



THE WINTER OF RUSSIA'S DISCONTENT

Russia's Futures from Within and Without

Chief Editor Dr. Sandis Šrāders
Editor George Spencer Terry

The Conference on Russia Papers 2023

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“I am now addressing our Armed Forces and the Donbas volunteers. You are fighting for the Motherland, for its future, so that no one forgets the lessons of the Second World War. So that there is no place in the world for executioners, punishers and Nazis.”

V. Putin

“No one in the world will forgive you for killing peaceful Ukrainian people.”

V. Zelensky

“Ukraine must win, Russia must be pushed out, and the Russian aggressor and war criminals must face justice: No peace reached before these goals are achieved can ensure anyone’s security.”

K. Kallas

“We must not humiliate Russia so that the day when the fighting stops we can build an exit ramp through diplomatic means.”

E. Macron

“Putin thought he could roll into Ukraine and the world will roll over. Instead, he met with a wall of strength he never anticipated or imagined - he met the Ukrainian people.”

J. Biden

“The war in Ukraine will continue until the complete defeat of Russia. We have already lost, the rest is just a matter of time.”

I. Girkin (Strelkov)

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Commandant's Foreword

BG Ilmar TAMM

Commandant, Baltic Defence College

When the final touches were being added to the last edition of the Conference on Russia Papers in late 2021, Russia had just released its ultimatum to the United States and the wider Western world, demanding that Ukraine be relegated to the status of a buffer state and that NATO forces be moved back to where they had been stationed in 1998 – and no later. Any additional actions that were seen to be ‘threatening’ to Russia’s security were also to be always under consideration. Some were too naïve to believe that this would lead to a full-scale war, others did not wish to believe that Russia would take such irresponsible and drastic actions, instead dismissing Russian rhetoric as a negotiation tactic, while others still stoically waited and watched to see exactly when the opening salvo would be fired, plunging Ukraine and Europe into a completely different world. The birth pangs of this completely different world came to a crescendo on 24 February 2022, and while Estonia celebrated its independence on that frosty morning, Ukraine was forced to stalwartly defend their own.

In the midst of these paradigmatic shifts and the still-ongoing battle to uphold the rules-based international order that is being tirelessly fought for the entire Western world by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the constancy of the Baltic Defence College’s mission has remained firmly in place. We continue act as a beacon of solidarity and multilateralism, educating the future generation of military and policy leaders of the three Baltic states, transatlantic allies, and other likeminded partners. In this vein, and as Thucydides once wisely wrote, “The society that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting by fools.” Condensed briefly, our mission is exactly to shape these scholar-warriors to be able to make those complex decisions in the field and formulate those well-informed arguments in the halls of power, if the need be, *semper ad securitatem patriarum*.

The Conference on Russia, as well as this parallel publication, smoothly fits within the College’s mission. Due to our joint historical experiences and our location in Tartu, Estonia, we have striven to be a centre of expertise and knowledge on Russia, our neighbour with which we have always had a

difficult relationship. Over the almost decade of running the Conference, this relationship could be characterised as cold at the best, but in 2023, we can unequivocally state that it is adversarial. In such a context, our discussions both in this volume and at the Conference become even more significant.

This volume speaks of Russia's futures, to be understood in a hypothetical plural. We cannot predict these futures, but I hope that you find these expert opinions from policy practitioners, academics, and other specialists informative and useful for hypothesizing how our continent will look like in the next decades vis-à-vis our troubled eastern neighbour. Scenario forecasting cannot be predicated on wishful thinking, as it was in December 2021, and we need to take such estimations of the future into consideration in safeguarding our own security and resilience.

I would additionally like to take this opportunity to thank the editors of this volume, Dr. Sandis Šrāders and Mr. George Spencer Terry, as well as all of the contributing authors, for all of their hard work and dedication that led to the compilation of this volume. It is exactly due to their diligence that we can freely read through such estimations in the chapters that follow.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Terry', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

01.01.2023

Tartu, Estonia

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Introduction

George Spencer TERRY,
Lecturer, Baltic Defence College

The past year has been filled with predictable yet unbelievable crises. With COVID-19 having finally come to a soft ebb, it seemed as if the world was returning to some sort of a familiar normality. However, the events that began during the wee hours of 24 February 2022 shattered any such expectations. Since this moment, the world has faced an interconnected cascade of diverse and precarious issues – refugee flows from Ukraine to the Baltic states, Poland, and wider Europe, economic woes in the form of inflation and high commodity prices, blackmail over fuel and grain, and a Ukraine that continues to fight for its – and our – values, independence, and freedom. Those infamous three days to Kyiv transformed into months of resolute resistance.

Each of these issues has one single nexus that connects them all together – a rabid and revisionist Russia, striking out at those phantoms that it has constructed in its mind over the past two decades of political and societal paranoia. In past editions of the Conference on Russia Papers, we have asked such questions as how the West could come to pragmatic, workable understandings with the Kremlin or how we could at least come to shape the possibility of such understandings. The time to ask such questions has long passed, and perhaps they were even futile in the first place, rooted in wishful and overly optimistic thinking for the future. Nevertheless, the question that remains now is not even how to tame the bear, but instead how to muzzle it, making sure that no one else will ever again feel the snap of his ever-hungry jaws. This is the mission of the current publication, *The Winter of Russia's Discontent*.

In this volume, we have collected the opinions and analyses of policy-makers, analysts, practitioners, and academics on what threats Russia poses and what solutions can be forwarded and what defenses can be raised. In the first section, we engage with this theme from the position of global powers and regions that must interact with Russia in one arena or another. Following these analyses, we then delve into the specific future permutations of the Russian idea. Finally, we focus on particular extant weaknesses within Russia, weighing them vis-à-vis current global crises in the third section.

Our intention is that this *mélange* of expert academic analyses, specialist prognoses, and opinion pieces can be used to inform the emerging policy and academic debates that have proliferated after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and will continue to do so. While these chapters delve into these hypothetical futures and concrete presents of Russia in the contemporary paradigm of the war, the war itself will end one day, and certain difficult choices will have to be made. How will the reconstruction, integration, and future defense of Ukraine look like, to ensure that such atrocities never again repeat? How do we engage with Russia, which will always be Europe's most significant neighbor, cognizant of its current refusal to engage with the very premises of transatlantic, European, and liberal democratic values? While we do not promise to have answers to these questions, let them act as a guiding light throughout the following pages.

Section I
Friend or Foe: Russia's Relationship with Major Powers

Lowered Expectations

Simon SERFATY

Professor, Eminent Scholar Emeritus, Old Dominion University

Abstract:

This chapter argues that the current global political climate is characterised by uncertainty and confusion. As the second half of the Biden presidency approaches, there are concerns about the potential return of Trump from retirement and the potential impact on democracy at home and abroad. The ongoing war in Ukraine has sparked discussions about the need for rearmament in Europe, specifically in Germany, which could potentially benefit NATO. However, this development may also lead to the resurfacing of policy differences within the EU and NATO, which could have negative and unforeseen consequences. The chapter concludes that the global political landscape is in a state of mutation and it is difficult to predict the future with any degree of certainty.

Key words: NATO, Ukraine, rearmament, policy changes, global political climate

To the end, Samuel Beckett insisted that he did not know who Godot was, nor what his two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, were waiting for. That was not the least absurdity of his play, which he wrote in French, the Irish author later explained, because he did not know the language well.¹

That is where we all are now: confused and unclear over what to expect as we stagger into the second and arguably final half of the Biden presidency, possibly half before Trump's return from his unwanted retirement – at home a democracy at risk, and abroad a tragic war waged in a moment of global mutation told in languages we understand poorly even when they carry an American accent. This is uncharted territory: at home, half the people wait for Trump to return to the White House and the other half wait for him

¹ A slightly different version of this essay was released on the web site of The National Interest as “Talk to Russia before it is too late” (September 23, 2022).

to go to prison; and abroad, half the world wait for America to reassert its leadership while the other half awaits confirmation of its demotion.

Who knows what will come next? This is a lose-lose war, which neither side can win but which both refuse to end – no compromise, it is said in unison. “We have not started anything yet,” Putin warns, as a criminal reminder that despite the mounting evidence of failure, Russia still owns the war he started since he controls its escalation beyond anything Ukraine can conceivably bear and the West dares to contemplate. “We have lost nothing and will lose nothing,” he still asserts while a defiant Ukraine pledges “to force Russia to end this war.” But what if Putin means what he says – are we deluding ourselves again? For those who dismiss the significance of his partial mobilisation and the seriousness of his nuclear hints, these are no echoes of the Cuban missile bluff: Putin is no Khrushchev, and what is known of him suggests that he might well choose the worst of the bad options available despite Biden’s own escalatory warnings meant to deter him with equally consequential bad choices.

Time, then, to think through the path we’re all on, and apply the brakes before it is too late? Recall the Sarajevo moment, over 100 years ago, when so much could have been avoided had so many not given so little thought to the cataclysm ahead. Or, closer to us, remember the Korean War after the breakthrough in Inchon, or the Vietnam War after the removal of Ngo Din Diem, or the Iraq War after Saddam Hussein’s capture – all spurned opportunities to end a war before it exacted nearly unbearable costs. “A fundamental strategic reappraisal is very much needed from all, international in character, political, rather than military in substance; and regional, rather than simply [Ukrainian], in scope,” as Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote about the war in Iraq as early as June 2004, when dramatically calling for “a reasonable deadline for the departure of U.S. troops” from Iraq before a bad war got much worse. Admittedly, there is no comparison between the natures of both wars. But there is a link between bad wars that get worse before they produce a bad deal.

For those who fear appeasement, a willingness to talk is not a repeat of prewar Munich or postwar Yalta; Ukraine is neither Austria in 1938, when the German aggressor remained militarily weak, nor Poland in 1945 when the war was for all purposes already won. For those who wait for a Korea-like *status quo ante bellum*, this is not a war with mutually accepted red lines that give its protagonists the time they need to achieve an alleged position of strength before agreeing to serious negotiations. For those who dream of

unconditional withdrawal from, or regime change in, Russia, this is not the war in Afghanistan, waged by the aged leader of a worn-out Soviet state: this is a moment of its own – an existential world crisis the like of which has not been seen since 1945. And make no mistake: if the war is not Ukraine’s only, it is also ours, which is why it must be stopped before it comes to our shores.

One day “there will be a dangerous backlash,” then-French president Jacques Chirac said of NATO enlargement (which he embraced nonetheless). As the most likely territorial backlash, Ukraine – although prudently kept at a distance – always loomed like a decisive test of Russia’s choice between cooperating with or maneuvering against the United States in Europe. Moving into a new century, Putin made his choice known – to reload and go backward in the direction of Cold War belligerence, with enlargement his alibi, rollback his strategy, and Russian history his motivation. In the early fall of 2008, the short war with Georgia was a wakeup call, but then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates was not heard by either of the two presidents he served – let alone their immediate successor – as time ran out after Crimea and past Minsk. For the most part, Putin did not fool the West, he just fooled himself – about his army, about Ukraine’s resolve, and about Western unity. In late 2021, therefore, Biden’s early warnings about a full-scale Russian assault on Kyiv did not deter Putin, clearly dismissive of Biden’s will to respond, and they were ignored by the Ukrainian government, skeptical of Putin’s preparedness for such a strategic gamble, and rejected by most European allies, mindful of their senior partner’s most recent intelligence debacle in Afghanistan.

That this war would be short was predicted by Washington and nearly all capitals with a stake in the impending conflict: Russian-staged images of the deceptive shock and awe made-for-television war in Iraq? Maybe – but however early it still is to forecast its long-term consequences, the war has had enough of a run for a first take on the repositioning of Europe with the United States and of the U.S. relative to Asia in the West, as well as a recasting of China relative to Russia and the Global Rest relative to the West.

In the West, there is much celebration: Russia down (and out?), America in (and back?), Europe up (and resolute?), and China aside (and troubled?). Thank you, Putin, you have served us well – NATO enlarged, with its identity and preponderance restored in Europe, America’s leadership reset, with a figure of authority and resolve which the rest of the West welcomes, and the EU’s complementary relevance asserted, which even perennial Eurosceptics applaud. Can it last, though? As the war lingers, sanctions hurt slowly but

weapons kill permanently, and escalation is feared unevenly. As Europe goes through its most demanding winter in 75 years, expect troubling questions about the conditions that led to this point: for over a decade, did the United States deter the Russian aggression – no; in anticipation of the war, did it respond to Ukraine’s increasingly urgent arms requests – no; having failed to deter and defend, did it join the fight – no; having left the fighting to others, did it suffer like others – no; having engineered a strategy that has kept the war going, was enough done to win, stop, or end it – no.

In short, will the end – a defanged Putin and a weakened Russia – justify the means – says who, on either side of the Atlantic and on the battlefield? The little and sadly immoral secret of the war is that whatever is said about it, we are not all Ukrainians. To speak up for and arm Kyiv is one thing, to die for it is another – that is the untold reminder of the war: for allies in Europe and elsewhere to believe that any American president will risk a nuclear war on their behalf in every circumstance is a risky gamble. While applauding the West’s unity and resolve, think of the Cuban missile crisis some 60 years ago, which opened a decade of West-West obfuscation, intra-European confusion, and East-West recalibration – until Reagan, past Carter, later restored enough strategic clarity to win it all.

The war in Ukraine was met with an unprecedented level of consultation in NATO and with the EU, and the Biden-Blinken foreign policy team deserves high marks for its management of the Alliance – the best since Bush-41 in Gulf War I. Yet, the war has also exposed Europe’s vulnerability – the risks and costs of a military confrontation momentarily hidden by the fallacies of representation – and America’s mendacity – a self-serving war by proxy whose costs are borne mainly by others: over six million refugees, dramatically higher gas prices and energy shortages with serious political consequences, more turbulence in strategically vital near-abroad countries across the Mediterranean, and, worst of all, the return of war on the Continent. Coming next, prepare for some European “jaw-jaw” not only with Putin but also with Biden of the sort the French like to lead, now with a forceful assist from a bolder post-Merkel Germany and a newly elected post-Fascist government in Italy. Yes, NATO is back but where is the Alliance going? While the war in Ukraine is cause for an overdue rearmament of Europe, including especially of Germany, which is a good thing for NATO, it will also resurrect overlooked policy differences within the EU and the Alliance, which is less promising.

Better than “war-war,” like Churchill used to say about Four-Power conferences, which many of his US interlocutors found futile at the time? Calling Putin names while awaiting his unconditional surrender of every square inch of Ukraine, including Crimea, will not bring him to the table, and expecting him to leave Ukraine and the Kremlin empty-handed and head down is not a winning diplomatic strategy. As Henry Kissinger wrote most recently – and not for the first time – the test of statesmanship “is to temper vision with wariness, entertaining a sense of limits” – which includes an understanding of achievable war aims. A sense of justice certainly satisfies our anger and outrage, but it also closes the door on diplomacy as a sacrilege that reduces the conflict into a dehumanising body count for the sake of territory that appears to be lost but can be regained later at a lesser cost. Kissinger knows history well, some of which he composed himself in response to the circumstances he faced, both as an individual and as a statesman. “When you read a work of history,” wrote historian E. H. Carr, “always listen out for the buzzing” – above the *déjà entendu* of angry calls to arms and outside the *déjà dit* of another Marshall or Marshall-inspired Plan.

Russia certainly stands as the main loser of the war, irrespective of what comes next, but the need to re-engage Moscow to stop the war until it can be satisfactorily ended is no less certain, with and past Putin. Think Kennedy after the 1962 missile crisis and, although different in character and significance, Bush after the 1989 Tiananmen massacre, with both presidents opening an exit ramp to their treacherous interlocutors, and seeking a path to *détente* with the Soviet Union after its most dangerous provocation and recovering from the then-greatest blow to normalisation with China within the following six months.

What will become of Putin himself is gaining clarity despite approval rates that remain surprisingly high. Remember, Khrushchev’s demise after his Caribbean fiasco took two years, nearly to the day – it is a matter of time for the alleged President-for-life to run out of time, as early as March 2024 when he might be “convinced” to not run for the presidency again. Yet, we hardly know for sure what difference his removal will make, as it was learned from Brezhnev for nearly two decades of increasingly global confrontation. Now, Putin’s critics and most likely successors are demanding more war not less, and fewer red lines not more; with no identifiable political bench in Moscow, who and what will come after Putin – another Putin *en pire*?

Admittedly, the thought of engaging Russia after “the obscene wrongness of its invasion” (*dixit* George Packer) ended its moral legitimacy, degraded its economy, and wasted its military power is disturbing. Why not finish what he started, and with him Russia? But beware, Putin was the way he was because Russia is the way it is: open-ended punitive sanctions would divert public resentment from him to the West and set the stage for another confrontational round, like 1919 opened the door on World War II – a new clash possibly more dangerous than Cold War I because of China’s full-time involvement with its own baggage of historical revendications and ambitions.

Limited to a small cohort of coerced, bribed, and marginal allies or partners, Russia is heard as a global supplicant shopping for security assistance, economic shelter, and strategic rehabilitation. Lacking access to the West, who better than China to invest in an underpriced gas station and overstocked nuclear warehouse? And who better and bigger than Russia to satisfy China’s interest in willing, capable, and compatible allies at a time when many of its neighbors appear to be building up their own forces to complement or even activate the US deterrent – just in case a catalyst is needed.

To be sure, China’s embrace of Russia’s intervention in Ukraine raises “questions and concerns,” acknowledges Putin, and it is cautiously focused “on issues concerning their respective core interests,” pointedly adds his Chinese counterpart before his new friend in Delhi publicly lectures him about the sanctity of territorial integrity. For China especially, support for Moscow carries a heavy price as it means further isolation from the United States and the states of Europe, including post-Brexit London and post-Merkel Germany. In other words, Ukraine is not a winner for China, and if nothing else, Putin’s fiasco in Ukraine serves as an anti-model for a Chinese government that is learning what not to do abroad the way it learned from Gorbachev about changes at home: as Bush-41 said about the Chinese, whom he knew well, strength irritates them, but they understand it better than weakness.

