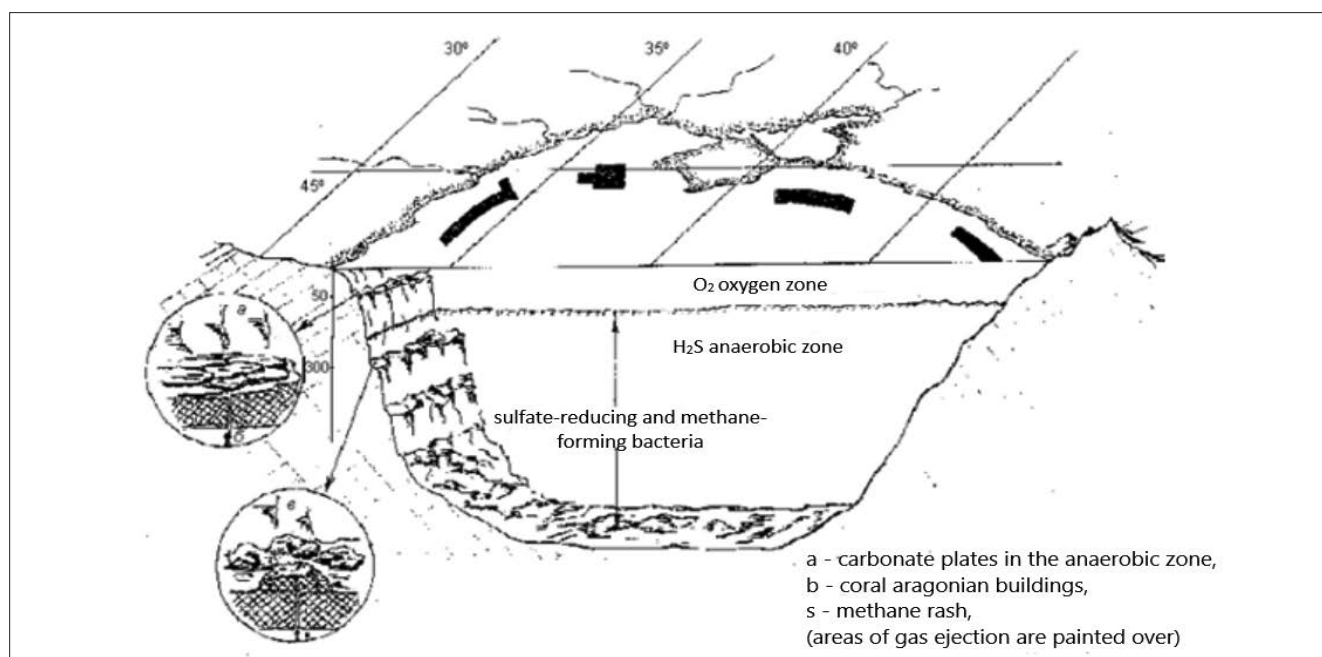


Figure 3. Methane-generating bacteria of the Black Sea [7]

Methane deposits on the seabed surface at depths of 200-800 meters. To be more specific, it is methane hydrate in the form of ice, where the methane content is 85-90%, and the rest is water. Breakthrough of mud griffon above the sea surface to a height of up to 100 metres are becoming quite common against the background of global warming. The higher the average annual temperature of the Black Sea water, the more methane hydrate evaporates, creating high excessive pressure. According to various estimates, methane reserves in the Black Sea range from 75 to 100 trillion m³ in the water areas of Georgia, Russia and Ukraine. For example, on the Ukrainian shelf, opposite the Crimean Peninsula, the reserves are 20-25 trillion m³, the height of the layer is 250-1,200 m. No other country has such concentrations of methane hydrate on the sea shelf. By comparison, global natural gas consumption is 3,6 trillion m³ per year [7].

Was the occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea the main reason for the Kremlin's aggressive policy to take over other people's resources? Hazardous energy resources of the Black Sea, to a greater extent, have their original significance from environmental safety and their extraction standpoint. This is a prerequisite for protecting the vital interests of all inhabitants on the planet. Unfortunately, the international situation in the context of current events hinders the focus of attention and resources on this critical task. There is an urgent need for a fast settlement of political, economic, financial and legal relations between the states of the Azov and Black Sea basin to achieve one goal – to create and ensure the environmental security of the entire region.

Starting the consideration of the issue of production of the energy resources of the Black Sea, the authors of the article have studied a number of modern proposals (technologies and patents) and offered the readers, in the opinion of the authors, the best of them. Ukrainian scientists from Khereson have developed and tested a method for production of hydrogen sulfide from 80-100 meters. For this purpose, a steel pipe is run to the target depth and primary water intake is made by the pump. After that, due to the pressure difference, hydrogen sulfide runs up the pipe until its complete outflow. The proposals of Lev Yutkin, the founder of the electric water-hammer method, suitable for separation of sea water into all its components, including precious metals – silver, gold,

etc. – also deserve attention. With the advent of nanotechnology products, the use of graphene-based nanocarbon membranes for separating seawater into the desired chemical elements has been widely proposed. If we take into account that a certain part of hydrogen sulfide beds deep in the bottom of the Black Sea, its surface production can be carried out by wells' drilling. The methane production from deep methane hydrate reservoirs today is being tested by many countries. China and Japan have achieved great progress in the technology of methane production from the seabed. Their working technology includes seabed wells' drilling. Into the wells, heat is supplied for the sublimation of methane from the solid state (ice) of methane hydrate and its pipeline pumping to the surface pumping stations.