In the Global Rest, Ukraine also confirms that every war does not count equally as human suffering gets a different billing depending on its victims and location. “Ukraine must win because it is one of us,” awkwardly declared the President of the EU Commission in Devos in June 2022 – a war *chez nous*, so to speak, whose people are easily recognisable and worthy of protection and help. This civilizational divide underlines a perceived Western indifference to the more customary wars *chez eux*, where the reaction is more of a drop dead-get lost variety – in the Sahel and the Tigray regions, or in Syria, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

Double standards that echo Sam Huntington? After 200 days of war, the Ukrainians expect an open-ended \$5 billion monthly allowance, on top of the \$60 billion-plus in military and non-military assistance already provided or pledged by the United States and the EU – about one-third of the original Marshall Plan costs (in current dollars) for rebuilding half of Europe after more than five years of total war. But who is counting if it is “over here” in the wide white world? As Secretary Antony Blinken keeps saying, confidence is back but humility remains *de rigueur*. Do not wait for an instant resurrection of a US-led Western world. And looming ahead of Cold War II, the like of India and Turkey hope to lead the next network of non-aligned states that refused to condemn Russia, wary of China but weary of Europe and mistrusting the US and the West.

Living in fear again, the old-fashioned way, is no fun. Yes, of course, there is the fear of climate change, and the fear of guns and their indiscriminate killing, the fear of the missing paycheck or the unexpected bill, the fear of inflation and the next recession, the fear of Trump and the MAGA Republicans or Biden’s Democrats and socialism, and the fear of COVID and the next pandemic – so much to fear beyond fear itself. But, surging anew and perhaps worst of all, there is now the old fear of total war which previous generations fought to end, *plus jamais* we were told, and the fear of nuclear war that was thought to have ended with the Soviet Union, *pour toujours* we assumed, is back now, openly discussed like a war like any other.

Yes, this is the time to talk, however hard to do. Absent diplomacy, too easily equated with so-called appeasement, there would be only war left – the me-Tarzan-you-Jane script of the jungle of old. Yes, as we look ahead, Putin and, with him, Russia must not be driven to strategic desperation, however much they earned the punishment and however satisfying that would be. And although different and differently, Zelenskiy, too, cannot be allowed to get reckless, however deserving he may be for winning a war he has heroically won already. Better to remember now the wars we fought and lost after we had won them, from Truman’s Korea after McArthur’s landing in Inchon and before the Chinese intervention to Bush’s war in Iraq after Saddam Hussein’s capture and before the rise of the Islamic State.

Talking will not necessarily end the war but it will stop the killing, and it will not restore all of Ukraine’s sovereignty, but it will keep it on track before facing consequences that will soon prove irreversible and unbearable for all. So, get to it, Secretary Blinken – the time to talk is your time: do not spurn the moment because later might be too late.

Britain: Keeping Europe in Balance?

Julian LINDLEY-FRENCH,
Author, Chairman of the Alphen Group, and
Eisenhower Professor of Defence Strategy

Abstract:

This chapter argues that the situation of the Anglo-German relationship post-Maastricht and post-Brexit is the result of Britain's attempt to play a balancing role in the face of increasing estrangement from the EU. It engages with the historical precedents and parallels of such situations of disaffection. In September 2022, Britain agreed to increase its commitment to NATO Forward Defence in the Baltic states by expanding its existing battlegroups into brigades. However, much of Britain's contribution to the collective defence of Europe will be in the maritime domain. In response, Britain is investing heavily in the Royal Navy with new heavy aircraft carriers, F-35 carrier-borne strike aircraft, and new classes of nuclear attack and ballistic missile submarines. As a result, the British armed forces are becoming a model for a NATO-focused European Future Force, and the JEF represents the essence of the United Kingdom's future engagement with Europe. The chapter concludes that it is crucial that the United Kingdom, France, and Germany come to an understanding and move beyond post-imperial delusions on one side and *schadenfreude* on the other in order to effectively address the challenges facing Europe and the transatlantic community.

Key words: Anglo-EU relationship, UK foreign policy, Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), NATO

*"Whether we like it or not we are considerably bound to Europe".
Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin*

Introduction

It is perhaps fitting if sad that I should be writing this paper in the wake of the funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 2 and the accession of His Majesty King Charles III. The sense of a *fin de siècle* Britain is palpable. Change is in the wind, but what change? On the face of it such a question seems little more than post-Brexit British hubris. The facts suggest otherwise. In 2022 Britain still enjoys the world's fifth or sixth largest economy and in 2022 the world's third largest defence spender (Mercopress 2022). On September 23rd, Ben Wallace, the British defence minister, said that by 2030 the UK would increase its defence expenditure from the current £48 billion per annum (€54 billion) to £100 billion (€112 billion) per annum. In spite of Chancellor (Finance Minister) Hunt's hair-shirt Autumn Statement (budget) that 'aspiration' is still on the table. British *Zeitenwende*? In practice, that means Britain's European lead in supporting Ukraine goes far deeper than simply supplying advanced munitions or training Ukrainian forces.

There were many reasons for Brexit, many of them to do with the utter frustration of the British people with a distinctly mediocre London political class. However, three reasons stood out that have been given insufficient coverage by the Continent's chattering classes which are germane to this paper. First, the sense in Britain that if the Euro was to be made secure as a currency the EU would need to integrate far more deeply. Second, because of its political culture Britain could never agree to such continental supranationalism. The English fought a civil war in the seventeenth century over the absolutism of King Charles I and have always refused to accept what many see as distant unaccountable power being enacted in their name. The American Revolution of the eighteenth century was in many ways an extension of that political culture with the pre-revolutionary 'no taxation without representation' equally at the heart of an internal British debate at the time.

There was also a third element – the perceived shackling of British power by France and Germany. For decades Paris and Berlin had refused to permit the British access to the Franco-German axis within the EU even though Britain's political, economic, and military weight warranted such inclusion. The Germans may have been willing to entertain such a shift from a 'directoire' to a 'triectoire', but Paris was implacably opposed. For Paris, France finally had Britain just where she wanted it – paying without saying. Many Brexiteers believed, rightly or wrongly, that far from magnifying Britain's influence in Europe or the wider world, the EU actively constrained it and

reduced Europe's second largest economy, strongest military power and over 16 percent of the EU budget to little more than an offshore cash cow. Frankly, such concerns were over-stated but not completely without traction, and it is for this reason both Berlin and Paris must also take the blame for Brexit. Their collective refusal to recognise that geopolitics is as much a fact of life within the EU as it is beyond EU borders was a deceit that continues to this day.

A History of Balancing

For centuries England, and then Britain, viewed balancing power in Europe as the central tenet of foreign and security policy. This was to prevent the emergence of a single hegemonic power in Europe and goes back at least as far as Edward III in the fourteenth century and the Hundred Year's War. Even at the height of Nineteenth century Empire Britain did not, and has never had, the power to be THE continental hegemon to which the Holy Roman Empire, imperial Spain, royalist and Napoleonic France, and latterly imperial and Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia have all at times aspired. Now, tragi-comically, Putin again and rather ridiculously aspires to such hegemony over at least part of Europe with his corruption of Peter the Great's and Catherine the Great's eighteenth-century vision of a New Russia (*Novorossiya*). Britain ruled the seas precisely because she could not rule the land.

However, whenever a power or combination of powers threatened to dominate Europe England/Britain moved to block it. In 1588 Elizabeth I used the Royal Navy to defeat the Armada and block the ambitions to stamp out what he saw as the Protestant heresy of His Most Catholic Majesty Philip II of Spain. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Britain blocked the ambitions of France's Louis XIV's culminating in the victory of Winston Churchill's forebear, Sir John Marlborough, at the Battle of Blenheim, and the seizure of Gibraltar in 1704. In the late eighteenth century Britain fought the Seven Years War (1756–1763) to block French ambitions in North America. Using both direct military and indirect financial means Britain also built a coalition of forces that ultimately defeated Napoleon. First, London first prevented Napoleon from invading Britain in 1805 with the crushing victory of the Royal Navy over the combined French and Spanish fleets at the Battle of Trafalgar. Second, London forced Napoleon to split his forces by fighting and defeating the French in the Mediterranean and

the Iberian Peninsula. Finally, a coalition led by the Duke of Wellington defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Thereafter, Trafalgar and Waterloo afforded Britain over a century of naval supremacy and some fifty years of quasi political supremacy in Europe even if London often chose not to engage, due what was called 'splendid isolation'.¹ In those days of High Victorian power Britain's prestige was deemed enough to ensure balance in Europe without the complications of entangling alliances.

Such policy did not prevent Britain forming crisis-specific coalitions, indeed that was the British strategic method. In the 1850s, Britain joined with France to block Russia's ambitions in the Crimea and over the entire Black Sea as Moscow sought to exploit a failing Ottoman Empire. In the twentieth century, Britain twice formed coalitions with France and the United States to first block the ambitions of Imperial Germany and then Hitlerian Germany, albeit at great cost to itself and the rest of Europe. It was the cost that Germany imposed on Britain following its formation by Bismarck with the proclamation of the German Empire at Versailles in January 1871 that began a century of first slow and then accelerated retreat from empire. In effect, Germany forced Britain to choose between defending the empire and the home base. Germany became simply too powerful to balance alone and the effort it imposed upon Britain between the 1890s and 1945 led ultimately to the demise of both totalitarian Germany and the British Empire. It also led to the eventual decision of the British elite in the 1960s (not the British people) to reverse course and for the first time in centuries implicitly support the creation of a European 'hegemon', what became the European Union.

Splendid Isolation?

In the wake of Brexit, it is fashionable amongst Europe's commentatorial herd to suggest Britain has now lost all influence and that only by being a member-state of the EU could a declining Britain have had any hope of retaining residual influence over Europe. It is a viewpoint that not only reveals a lack of imagination (and courage) amongst many so-called experts, allied to a large dose of Brussels-inspired wishful thinking (s/he who pays the piper buys the tune), it also reveals a failure to understand Britain and

¹ In 1848, the then British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston famously said, "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow". This was a policy endorsed by Prime Minister Lord Salisbury forty years later between 1885 and 1902.

its statecraft. For all its many challenges and failings Britain still retains an ability to build coalitions. Take AUKUS – the Australian, UK, US strategic pact. As an exercise in statecraft, it was brutal. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian called AUKUS a “stab in the back” because the French conventional submarines the Australians were going to buy as part of the so-called “deal of the century” were dumped unceremoniously in favour of what will almost certainly be a variant of the British nuclear-powered Astute-class (BBC 2021). The latest, *HMS Anson*, was commissioned into the Royal Navy in September.

That is only part of the story. Not only are the British submarines markedly superior to the French submarines the Australians had first bought, the French Naval Group made a mess of the contract, and given the distances over which such submarines must operate in the Pacific nuclear power and the stealth it affords is vital. Crucially, the submarines were only one element in a three-part pact that also includes a strategic partnership with three powers long used to working together, and the sharing of advanced technologies with military applications, such as Artificial Intelligence and machine-learning, which all three are working on.

There is no question that the manner by which AUKUS was rolled out could have been carried out with somewhat more political politesse given that President Macron was only metres away from the discussions and apparently wholly unaware of what the Americans, Australians and British were up to. The AUKUS deal was finalised by Australia, the US, and the UK at the 2021 Carbis Bay G7 Summit in Cornwall. However, given France’s hostile and hard-line post-Brexit posture AUKUS was also a timely reminder that Britain IS a Great Power and must be treated as such. In any case, there was probably no way AUKUS could have been announced without Paris being mightily upset. Still, do unto others... Had the roles been reversed the French would have taken great delight in ‘stealing’ a British defence contract from London, and no doubt would have called it good statecraft.

AUKUS reveals also much more about contemporary British statecraft. Far from once again being not-so-splendidly isolated Britain still has powerful friends attested to by its membership of the Five Eyes Intelligence group, a coalition (that word again) which is increasingly becoming Six Eyes as Japan moves closer in the wake of the new Anglo-Japanese Defence Treaty. Perhaps the most telling question the French need to consider is just how would they expect a power such as Britain to act outside of the EU? With its hard-line on the Northern Ireland Protocol and the inner-British border

Paris continues to give the impression that it seeks to damage the sovereign integrity of the United Kingdom, even if that is not, in fact, the French intention.

Germany's take on Brexit is somewhat different but, in many ways, equally hard-line. Germany's view of European integration is essentially German-centric; the ever deeper organisation of other European states around Germany and its economic and political interests. As such, the EU is a super-*zollverein* (customs union) reinforced by the German-centric Euro. As soon as Britain indicated it would never join the Euro at the 1991 Maastricht Summit Berlin and London became if not estranged secondary to its relationships with France, the United States...and Russia. Berlin's drive was partly mercantilist, partly a consequence of post-war German angst, and partly the price the Germans insisted upon for giving up the mighty Deutschemark for the Euro. To be fair to the Germans the British also failed to understand that by agreeing to the creation of the Euro Germany also saw it as a price to be paid if the power of a united Germany in and over the rest of Europe was to be embedded in a legitimate pan-European institution.

The real tragedy of the Anglo-German relationship post-Maastricht is that Berlin wanted Britain to play a balancing role but in spite of Tony Blair's Euro-enthusiasm the British people became increasingly estranged from the EU as mass immigration suppressed already low wages. With the British unable or unwilling to become part of a European flagship project Germany saw as vital to its own interests and wider European stability Anglo-German relations ceased to be central to the Germans. That was Britain's choice, partly because London regarded the Euro as a badly designed and dangerous political leap of faith, and partly because, to quote Churchill in 1953, much of the British population still saw itself as being with Europe, but not of Europe.² Many of them still don't.

Balancing Today?

The Joint Expeditionary Force, or JEF, is perhaps the most useful example of Britain's contemporary balancing statecraft and London's continued determination to influence events on the Continent, even if 'balancing' is

² In 1953 at the height of the attempt led by the French to create a European Defence Community that would embed a rearmed Germany in a supranational European body, Prime Minister Winston Churchill said that Britain would not join because "whilst we are with them, we are not of them".

perhaps too strong a word. Created at the NATO Wales Summit the JEF is determinedly collective, rather than common, and Alliance-focused rather than EU-centric. In addition to the UK, which acts as lead 'framework' power of JEF its other members include Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. In February 2022, it was also announced that this high-end strike force would conduct military exercises in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The JEF also shows the orientation of much of Britain's future European engagement. It is not intended to be anti-French or anti-German and most decidedly not anti-EU. As a sign of good faith in September 2022 Britain opted to join the Dutch-led PESCO military mobility project in spite of concerns about the ability Britain has to exert decision-shaping influence over EU CSDP operations. Britain also seeks closer military ties with France and Germany and there is good reason to believe Berlin and Paris seek the same. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has clearly concentrated minds in Berlin, London and Paris, and rightly so. Whilst Paris has been pushing for deeper European defence integration and Berlin has talked rather vacuously about a future European Defence Union, both remain keen to keep the door open to Britain. President Macron's European Intervention Initiative (EI2) and his idea of a European Political Community is carefully crafted to enable Britain to have a say, be able to play and of course pay. From Paris's perspective this is hardly surprising because France has no more intention of subsuming its armed forces within some supranational EU Army than Britain ever had. Whatever ambitions Macron might have for '*l'Europe*' the French people do not seem to share them, especially where it concerns the descendants of Napoleon's '*Grande Armée*'.

The JEF is also comprised of nations that are by and large Atlanticist and that by and large emphasise NATO for defence, which is not only central to British statecraft but now includes Finland and Sweden which are just in the process of joining the Alliance. Britain also feels a special responsibility towards Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, partly for historical reasons, but also because London is of the firm opinion that credible deterrence and defence can only be afforded by NATO if Allied forces are deployed forward in strength and reinforced by states that can prove they are able to act quickly, capably and decisively.

Britain's challenge is that it is no longer a continental military power. Gone are the Cold War days when the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) of 55,000 troops was forward deployed on the inner-German border. Although

Britain agreed to increase its commitment to NATO's Forward Defence in the Baltic States at the June 2022 NATO Madrid Summit by expanding its existing battlegroups into brigades, much of London's contribution to the collective defence of Europe and the maintenance of deterrence will be in the maritime amphibious domain. It is an enormous domain that stretches from an increasingly contested Arctic through the North Atlantic to the Tropic of Cancer and into the Mediterranean. There has also been a foray by the UK Carrier Strike Group into the Indo-Pacific to demonstrate freedom of navigation solidarity with the Americans and support for Australia and Japan.

That is why Britain is reinvesting so much in the Royal Navy with new 70,000 ton heavy aircraft carriers, F-35 carrier-borne strike aircraft, new Astute-class nuclear attack submarines (SSN), new Dreadnought-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN), upgraded Type 45 destroyers, new Type 26 destroyers (at 10,000 tons markedly larger than frigates), and new Type-31e frigates. Many of these platforms will in time host a myriad of drone, hypersonic missile and artificially-intelligent capabilities as was demonstrated in September at the RIMPAC 2022 exercise with the Americans and twenty other nations off Hawaii.

Britain's American Paradox

RIMPAC 2022 and AUKUS could suggest a shift towards the creation of a US-led Anglosphere within NATO to balance an emerging Eurosphere. However, the Anglosphere is not actually an Anglosphere at all with many states, such as Poland and those in the JEF suspicious of efforts to pool defence sovereignty within the EU, now siding with the Americans and British. Equally, there is an American paradox that will likely prevent the Anglosphere and the Eurosphere becoming too distant from each other: the rise of military China and the impact it is having on US foreign, security and defence policy, as evident in the new US National Defense Strategy.

In a sense, the post-Brexit 'game' of beggar thy neighbour in Europe was playable (just) prior to the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Not anymore. Whatever frustrations Europeans may share about each other pales into insignificance compared with the new reality they must now all confront and with which the Baltic States live daily: the need to credibly deter Russia going forward. Frankly, given the pressures European weakness

and Chinese power are exerting on the United States and its armed forces there will soon come a time when the Americans will only be able to guarantee European security and defence going forward if the Europeans themselves do far more for their own defence, and that must include the British.

That message was explicit in the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept and is implicit in the 2022 US National Defense Strategy. The Americans now need allies more, not less, if they are to remain a credible power in the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East, Europe, the Arctic and elsewhere, but those allies will also need to be capable of making the Americans militarily stronger not weaker. They have such allies in Japan and the Republic of Korea in the Indo-Pacific, and in Australia they have an ally that aspires to be capable, which is why they are buying nuclear submarines. However, it is in Europe where the US really needs capable allies and given that Britain, France and Germany account for some 65 percent of all defence-expenditure in Europe and almost 90 percent of all defence research, technology and development such a European-led Allied deterrence and defence posture will only ever be realised if Europe's three leading powers put aside what in global terms are distinctly second-order tensions over Brexit.

Britain's European Future

Stanley Baldwin, a British prime minister in the 1930s, implied that one only has to look at a map to see to where Britain is 'considerably bound'. That bond does not stop Britain having global interests or exploiting its still global ties but post the Suez Crisis in 1956 and even more so the decision to withdraw from beyond Suez in 1967, Britain has long been a powerful European rather than world power. Today, Britain is an important European member of the G7, a permanent member of the UN Security Council (and rightly so because the UNSC is not the executive committee of the UN), and a leading member of NATO. Interestingly, as formal institutions seemingly come to be ever more complicated, and decision-making ever more hidebound, Britain's power, diplomatic agility, and strategic raider military projectability also makes London a vital power in any military coalition of democracies which are increasingly the vogue these days.

Much is made of how much the British armed forces have shrunk over the last decade, but little is made of the flexibility and capability of Britain's contemporary strategic forces. This was the explicit aim of the 2021

Integrated Review of Security, Defence and Development and Foreign Policy (the clue is in the title and the word ‘integrated’) which will now be subject to a further review ordered by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. By 2030, the British future force will need to be interoperable at the high-end of conflict with the Americans across air, sea, land, cyber, space, information and knowledge. As such, the British armed forces should become the model for a NATO focussed European Future Force. In The Alphen Group’s (TAG) NATO Shadow Strategic Concept, which I had the honour to draft, we called for the setting up of a highly-mobile, heavy first responder, high-end essentially European force, with Britain at its core. This ambition was also reflected in the official 2022 NATO Strategic Concept.

For the British, NATO is and will remain Europe’s principal provider of military security and thus the backbone of deterrence and defence in Europe as it is for many Europeans and it is that commitment more than any other that forges the bond between Britain and its Nordic and Baltic allies and partners. The NATO Readiness Initiative, the new NATO Force Model and the NATO Military Strategy owes much to British thinking, as does the establishment of fully capable European NATO forces and capabilities able to undertake a full spectrum of missions and contingencies. Britain will also be at the core of a pool of forces that Europeans could draw upon for autonomous crisis response missions and operations.

For the British the down-payment on a credible future NATO will thus be the setting up by 2030 of a NATO Allied Command Operations Mobile Heavy Force (AMHF). That is precisely why the British have committed to raising their defence budget from current 2.3% of Britain’s \$3.2 trillion economy. Such a force would need to consolidate all Allied Rapid Response Forces into a single pool of forces supported by the requisite force structures and be sufficiently robust and responsive, and held at a sufficient level of readiness to meet any and all threats to the territory of the Euro-Atlantic area in the first instance, with sufficient capacity to also support those frontline nations facing transnational threats, such as terrorism. The AMHF would, in effect create a high readiness/high-end force that emerges from the enhanced NATO Readiness Initiative agreed at the NATO Madrid Summit.

Britain will also assist NATO to better exploit emerging and disruptive technologies and over time enable the Alliance to act as a vehicle for the introduction into the Allied Order of Battle of artificial intelligence, super/quantum computing, big data, machine learning, drone swarming, and autonomous capabilities (for example, manned-unmanned teaming, decoys, relays, and networked autonomous systems), hypersonic weapon systems to

enable an allied capability to engage in hyper-fast warfare. Capabilities that will be crucial to deterrence in the future.

In other words, Britain is no longer seeking to balance other European democracies but rather enable them. London has no problem, for example, with the NATO Future Force also helping to give further shape and meaning to greater European strategic responsibility. Such responsibility, and the autonomy it fosters, are a function of relative military capability and capacity and must be seen as such. Together with enabling combat support and combat support services, such a force could be deployable in several guises and under more than one flag. These contingences might include a NATO-enabled European coalition (both EU allies and partners) or a framework for coalitions of the willing and able.

There is also a challenge Britain poses to the rest of Europe. If the new NATO agreed at the 2022 Madrid Summit is to be realised in a timely manner, then whatever the post-pandemic, energy-crisis economics European allies, together with Canada, will by 2030 at the very latest need to invest sufficient resources to ensure that they are collectively meeting at least 50 percent of NATO's Minimum Military Requirements identified by the strategic commanders. These will include fully usable forces required for covering the whole spectrum of operations and missions, as well as the strategic enablers required to conduct multiple demanding large- and smaller-scale operations. With France and Germany also to the fore Britain must help lead the way.

Britain: Keeping a Balance

There have been several mountains of excrement (not too strong a word) written about Britain since Brexit. To my mind, Brexit was a mistake because it was bad geopolitics and Britain was in fact winning the argument about collective versus common action. Much of that nonsense has been written by think tanks desperate for the European Commission's approval, or by researchers who lack the courage to tell power what it does not want to hear. The narrative was simple: Britain leaving the EU was bad. Therefore, Britain was wrong and Britain must be punished. Perhaps the worst-example of this nonsense was when I attended a meeting in Brussels to be warned that because of Brexit Britain would be denied intelligence-sharing. Given that Britain supplies some 70 percent of raw intelligence data on a raft

of vital issues I was tempted to quote Clint Eastwood and say “Go ahead. Make my day.” The decision to exclude Britain from Galileo when much of the technology was British was perhaps the worst example of petty punitive politics dressed up as EU legalism.

It is true that Britain could easily retreat into itself. After all, Britain is a nuclear-armed island of some seventy million souls with a major economy, advanced expeditionary armed forces and one of the world’s leading intelligence capabilities. However, that would not be the British way. It is precisely because Britain is a nuclear-armed island of some seventy million souls with an advanced economy, advanced expeditionary armed forces and one of the world’s leading intelligence capabilities that Britain cannot and will not disengage from the security and defence of Europe. It would simply not be in the British interest. Berlin and Paris might have trumpeted their failed leadership of the Normandy Format and the Minsk process, but when it came to the crunch, as so often in the past, it was American and British action in support of Ukrainian courage that blunted Putin’s attack. Deeds not words, Europe!

Therefore, it is time for Berlin, Paris and others to stop insulting Britain for the democratic decision it made back in 2016. It is also time for those Britons with post-Brexit delusions of imperial grandeur to step aside. Britain can have influence in the world with or without the EU, which is hardly a bastion of growth and stability with a Brussels that is hardly greater than the sum of its parts. Equally, Britain will have more influence if it constructively seeks to work with its fellow Europeans, particularly where it concerns security, deterrence and defence. That will not be as easy as it sounds. First, there is still the temptation for the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to turn inwards with the energy crisis, even though England is believed to be sitting on trillions of cubic metres of shale gas in the Bowland Basin. Second, there are still too many on the Continent in senior positions who want post-Brexit Britain to fail, even if they claim it is ancient history and they have moved on. With due respect to Belgium, Britain is not Belgium with nukes and must be accorded the respect its still considerable power warrants. Third, given the scale and scope of dangerous change afoot in the world, and indeed Europe, only by standing together can Europeans hope to be really secure. Institutions like the EU or NATO are tools, a means to an end, they are not ends in and of themselves.

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The Re-calibration of Germany's Russia Policy

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Abstract

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine that began on 24 February 2022 has shattered Germany's post-Cold War identity and left its Russia policy in ruins. For 30 years, Berlin pursued a strategy aimed at encouraging Russia to be a partner in European affairs. To this end, it invested heavily in dialogue, trade and bilateral co-operation. German policy makers saw no immediate military threat from Russia and drastically reduced military spending. Successive governments viewed Germany's increased dependence on Russian gas as a stabilising factor in Europe since they believed that Russia needed the German market as much as Germany needed the gas. The new German government that came to office in December 2021 was deeply divided on the issue of Russia and struggled to respond to Moscow's build-up of military force on Ukraine's border. However, Chancellor Scholz's *Zeitenwende* speech three days after Russia's invasion signalled an abrupt change of thinking in Berlin, including the need to rapidly re-invest in defence and reduce Germany's dependence on Russian energy supplies. Scholz also pledged strong support for Ukraine although the government initially vacillated over weapons deliveries causing dismay in Kyiv. The brutality of Russia's invasion generated sympathy in German society for Ukraine while leading figures in the Social Democratic Party (SDP) who had promoted expanding the gas relationship admitted that they had misjudged Russia's intentions. The spectacular exodus of German companies from the Russian market after the imposition of western sanctions signalled the end of an era in which Germany had hoped for the best in its relations with Russia but failed to prepare for the worst.

Key words: Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Germany's Russia policy, Military spending, Russian gas dependence, *Zeitenwende*

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, marks a turning point in European history, a *Zeitenwende*.

Moscow's use of military force to depose Ukrainian leadership and extinguish the country's independence has brought to a spectacular end the 'post-Cold War era', which began with the promise of a democratic Russia and a European continent at peace with itself. A new label has yet to emerge to describe the new reality in which Germany is one of several Western countries that have imposed unprecedented economic sanctions on Russia while also providing economic and military support to Ukraine to help it continue fighting a war of national survival. Russia sees its military campaign in Ukraine as part of a war with the West to define the limits of Western influence in global affairs and restrict the weight of the United States in the European balance of power. By contrast, Germany and its allies regard their response as a defence of the Helsinki principles of sovereignty, inviolability of borders, and human rights. Moscow accepted these over 30 years ago as the basis for security in a common vision of a Europe 'whole and free'.

Russia's war against Ukraine has shattered Germany's post-Cold War identity and left its Russia policy in ruins. Germany's rapid unification after the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 owed much to the Moscow's decision to disengage from Central Europe and instilled a determination in the German political class to achieve reconciliation with Russia as part of an extension of the European integration process that had allowed Germans to normalise relations with former enemies. Their idealistic goal was the creation of a *Friedensordnung*, a post-modern security order built on peaceful relations rather than power. The main instruments for fashioning the new relationship with Russia were dialogue, trade, and bilateral cooperation. Germany invested heavily in all three areas while re-purposing its armed forces to perform non-combat roles in international crisis management operations. Contributing to NATO's collective defence mission was no longer a priority, as the Alliance's focus shifted to out of area challenges. The underlying assumption of this policy was that Russia accepted Germany's logic that the dark days of power relationships and spheres of influence in Europe belonged to the past in an increasingly globalising world. Increased German dependency on imports of natural gas from Russia were a by-product of such thinking. The gas was cheap, and from Berlin's perspective, larger imports increased mutual dependency, contributing to stable relations. The security of these gas supplies was not considered a problem since Moscow had been a reliable gas supplier to West Germany even during the worst days of the

Cold War. Russia's deliberate reduction of gas deliveries in the summer of 2022 as Germany and its allies stepped up arms deliveries to Ukraine destroyed the illusion that the gas trade could be an effective insurance policy against war. For German policy makers schooled in the thinking of *Nie wieder Krieg* (no more war, ever), the impossible had happened.

At the time of writing, a debate had yet to begin among the German policy elite about the responsibility that Germany bears not just for misreading Russia's intentions but for also for failing to deter it from embarking on a course to dismember the second largest country in Europe. After the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russian policy makers cannot have failed to note Germany's readiness to make its energy security a hostage to Moscow, as well as the continued hollowing out of its armed forces. The concept of *Wandel durch Annäherung* (Change by Growing Closer) that underpinned Germany's approach to Russia for more than two decades proved counter-productive. Russia did indeed change as closer relations between the two countries took shape, but the features it acquired were increasingly negative as the leadership moved down a path of anti-Western authoritarianism backed by re-discovered imperialist instincts. By the time Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, it could be considered a fascist state even if Germans were not inclined to label it as such due to the Soviet role in the defeat of Nazism. However, the brutality of Russia's military operations, including an extraordinary level of violence against Ukrainian civilians, a supposedly 'brotherly people', was deeply shocking for the policy elite and brought accusations of 'genocide' from some quarters (e.g., Beck 2022). Policy makers had persuaded themselves that Germany's hand of friendship had suppressed Russia's violent tendencies so familiar from history. Berlin's failure to heed the multiple warnings of Poland, the Baltic states, and others that Germany's faith in Russia's capacity for positive change was misplaced was a deep source of embarrassment. Germany had not wanted to allow realism to cloud its idealism about Russia.

The coalition of Social Democrats, Greens and Free Democrats that came to power in December 2021 immediately found itself in a highly uncomfortable and challenging situation as Moscow built up its military forces on Ukraine's borders in a menacing show of force. Rattling Western nerves, Moscow issued an ultimatum to NATO countries to discuss a fundamental revision of European security arrangements, including not just the prohibition of further NATO enlargement but also the roll-back of NATO's military presence in Central Europe to the situation before the Alliance's first

enlargement to the region in 1997. The purpose of these unrealistic proposals was for NATO member states to reject them and make Ukraine's efforts to integrate with NATO a 'casus belli' for Russia. Finland, a country that manages its relations with its Russian neighbour with consummate skill, quickly concluded what was at stake for European security. Responding to Moscow's threat of 'serious military and political consequences' if Finland were to join NATO, President Niinistö warned other Western countries of the dangers of appeasing Russia and insisted on Finland's right to decide its own security arrangements (Milne 2022). Berlin remained silent.

The government was deeply divided on the issue of Russia and how to manage relations with it. The SPD was largely wedded to traditional *Ostpolitik* concepts of preserving close relations with Russia despite tensions and remained committed to the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline project while the Greens brought a strong human rights' focus to Russia policy and a more sympathetic view of Ukraine. They were opposed to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline on environmental and geopolitical grounds. The Free Democrats were closer to the Greens in their condemnation of the increasing repression in Russia but were divided on the issue of Nord Stream 2.

The growing crisis immediately revealed the government's inexperience and its inability to lead a European response to Russia's increasing pressure. Germany no longer possessed the diplomatic leverage that had allowed it to fashion the Western response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and its destabilisation of south-eastern Ukraine in 2014. Understandably, Chancellor Scholz could not compete with Angela Merkel's mastery of the issues in the 'East'. Annalena Baerbock, the new foreign minister, had not previously served in government and had no specialist knowledge of the region. President Putin had chosen his timing well and his skilful sabre-rattling exposed two deep-seated intrinsically German vulnerabilities that defined the limits of a European response to a Russian invasion. The first of these was Germany's instinctive discomfort with hard power and its lack of capacity for deploying it. The second was Germany's unprocessed history in relation with Ukraine marked by its tendency to feel guilt for Hitler's war crimes on the eastern front, focusing more on Russia rather than Ukraine despite the fact that Ukrainians suffered more than Russians at the hands of the German invaders. This reflex made German policymakers particularly cautious about boosting Ukraine's defences because weapon supplies necessarily meant bringing Germany into indirect military conflict with

Russia. Britain, Poland, the Baltic states, and others had no such hesitation in arming the victim of Russia's aggression.

Germany's hesitation in supplying weapons reinforced suspicions in Kyiv that Germans shared a colonial attitude with Russians about their country, regarding them as people whose fate along with that of other Central European countries can be decided jointly by Berlin and Moscow. Recent history supports this view. The Minsk Agreements that froze the conflict manufactured by Moscow in Donbas' in 2014 to Russia's advantage was heavily influenced by Germany. In the years that followed, Kyiv often felt itself under pressure from Berlin to show flexibility regarding its implementation in the absence of concessions from Moscow. This contributed to its sense that Germany saw Ukraine as *Verhandlungsmasse*, a bargaining chip for settling relations between Europe and Russia.

Seemingly insensitive to understandable Ukrainian fears, the new government caused dismay in Kyiv by not immediately threatening to prohibit the operation of the new Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline if Russia invaded Ukraine. Admittedly, there was no evidence to support Ukrainian suspicions that Scholz might be cut from the same cloth as past SPD *Russlandverteher*. He did not hail from the same group in the SPD as former Chancellor Schröder, President Steinmeier, and former Minister of the Economy and Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel. As Mayor of Hamburg (2011–2018), he had kept his distance from his counterparts in the twin city of St Petersburg. However, he did not dissent from the standard SPD line towards Russia and as Vice Chancellor and Finance Minister (2018–2021) was part of the Grand Coalition that backed the Nord Stream 2 project and continued to underfund the armed forces.

The Chancellor and his defence minister, in particular, did not help themselves during the early months in office by their disastrous communication on weapons deliveries to Ukraine. The government's was apparently unable to decide on which weapons Germany would or would not send to Ukraine reflected divisions within both the SPD and the Greens on the issue. Defence Minister Lambrecht's announcement in January 2022 that Germany would supply 5000 helmets as a gesture of solidarity provoked ridicule at home and abroad. Later decisions to supply light weapons and then small amounts of heavy weapons were shrouded in secrecy and confusion as it emerged that the promised weapons would take months to reach Ukraine in some cases. It quickly became clear that the Bundeswehr was desperately short of equipment and that Germany had precious few weapons

systems to give Ukraine in the first place. In addition to the weapons debacle, Scholz appeared unmoved by the destruction and loss of life in Ukraine and showed no urgency to visit Kyiv even after the signal that President Steinmeier was welcome in Ukraine. The Ukrainian government had initially caused offence in Germany by indicating that Steinmeier should not visit because of his perceived record as a *Russlandverstehher*. The Chancellor finally visited Kyiv in June 2022 together with the French and Romanian Presidents and the Italian Prime Minister.

For all Scholz's instinctive caution, his speech to parliament on 27 February 2022 showed genuine boldness and an impressive command of the issues. It has anchored the word *Zeitenwende* in the English language. The reference to the change of an era reflected Germany's understanding of the significance of Putin's decision to go to war with Ukraine. This was not a repeat of 2014 when Russia had wrested Crimea away from Ukraine without firing a shot. Moscow had now triggered the first major military conflict in Europe since 1945. Scholz stated clearly that Putin did not just intend to wipe Ukraine from the map, he was building a Russian empire and destroying the European security order (*Bundesregierung* 2022). The Chancellor stated Germany's unequivocal support for Ukraine and proceeded with a string of announcements that left commentators aghast at the apparent speed of change. The government would immediately invest €100bn in the Bundeswehr and increase defence spending to 2 percent. It would invest in building a new generation of aircraft and tanks together with European partners. It would devote resources to improving its resilience to cyber-attacks and disinformation. It would also invest in two liquefied natural gas terminals to reduce dependency on gas imports from Russia. Putin had seemingly succeeded where President Trump had failed in persuading Germany that it needed both to invest in defence and reduce its gas dependency on Russia.