With the increase in methane production, huge voids (excavations) appear. They can lead to earth (seabed) tectonic movements. For the Black Sea, this will inevitably lead to a repeat of the Crimean disaster of 1927, only on an incomparably larger scale (planetary level). Many well-known scientists agree that in the interests of safety, these voids must be filled with fresh water. Why the water should be fresh? There is a direct threat of groundwater salinization. Hydrocarbon recovery in the Black Sea is possible, but only subject to a thorough study of all the natural features of this degrading water basin. Recently, many "easy" offers in the pursuit of profit exclusively to the detriment of environmental safety have appeared. This will lead to the forecasted consequences in the coming years of our existence.

Conclusions

The article analyses the ecological situation in the Black Sea, which, according to many world's leading scientists, is on the verge of disaster. Hydrocarbon recovery in the sea is viewed by the authors of the article as the need to maintain ecological balance and safety, dictated by a deadly threat to half of humanity. The article reveals the nature and mechanism of the Black Sea replenishment with hydrogen sulfide and methane. Priority directions of hydrocarbon production technologies are given. An emphasis is made on improvement of the living/stay conditions in the Black Sea, promoting the concept of a large-scale saturation of the coastal waters with oxygen, using the aeration method [8].

FOCUS ON: ENERGY RISKS

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Great Patriotic War or World War II?

On September 1, 2019, the leaders of many countries celebrated the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the World War II in Poland. The leaders of the Russian Federation were not invited to the Anniversary of the tragic events. That caused a corresponding comment from the Russian Foreign Ministry with "resentment" in response to such actions.

But, unlike Germany, Russia has not yet apologized for its aggression in the World War II, which it entered on September 17, 1939. Moreover, since 2019, official Russian propaganda has launched a broad celebration campaign for the 75th Anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, trying to present a refusal of all former Soviet citizens, their descendants, former allies and partners to jointly celebrate this Anniversary with Russia, which has become a modern aggressor, as a violation of the memory of perished people in that war.

Therefore, perhaps it is worth recalling other events that do not fit into the postulates of the Russian state historiography, which tries to operate with the "Great Patriotic War" term for the events from June 22, 1941 to May 9, 1945. This approach is rather thought out to avoid the very inconvenient questions of assessing the participation of Russia in other military conflicts of that time and creating an idea of non-involvement in the aggression of 1939. But are they objective?

For example, the official Soviet title "Red Army Liberation Campaign in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus in 1939" was used for a long time to denote a military operation that lasted from September 17 to October 6, 1939, and was the actual invasion in Poland, when, in addition to 42 complete and 20 partly-complete German divisions, the Soviet 21 rifle and 13 cavalry di-

visions, 16 tank and 2 motorized brigades numbering 618 thousand people and 4,733 tanks were acting in collaboration.

As a result, there was a final occupation of the entire territory of the Second Polish Republic by the Red Army and the Wehrmacht, which even ended with a joint parade. Is it logical to consider the aggression of the Germans against Poland on September 1, 1939 as the World War II, but the similar, agreed and even formalized in writing via the secret protocols between Berlin and Moscow, allied actions of another country in two and a half weeks as only self-defense on the foreign territory?

To justify its own aggression, the Soviet propaganda imposed the opinion that Poland ceased to exist at the time of the Soviet invasion. Even the most powerful German tank attack did not demoralize the Poles. They actively counterattacked. The Battle of the Bzura until September 22, the heroic resistance of the Polish garrison of Brest, the protection of Westerplatte, Hal and Gdynia arouse the admiration of the entire world. Warsaw resisted until September 26 and was finally surrendered only on October 6.

The top-secret order of the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) No. 001223 dated October 11, 1939 refutes the Soviet arguments. According to the document, in a territory with a population of 13.4 million, 107 thousand people were arrested, and 391 thousand people were administratively expelled. Almost 10 thousand of them died during the deportation. According to the decision and considering the actual organizational work done by the Soviet government, controlled by Moscow Polish military formations were created on the territory of the USSR.

FOCUS ON: LITTLE-KNOWN PAGES OF THE WORLD WAR II



Photo 1. Meeting of the Soviet and German officers. Occupied Poland, 1940

Source: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/30191906.html>

At the same time, for long time, not only a proper assessment but a reminder of the international Treaty for Renunciation of War as a national policy instrument, the so-called Kellogg-Briand Pact (Paris, August 1928), the Non-Aggression Pact between the USSR and Poland (Moscow, July 1932) were actually banned for Soviet scientists. The provisions of the Convention for the Definition of Aggression (London, July 1933) were also very unilaterally interpreted. Pointing out some modern analogies with the attitude of the Russian Federation to the norms of international law to the inquisitive reader does not make sense.