Scholz went out his way to brand Russia's aggression against Ukraine as "Putin's war," concluding that there was no readiness on Putin's part for real dialogue. While Germany would keep communication channels open to Russia, there would be no talking for the sake of talking. He explained the need to differentiate Putin from the Russian people who had 'not decided in favour of the war' by referring to the historical importance of the reconciliation achieved after 1945 between Germans and Russians. In line with his NATO counterparts after the start of Russia's invasion, Scholz stuck studiously to the message that NATO member states were not at war with Russia

and wished to avoid Russia's war against Ukraine from escalating beyond Ukraine's borders. However, his argumentation in the *Zeitenwende* speech indicated his understanding that Putin was at war with NATO, including Germany. The sanctions measures adopted by Germany and its allies against Russia are unquestionably an instrument of economic war, and Russia views them as such. It is difficult to escape the view that Germany, in view of its history, cannot consider itself to be at war with Russia and thinks of the conflict in Ukraine as a crisis to be managed. With one eye to the *Russland-versteher* and pacifist sentiments in his party, Scholz consistently refused to say that Ukraine must prevail in the war with Russia, limiting himself only to stating that Russia must not win and Ukraine must continue to exist. At the same time, the Chancellor warned repeatedly of the risk of the war escalating and drawing in NATO, alluding in particular to the dangers of nuclear war (Amann and Knobb 2022). This reference was not by chance. For decades, Russian messaging has played on German anti-nuclear sentiments that date back to the controversies over the deployment of US nuclear weapons in West Germany.

Even if an inquest into the failings of Germany's Russia policy had not begun four months into the war, two of its chief authors from the SPD had the humility to admit that they had been wrong. President Steinmeier who had defended Nord Stream to the very end, describing energy relations as "almost the last bridge between Europe and Russia" said simply:

"We held on to bridges that Russia no longer believed in and that our partners warned us about. My holding on to Nord Stream 2 was clearly a mistake" (*Bundespräsident* 2022).

He conceded that he had underestimated Putin's readiness to pay for his 'imperialist delusion' with the "complete economic political and moral ruin" of Russia (Ismar 2022). If these arguments were indisputable, his assertion that "we failed with the project to tie Russia into a common security architecture" (*ibid.*) was questionable. It pre-supposed that this idea was feasible in the first place, given the fundamental differences between NATO countries and Russia on the nature of security and how to provide it.

Sigmar Gabriel went further by admitting that Germans were wrong in thinking that they knew better than the Eastern European countries how to deal with Moscow based on their *Ostpolitik* experience and that Germany's attitude towards them was arrogant and paternalistic:

“The idea was that stronger links between the German and the Soviet – or Russian – economy would help us more effectively maintain stability and peace in Europe. Then Vladimir Putin arrived, a man who had no interest in economic success and used a different currency, the currency of power. To be honest, we Germans never believed the war in Ukraine would happen, until it did. The success of Germany’s economy and society is founded on successful economic integration and the conviction that the closer the economic ties are, the safer the world will be. That was obviously a gross misjudgement” (Gabriel 2022).

Gabriel also admitted that the previous government’s decision to let the market determine the best source of gas was a mistake and that it should have reduced Germany’s reliance on Russian gas after 2014 (Tagesschau 2022). Robert Habeck, the new Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, reportedly identified a pro-Gazprom lobby in his Ministry previously led by Gabriel that had opposed the construction of LNG terminals. Gabriel admitted that he had personally erred by not listening to the objections of the ‘East Europeans’ to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, for which he lobbied so vigorously. By contrast, former Chancellor Schröder showed no remorse for his unflinching support for Putin over more than two decades, or for his considerable influence over the two Nord Stream projects. Only in response to a chorus of public condemnation did he step down from his role as chair of the board of the Russian state oil company Rosneft nearly three months after the war had started. Parliament had earlier voted to strip him of his parliamentary privileges. Beforehand, Schröder had given an unapologetic interview to the New York Times in which he defended the policy of increasing Germany’s energy dependency on Russia and predicted that Germany would go back to doing business with Russia after the war as it had done in the past because of its need for raw materials (Bennhold 2022).

Former Chancellor Merkel made her first media appearances in June 2022 six months after leaving office. Clearly shocked by the war in Ukraine, she nevertheless refused to admit any policy mistakes and stood by her earlier decisions to resist granting Ukraine a NATO Membership Action Plan in 2008 as well as her support for the Nord Stream 2 project. She claimed that the project had not increased the risk of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia (ibid.) and did not take responsibility for the decision to bring forward the closure of Germany’s nuclear power plants that led to Germany’s increased dependence on gas imports. She also refused acknowledge that the chronic underfunding of the Bundeswehr during her time in office had weakened

Germany's hand in dealing with Russia. Nonetheless, she observed that despite all her years of dealing with Putin, it had not been possible 'to really bring the Cold War to an end' (Youtube 2022). At the same time, she noted that she had long made it clear to others that Putin hated the West and that his goal was to destroy the EU because he saw it as the 'entry step' to NATO. Nevertheless, she argued that it was Germany's interest to seek a *modus vivendi* with Russia in which the two sides could try to coexist peacefully despite all their differences. She did not believe in the old Ostpolitik mantra of *Wandel durch Handel* (change through trade) but instead in *Wandel durch Verbindung* (change through connectivity) 'with the second largest nuclear power in the world' (Der Spiegel 2022).

The combination of sanctions and Germany's commitment to reduce its reliance on Russian oil and gas imports as soon as possible has led to the bilateral trade relationship unravelling rapidly. Although in June 2022, German companies such as Bayer, Liebherr, and Metro continued to operate in Russia, an overwhelming majority had either scaled back or suspended their activities, with a smaller number announcing that they are leaving the country. The departures included major brands such as Aldi, BASF, Deutsche Bank, Deutsche Telekom., Grohe, and Siemens (Sonnenfeld 2022). The latter had been in the Russian market for nearly 170 years. The exodus of German companies from the Russian market is highly significant since the voice of business was a critical factor in influencing the Russia policy of successive governments and sustaining belief in trade as a stabilising force in relations with Russia. The heads of some of Germany's largest companies regularly praised the Russian government despite the worsening business environment in Russia and increasing tensions with the West.

By the summer of 2022, the war had rendered much of Germany's impressive civil society connectivity and other linkages with Russia lay inactive. Fearful of greater domestic repression, many representatives of Russia's liberal intelligentsia who contributed heavily to these ties were also now outside the country. Another pillar of Germany's relationship with Russia had also disintegrated.

In mid-summer 2022, it is still impossible to predict how long and in what form Russia's war with Ukraine will last and what the outcome will be, however, it is clear that Europe has already entered a new phase of confrontation with Russia that could last decades and significantly alter the balance of power on the continent if the EU meets its commitment to wean itself off Russian oil and gas and NATO countries, bolstered by Swedish and

Finnish accession, re-invest in defence. Germany will need time to find its feet in this rapidly changing situation that will force it both to re-assess its approach to Russia and pay greater respect to its allies who demonstrated a far better understanding of Moscow's intentions. US-China tensions and German concerns about the future access of German exports to the Chinese market, as well as the possible re-election of Donald Trump as US President, will make the coming years especially challenging for German diplomacy. Hopefully, there will be an opportunity for Germany to play a leading role both in the reconstruction of post-war Ukraine as well as in the process of preparing Ukraine for eventual EU accession. In this scenario, Ukraine will become the key focus of Germany's engagement in its 'east'. An opinion poll conducted in June 2022 indicated that Germans believed by a factor of 2:1 that peace in cooperation with Russia was no longer possible and that Europe must stand up to Putin. At the same time, there were signs of increasing support for Ukraine joining NATO and overwhelming backing for Ukraine joining the EU (Petersen 2022). There is little doubt that the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who fled to Germany in the early months of the war contributed to changing perceptions of their country that had previously been framed by Russian propaganda as 'nationalist' and 'neo-Nazi', terms that left many Germans cold towards Ukraine.

For the foreseeable future, Russia is likely to continue deploying a variety of tools to divide the West and break its influence on global affairs. Germany will be a major target for this effort and will need to build much more resilience to guard against Russian attempts to manipulate public opinion, undermine its government, and destabilise its political system. At the same time, Russia's economy will continue to suffer from the twin pressures of a harsh sanctions regime that is likely to stay in place for many years and a declining market for hydrocarbons. Sanctions will starve Russia of a range of Western technologies and know-how, making any replacement difficult. Poverty and inequality will worsen, and the transfer of power from Putin to his successor may have the potential to de-stabilise Russia internally with powerful effects on its neighbourhood. Calibrating the pressure on Moscow to revise its policies and neutralise the military threat to its neighbours without causing a breakdown of authority will present a serious challenge to Western policymakers.

Scholz has spoken of an 'ice age' (Kubina 2022) in relations with Russia, as well as Russia's war against Ukraine being a 'caesura' for German diplomacy. Future historians may debate whether the 'caesura' was in fact

the preceding three decades that separated two eras of confrontation during which Germany flirted with the vision of a reforming Russia that would bring peace and stability to Europe.

Tragically for Ukraine, German policy makers were unprepared for the alternative scenario of a Russia bent on re-shaping the European security system through war rather than reforms at home.

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How Does China see Russia? A Glimpse into the PRC Official Position and the Surrounding Academic Outlooks

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Abstract:

This essay aims to assess the perception of Russia in the foreign policy establishment thinking of the People's Republic of China, specifically looking at the most recent developments following the Russian invasion into Ukraine, by examining speeches, statements, and meeting readouts of the PRC's top foreign policy actors, complemented with an assessment of Chinese academia. The first section of the essay gauges the role of Russia in China's foreign policy outlook. The second section provides an analysis of selected PRC academic publications after the beginning of Russia's attack on Ukraine. The essay concludes that the PRC's policy vis-a-vis Russia is not that of an allied power, but of an interest-based pragmatic neighbour. Consequentially, while the Chinese foreign policy establishment promises deep and integrated cooperation, the PRC foreign affairs academic debate contains a strong motif of a limited support doctrine in relation to Russia.

Key words: China-Russia, Political discourse, Academic discourse, Ukraine

Introduction

Russia and China share many characteristics, and both sides are falling back on these similarities to benefit their relationship. There is the institutional memory and likeness that is a legacy from the high point of the Sino-Soviet relationship of the 1950s. Simply put, many practices share the same roots and are easily understood by the other side. Even for structures that are obsolete or reformed beyond recognition, such as the Communist Party rule and role in Russia or the relationship between the state and private capital in China, there is a muscle memory, especially among the leadership generation, of the systemic mechanisms underlying the counterpart's decision making. This muscle memory trickles down to institutional, managerial,

and technological operations, facilitating cooperation in various sectors, including, crucially, the military.

Still, historic commonalities aside, the two powers are also drifting apart. The policy mistakes that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union from within were a warning to China, but also served as proof to China that it had chosen the better approach to localising Marxism – China had adopted, reformed, and ultimately transformed the Soviet model. (孔寒冰, 项佐涛) The failure of (Soviet) Russia juxtaposed to the rise of China has bred condescending attitudes towards Russia.

Furthermore, the institutional cultures of the last three decades have very little overlap, and while both share the goal of countering US domination, it is not being accomplished through mutual integration, but rather via increased sovereignty-building and silo-ing on the national levels. Given the current emphasis on sovereignty in both Moscow and Beijing, it would be hard to imagine any scenario of integration akin to that of the first decade of the People's Republic of China. Even if Russia's sovereignty is severely undermined as an outcome of a coordinated Western punishment for Russia's war in Ukraine and the country is forced to accommodate China's interests as a result, the level of institution-building *ex nihilo* that took place in 1950s China would not happen in contemporary Russia. With these factors in mind, it is important to investigate the Chinese position, approach, and plans for Russia.

Since the upgrade of the Sino-Russian relationship to the “Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era” in 2019, and even more so since the beginning of Russia's war in Ukraine, much attention has been paid to the position of China vis-a-vis the Russian worldview. The Chinese position has been called ambiguous (Wolf and Malyarenko, 2022) balancing (McGuirk, 2022) contradictory, and even “solidly pro-Russia.” (Feng, 2022) During a Bush China Foundation US-China Strategic Policy Dialogue on Ukraine event in cooperation with Peking University's Institute for Global Cooperation and Understanding that brought together academics and former diplomats from the United States and PRC (Leung, Shan and Yu, 2022) in April 2022, Yu Hongjun, Vice President of the Chinese People's Association for Peace and Disarmament, and former Deputy Minister of the International Liaison Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, currently affiliated with Peking University, summed up a position many consider to be mainstream among PRC official and academic circles alike: “So, I think, NATO forced

Russia to fire the first shot. It is an indisputable fact that the war was started by Russia first, but this is a 'special military operation' that NATO forced Russia to start first, or Ukraine lured Russia into starting the war first." (Yichao, 2022) On one hand, this position places the blame on NATO and, most often, the United States. On the other hand, it cannot avoid admitting that it was Russia that started the war – a war that has implications globally and affects China's foreign policy strategy directly.

"China always respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. At the same time, we have also seen that the Ukraine issue has its complex and special historical circumstances, and we understand Russia's legitimate concerns on security issues," (Xinhua News Agency, 2022) stated PRC's minister of Foreign affairs Wang Yi in a 24 February 2022, phone call with his Russia counterpart Sergei Lavrov – on the day that Russia invaded Ukraine. Later that same day, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying responded to a Bloomberg question "Can you say then China considers Russia's action an invasion?" during the regular press conference with "We have stated China's principled position on the Ukraine issue. There is a complex historical background and context on this issue. The current situation is the result of the interplay of various factors." (MFAPRC, 2022) The statements balancing keywords "sovereignty" with "concerns" and "context": arguably were meant to project vagueness, yet yielded the opposite result, casting China as a supporter of Russia in the eyes of the US and wider Western policymaker and foreign policy communities. (US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2022)

Seven months later, during the meeting with Xi Jinping on the side-lines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, it was Vladimir Putin's turn to refer to "concerns," (Putin, 2022) this time, acknowledging Chinese unease regarding the situation in Ukraine. Coming out as a rhetorical supporter of Russia during the first stages of Russia's war in Ukraine, the People's Republic of China has ended up in a complicated position due to its comprehensive strategic partner's failures on the front line.

Against the backdrop of such complex, ambiguous, and even contradictory signals at times, the essay is an attempt to gauge the Chinese approach to the PRC's relationship with the Russian Federation, its strategic considerations, perceived risks, and preferred outcomes, by examining the most recent developments in speeches, statements, and meeting readouts of the PRC's top foreign policy actors, complemented with an assessment of

Chinese academia's understanding of its partnership with Russia. Methodologically placed in the field of discourse analysis, the essay applies source analysis of Chinese and Russian official foreign policy actors' statements as well as recent academic publications with relevant keywords retrieved from the China National Knowledge Database (CNKI.net). Source languages include Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and English.

Big Country Diplomacy: The Role of Russia in China's Foreign Policy Outlook

According to the Xi Jinping Thought of Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, China's "new type of international relations" is subdivided into several categories: Big Country Diplomacy, Regional Diplomacy, Developing Country Diplomacy, and Multilateral Diplomacy. (China Internet New Center, 2022) The relationship with Russia falls into the most important category of the four: the Big Country Diplomacy, along with China-US and China-EU relations. Moreover, China pursues cooperation with Russia also via the Multilateral Diplomacy outlet, as Russia is a member of all three organisations PRC prioritises under this category – the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the BRICS. Russia, one can deduce, is an unavoidable presence in the Chinese foreign policy agenda, because all China's foreign policy foci overlap with it; Russia is a major power, a regional presence, and a multilateral partner. Moreover, as an "upper middle income" state according to World Bank (Hamadeh, Rompaey, Metreau, Eapen, 2022) Russia is also seen as a "developing" country by the Chinese classification.¹

The relationship also has an internal emotional aspect. China is sympathetic towards Russia's push against what both countries see as US

¹ In an interview with a Chinese diplomat in September 2022, the diplomat stated that "Russia is doing well in providing certain social services, including medicine and all levels of education, to its population. From an economic perspective, however, it is not a developed country." This view is supported by a 2004 publication by Peng Gang and Guan Xueling, which states that "today, with economic globalization deepening with each passing day, the so-called developed and underdeveloped economies practically refer to the developed and underdeveloped market economies. Russia is obviously an underdeveloped market economy." This perspective is also reflected in the online Chinese encyclopedia Baidu Baike, which lists Russia among the major developing countries: "发展中国家", Baidu Baike, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/发展中国家/652451>.

hegemony. However, the perception that China's leadership is willing to unambiguously draft itself as a supporter of the Russian position solely to counter US supremacy is flawed. Close cooperation and the messaging of national leadership messaging on the "friendship with no limits and no forbidden areas of cooperation" (Xinhua News Agency, 2022) has practical interests behind it. Even Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy is careful not to lock China into the Russian worldview: "As for now, China is balancing and indeed has neutrality and, I will be honest, this neutrality is better than China joining Russia ... It's important for us that China wouldn't help Russia," (McGuirk, 2022) he expressed during an online address to Australian university students in August 2022. Indeed, with the curious exception of Li Zhanshu, the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the third most powerful official in the Communist Party hierarchy, stating to Vladimir Putin that "We fully understand the necessity of all the measures taken by Russia aimed at protecting its key interests, we are providing our assistance," (The State Duma, 2022) Chinese officials are normally trying to avoid any allegiance in their signalling towards Russia.

Russia, in its turn, routinely portrays Chinese diplomatic actions as expressions of support for the Kremlin. Case in point: the contradictory signalling of the importance of the Putin-Xi meeting during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Samarkand.

The first stopover meeting during Xi Jinping's Central Asia tour, which also was the first in-person visit of the PRC leader since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, was not Xi's conversation with Vladimir Putin, but his visit to Nur-Sultan for a Sino-Kazakh bilateral with Kassym-Jomart Tokaev. "China highly values its relations with Kazakhstan, and firmly supports Kazakhstan in safeguarding national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and in taking reform measures to preserve national stability and development. China will always be a trustworthy and reliable friend and partner of Kazakhstan," (MFAPRC, 2022) reads a PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement following the formal talks of Xi Jinping and the president of Tokayev on 15 September 2022. Aside from the traditional Chinese diplomatic lingo, the meeting overall, as well as the statement in particular, are quite remarkable, not just because of the bilateral implications of the Sino-Kazakh relations, but because they again allow us to gauge the complexity of the Chinese official position towards Kazakhstan's northern neighbour – the Russian Federation.

China did not choose Moscow as the primary destination for China's president. Instead, it chose to express solidarity with a country whose positioning in the war has not been the same page with Russia; Kazakhstan has opened its borders to Russian citizens fleeing conscription, and in more recent displays, even demonstrated readiness to directly contradict Russia, rejecting a "demand by Russia's Foreign Ministry to expel Ukraine's ambassador to Kazakhstan, Petro Vrublevskiy, over his comments in August about killing Russians." (Tapaeva, 2022)

In sum, what Russia broadcasted as a bilateral Putin-Xi meeting against the backdrop of a Central Asian venue (Russian News Agency, 2022), China presented as a Central Asia-oriented multilateral Chinese show of strength, a "revival of the ancient Silk Road," with meetings with Vladimir Putin and other leaders on the side. In this setting, it is understandable why Xi Jinping did not announce the meeting with Vladimir Putin first; the declaration had been made by the Kremlin.

When the Chinese minister of Foreign Affairs and State Councillor Wang Yi briefed the accompanying journalists on the outcomes of the visit, Russia was merely an afterthought, first mentioned only two-thirds into the statement: "President Xi Jinping also held bilateral meetings in Samarkand with the leaders of 10 countries attending the SCO Summit at their request and attended the trilateral meeting between China, Russia and Mongolia." (MFAPRC, 2022) Arguably, the result of the Putin-Xi meeting still contained language of encouragement as the "two heads of state positively evaluated the fruitful strategic communication maintained between the two countries this year, and said that they will continue to strongly support each other on issues concerning each other's core interests." (*ibid*) The messaging followed the Chinese contradictory or ambiguous approach.

Of course, one should not underplay the cooperation and mutual support between the two countries, including in the realms of defence and security. On 19 September 2022, the 17th round of the China-Russia Strategic Security Consultation took place, chaired by Yang Jiechi, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee, co-chaired by Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Nikolai Patrushev. The format has been active since 2005, and the statement again spelled many commonalities in security outlooks: "The two sides ... exchanged in-depth views on maintaining global strategic stability, the situation in the Asia-Pacific region, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and other

international and regional issues of common concern.” (MFAPRC, 2022) The commonalities in global security worldview, namely, the shared willingness to resist US-led security architecture, translate into practical projects as well. A recent example of the anti-US cooperation and an illustration of the military and dual-use cooperation between the two powers is the Russia and China deal on mutual deployment of GLONASS and Beidou satellite navigation systems in their territories. (Interfax, 2022) According to the information provided by TASS, GLONASS stations will be placed in Changchun, Urumqi and Shanghai, whereas Beidou would be placed in Obninsk, Irkutsk and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. (Russian News Agency, 2022) “Used simultaneously, the Russian and Chinese systems – GLONASS and Beidou – will increase the accuracy and reliability of navigation. Therefore, we are sincerely interested in wider cooperation in using the GLONASS and Beidou systems, as well as navigation technologies based on them,” expressed Roscosmos CEO Yuri Borisov.

Still, the cooperation is not all-encompassing. China prioritizes anti-US strategies but is reluctant to support all Russia’s ventures: in the “friendship with no limits,” the words spell out partnership, but the context signals limits.

An Ideal Russia for China: the PRC Academic Debate

The previous section attempted to demonstrate how Russia is exaggerating Chinese commitment to the bilateral relationship, and how Chinese official foreign policy communications carefully draw a line, presenting Russia not as *the* ideological counterpart, but merely as *one of* them, albeit an important one.

What, then, in turn, could be the function that China ascribes to Russia? Further analysis of the PRC academic publications after the beginning of Russia’s attack on Ukraine demonstrate that the analytical community of the PRC favours deepening specific cooperation with Russia when it serves at least one of two goals: to offset US domination regionally and globally, including in the Global South, and to insulate China against global economic shocks emanating from volatile energy and shipping markets. The first goal falls within the military and value domains, whereas the second one is economic.

Voicing a popular opinion among China's economic academia, Hu Zinan, Tongji University, in his article for *Asia-Pacific Economic Review*, underscores the economic opportunities for China in the "Russia-Ukraine conflict," arguing in favour of maintaining what he calls the "strategic ambiguity on Russia" rather than voicing support: "At present, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has evolved into a game of superpowers. It has significantly changed the pattern of global economy and international competition. The main changes include that the EU is becoming the biggest loser, manifested in a widening gap with China and the United States; The severe sanctions imposed by the United States and Europe on Russia are tearing the global industrial chain apart; The imbalances between the supply and demand of global energy and food are making their prices roaring; The predatory behaviour of the United States and Europe against Russia is leading to a collapse of the Western credit system. As for China, these bring both challenges and opportunities. China should keep on high alert and handle with caution, maintaining strategic ambiguity on Russia, deepening China-EU economic and trade cooperation, exploring new space for cooperation in the fields of energy and food, and accelerating the internationalization of RMB and the development of digital RMB." (胡子南, 2022) This line of thought is pragmatic and acts as an illustration of the Chinese self-serving approach in Russia's conflict with the West, not featuring any particular solidarity with Russia.

It is worth mentioning that such an approach to Russia is not necessarily seen in China as working against Russia's interests or strategies. Liu Fenghua, Head of the Russian Foreign Policy Research Department at the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, argues that Russia's own approach to foreign policy has "has experienced the evolution process from transformation to finalization. This process can be divided into five stages: Pro-Western Diplomacy (1991–1995), 'Multi-polarization' Diplomacy (1996–2000), Pragmatic Diplomacy of Great Power (2001–2004, 2009–2013), Neo-Slavic Diplomacy (2005–2008), and Power Diplomacy of Great Power (from 2014 to the present)." (柳丰华, 2022) The current stage does not leave much space for meaningful alliances on Russia's part, in a sense, as it is conceptualized in China as a counterpart of Xi Jinping's Chinese foreign policy outlook. These domains serve Russia's current interests as well, specifically given the isolation due to sanctions. Case in point: Russia's vice prime minister Aleksandr Novak specifically played up the 'Power of Siberia 2' pipeline during the

SCO Summit in Samarkand as an alternative to replace the export market and revenue stream lost due to the shelving of the 'Nord Stream 2' pipeline to Germany, promising an agreement soon on the project with China and stating that "the gas pipeline will allow a supply of up to 50 billion cubic meters of Russian gas to China per year."

However, if interests in some projects overlap, there are fundamental differences in approach in others, acknowledged by the Chinese side. The Arctic is a pertinent example of such differences: "Security cooperation in the Arctic region is a milestone in the relations between China and Russia. As a classical theory that influences a country's foreign policy decisions, defensive realism may be used to interpret the structure and course of China Russia cooperation in Arctic security affairs. On the one hand, the current Arctic governance is moving towards the pattern of "multipolar competition" under the leadership of the Arctic Council; On the other hand, driven by economic complementarity, a shared perception to external threat, power balance, and so on, China and Russia have developed a closer security cooperation partnership, which to a certain extent has enhanced their security cooperation in the Arctic region, such as joint exploitation of resources, construction of airline infrastructure and heightened awareness of security cooperation. China and Russia are facing many challenges due to their differences in perception, the uncertainty of global climate change, and the danger of militarization of Arctic security by the United States. Therefore, identifying the core interests and demands of China and Russia in the Arctic region, acknowledging their differences, strengthening their strategic cooperation in the emerging technology sector, creating a new model of China-Russia Arctic +X cooperation, and jointly establishing the Arctic Science and Sustainable Development Fund are some of the options for the two countries to deal with the challenges." (谢晓光,杜洞光, 2022)

Importantly, PRC academics frame the "Ukraine crisis" in the categories of impact on the "developing world," of which China considers itself to be a part and a leader (Kelly, 2018): "Due to the Ukraine crisis, the actors, organizing mechanisms, norms and rules, as well as the overarching issue of the international system have all suffered from shocks, albeit to different degrees. With both gains and losses expected, the crisis has posed more challenges than opportunities for developing countries at present," (杨洁勉, 2022) writes Shanghai Institute of International Studies' Yang Jiemian, member of the Foreign Policy Advisory Group of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In his article, he examines how the "crisis" could present an

opportunity for China to “advance the construction and reform of the international system.”

Influential PRC academics do not openly argue for disengagement with Russia; however, they point out the challenges in across-the-board cooperation and argue in favour of carefully weighing China’s own interests. The effects caused by Russia’s war in Ukraine are routinely analysed via the assessment of challenges and opportunities for China. The motif of anti-US comradery aside, the Chinese academic debate does not argue in favour of a strong Russia on China’s borders. Currently, Russia needing China because of Western sanctions is beneficial for China economically. (郭晓琼,蔡真, 2022) An ideal Russia for China, one can presume, is an entity that is contained enough to continue needing China economically and geopolitically but functional enough not to implode.

Conclusions

China’s academic debate includes a view of Russia as a somewhat rogue state, the bottom line of which, for the time being, can be used to China’s benefit – to counter the United States and to present an ideologically credible alternative development model to the Global South. The limitation, however, is that Russia should be limited enough in its options that it continues to rely on China, but not so limited that it implodes.

A Russia in a role of a junior partner is advantageous for China, providing benefits such as natural resources, a market for technology, ideological solidarity, and even some extent of military cooperation, implying stability along the four thousand kilometre long Sino-Russian border. Whereas a weak and disintegrated Russia is a risk factor – its regions can become a source of terrorism, extremism, and even a nationalist anti-China agenda.

Furthermore, even if they do not currently amount to unilateral land, Russia’s destabilising activities closer to China, e.g., in Central Asia, could disrupt China’s neighbourhood. Although current Russian expansionism is not a sanctioned topic for the mainland academic critique, research into the historical aspects of Russian imperialism, including the humiliating treaties, such as the “Russia-Chinese Provisional Agreement on the Fengtian Province,” (徐炳三, 2022) is alive in well.

It is consequential, then, that the PRC foreign affairs academic debate contains a strong motif of a limited support doctrine: China should take

advantage of the instability for the benefit of internationalising its financial infrastructure and expanding its economic reach, however, mainstream academia rarely contains calls for providing full support and solidarity to Russia. Without exaggerating the influence of the academic opinion on official PRC state policy, one must admit, however, that the debate, especially in the publications of influential think-tankers and analysts, provides a basis for determining the mainstream line of approach toward Russia. For this reason, Xi Jinping's government will likely continue the tradition of the "PRC's foreign policy contradictions," (Rühlig, 2021) manifested in the impossible task of keeping Russia close while hedging against it.

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Section II
The Winding Path of the Russian Idea

An Obituary for the Post-Soviet, 1991–2022

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Abstract

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, both the region and the period following this collapse have been widely characterised as post-Soviet. While there have been some liminal problematisation of the paradigm, it has been generally accepted both popularly and academically as some sort of qualifier for historiographical periodisation and study of this region in both scholarship and for policy-making. This chapter will argue that the post-Soviet is no more for two main reasons. First, Russia no longer wields soft power within the so-called post-Soviet space, and second, Russia is no longer incontestably viewed as the regional hegemon even within the region itself. Such a paradigm shift will have lasting implications for both regional studies and policy-making, but these changes can be guided and informed by the current processes that are playing out both societally and geopolitically in the former region.

Key words: Post-Soviet, Periodisation and categorisation, academic and policy discourse, Russia, Ukraine

Introduction

Periodisation is crucial to the study of history. It provides clear delineations of certain periods, categorisations and characteristics of certain countries or societies during these periods, and helps to explain certain narratives behind or causes of important events that change the course of history. In this way, periodisation is as well deeply linked with historiography. The events that delineate these periods, effectively providing the conditions for the before and the after, are seen to be so paradigmatic that they constitute natural divisions in the flow of history. Some examples of such periods are the pre-Columbian, that of Late Antiquity, the Renaissance, the Interwar Era, or, as is the focus of this chapter, the post-Soviet. After the official dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the post-Soviet period had begun. The

countries that had previously formed the fifteen constituent republics of the Soviet Union would bear this new post-Soviet moniker.

At the same time, however, such periodisation has effects beyond the study of history and of spatial understandings. In being used to categorise countries and societies in broader regimes of knowledge, it attaches certain uncontested connotations to actors within this configuration, privileging the roles of some actors while diminishing others. This phenomenon is especially true in both vernacular and scholarly uses of the post-Soviet as a descriptive term. Both academic programmes or journals or policy institutes that focus on post-Soviet affairs or the region would give Russia a central position not only structurally but discursively, frequently to the detriment of the other countries and societies put in the same category. Often in these discourses is the post-Soviet linked solely to Russia as its centre, marked certain proclivities toward corruption, lower standards of living, or other ways of othering these societies, countries, and cultures from either Western or global standards, affecting the production of knowledge and policies toward this broader region with these biases and stereotypes.

This chapter will argue that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022 marks the end of the post-Soviet period and a paradigm shift to a new, unfamiliar territory. The post-Soviet period was characterised by two main factors: Russian soft power in the space of the former Soviet Union paired with the implicit understanding of externally uncontested Russian hegemony in this area. After the war, neither of these two factors are fixed, meaning that the current configuration is something different. While uncovering this specific configuration is not the aim of the current chapter, it will nonetheless delve into what possibilities there are for future theorising and conceptualisation.

This chapter is structured in the following fashion. First, there will be a discussion of why Russian soft power and hegemony in the former Soviet Union were the two defining characteristics of the post-Soviet in both popular and academic terms. Next, a review of the events following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine will be presented to demonstrate why those two defining characteristics of the post-Soviet no longer can be relied upon currently. Finally, the chapter will conclude by discussing the implications of this paradigm shift not only for regional studies but also for policymaking.

What Constituted the Post-Soviet?

Before discussing why the post-Soviet epoch has ended, it is first necessary to delineate what made the post-Soviet the post-Soviet other than its foundational event, which was the collapse of the Soviet Union. From 1991 to 2022, the Russian Federation maintained dominance in the post-Soviet space through soft power paired with disciplinary – yet externally untested – uses of force. The only so-called post-Soviet states that were able to escape from such cycles were the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which had made overtures to European and transatlantic organisations from 1990–1991 onward, securing their membership in the European Union and in NATO in 2004. Nonetheless, they were still often categorised as liminally post-Soviet, despite the fact that they were characterised as the ‘internal West’ during the Soviet period itself.

In the post-Soviet period and post-Soviet space, Russian soft power was strengthened through a variety of different mechanisms, many of which were directly supported by the Russian Federation either through direct policy actions or through unofficial networks and substrata that were maintained after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The clearest example of this is the Russian language as the *lingua franca* in many of these societies, alongside shared historical memories including Second World War and the relative material progress of the late 1950s and 1960s in relation to the years both preceding and following them (Ironsides 2021).

Such narratives were often strengthened in Russian strategic communication or cultural diplomacy projects as well. Additionally, many of the elite of these newly independent states were educated in Soviet universities and were socialised in the Soviet bureaucratic system, as such able to maintain ties across borders and now in neighbouring countries. As Russia had served as the metropole in this previous pseudo-imperial system, it was now the unofficial nexus of communication and economic connectivity, despite inroads being made by other global actors. Support of leaders such as Aleksandr Lukashenko currently or Nursultan Nazarbayev in the past, as well as for break-away territories and regions also solidified its role as a patron for the authoritarian regimes that would come to be equivocated with the post-Soviet area.

At the same time, Russia tried to institute many organisations that would parallel institutions that had been either established in the West or globally to legitimise its position in the post-Soviet space based on new logics. The

Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) would technically mirror many of the same developments of the European Economic Community in institutional and legal terms, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) would emulate many of the same principles of collective defence similar to NATO, and the Confederation of Independent States (CIS) provided a legal framework that could have evolved along the same lines of a regional union in the same way as the European Union or ASEAN.

However, each of these novel formats did not truly run on any of the liberal institutionalist principles that had acted as both inspiration and impetus for these other organisations. The EEU and CIS would have had Russia dominate any governing bodies or would have any of the other members remain economically dependent on Russia, as in its current stead, 90 per cent of the GDP of the EEU comes from Russia (Lüdtke 2021). Even the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which held its 2022 summit in Samarkand, has only worked to maintain a Sino-Russia balance in a limited swath of Eurasia.

Nevertheless, the use of military force always remained should any country wish to break out of the post-Soviet orbit that had Russia as its centre of gravity. From 1991 onward, such examples of this can be found in Ichkeria, Georgia, and Ukraine, and additionally with the stationing of Russian soldiers either officially as in the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan as peacekeeping forces or in permanent bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to mediate in conflicts that Moscow saw occurring between its satellites. Additionally such frozen conflicts served Russian interests in keeping those countries locked in Russia's orbit, as such a situation would guarantee that these countries would remain dependent on Russia to maintain a balance of power that would allow for both state and elite survival while at the same time keeping these countries away from other international organisations such as the European Union or NATO that have the legal precondition of not having any outstanding territorial disputes in order to apply for accession. The model of *Russkiy Mir* had always been geocentric and most definitely not a *Pax Rossica*.

Why has the Post-Soviet Ended?

At the beginning of 2022, Russia's position within the post-Soviet region seemed almost incontestable. The CSTO mission in Kazakhstan (Satubaldina 2022) – with Russian forces quickly deploying and withdrawing from the country after the mission as agreed upon – seemed to hint that Russia was more entrenched in the region than it had been for years, ready to reassert its hegemony. Even in the first days of the war against Ukraine did many pundits forward this view, projecting three days to Kyiv before Russia would force a regime change, and like with past uses of its military might, would revert back to a business as usual situation with the EU and the wider West. However, as those three days to Kyiv (Sciutto and Williams 2022) extended to three weeks, three months, and then a total withdrawal on that specific axis of advance, it was clear that previous prognoses regarding Russia were distorted or outright wrong.

The extended war – which galvanised the Ukrainian population and led to an unprecedented level of transatlantic solidarity – blew away the credibility of any Russian soft power in Central and Eastern Europe. What popular support Russia had previously enjoyed in Ukraine had been wiped away in a matter of days, with citizens of occupied Kharkiv yelling “Muscovites go home” at the Russian forces in Muscovite-accented Russian, and similar situations could be seen in the Baltic states and Moldova with only a vocal minority of Z-invasion supporters being visible compared to how loud support of the Kremlin had been from certain groups in the past. Soft power at gunpoint is no longer soft power, but a choice of either forced assimilation or violent extermination. Support of the Russian invasion, instead of being found in other former territories of the Soviet Union, was to be found with the Western far left and far right, based on ideological and propaganda narratives.