Considering the consequences, is it possible to consider "the armed conflict on the border with

Finland" or "the defensive war of the USSR against the aggression of bourgeois Finland", in terms of the official Soviet historiography, really defensive? In the period from November 30, 1939 to March 13, 1940, 10% of the territory of the neutral state was annexed. That is 2,761 km² of the best agricultural land, the waters of intensive coastal fishing, including access to the Arctic and its resources. It still deprives Finland of the historical right to use them.

Then, Soviet troops consisting of four armies, supported by ships of the Baltic and Northern Fleets, numbering 540 thousand people, attacked Finland on the front from the Baltic Sea to the Barents Sea.

FOCUS ON: LITTLE-KNOWN PAGES OF THE WORLD WAR II



Photo 1. Soviet T-26 tanks enter combat positions

Source: <https://topwar.ru/92363-dva-tankovyh-boya-sovetsko-finskoy-voyny-1939-40-gg.html>

By the way, the Soviet propaganda, acting in a general context, tried to create an image of support for the Finnish national liberation movement and even created "Finnish" military formations on the territory of the USSR". They could not be properly staffed, so they forcibly included the residents of Belarus, which gave rise to a bitter joke of the time: "*Minsk Finns* will march onto *Finnish mines*".

The losses of the Soviet side in that "defensive" war were 400 thousand killed and wounded, which significantly exceeded the 60 thousand of Finnish killed and wounded.

The phenomenon of the "Winter War" was the growth of desertions in the Red Army. The People's Commissariat of Defense and the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR even had to issue a joint secret order No. 0093 dated January 24, 1940 on the fight against desertion of military personnel from active units,

which stressed the need to arrest all deserters and transfer them to special departments for investigation.

Behind the five Soviet armies operating at the front, 27 NKVD control and barrier detachments of 100 men each were stationed. According to the results of the Finnish campaign, military tribunals have convicted 1,695 servicemen of ordinary and junior staff and 76 middle and senior commanders; 40% were deserters and crippled. The number of persons convicted for anti-Soviet statements was also considerable.

That "defensive" war led to the recognition of the Soviet Union as an aggressor by the UN predecessor, the League of Nations, and its exclusion from its membership.

But the most blasphemous during the "Great Patriotic War" was the war with Iran, which also had the status of a neutral state. Nothing is writ-

FOCUS ON: LITTLE-KNOWN PAGES OF THE WORLD WAR II

ten about this in textbooks, and even for a limited circle of military leaders, it was presented as a joint England-Soviet operation - "Operation Countenance" (Rus. "Soglasiye Operation") with the actual occupation of part of the Iranian territory. It was conducted from August 25 to September 17, 1941. The trans-Iranian railway corridor allowed the USSR providing 34% of lend-lease supplies. How does this correspond to the content of the "Great Patriotic War"? A separate story is the consolidated effort of other countries, which still forced the USSR to leave the territory of Iran after the end of World War II and much later the United Kingdom to do the same.

Russian historiography has also taken the final events of World War II beyond the "Great Patriotic War," namely, the Soviet aggression against Japan with the annexation of the territory of its four Islands. Less well known is the USSR-Japan Pact, similar to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. It contained an article stating that if one of the parties pursued a war, the other side would not enter it. By the way, imperialist Japan complied with this condition, unlike the People's USSR. The last one entered the war with Japan, which was already fighting with the United States. Officially, according to international law, this war is still not ended. There is only a truce that is not in any way consistent with "patriotic defense conflict".

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Andrii TARASOV,
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"Iranian Front" of the USSR: Several Lessons for Ukraine¹⁴

In 2020, the humanity commemorates the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II – the most cannibalistic and the first one with the use of the nuclear weapon. However, even after all these years, we have something to look at with a fresh eye and consider today. Given the extensive propaganda campaign launched by the Russian Federation, trying to create the impression that the Soviet Union waged its own Great Patriotic War (hereinafter GPW) and was solely a victim, which gained the victory over the aggressor and paid the price of incredible suffering, it is needed to recall those events.

Soviet and the most modern Russian military historians, guided by ideological dogmas, are not very keen to objectively and impartially consider the World War II in conjunction with the previous and subsequent actions of the USSR. Meanwhile, the victims of aggression caused namely by the Soviet Union were all its Western neighbors during 1939-1940 and Southern and Eastern neighbors during World War II.

Wars with Finland and Poland generally were wrapped into the term "forced local conflicts," caused by the need of survival of the USSR in a hostile environment. They occurred before the GPW and, moreover, were allegedly unrelated in time.

But there are events that cannot be separated from the period of World War II, and their analysis is critical for assessing the policy of modern Russia in its aggression against Ukraine. At the

same time, it should be understood that any progressive and humanistic norms of international treaties have never upset the RSFSR, the USSR, or now Russia.