The shift away from the Russian cultural and historical sphere continued to occur at lightning speed in the following months, and not only in Ukraine. What remained of Soviet monuments were removed from public space in Estonia with the T-34 being removed from Narva (ERR News 2022) and Soviet era obelisk representing the ‘liberation’ of Latvia was removed in Riga (DW 2022). Moldova and Georgia made their ambitions to join the European Union absolutely clear (European Commission 2022a; 2022b), Kazakhstan has refused to expel its ‘equal strategic partners’ (i.e., the Ukrainian diplomatic corps) at the Kremlin's behest (Reuters 2022a),

and Uzbekistan ordered its citizens not to take part on the side of Russia (Temirov 2022), all asserting their own agency outside of Moscow's plans. In each of the wider regions outside of the Muscovite metropole, ties to the Soviet past or connections with contemporary Russia were loosening.

This loss of control spiralled also on to the geopolitical level, resulting also in Russia's role as regional hegemon being contested both by outside actors and by those states that also used to be dependent on it for security guarantees or dependent on the so-called order that Russia provided in the international system. The most striking example of this is the renewal of the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict over disputed territories that began on 13 September 2022. Not only did Armenia call on CSTO forces to come to its aid in projecting its territorial integrity to be directly denied by Russia, but Azerbaijani forces levelled an FSB outpost that was to be housing 'peace-keeping' forces stationed in Armenia. As such, Russia either had neither the interest nor the ability to protect its satellite state in the South Caucasus nor even the ability to strike back against a direct attack against its own forces. As a result, not only have Azerbaijan and Armenia come to negotiations, but even a mutually agreeable border settlement could be in place by the end of 2022 (Reuters 2022b). Such a situation would have been unthinkable in a previous context.

This is not the only instance of the South Caucasus region turning completely against Russia. At the same time, party chairman Irakli Kobakhidze of the Georgian Dream has called for a public referendum on the retaking of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Menabde 2022), two regions that were wrested away from Tbilisi as a result of the 2008 war with Russia. Like the situation between Azerbaijan and Armenia, such a shift in public rhetoric toward either animosity or indifference toward Russia demonstrates that the credibility of Russia as a regional hegemon has been destroyed, with states that previously were deferential to Moscow now openly defying it. This process is also ongoing in Central Asia as well, as exemplified by the renewed armed conflicts between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan over exclaves that, such as in the case of the other border conflicts in the territory of the former Soviet Union, had been instrumentalised to cement Russia's role as mediator and hegemon. Further evidence of Russia's waning influence in the regions is marked by Armenia and Kyrgyzstan's refusal to participate in the CSTO 'Indestructible Brotherhood-2022' training exercises (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* 2022a). Comments by Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon stating that Russia should "respect" each of its neighbours as they

are not the “former Soviet Union” only underlines this trend (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* 2022b).

However, equal to the agency asserted by all of these states and societies in the former post-Soviet area in challenging Russian hegemony is the transatlantic community finally doing the same with a higher degree of solidarity. The brutalities of the Second Chechen War were treated as a domestic issue within Russia. The violations of international law and the dismemberment of Georgia were condemned, but it took little time to go back to business as normal. The 2014 occupation of Crimea and the Donbas yield similar results – short-term condemnation followed by a slow return to a new normality in relations. Each of these situations occurred because of an implicit understanding from a substantial portion of Western capitals that Russia had a right to project its power in the countries as they constituted something akin to a sphere of influence. Only with the 2022 invasion would this implicit right to hegemony in area of the former Soviet Union be challenged when both NATO and the European Union would come together in solidarity to directly send weapons and enact a full package of sanctions to truly show that such actions on the side of the Russian Federation would be completely unacceptable. Now while certain members of both the transatlantic and European communities have pushed against a fully punitive regime against Russia, the overall position of both NATO and the EU is unprecedented.

Not only have Western nations become brasher with Russia, directly pushing back against its claims of an unquestionable sphere of influence in not only words but deeds, but China has also become more assertive after the war against Ukraine. As Putin and Xi met during the SCO summit in Samarkand, the comments made clear that Russia would remain deferential to China in Central Asia if there was any sort of conflict of interest. Even in the publicly released discussions, Putin acted as Xi’s inferior, lavishing his ‘comrade’ with respectful language and promising to assuage any ‘concerns’ regarding the conflict in Ukraine that Beijing apparently had (Kuczyński 2022). While this shift is not toward the protection of a rules-based international order in the same way that the Western reaction against the war in Ukraine is, it nonetheless represents a contestation of Russia’s post-Soviet sphere of influence in Central Asia from China, which Russia has reluctantly accepted in a public format.

Implications

By any vestiges of Russian soft power having been wiped away and Russia losing its uncontested hegemony in the post-Soviet space – by both losing credibility in its pseudo-institutional organs of power and being challenged regionally by former deferential states now going out to forge their own, diverging policies based on national interest – the post-Soviet as both a periodisation and a regional moniker has also been demolished. The geopolitical pressures in the region will only rise while at the same time domestic pressures within Russia could very well reproduce those same dynamics of disintegration at home. Even the most conservative predictions of the near future would reconsider the ability of Russia to project its power in its former ‘near abroad’ without having any significant pushback from either the countries in each of those regions or great powers on the global scale.

The focus of the post-Soviet paradigm was having Russia as the connective logic among each of the countries in the former post-Soviet region, and this focus on Russia had in fact blinded many policy-makers and scholars to alternative explanatory frameworks and other variables that could have served to provide a wider understanding of the regional processes, and as such, these alternative viewpoints would have provided a more holistic picture in which the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, along with genocidal practices in the occupied areas, would not have been unthinkable.

This post-post-Soviet should therefore not centre Russia as it did before, but instead look to state and societal perspectives from the former region instead of just those of the Moscow officialdom and those who have studied it. This implies also a more structural change has to happen globally, similar to the decolonialising approach that has been suggested for post-Soviet studies (Koplatadze 2019; Zarakol 2011), wherein the topic would become relegated to history departments, and policy-making centres, think tanks, and research institutions would then reformulate their strategies around focusing the studies of the former post-Soviet region on the specific countries and societies that constituted it without filtering them first through the lens of Russia or the Soviet Union. In this way, let there be a proliferation of regions, whether that be the Pontic, the Transoxianian, the Trancaucasian, or even in the case of Russia and Belarus’, the markedly neo-Soviet.

However, these transformations of mentality do not mean that Russia will become any less relevant or any more predictable than it has been previously. Contemporary Russia, with its locus of regime power tightly wound

within and around the Kremlin, has depended on its legitimacy coming from the projection of Russian power abroad in order to create a sense of national pride at home. In fact, as this influence wanes, Russia may be apt to more armed adventurism, aggressive actions, and other 'special military operations' wherein victory may be more assured than it was in the case of Ukraine in order to give Moscow a face-saving, glory-building victory. If and when such a conflict does arise, let there not be again headlines from articles or policy reports that talk about how unthinkable or surprising such an action was.

In the same way that the 24th of February marked the beginning of the end of the post-Soviet period, let it also mark the beginning of a new era wherein the countries that were unfortunately lumped into this post-Soviet region are given their own voice and centrality in global discourses, since for them, unfortunately, the 24th of February was no surprise.

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Postmodern Europe goes to War

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Abstract:

The Western response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine was significant in its provision of weapons, imposition of sanctions, and support for refugees. This essay argues that a postmodern attitude can explain not only why Putin instigated the war, but also why European NATO and EU member states were unprepared for it. This lack of preparedness presents a significant obstacle to the creation of a new European security order. The postmodern attitude, characterised by a rejection of objective truths and a focus on individual experiences and interpretations, has led to a lack of consensus and a fragmentation of the European security community. As a result, member states were unable to effectively respond to Russia's actions and were caught off guard by the invasion. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine highlights the need for a renewed focus on the importance of objective truths and a unified approach to security in Europe.

Key words: Postmodernism, Russia, Ukraine, EU, NATO

The Western response to Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine was unprecedented in its weapons deliveries, sanctions, and the asylum provided to refugees. Putin had likely expected the same reaction as that following the annexation of the Crimea: The West protested, imposed minor sanctions, and implicitly accepted the new status quo. This time was different. The Ukrainian president Zelensky successfully turned his war into a war of the West against Russia. The Baltic States and Poland argued that they could be the next victims of Russian aggression. This fear was not unfounded. Because of Putin's rejection of Ukraine as a sovereign state, Western leaders concluded that their interests were at stake and that Russia must be stopped. This essay explains that a postmodern attitude explains not only why Putin started this war, but also why European member states

of NATO and the EU were completely unprepared for it. Finally, this essay explains why this postmodern attitude is an important obstacle for the creation of a new European security order.

Rising Tensions

In December 2021, Putin presented two documents: one addressing the United States (MFARF, 2021) and the other one, NATO (MFARF, 2021). He demanded the end of NATO enlargement and the withdrawal of foreign troops from the former Warsaw Pact countries. However, putting pressure on both Ukraine and also on the West was a high-risk strategy. If the adversary does not comply, it would have no other choice than to attack. This explains the harsh tone of Putin's speech on 24th of February; when he argued that 'in response to our proposals, we faced either cynical deception and lies or attempts at pressure and blackmail'. (Bloomberg News, 2022) In his view, this was not new, but the consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Putin feared the eastward expansion of NATO and saw the organization as a 'tool of US foreign policy' aimed at containing Russia. In Putin's view, this was a matter of life and death for the Russian state. Subsequently, he announced the special operation aimed at 'protecting people' in the Donbas. It later turned out that he had more ambitious objectives.

President Putin's grievances are well known. Not only did he see the collapse of the Soviet Union as a geopolitical catastrophe, but he also believed that the West took advantage of Russian weakness. The enlargement of NATO moved its 'military infrastructure to the Russian border,' threatening vital Russian interests. Putin viewed Western support for Colour Revolutions as a threat to Russian interests. Meanwhile, the enlargement of the EU was seen as an attempt to draw countries into the Western sphere of influence.

Putin protested against interventions without a UN-mandate (Kosovo, 1999) and breaking the promise that in exchange for a UN resolution the West would not implement regime change in Libya (2011). For Putin, the death of the Libyan leader Muammar Ghaddafi proved that the West could not be trusted, a conclusion he had first drawn after the intervention in Iraq in 2003. However, Putin himself intervened in Chechnya (1999), where U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright found that the Russian leader was guilty of genocide. Years later, Putin fought a war with Georgia (2008) and

carried out the annexation of the Crimea. In 2015, he sent troops to Syria in support of President Assad. The gradual accumulation of these events resulted in the deterioration of Putin's relationship with the West, with the latter party hardly understanding the consequences of this decline.

Western Ignorance

However, all understanding of Russian grievances was lost when Putin launched his limited military operation against Ukraine. Unfortunately, the EU and the United States could not react in the same way to Putin's aggression against Ukraine. For the United States, it is China – not Russia – that is its main competitor. The Russia – U.S. trade relationship has always been negligible, as the new National Defense Strategy (2022) made clear. The document prioritised 'the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific, then the Russia challenge in Europe.' For that reason, the United States 'will collaborate with our NATO Allies and partners to reinforce robust deterrence in the face of Russian aggression' (U.S. DoD, 2022).

For Europe, especially Western Europe, the situation is completely different. For geographical reasons, they cannot ignore Russia and put their trust in interdependency and effective multilateralism. The latter strategy was possible in past years due to the success of US extended deterrence and the success of European integration. Together, these created unparalleled prosperity and security in Europe. As a result, most member states became postmodern. The former British diplomat Robert Cooper observed that postmodernity is about mutual interference in each other's domestic affairs. As a result, the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs became blurred, borders became irrelevant, and the concept of sovereignty was weakened. In addition, force as an instrument for resolving disputes became obsolete. Security in Europe was now based on transparency, mutual openness, interdependency, and mutual vulnerability (Cooper, 2002).

The desire to have no more wars in Europe reflected the thinking of the founding fathers of European integration, the French politician Jean Monnet and French Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman. As a peace project, European integration became immensely successful. This was underscored by the fact that countries could only join on a voluntary basis and had to make great efforts to become members. New member states had to

accept the *acquis* of the EU, including its values, which included the concept of effective multilateralism and the rejection of the use of force.

Postmodernity as a Trigger for Dissention with Russia

The obsolescence of the use of force within the postmodern system explains Europe's risk aversion. A Win/Gallup poll found that few Europeans are willing to fight for their nation: 'Globally, 60 per cent said that they would be willing to take up arms for their country, while 27 percent would not be willing. Western Europe proved the region most reticent to fight for their country, with just 25 per cent saying that they would fight while about half (53 per cent) stated that they would not fight for their flag'.(WIN/Gallup, 2014) Only 18 percent of the Germans, 27 percent of Britons, and 29 percent of the French said that they would defend their country. Putin saw this as a sign of decadency and degeneration.

Europe's postmodern stance was tested by Russian aggression against Georgia and Ukraine. The success of European integration, the widespread belief that values are universal, and the view that the EU was role model for the world have all led to naivety and misperceptions about security and the world outside the EU and NATO. Traditional modern states like Russia and China consider security in terms of territorial integrity. However, since the end of the Cold War, European members of NATO and most EU member states have considered the idea of territorial integrity outdated and focused instead on values-based human security. In Europe, the use of armed force was only contemplated to protect human rights and democracy.

However, EU soft power and the idea of human security became a trigger of dissention with Russia, and consequently a source of instability in Europe. President Putin considered EU and NATO enlargement, support for democratisation movements, and peace support operations as attempts to increase the Western sphere of influence. He believed that, for its protection, Russia requires a buffer zone of neutral or likeminded states. This is rooted in the belief that Russia has no well-defensible borders. Both Napoleon and Hitler tried to capture Russian lands, but they failed because of the harsh winters and the logistical challenge of the buffer zones and the vastness of the country.

The implications of the different political and strategic cultures became apparent when the crisis escalated into an US proxy war in support

of Ukraine and an economic war between the EU and Russia. When announcing his 'partial mobilization' on September 21, Putin said that Russia was fighting against 'the entire military machine of the collective West'. But with the notable exception of Poland, the Baltic states, and the Nordic countries, there was little awareness in Europe of the true nature of the threat posed by Russia.

These different cultures have created a permanent misunderstanding that has contributed to the crisis. An important lesson learned is that EU and NATO member states must make a clear distinction between internal and external relations. Instead, the success of the EU as a peace project has created political leaders incapable of dealing with external crises and war.

In postmodern Europe, the fundamental concepts of nuclear deterrence, coercion, and counter-coercion were forgotten. Politicians who were to blame for decades of budget cuts on defense, who have little affinity for power politics, and no experience whatsoever with war now found themselves in an awkward position. In many capitals, including Brussels, the knowledge of dealing with such crises had disappeared. The military had also lost such knowledge, having focused on peace support operations and not on sustained combat operations and warfighting.

The consequences of this lack of experience became apparent in one of the most worrying debates during the crisis: neglect of the principles of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). Due to the risk of nuclear confrontation between Russia and NATO, such a confrontation should have been prevented at all costs. Instead, during the Ukraine war, MAD was now considered as an insurance against further escalation of the conflict. Due to his long experience, President Biden was probably the only Western leader who understood the dynamics of the conflict. He skillfully played the escalation-de-escalation game. Biden was initially reluctant to send large numbers of weapons systems, especially long-range systems, which could reach Russian territory. Putin also tried to limit the war to Ukraine. However, in Europe, the danger of nuclear escalation was largely ignored, especially in non-nuclear states.

The lack of experience also led to counterproductive policy choices that could undermine European unity. Economically, the EU could put pressure on Putin, but the gas crisis demonstrated that both the European Commission and the national governments had little idea how to do it effectively. First, the objectives set could hardly be achieved with the instruments at hand. The EU Council Conclusions of the 24th of February demanded that

‘Russia immediately ceases its military actions, unconditionally withdraws all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect its territorial integrity and independence within its internationally recognized borders’. (European Council, 2022)

By imposing sanctions, the EU invigorated these words, but it was unclear how the sanctions could coerce Russia to accept those demands. The sanctions were designed to cripple the Kremlin’s ability to finance the war, to impose clear economic and political costs on Russia’s leadership, and diminish its economic base. In another document, the EU wrote that the aim of the sanctions is to ‘impose severe consequences on Russia for its actions and to effectively thwart Russian abilities to continue the aggression’. (European Council, 2022) ‘To cripple’ the war effort were the words used by high Commissioner Borrell on numerous occasions. Von der Leyen spoke rapidly about destroying the Russian war machine. The US president spoke similar words, but Defense Secretary Austin broadened the discussion by adding the condition of weakening the Russian economy. A Yale study revealed that the Russian economy was effected markedly, but it could not explain whether this contributed to the achievement of objectives. (Sonnenfeld et al. 2022)

That sanctions did not stop the ‘war machine’ was to be expected. The formula for successful sanctions, or coercion in general, is simple: the costs of defiance borne by the target must be greater than its perceived cost of compliance.¹ Studies on sanctions have shown that, in recent history, the disruption of a military intervention impairing the military capabilities of the target country has never succeeded. Decades of sanctions did not significantly reduce the threat of Iran and North Korea. On the contrary, heavy sanctions cannot stop Iran and North Korea from continuing their missile and nuclear programs.

The effectiveness of sanctions was weakened by the fact that they were only supported by some 40 countries. The lack of support for the West became also clear in the UN. As the UN Security Council was paralysed, a Uniting for Peace procedure transferred the voting to the General Assembly in early March. A majority voted in favor of the resolution, but the number

¹ This is an important conclusion of a study by Gary Clyde Hufbauer (PIIE), Jeffrey J. Schott (PIIE), Kimberly Ann Elliott (PIIE) and Barbara Oegg (PIIE) June 2009, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*, 3rd edition, Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE), 2009. I reached similar conclusions regarding the effectiveness of coercive in Rob de Wijk, *The Art of Military Coercion: Why the West’s Military Superiority Scarcely Matters*, Amsterdam University Press. 2014

of abstentions (35) including major players such as India, South Africa, and China, was worrying.

Success can only be achieved by a combination of sanctions and military force. However, Europe had little to offer militarily. Equipment was sent to Ukraine, but Borrell stated in September that there was little left. (Preussen, 2022) Thus, the burden was almost entirely on US shoulders and on the small front line states bordering Russia. Therefore, the European member states had no other choice but to rely on sanctions and other measures and leave the heavy lifting to the US. The notable exception was the UK that teamed up with America and played an important role in the training of 10,000 extra Ukrainian soldiers. Only in October did the EU decide on a training program in Germany and Poland for some 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers

The Weaponisation of Energy

There is absolutely nothing wrong with sanctions. They send a signal to the adversary that his behavior cannot be tolerated. However, it is crucial that the lessons learned from previous episodes are considered so that the use of power tools does not cause self-inflicted wounds. As has been argued above, if the costs of the sanctions are high for the sender, then considerable risks are taken. A clear example of this is the EU's energy policy. Here, the coercer got coerced. The cause is in the past.

In 1968, because of détente, the state-owned enterprises ÖMV and VÖEST and the steel manufacturers Mannesmann and Thyssen started negotiations with the Soviets on gas deliveries. They reached an understanding and on 1 September 1968, and the export of the gas to Austria, Italy, West-Germany, Finland, and France quickly followed. Remarkably, the Soviet Union's attempt to crush the liberalisation movement in Czechoslovakia, called the Prague Spring, did not have a negative effect on the negotiations. In those days, there was little discussion about the potentially negative consequences of the gas deals. On the contrary, in the increasing energy dependence, Germany especially saw an opportunity to influence the Russia politically and to build peaceful and stable relations. During the Cold War, *Wandel durch Handel* became a guiding concept that was based on the belief that a healthy trade relationship could even overcome ideological

differences. These assumptions remained unshaken despite the annexation of the Crimea in 2014.

In 2007, the EU presented the energy and climate change objectives for 2020. It was agreed 'to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent, rising to 30 percent if the conditions are right, to increase the share of renewable energy to 20 percent, and to make a 20 percent improvement in energy efficiency'. Until 2014, the dependence on Russia played a limited role. But on 16 June 2014, Russia halted gas deliveries to Ukraine for the third time in eight years. According to Russia, Ukraine failed to repay its debt to Gazprom. (Farchy and Hille, 2014) As the EU received 30 percent of its gas from Russia and half thereof is transited through Ukraine, Brussels feared that the flow of gas to Europe could be affected as well. This already happened in 2006 and 2009 during similar 'gas wars' between Russia and Ukraine. (CIEP, 2014) However, this did not lead to less gas being taken from Russia.

The role that Ukraine plays in the transit of Russian natural gas supplies to Europe has for many years been viewed by the Kremlin as problematic. As a result, plans were hatched to construct alternative pipeline routes that would allow Gazprom to diminish its reliance on Ukraine. The first of those plans was the Nord Stream pipeline that connects Russia to Germany via the Baltic Sea. Construction began in 2005, and the two parallel pipelines were finished by October 2012. Under EU competition law, energy companies are not allowed to simultaneously own production capacity and transmission networks. Gazprom has long tried to acquire an exemption to these EU rules, but ultimately it had to back down in the face of continued opposition from Brussels. Also, the bilateral agreements that Russia struck with several EU member states along the South Stream route were found to be in breach of EU law, as Gazprom intended to be the sole supplier of the gas, as well as own the pipeline infrastructure. (EURACTIV, 2013)

Furthermore, in April 2015, after years of investigating Gazprom's practices, the European Commission published its formal 'statement of objections' accusing the company of price fixing, hindering the free flow of gas in EU member states, and of muscling out competitors. (Barker, 2015) Despite these initiatives and the acknowledgement that Putin was willing to use energy as a weapon, little happened. Gazprom remained crucial for the gas supply in Europe.

The second plan, Nord Stream 2, caused considerable frictions between Germany, the EU, and the Trump administration. The US President imposed sanctions on any firm that helped Gazprom finish the pipeline. He

pointed angrily on the discrepancy of the United States' pledge to the defence of Germany and other European allies and the energy trade that could be used to build up Russia's armed forces. In his view, Europe would become a 'hostage of Russia'. Trump was right. Russia's aggression against Ukraine demonstrated that *Wandel durch Handel* was an obsolete concept founded on the wrong belief that interdependencies would cause stability and prosperity.

In March 2022, the Commission decided to cut gas imports by two-thirds before the end of the year. It was feared that due to a complete import ban European countries would not survive the winter. In doing so, the EU made itself blackmailable by Russia, just as Trump predicted.

Technically, the decision to reduce gas imports was not a sanction, but part of a plan to become greener faster and less dependent on Russian gas. As the plan, REPowerEU Plan, was the EU's response to the global energy market disruption caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, this was considered a sanction by Russia so that counter measures could be expected.

The decision to reduce the flow of gas by two-thirds turned out to be a self-inflicted wound. Putin began to use energy as a weapon by closing the pipeline 'for technical reasons', then opening it again. Germany in particular panicked about the consequences for its citizens and industry.

In Prague, thousands went into the streets to protest against the soaring gas prices. In the United Kingdom, the 'Don't Pay UK' movement was a direct attack on the high energy prices. In Italy, energy bills were publicly burned. In almost all EU-member states except for Spain and Portugal, which are outside the European energy grid, governments took emergency measures to help the population and protect the industry. The sanctions policy of the EU had turned into economic warfare, the consequences of which could only be mitigated by draconian measures such as a proposed price cap on oil and gas.

A better strategy would have been to impose sanctions if Putin would use gas as an economic weapon. The counter argument is that reducing energy revenues would 'cripple' the Russian war machine and that this could contribute to the withdrawal of all troops from Ukrainian soil. But, as has been explained above, this assumption was unfounded. Alternatively, the EU could have decided to completely stop the import of gas, despite the hardships this would cause.

Containment 2.0

The lack of experience with coercive diplomacy and war are important obstacles to turn the EU into a credible political player as well. Of course, the EU is a regulatory superpower capable of imposing rules and regulations through trade agreements on countries that seek access to the integrated European economic market. However, the offensive use of both economic and military power is not related to trade policies but to the forgotten concept of coercive diplomacy.

This is problematic because the European EU and NATO member states have no other choice but to develop a new European security order which is *not* about constructive multilateralism, soft power, and détente. As long as an anti-Western regime is in power, the Europeans have no other choice but to erect a new iron curtain and adopt a concept of containment 2.0. The original concept was aimed at containing the Soviet Union and served the West well until the end of the Cold War in 1989. It was introduced by the Moscow-based US diplomat George Kennan in *Foreign Affairs*, the famous X article.

Kennan argued in *The Sources of Soviet Conduct* that the “main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union (...) must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.” To that end, he called for countering “Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world” through the “application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy.” In his view, such a policy would “promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power.” Kennan considered the Soviet threat to be primarily political.

Therefore, he advocated economic assistance through the Marshall Plan and overt propaganda and covert operations to counter the spread of Soviet influence. Paul Nitze, Kennan’s successor as director of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, saw the Soviet threat primarily in military terms. He suggested that the administration should act accordingly. In 1950, this conception prevailed. National Security Council (NSC) 68 signed by the Truman administration demanded a drastic increase of the U.S. military budget.

Containment was not the only strategy for dealing with Russia. Roll-back was another one. John Foster Dulles declared during the 1952 election

campaign that the United States' policy should not be containment, but the 'rollback' of Soviet power and the eventual 'liberation' of Eastern Europe.

Containment 2.0 bears within itself elements of classic containment and rollback. The proxy war in Ukraine is nothing less than rollback. Granting Ukraine and Moldova the status of EU Candidate Country is an economic measure comparable to the Marshall Plan. A breakthrough was the application for NATO membership by Sweden and Finland that was a severe blow for Putin, who saw further enlargement of NATO almost as a war declaration. The memberships facilitate military containment by the erection of a new Iron Curtain running from the north of Finland to Turkey and supported by collective defence and extended deterrence, or the US nuclear guarantee.

This means that the old European security order is dead. The old order was founded on the 1991 Charter of Paris that accepted that all countries could freely decide their political and economic system and could also freely decide on joining the institutions of their choice. The Charter in turn was based on the Helsinki Declaration that was approved in 1975 during the first meeting of the Convention on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The declaration codified the principles for mutual cooperation and respect. Gradually, a body of confidence and security building measures were developed, most recently codified in the Vienna Document of 2011. All principles were violated by President Putin. Détente and a cooperative security order cannot be ruled out if containment 2.0 is successful. However, this can only happen after a regime change in Moscow.

A Shifting Mind-set

Postmodernity is at odds with containment 2.0. Consequently, it requires the EU to develop into a geopolitical player that knows how to use its military and economic power instruments effectively. This requires European unity, a shift in mindset, and a shared attitude towards Russia and other systemic rivals. The biggest threat is domestic politics. It is too soon to predict the effects of the crisis with Russia on the internal stability of the member states. Societal and political stability in the individual member states is the biggest threat to unity and the biggest boon for Putin who tries to stir up unrest through hybrid warfare. Putin uses institutions such as the troll factory, the Internet Research Agency in St. Petersburg, as an outlet for fake

news and information operations in the social media. He has spent 300 million euros on 'buying' support from pro-Russian parties. (Wong, 2022) Russia probably facilitated the mass protest on energy prices that happened in Prague. Putin could continue weaponising the use of energy and raw materials. His success will depend on his ties with like-minded countries, most notably China. Nonetheless, Putin's success as a disruptor and his support by allies will depend on the outcome of his war with Ukraine.

Putin's success also depends on a new geopolitical role for the EU. Jean Monnet wrote in his memoirs that 'Europe will be forged in crises and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises'. Indeed, the financial crisis that lasted from 2009 to 2012 accelerated financial integration with a Banking Union and instruments for sovereign debt relief. Brexit facilitated Franco-German leadership and made possible unprecedented solutions for the debt crisis following the Covid-19 crisis which started in 2019. A rescue package of 750 billion euros would be financed by common loans and guarantees by the member states.

European taxes were introduced for paying back the loans. Not only was the Rubicon of Eurobonds crossed, it also created an opportunity for the EU to become an important player on the global capital market and strengthened the euro. The Covid-19 crisis itself led to a common vaccine policy even though healthcare is a national responsibility. The refugee crisis, in particular the provocation of Belarus in 2018, showed that refugees can be used as weapons and led to a tougher policy of pushbacks. The crisis in trans-Atlantic relations caused by President Trump has led to the understanding that reliance on the United State is no longer a certainty. All crises mentioned contributed to the conclusion that Europe should be an autonomous economic, military, and political player. The humiliating retreat from Afghanistan in 2020 has led to the conclusion that the EU should have a rapid deployment force for similar contingencies.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has had similar effects. In an unprecedented move, the Commission announced the European Peace Facility in March 2021, an off-budget instrument that enhances the EU's ability to act as a global security provider. The facility reimbursed national weapons deliveries to Ukraine. Moreover, the president of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen announced in her State of the Union 2022 a Critical Raw Materials Act to become less dependent on China and Russia, who control, along with the Democratic Republic of Congo, crucial raw materials for the semiconductor industry. She also announced a "specific set of measures that

take into account the specific nature of our relationship with suppliers and measures to ‘decouple the dominant influence of gas on the price of electricity.’ These measures are part of “new ideas for our economic governance.” In this way, not only more steering power for Brussels came into view, but the contours of an energy union became visible as well.

Crucially, a shift in mind-set was visible in Germany, Europe’s most postmodern county. At the start of the war, the new Chancellor Scholz talked about a *Zeitenwende* that would require major policy decisions. Subsequently, he announced that Germany would spend 100 billion euros on defence. During a speech in Prague in August 2022, he pleaded in favour of an autonomous and sovereign Europe and deepened geopolitical Union, one that includes Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and the Western Balkans, thus creating one geographical space that clearly fits the concept of containment 2.0. In sum, despite hesitations about arms deliveries to Ukraine, a general understanding emerged that Germany is ‘condemned to lead.’

Conclusion

Despite failures at the start of the war, Russian aggression against Ukraine had similar effects as previous crises. It broadened and deepened integration and pushed the Union into a more geopolitical role. The biggest threat to its new role is domestic societal and political stability of the member states that are the subject of hybrid attacks by Russia. Enhancing domestic resilience is therefore crucial. Shifts in mind-set are visible, most notably in Germany, which is abandoning its longstanding proclivity towards pacifism and acknowledges that it is condemned to lead. This brings the whole EU closer to US political and strategic culture. In summation, this will make it easier to implement a containment 2.0 strategy needed to protect, together with NATO, a large part of the continent from Russian aggression.

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History Will Neither Forget nor Forgive Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

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Abstract:

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has had a significant impact on the West's perception of Russia. The resilience and leadership of the Ukrainian people, as well as the inflow of Western support, has challenged the long-held assumptions about the political leadership of France and Germany and Germany's self-proclaimed status as a moral superpower. This essay suggests that the Russian invasion may be the beginning of a new era for Ukraine and a fundamental shift in the moral centre of the European Union.

Key words: Russia, Ukraine, Germany in the EU, Western perceptions of Russia

When Russian forces invaded Ukraine in the early hours of 24 February 2022, the assumption shared by many of those around Vladimir Putin was that the resulting campaign – dubbed a “special military operation” by the Kremlin – would be over very swiftly. Advancing on four fronts, from close to Kyiv in the north to Kharkiv and the Donbas to the east, to Mykolaiv and Kherson in the south-east, Russian forces initially advanced quickly, despite spirited resistance from the Ukrainians.

At the time, the Russian assumption – that Ukraine would crumble – was not confined to the Kremlin. Germany's Finance Minister, Christian Lindner, for example, was reported by the Ukrainian ambassador in Berlin, Andriy Melnyk, as saying that the Zelensky regime in Kyiv would fall “within hours” and that members of the German government were ready and willing to talk to an incoming Russian occupation administration (The Kyiv Independent 2022). According to former British prime minister Boris Johnson, the idea that Kyiv would fall to the Russians in short order was not only Berlin's assumption, but it was also the German government's preferred outcome (The Guardian 2022). The logic, one must assume, was that in that

way the Moscow-Berlin relationship – and key energy supply infrastructure – could be preserved with minimal disruption – even if Ukraine was to be abandoned in the process.

For a time, in those early days of the war, it did indeed appear that Ukrainian resistance would – for all its tenacity and bravery – be rather fleeting. Western assumptions about the numerical and technological prowess of the Russian Army were widespread, not least in the fact that Russia deployed as many tanks in its initial invasion as the total that are operated by all Western European nations combined. Little wonder then that when the media began reporting the existence of a 40 kilometre-long column of Russian vehicles, seemingly bearing down on the Ukrainian capital, many Western commentators were already composing their obituaries not only of the Zelensky regime, but of Ukraine as a whole.

For some, however, that column of Russian armour did not so much presage Ukraine's collapse as summon forth thoughts of the Red Army's disastrous "Winter War" against the Finns of 1939–40, a moment when – once again – Moscow's military might foundered on the resistance, determination, and ingenuity of a smaller neighbour. So it proved in this case. Far from preparing their ceremonial entry into Kyiv – as some reported they were – Russian soldiers in that column found themselves subjected to such a mauling from the Ukrainian Army that they were eventually forced to withdraw to the frontier, leaving the rusty, pockmarked remnants of their vehicles in their wake. If one needed a visual representation of the Kremlin's humiliation in 2022, that was it.

Russia, then, clearly miscalculated. Underestimating not only the determination of the Ukrainians themselves to resist, but also that of Kyiv's Western partners in providing not just warm words but a thoroughgoing programme of military and humanitarian assistance. This latter point, I think, is crucial. When Russia annexed Crimea and sent its proxies into Donetsk and Luhansk back in 2014, the Western response was so muted that it amounted to little more than a gentle slap on the wrist for the Kremlin. A few sanctions were imposed, but not enough to really hurt the Russian economy. Nord Stream 2 went ahead – with Germany seemingly deaf to the protests of its Central European partners – and the football World Cup played out in Russia, in the summer of 2018, unaffected by boycotts or significant protests. The message that Vladimir Putin appears to have heard from the West was one of resigned acceptance.

That insipid Western response was nothing new, of course. The same passivity had followed the murder of Aleksander Litvinenko, in London, in 2006, Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008, the Putin-Medvedev musical chairs of 2008 to 2012, and the downing of MH17 over eastern Ukraine in the summer of 2014. At every turn, it seemed, western myopia and gullibility, and an unwillingness to disrupt trade connections with Russia, were expertly exploited by the Kremlin's disinformation machine, which would muddy the waters, sow countless wild conspiracy theories to deflect blame, and preach about Russia's exceptionalism and its right to unilaterally police its "near abroad."

Given that the West had done so little to curb Putin's ambitions in 2014, it was entirely reasonable to assume that it would again do little in 2022. Of course, like any gambler, Putin was perhaps lulled into a false sense of confidence by his earlier successes, spurred by the apparent spinelessness of his opponents, and the ease with which his *dezinformatsiya* campaigns could befuddle them. Consequently, it was perhaps inevitable that he would be seduced into running ever greater risks.

Yet, in addition to that, much else had changed in the intervening years and the position of the West appeared markedly more fragile and imperilled in 2022 than it had been eight years earlier. For one thing, the internal bloodletting collectively described as "the culture wars" had disrupted and demoralised many Western societies, culminating in the race-charged convulsions of the summer of 2020, when the murder of George Floyd and the rise of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement appeared – at least temporarily – to mark a revolutionary moment in US politics.

That spasm of radical navel-gazing was not an isolated example, and though the United Kingdom and the wider "West" have thus far been spared many of the worst excesses of the United States' culture wars, the direction of travel is nonetheless clear. As is often said, "When America sneezes, Britain catches cold." In all of this, of course, the Kremlin has been no impartial observer. Indeed, in 2013, Putin was already positioning himself as the "champion of conservatism," damning the "genderless and infertile" liberalism of the West and seeking to give financial and political succour to those who would resist the onward march of Progressivism. This, of course, was a perfect wedge issue for the Kremlin, designed to not only garner support in the developing world but also speed the political polarisation of the West.