Referencing to the memoirs of former People's Commissar of the Soviet Navy Mykola Kuznetsov, we will find interesting information. Even in the first days of July 1941, the members of the British Military Mission arrived to Moscow. Kuznetsov had to meet General N. McFarlane and Rear-Admiral J. Miles. However, Kuznetsov begins the memoir of those meetings not with an immediate discussion of fateful decisions, but with the fact that McFarlane came at the official reception dressed in the shorts on a hot July day. Only on the next page, he reports that the joint provision of sea communications was discussed at the first meeting. This is followed by the criticism of the British officers, who provided little assistance in the fight against German mines, and a short one-paragraph description of the sea convoys from England to Arkhangelsk and Murmansk. Other convoys allegedly did not exist [1].

Meanwhile, with the beginning of the third month of the GPW, according to the Soviet chronology, the USSR actually carried out aggression against a neutral state of Iran. The military operation, which lasted from August 25 to September 17, 1941, was a joint Anglo-Soviet invasion into Iran, although the USSR initiated it and had the greatest interest in conducting the operation at that time.

The operation in Russian is named "Soglasie", in English – "*Operation Countenance*." In Ukrainian, it sounds like "Operation Compassion." Perhaps this is the meaning of the British military, agreeing to provide allied assistance to the USSR. As a result of the operation, the

¹⁴ The publication was prepared in the framework of the project "Promoting Security in the Black Sea Region through Greater Engagement of Non-Governmental Organizations" with the support of the Black Sea Trust Fund, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Black Sea Trust Fund or its partners.

FOCUS ON: LITTLE-KNOWN PAGES OF THE WORLD WAR II

USSR was able to control the Trans-Siberian railway and highways and thus ensure the supply of equipment and food under the Lend Lease Act.

However, not only the name of the operation has some ambiguity. Its preparation, justification, and intention to take advantage of the consequences are indicative.

Although the operation had its own military logic for the USSR, its justification was based on the fact of Germany's political influence on Iran, which could indeed be considered significant, but not decisive. There was no German military contingent there. According to the "Ettelaat" Newspaper dated July 8, 1941, there were 4,630 foreigners in Iran, the number of British ones was 2,590, Soviet citizens - 390, Germans and Italians - 690 and 310 respectively [2].

For instance, the attempt of military intelligence of the German Wehrmacht "Abwehr" to conduct two major operations against the allies in Iran testified the thesis. These were the operation "Francois" with the use of the Qashqai people – the representatives of the opposition to the Shah's regime, to sabotage the supply of Lend Lease, and the operation "Long Jump" to eliminate the leaders of the "Big Three" (Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt) at the Tehran conference in 1943. Both German operations were complete failures.

So, how did the events unfold?

On August 12, 1941, the Governments of the USSR and the United Kingdom sent the concerted diplomatic notes to the Government of Iran, in which they expressed the hope of taking measures against German agents. Having received a response on August 21, the USSR and the Great Britain agreed that it did not satisfy them. A few days later, the aggression began.

The Shah of Iran, Reza Pahlavi, summoned the British and Soviet ambassadors Reeder Ballard and Andrey Smirnov for explanations. He asked what the reasons were for their states to invade his country, and why they did not declare a war. Both replied that it was because of the presence

of "German representatives" in Iran. There was no answer to Pakhlavi's question whether the offensive would continue if he ordered the Germans to be sent out.

The Shah sent a telegram to President Roosevelt asking him to stop further military operations. The United States did not participate in the war at that time. They took a position of neutrality, not wanting to influence the conflict. Roosevelt replied to Pahlavi that he was not able to satisfy his request, and expressed the hope that the "territorial integrity" of the state would be respected [3].

In justification of its actions, the USSR referred to the Russian-Persian Treaty signed on February 26, 1921 in Moscow between the RSFSR and Iran. It is interesting that the article 2 of the Treaty in the original noted: *"the Russian Soviet Government stigmatizes the policy of the governments of tsarist Russia, which concluded the treaties regarding the East, having the ultimate goal of its gradual capture, with other States of Europe without the consent of the peoples of Asia and under the guise of ensuring the independence of those peoples. The Russian Soviet Government unconditionally rejects that criminal policy, which not only violated the sovereignty of the Asian States but also led to the organized brutal violence of European predators over the living body of the peoples of the East"* [4].

Thus, the artificiality of the reason for launching aggression against Iran was obvious. **And this is the first lesson** we must learn - Russia tends to create an artificial pretext for aggression.

The strategic interest of the USSR is clear and does not require a more detailed explanation.

Great Britain was interested in the ownership of the Abadan Oil Refinery by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company because, in a case of victory in the Caucasus, the Wehrmacht could capture it in the future and go to the rear of the British troops stationed in Egypt. Therefore, the Commander of the British Forces in Iraq General Edward Kuynen was ordered to prepare for the occupation of the Abadan and Naft-e-Shah fields and the ports of Bushehr and Bandar Shahpur.

FOCUS ON: LITTLE-KNOWN PAGES OF THE WORLD WAR II

The invasion was unexpected for Iran. It was deployed across the South Caucasus with the support of aviation and the Caspian Flotilla, and the 53rd Army of the Central Asian military district, 44th and 47th armies of the Tansbaikal Front, commanded by Lieutenant-General Dmitriy Kozlov, entered the North of Iran. 409 combat aircraft and about a thousand T-26 tanks, which did not get to other fronts of the GPW, were deployed in the battle.

The fleets of Great Britain and Australia, land and air units and formations of the armed forces of the British Empire, which included the Indian Colonial Troops, operated from the Persian Gulf (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Directions of the Soviet and British offensive actions against Iran in 1941

The Iranian army did not provide effective resistance. In addition, the rapid victory of the USSR and Great Britain was also facilitated by the decision of the Shah of Iran to prohibit his troops from destroying the network of highways and transport routes, which were built under his patronage and became a significant achievement of pre-war Iran.

As a result of the operation, the United Kingdom occupied the ports and rich oil fields of Southern Iran, and the USSR occupied the North of the country with the cities of Ardabil, Tabriz, and Urmia (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Soviet and British occupation zones in 1941

However, later the differences in the policy of the occupiers became obvious.

Despite the resignation of the previous government of neutral Iran, which was considered an adherent of Germany, that was enough for Great Britain, the USSR did not stop there. The GPW ended on May 9, 1945, but, "watch the hands...", after that Moscow implemented a plan to create **two** Pro-Soviet separatist **people's republics - the Kurdish Mehabad Republic and the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan** (Figure 3). This is a parallel with modern Ukraine.

It was done in the following way. On November 26, 1945, elections to the national Majlis of South Azerbaijan were held in Iran under the control of the Soviet troops, and on December 12 of the same year, the Azerbaijan People's Government (APG) of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan was proclaimed.

To support the new government by force, on February 5, 1946, the APG deployed its own army based on the units of the ethnic Azerbaijani from the 77th Mountain Rifle Infantry Division of the 4th army of the USSR Armed Forces.

FOCUS ON: LITTLE-KNOWN PAGES OF THE WORLD WAR II



Figure 3. The Kurdish Mahabad Republic and the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan

With the assistance of the USSR, the AGP issued its own money, established control over banks and introduced a state system of trade. During the existence of the autonomy, about 500 supporters of the Shah were executed.

On January 22, 1946, the Mahabad Republic, officially known as the Republic of Kurdistan, was established in the province of West Azerbaijan (Iranian Kurdistan).

And that was not the right of the winner over the neutral and later allied country, and in general it was not its first experience of such influence...

In the early 1920's, before the creation of the USSR, the RSFSR supported Gilyanska Soviet Socialist Republic, which emerged and existed in the Iranian province of Gilan from June 1920 until September 1921.

Before that the Russians fought for the possession of the southern regions and their maintenance from the second half of the XVII century to XIX century that resulted in seven Russian-Turkish, three Russian-Persian, Crimean

and Caucasian wars, irretrievable losses from which exceeded one million people. This is how the "native Russian lands" were formed.

We also have the current policy of the Russian Federation in Iran, which pushes it to a military conflict in the Middle East, which can be waged at any moment and have global consequences.

And this is the second lesson for Ukraine.

The Soviet Union's reluctance to leave Iran at the end of the War was also indicative.

In January 1942, a trilateral Treaty was signed. Under that treaty Iran received guarantees of sovereignty and territorial integrity and withdrawal of the Soviet and British troops within 6 months after the end of the war. In addition, in September 1943, Iran declared war on Germany, and the Soviet-British intervention led to the enthronement of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, whose power satisfied the USSR and Great Britain.

But the USSR would not be itself if it clearly adhered to its obligations. The actual failure to meet its obligations under the Treaty in a timely manner led to the Iranian Crisis. It should be remembered that the USSR was actually expelled from the League of Nations after the 1939-1940 war in Finland. Therefore, the experience was still too fresh and memorable.

On January 18, 1946, the first session of the UN General Assembly started. Iran's complaint about the actions of the USSR at this session forced it to "put a good face on" and leave the territory of Iran.

Only on March 26, 1946, the United States and Great Britain obtained Stalin's signature, by which the Soviet troops finally left Iran. Pro-Soviet politicians were removed from the government, the Iranian Parliament rejected a bill granting oil concessions to the Soviet Union, and the separatist Azerbaijani and Kurdish People's Republics disappeared after the intervention of the Iranian military.

FOCUS ON: LITTLE-KNOWN PAGES OF THE WORLD WAR II

This is the third lesson for Ukraine.

It is impossible to ignore the Jesuit assessment of Lend Lease.

In the memoirs of Georgiy Zhukov, issued thirteen times in thousands of copies, the thesis that those supplies amounted to only 4% of the military production of the USSR was clearly stated. Further, I will quote the words of Zhukov in the original language: *"Regarding weapons, I can say the following. We received about 18,000 aircraft and more than 11,000 tanks under Lend Lease from the United States and England. To the total number of weapons that the Soviet people provided to its army during the war years, Lend Lease averaged 4 per cent. Therefore, there is no more talk about the crucial role of Lend Lease. As for the tanks and aircraft that the British and American governments supplied to us, let's say open, they were not popular with our tankers and pilots."*

A little earlier, he recognized the supply of 400 thousand cars, equipment, fuel, and food, but concluded that it was beneficial, first of all, to American and British military, enriched by that [5].

Again, if you look at the official statistics of the USSR, you can compare Lend Lease with the data recorded for the Soviet production of tanks, aircraft and vehicles during the GPW: 213,742 aircraft of all types, and therefore 18,000 for Lend Lease is 8.4%; 85,255 tanks and self-propelled guns, so 11,000 is 12.9%; 265,600 trucks, therefore 427,000 vehicles is 161%! As a military specialist, I clearly understand that the USSR alone could not have defeated Germany if it had not received assistance.

Even from the point of view of a formal logic, the following questions arise. If this was such a small contribution, then why did the USSR sign the Lend Lease Protocols with orders for several years in a row, organized and maintained five routes for the delivery of aid to the USSR

[6], introduced the Caspian Flotilla into the Active Army, and deprived other fronts of the GPW of three armies consisting of two corps, seven divisions, three separate tank and motorcycle regiments, other units, hundreds of aircraft and thousands of tanks?

Note. In total, five routes were used to deliver materials to the USSR under the Lend Lease Act: the Arctic, Black Sea, Northern, Far Eastern, and Trans-Iranian through Iraq and Iran. The Black Sea route was used least of all, only starting from the end of 1944, after the end of hostilities in the Caucasus, in Crimea, and the withdrawal of the German allies from the War. Arctic, through Alaska to Soviet ports in the Arctic, was poorly used due to freezing of the ports in those regions in the winter months. The Far Eastern route was very long, and there was a danger of facing the Japanese Navy. Starting August 1941, the main route for weapons and materials supply to the USSR was the route from Iceland through the Arctic Ocean and the Barents Sea to the ports of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. This route as the main one was preserved till the summer of 1942, when deliveries were reduced after the defeat of the notorious PQ-17 caravan. All in all, from 1941 to 1942 in the North, 343 of 504 tons of convoyed cargo were lost. At the same time, the eyes of the allies turned to the South.

However, if this is still a significant contribution, then why do humiliation and abuse of the memory of the allied military continue? Therefore, we should be prepared for the fact that the Russian Federation's and Moscow's assessment of past events will be exclusively political, based on its own ideology, and not internationally recognized values. It will emit an unabashed cynicism.

This is the fourth lesson for Ukraine.

All these features of the Soviet actions in Iran in the 1940s are characteristic and relevant to the current days for modern Russian politics.

Ukraine—NATO: Cooperation is going on

Main events within Ukraine-NATO cooperation in January-March 2020¹⁵

Joint¹⁵ press point with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Romania Ludovic Orban

NATO Headquarters, 09.01.2020

Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General:

«So, first of all, the Black Sea is of strategic importance to NATO. And NATO has increased its presence in the Black Sea Region on land, at sea and in the air, with enhanced air policing, with more naval presence and also with more presence with land forces, especially with tailored forward presence and brigades we have in Craiova.

We are constantly assessing the need to further enhance our presence. We have to remember that three of our member states are littoral states to the Black Sea: Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. And then we have two close partners, Ukraine and Georgia, who are also Black Sea countries. So we are also working closely with them, helping them, working with them, exercising with them.

I recently visited Ukraine, the whole North Atlantic Council visited Ukraine. And... and we saw how we are helping them to, for instance, build naval academies and strengthen their naval capabilities. So on top of that, we have increased the readiness of our forces so we can easily re-... quickly reinforce. And we are also conducting more exercises. So the Black Sea Region is of great importance to NATO. And we have to remember that what triggered the adaptation, the strengthening of NATO's collective defense, which we have seen over the last years, was actually the illegal annexation of Crimea in the Black Sea.»

Source - https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_172382.htm.

Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE)

European Parliament, 21.01.2020

«The second item is ... or challenge we also need to address together is Russia. We have, as you know, in NATO developed what we called a dual-track approach to Russia: deterrence, defence and dialogue. And there is no contradiction between deterrence, defence and dialogue. Actually, as long as we are strong, as long as we are united, as long as we are firm, we can also talk to Russia. Russia is our neighbour. Russia is there to stay. We need to strive for a better relationship with Russia. And dialogue with Russia is not a sign of weakness. Dialogue with Russia is a sign of strength. And of course, we need the United States, Canada, North America to provide the necessary capabilities to have credible deterrence and defence. But we also need North America to have meaningful dialogue with Russia. Because an important part of that dialogue is about arms control, and arms control has to involve the United States, at least in many aspects... For instance, the demise of the INF Treaty, the treaty that banned all intermediate range missiles in Europe, it's a US-Russia agreement. And NATO was a platform to address that. The New START, of course, is a bilateral arrangement between Russia and the United States, but has a lot to say for European security. So I believe in arms control. But to have meaningful arms control, we need also to have, also, the United States around the table, to also address arms control with Russia.»

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/uk/natohq/opinions_172822.htm?selectedLocale=en.

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¹⁵ The material is prepared in the framework of the Project "Raising of awareness on NATO among the communities in the East and South of Ukraine," which is implemented by the Centre for Global Studies Strategy XXI under the support of the British Embassy in Ukraine.

UKRAINE—NATO: COOPERATION IS GOING ON



Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/photos_173226.htm.

Press point with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following a meeting of NATO Defense Ministers

NATO Headquarters, 13.02.2020

Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General:

« We had a very good meeting with the Ukrainian Defence Minister. All Allies met with him and the Allies expressed strong support to Ukraine, to Ukraine's territorial integrity, to its sovereignty...

The North Atlantic Council, I, we all visited Kyiv and Ukraine not so long ago. And then we also went to Odessa, where we saw the Naval Academy, where we have NATO advisers, NATO trainers. We saw Allied - NATO-Allied ships in the harbour of Odessa. And I think this demonstrates very clearly that we speak about both practical co-operation and political support...

We commend President Zelenskyy for the initiative he has taken to renew the efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Ukraine. We welcome also, therefore, the new high-level meetings within the Normandy Format. We welcome the fact that

we have seen some prisoner exchanges and also some disengagement zones have been expanded. So we have seen some progress. There are many problems, for instance, we see constant violations of the ceasefire. We see that the OSCE monitors are not able to operate freely and safely. But we strongly support the efforts to find a peaceful solution. This is a war going on in Europe, not far from NATO. And of course, this matters for all of us. »

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_173302.htm?selectedLocale=en

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Briefing by the Minister of Defense of Ukraine Andriy Zahorodniuk following the visit of the Ukrainian delegation to NATO Headquarters and the QUINT meeting

Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 19.02.2020

Andrii Zahorodniuk, Minister of Defense of Ukraine:

«The main results of Munich are as follows: the reduction of attention to Ukraine at the level of

UKRAINE—NATO: COOPERATION IS GOING ON

experts and the Ministry of Defense. It is out of focus, that is the attention is not very high. There is a strong support. In general, there is a full support for our course of reforms. They know about our course of reforms... In Brussels, a day before Munich, we had a meeting with the Secretary-General and his Deputy, it was actually like a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, but informal. And there were all the NATO Defense Ministers who came to Brussels. Their advisers, consultants and observers work here, informing them on the progress of the reforms. They are absolutely pleased with the progress of the reforms. They see that with the pace, we are moving now, we can definitely expect our status in NATO to be enhanced to an enhanced partner in October. If the pace of reforms is maintained».

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5ltmalkgZA>.

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Statement by the NATO Secretary General on MH17 criminal trial

NATO Headquarters, 06.03.2020

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I welcome the start of the criminal trial for the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17. This trial is an important milestone in the efforts to ensure justice for the 298 victims and their families. I welcome the commitment of the Joint Investigation Team to establish the facts of the case and I have full confidence in the independence and professionalism of the Dutch legal system. It remains essential to establish truth, accountability and justice for the downing of flight MH17, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2166. All countries have a responsibility to fully cooperate with these efforts.



Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_174179.htm?selectedLocale=en.

Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs

02.04.2020

We decided to deepen our partnerships with Ukraine and Georgia even further. Including with exercises in the strategic Black Sea region.

As well as joint work to counter hybrid warfare. And efforts to share more air traffic radar data, making the skies safer for all.

We also agreed to increase NATO's cooperation with the United Nations. With a package of measures to help with UN peacekeeper training. This includes medical care, countering improvised explosive devices, and communications. And Ministers formally launched the Reflection Process to further strengthen NATO's political role.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_174772.htm?selectedLocale=uk.

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UKRAINE—NATO: COOPERATION IS GOING ON

The flag of **North Macedonia** was raised at NATO Headquarters on Monday (30 March 2020), in a special ceremony to mark the country's accession to NATO.



Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_174648.htm?selectedLocale=en.

DECLARATION BY THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE ON THE AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA AND THE CITY OF SEVASTOPOL

Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell Fontelles, on behalf of the European Union, on the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

Council of the European Union

Press release 153/20, 16 March 2020

Source: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/03/16/declaration-by-the-high-representative-josep-borrell-fontelles-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-autonomous-republic-of-crimea-and-the-city-of-sevastopol/pdf>.

Six years on from the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation, the European Union remains steadfast in its commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The European Union reiterates that it does not recognise and continues to condemn this violation of international law. It remains a direct challenge to international security, with grave implications for the international legal order that protects the territorial integrity, unity and sovereignty of all States.

The European Union remains committed to fully implementing its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures. The European Union calls again on UN Member States to consider similar non-recognition measures in line with the UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262. The European Union does not and will not recognise the holding of elections by the Russian Federation in the Crimean peninsula.

The increasing militarisation of the peninsula continues to negatively impact the security situation in the Black Sea region. In violation of international humanitarian law, Russian citizenship and conscription in the armed forces of the Russian Federation have been imposed on Crimean residents. The unjustified use of force by Russia against Ukraine on 25 November 2018 is a reminder of the negative effects of the illegal annexation on regional stability. The return of the illegally-captured Ukrainian servicemen and ves-

sels, as requested by the Order of the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea and called by the EU, was long overdue when it eventually took place in the second half of 2019.

The European Union condemns the construction of the Kerch Bridge without Ukraine's consent and the recent opening of a railway section. These are yet further steps towards a forced integration of the illegally-annexed peninsula with Russia, and a further violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The EU expects Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage of all ships through the Kerch Strait to and from the Azov Sea, in accordance with international law. The illegal restrictions to such passage are still ongoing and have negative economic consequences for Ukraine's ports in the Azov Sea and the whole region.

Since the illegal annexation by the Russian Federation, the human rights situation in the Crimean peninsula has significantly deteriorated. Residents of the peninsula face systematic restrictions of fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, religion or belief and association and the right to peaceful assembly. In accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 74/168 of 18 December 2019, it is crucial that the regional and international human rights monitoring mechanisms as well as the non-governmental human rights organisations have unimpeded access to Crimea and Sevastopol.

The rights of the Crimean Tatars have been gravely violated through the shutting down of Crimean Tatar media outlets, and the banning of the activities of the Mejlis, their self-governing body, and the persecution of its leaders and members of their community. The EU expects Russia to reverse these decisions and to end the pressure on the Crimean Tatar community. Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians and all ethnic and religious communities in the peninsula must be ensured the possibility to maintain and develop their culture, education, identity and cultural heritage traditions,

DECLARATION BY THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE ON THE AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA AND THE CITY OF SEVASTOPOL

which are currently threatened by the illegal annexation.

Furthermore, Russian Federation should stop changing the demographic structure of the population by transferring its own civilian population to the peninsula. Russia must also take measures to improve the environmental situation, which has considerably worsened since the illegal annexation.

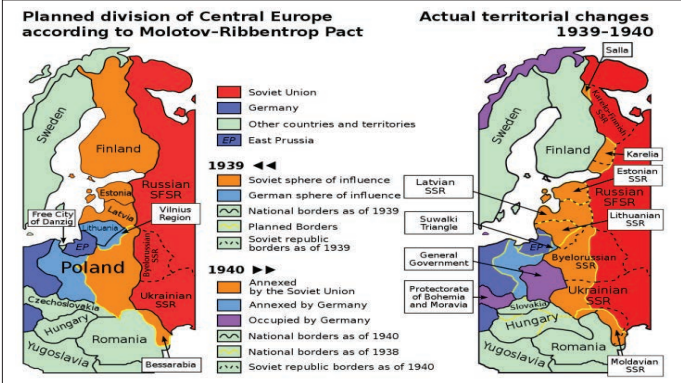
The EU reiterates its call for the immediate release of Emir-Usein Kuku and his five co-defendants, Oleh Prykhodko and all others who have been detained in the Crimean peninsula and sentenced in breach of international law. The EU calls for full compliance with international human rights stan-

dards in the peninsula. Journalists, human rights defenders and defence lawyers should be able to work independently and without undue interference and intimidation. All pending cases of human rights violations and abuses, such as enforced disappearances, torture and killings, violence, politically motivated prosecutions, discrimination and harassment should be thoroughly investigated. Full, free and unrestricted access for international human rights actors to the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea and Sevastopol, continues to be paramount. The EU recalls UNGA Resolution 74/168 of 19 December 2019, and calls for its full implementation, including the Russian Federation's obligations under applicable international humanitarian law.

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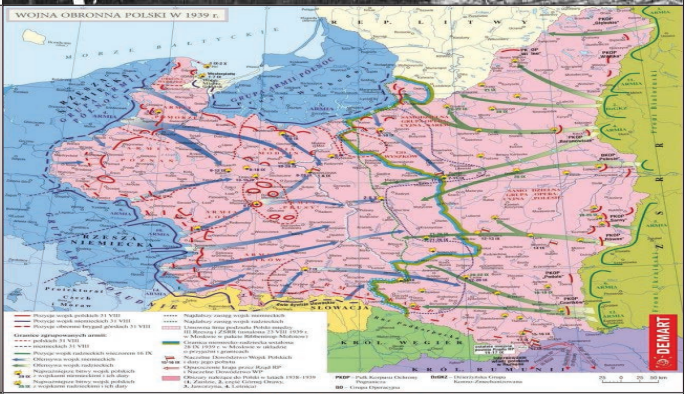
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LITTLE-KNOWN PAGES OF THE WORLD WAR II



Invasion of the USSR into Poland (1939)

Soviet historiography officially called it "The Red Army's liberation march to Western Ukraine and Western Belarus in 1939".



"Winter War"

(Invasion of the USSR into Finland). Combat actions were waged between the USSR and Finland in the North of Europe. There were talks between two countries for a long period of time, and the Soviet Union demanded that Finland ceded substantial border territories near Leningrad (now – Saint- Petersburg) and some coast of the Gulf of Finland in exchange for swampy and wooded areas in the North that did not compensate the loss of Vyborg and the Mannerheim Line, which was a line of Finnish defense.





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