That polarisation was part of a wider malaise; a crisis of Western confidence which has arguably been ongoing for some years, but was typified

perhaps by a 20 percent *decline* in British defence spending in the three years after 2014 (The World Bank, 2022) – the very years following the first Russian invasion of Ukraine – and by an opinion poll from 2015, which found that less than 20 percent of Germans declared themselves willing to fight for their country. Britons – at 27 percent – were scarcely more belligerently patriotic (Gallup International 2015). That crisis of confidence was perhaps typified by the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan in the summer of 2021, an event that appeared to mark the final humiliation of US military might and an end – for the time being at least – to US “foreign adventures.” Putin and his advisors, watching such events, would have been all too aware of the inherent weakness that Western institutions and societies appeared to be displaying. They were under no illusions about the strategic capital to be had in exploiting them further.

Moreover, Russia’s penetration of Western economies – via the medium of energy dependency – was continuing apace. Most grievously affected was Germany, where a popular rejection both of coal-sourced energy and, in the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster, of nuclear power, left that country dangerously reliant on Russian gas, and seemingly blind to the political consequences thereof.

Germany, indeed, appeared to be almost uniquely exposed to Russian manipulation. The problem was exemplified by the murky role played by former Chancellor turned political lobbyist Gerhard Schröder, whose service as a board member of both Rosneft and Gazprom would see him described by one commentator as a “political prostitute” (Dunphy 2007). Chancellor Merkel, too, imagined herself to have better insight than her hawkish neighbours in “understanding” the Kremlin and was – throughout her time in office – a keen advocate of the policy of “*Wandel durch Handel*,” promoting political change through trade, despite the mounting evidence that, far from exporting civilisation, such contacts tended instead to import corruption.

More than that, Germany’s continuing agonies for the crimes of Nazism left that country perceiving some nebulous moral debt to Russia, which left it seemingly unable, or unwilling, to be politically robust in its dealings with the Kremlin. This perception was as historically illiterate as it was politically dangerous. Of course, the Russian Federation had positioned itself as the political successor to the Soviet Union – all the other former Soviet republics had developed new national narratives of their own after 1991 – but a breakdown of the Soviet dead of World War II by republic would demonstrate that it was the Belarussian and Ukrainian peoples – rather than the

Russians – that were most grievously affected by the war. After all, most of the fighting between 1941 and 1944 took place, not on Russian soil, but on that of Belarus and Ukraine (Davies 1987). If Germany insists on carrying a “blood debt” for the depredations of its grandfathers, therefore, it should really be paid to Kyiv and Minsk, rather than Moscow.

In addition to all those factors, the COVID pandemic in 2020 catalysed and metastasised those social and economic challenges by squeezing already straitened budgets, disrupting already fragile economies and clogging the political cycle with worries about vaccines and the utility of lockdowns. In these circumstances, it would be easy for an outsider to assume, perhaps, that the West was too distracted and too demoralised to mount any meaningful defence of its values in the face of challenge. For the Kremlin, then, 2022 represented something like a perfect storm, an opportunity to wrest Ukraine away from its westward pivot once and for all.

So, what went wrong?

Firstly, contrary to the expectations of many, Ukraine defended itself with remarkable guile and vigour. It did not hurt, of course, that Ukraine – unlike most of Western Europe – has not yet passed into a “post-heroic” phase in its national development; its soldiers were willing and proud to defend their homeland from outside aggression. More seriously, perhaps, Ukrainian forces had received training and material support in the period since the invasion of 2014 from NATO members. Crucially, in withstanding the initial Russian onslaught in February and March 2022, they laid the essential groundwork for a wider Western collaboration.

While ceding territory in the south-east, especially around Kherson and the coast of the Sea of Azov, Ukrainian forces mounted a spirited defence of Kyiv, not only resisting the initial Russian paratrooper landings at Hostomel airport, to the north-west of the capital, but allegedly also interdicting several attempts to assassinate President Zelensky. Crucially, too – like Stalin in 1941 – Zelensky made a very public show of remaining in his capital in those early days, ensuring he was photographed in front of recognizable buildings, and famously answering US President Biden’s offer of evacuation with the line; “I need ammunition, not a ride” (Braithwaite 2022). The resulting boost to public morale was incalculable.

So, Ukraine’s resolute defence in those early days and weeks gave a spur to the growing Western consensus that the country deserved to be materially assisted. There were still dissenters, of course. Israel has been curiously reticent, wary of alienating its large Russian immigrant population,

and – more seriously – of upsetting a delicate balance in the Middle East, where Russia, too, is now a player. Germany, meanwhile, only grudgingly declared a *Zeitenwende* (a turning point) in its foreign policy principles that February and has been glacially slow in implementing any actual change thereafter. Yet, elsewhere in Europe there was near unanimity, in tone if not always in content. Britain, under the unusually principled leadership of prime minister Boris Johnson was something of a trailblazer.

Britain had, arguably, already been stung out of its complacency regarding Russia by the murder of Aleksander Litvinenko in London in 2006 and the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal, using the nerve agent Novichok, in 2018, an attack which would directly result in the death of a local woman, Dawn Sturgess. Less dependent on Russian energy than some, Britain was therefore able to view the Kremlin's actions with a moral clarity that some of its partners lacked and did not hesitate to directly accuse the Kremlin of being behind those attacks. In due course, Britain would deliver anti-tank weapons and good will while Johnson was fêted in Kyiv.

Ukraine's neighbours have also led the way. Poland donated huge amounts of military hardware, while its people opened their doors to Ukrainian refugees – a remarkable act of generosity given that the Polish-Ukrainian relationship has not always been a happy one. A Polish offer to transfer its fleet of MiG fighters to Ukraine was derailed only following the intervention of the Chinese with President Biden (The Spectator Australia 2022), while Warsaw has also been pressing for Patriot missiles to be sent to Ukraine to defend against Russian missile attacks.

Lithuania, meanwhile, has offered military and logistical assistance, and crowdfunded drones for the Ukrainian military, while Latvia and Estonia top the list of aid donors by proportion of GDP (The First News 2022). To those with an understanding of Central European history, this overwhelming support for Ukraine in the region will not be surprising. Poland and the Baltic states – with their collective histories of Russian and Soviet occupation and subjugation – have long been warning their Western partners about the risks of trading with Russia, and of treating the Kremlin regime as if it is anything other than a rogue state. Yet, until the spring of 2022, they were condemned to play the role of the classical Cassandra – their prophecies disbelieved and dismissed by their Western allies.

The influence of the Central European states was arguably of profound significance. Without their input, the attitude of the rest of the EU would most likely have been that preferred by the Germans and the French – one

of earnest hand-wringing and impotent expressions of concern, but little in the way of genuine action. Berlin and Paris, one suspects, would have been content with a modern, more compassionately-worded reprise of the infamous rhetorical question posed by the French press in 1939 – “*Mourir pour Danzig?*” After all, who in Paris wants to die for Kyiv?

It was Poland and the Baltic States, I would suggest, who made that political position untenable. Their principled, historically evidenced rejection of the Kremlin’s malignant mendacity, being coherently voiced from *within* the corridors of power of the EU, meant that Brussels was unable to look away and so found itself honour-bound to discover its backbone. “*Mourir pour Danzig?*” would be drowned out by the rather nobler sentiment of “*For Our Freedom and Yours,*” itself a throwback to Poland’s interminable 19th-century struggles against Russia.

As a result, it is tempting to imagine that the principled defence of Ukraine advocated by Poland and the Baltic States is symptomatic of a profound eastward shift in the moral centre of gravity of the European Union; a challenge to the long-assumed and long-accepted political leadership of France and Germany, and to Germany’s self-proclaimed status as a “moral superpower.” While Emmanuel Macron has nonetheless insisted on trying to take a diplomatic lead in seeking to resolve the conflict – most recently suggesting, rather bafflingly, that Russia should be given security guarantees in any negotiated settlement – one suspects French “leadership” is ringing rather hollow for many in the east of the European continent. The days of the “lesser” members of the EU meekly taking instruction from Paris and Berlin, one suspects, are well and truly numbered. One must wait and see what effect this might have on the future development of the European Union.

As well as the support of Ukraine’s neighbours, another decisive factor in Putin’s evident miscalculation is the parlous state of the Russian army. The Kremlin’s forces – supposedly ranked second in the world for their military might – have so far proved themselves to be decidedly fallible. Inflexible decision-making at a battlefield level, along with poor training, ill-motivated, ill-trained conscripts, and the ravages of a thoroughly corrupt army hierarchy have conspired to hamstring the Russian army to an extent that Western observers would scarcely have imagined prior to February.

A salient example of the seemingly endemic corruption is that of Yevgeny Prigozhin, an oligarch and Putin confidante, whose catering business was awarded the billion-dollar-a-year contract to supply food the Russian armed

forces in 2012 yet a decade later was found to be supplying rations to serving soldiers that were more than seven years out of date (iNews 2022). Other examples abound. Understrength Russian motorised units barely had the manpower to defend themselves from infantry assault (Matthews, 2022). Meanwhile, Russian military vehicles were discovered to be so badly maintained that avoidable battlefield breakdowns became commonplace, while the new conscripts called up in October 2022 were often sent into battle with obsolete equipment and only minimal military training (Sauer 2022).

To some extent, this is all symptomatic of the Kremlin's historic lack of care for its fighting men; a phenomenon that predates even the Soviet Union's remarkable profligacy with the lives of its soldiers. Yet, it is also indubitably a symptom of the corruption that infects Russian bureaucracy at every level, where officials are almost expected to skim off whatever they can and even conscripts will sell their kits for profit. The cynic might be tempted to wonder what proportion of Russia's \$66 billion annual military budget is currently invested in Moscow dachas, Algarve villas, or floating in the yacht playgrounds of the Caribbean.

Whatever its precise origins, that culture of corruption can only have a profound effect on the morale and fighting effectiveness of Russian forces. Desertions, encouraged by the Ukrainians, are commonplace, while Russian losses – estimated by the Ukrainian general staff at over 90,000 killed (December 2022) – are far outstripping those of their opponents. It all serves as a potent demonstration to Ukraine's Western partners that the Russian giant still has feet of clay.

In such circumstances, lapses in military discipline should not be surprising, yet the moral failings of Russian troops have only served to spur Ukrainian defiance and Western aid efforts still further. The massacres witnessed at Izyum, Bucha, and elsewhere, as well as the horrific siege of Azovstal works in Mariupol, the rapes, the targeting of civilian infrastructure and the seemingly systematic deportation of Ukrainian children to the Russian interior, have all shocked Western opinion.

In addition, the conscription of convicted felons and the prevalence of Chechen fighters and "Wagner" mercenaries in the Russian ranks has dismayed those in the West who are more accustomed to their armies being staffed by disciplined, professional soldiers. All of this has seriously undermined Russia's claim to be a serious, modern state. More significantly, it has become a key component of the Western narrative of aid and resistance

for Ukraine; proof positive of what happens when Western values are not actively defended when challenged.

So, how will history view the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The brief answer is that it will be viewed very differently from its predecessor from 2014. While Putin, deluded by his own wild dreams of Russian ethno-nationalism, certainly expected a similar situation to the previous invasion – a supine West and an isolated, divided Ukraine – the reality has been rather different. In short, the invasion of 2022 has already provoked, and will continue to provoke, profound change.

On the one hand, of course, Ukrainian successes on the battlefield, combined with the exemplary wartime leadership of President Zelensky, with its clear political and moral messaging, have created a platform for the inflow of vital Western material and humanitarian support, thus further bolstering Ukrainian resistance. On the other, meanwhile, the poor performance of Russian forces, their parlous record as occupiers of Ukrainian territory, and the clumsy, incoherent propaganda messaging of the Kremlin – variously describing their opponents as Nazis and Satanists – has fatally undermined whatever support Putin might previously have enjoyed on the West's political fringes. The result is something like a virtuous circle, in which the West sees the moral and material worth of its support for Ukraine, while Russia appears only to demonstrate its own mendacity and depravity.

More than that, crucially, the Russian invasion of 2022 has served to shake the West from its complacency as regards Russia. For much of the last decade, Vladimir Putin had expertly toyed with Western opinion; using every weapon in his hybrid-warfare armoury to divide, confuse, and hamstring his opponents. At every turn, he would deny and deflect, dismissing Western complaints as so much “Russophobia,” while once again presenting a reasonable face to the world. What is perhaps most surprising about the events of this year is that he has abandoned that policy – one which had previously brought him considerable success at comparatively little cost – in favour of the high-risk gamble of launching the largest military conflict the European continent has witnessed since 1945.

In taking this step, Putin has not only underestimated the resolute defiance of the Ukrainians, but I also suggest he has fatally misread the West. Objectively, he had good reason, perhaps, to imagine that Western societies were so exhausted and divided amongst themselves, following the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the upheaval of the culture wars, and the COVID pandemic, that they no longer had the stomach to fight for their principles.

But his invasion of Ukraine has proved that assumption spectacularly misplaced and – more than that – it has brought the old piecemeal strategy to a crashing halt, galvanising Western opinion in the process. As Boris Johnson has suggested, a key realisation for Western leaders after the invasion was that the Kremlin was not interested in negotiations. Putin, then, has exposed Russia as the gangster state that the Poles, the Baltic states, and others had always considered it to be. Indeed, in a highly symbolic move, the European Parliament designated Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism in November 2022. As a result of all that, there can now be no return to “business as usual” with the Kremlin, however much some Western countries might silently see that as a desirous solution. By invading Ukraine, the Putin regime has surely ensured its own demise.

Most importantly, perhaps, what is being witnessed this year – and is less violent form since 2014 – is the birth pains of a new Ukraine. Though that country achieved its independence in 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has since then been viewed – by the Kremlin at least, if not by parts of the wider West – as a part of Russia’s self-declared “near abroad,” a key component of the *Russkiy Mir* – the “Russian World,” a successor to the spurious “spheres of influence” so beloved by Stalin. Following Ukraine’s westward pivot, demonstrated most decisively at the “Revolution of Dignity” on the Maidan in Kyiv in the spring of 2014, Putin’s clandestine seizure of the Donbas and annexation of Crimea were an attempt to halt that shift, fixing Ukraine in the Kremlin’s orbit, while exploiting the grievances of the country’s Russophone population to perpetually undermine the Ukrainian government.

The invasion of 2022 marked the failure of that policy, and its defeat will in due course likely see the collapse of the idea of the *Russkiy Mir*. Ukraine’s Russian speakers, forced into a crude binary by the Kremlin’s aggression, have overwhelmingly opted to take Ukrainian identity, with some even abandoning the Russian language altogether. With the defeat of Putin’s invasion, Russia’s failing cultural draw will be nullified, along with its political and military power, and Ukraine will be free to chart its own course, without reference to its erstwhile masters in the Kremlin. In attempting to halt Ukraine’s westward pivot, then, Putin has most likely accelerated it, rendering it even more potent, more determined, and perhaps irreversible. Without wishing it or understanding it, Putin has cast himself as the malevolent midwife of the Ukrainian nation.

For all these reasons, then, history will neither forgive nor forget the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. By launching a full-scale military conflict against a sovereign neighbour, on European soil, Putin has embarked on a course of action which was impossible for the West to ignore, the consequences of which – one expects – will be profound, both for Russia and for the wider region. Paradoxically, in seeking to maintain an unwanted status quo, Vladimir Putin had made epochal change inevitable, foreshadowing not only the end of his own rule but the emergence of a sovereign, free Ukraine.

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Will a Defeated Russia Renew Itself? The Jury is Out

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Abstract:

This essay argues that Russia and its post-Putin leadership will likely exhibit a lack of accountability for the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The war crimes committed by Russian forces during the invasion have exposed a moral crisis within Russian society, reflecting a deep-seated cynicism and lack of morality. This crisis has significant implications for Russian foreign policy and global relations, and is unlikely to be resolved in the short term. The impact of this crisis warrants further analysis, regardless of whether Russia becomes more democratic or Western-oriented.

Key words: Russia, Ukraine, Russian society, Post-Putin leadership

‘When will the alarm go off, and Russians finally realise that Vladimir Putin’s regime is leading the country towards a catastrophe?’ Ever since Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24th 2022 professional Russia-watchers and the Western public at large have been asking this question again and again. The Russian assault on Kyiv failed. Tens of thousands of Russian soldiers were killed or imprisoned. Russian troops committed unspeakable atrocities in Ukraine’s occupied territories. Massive international sanctions have been imposed on Russia in waves. Finally, the Kremlin announced the first round of mobilisation in autumn 2022. This sparked an unprecedented exodus of hundreds of thousands of military age men from Russia, streaming into Kazakhstan, Georgia, and even Mongolia. However, the answer to the question is still pending. Moreover, it may well be simply ‘Never’.

Which means the war will continue in the foreseeable future simply because the tank called ‘Putin’s Russia’ does not have a reverse gear. The aggression will come to an end in one of two ways: if the Kremlin realises it cannot win and considers negotiations, or if it is soundly defeated. In the first case, the Ukrainian leadership and the Ukrainian people will have to

decide whether to negotiate and on what conditions. At the time of writing, such a development seems increasingly unlikely. And even if it occurs, the negotiations will almost certainly fail. I can imagine that if the situation becomes too dire for him, Putin may withdraw from Eastern Ukraine. What he will not accept is ceding occupied Crimea. Furthermore, the Russian regime will reject any idea of reparations. And Putin, Shoigu, Patrushev, and others will not give themselves up to face an international war crimes tribunal. Any armistice or even peace accord without this will be a dangerous travesty, even if Ukraine joins NATO and the EU quickly.

Total defeat of Russia, including the loss of Crimea, will almost certainly mean the end of Putin's rule as well. Do not expect the crowds to storm the Kremlin, baying for the blood of the 'traitors'. The Russian people will grumble, but they will most probably accept the *fait accompli* (more about the state of the Russian society later). But Putin will not only lose whatever remains of his prestige. He will inevitably become a liability to the rest of the ruling clique. In such circumstances, a struggle for power will ensue. Its outcome is by no means predestined. Someone living in a fortress-like underground bunker with multiple layers of security will be difficult to dislodge. It will also be difficult to hatch a plot due to widespread surveillance.

Still, losing the war to Ukraine would provide the best opportunity to depose Putin. If successful, the new ruler or, more likely, rulers will be the second tier functionaries from the previous era. I believe they will be willing to accept the facts on the ground, forsake any territorial claims against Ukraine and talk peace – if only to get sanctions lifted.

They will try to turn everything into a topic for negotiations. How many war criminals are there, and who are they, exactly? Can we try them in Russia while international observers are present? I suspect that many of the suspects will suddenly die of heart attacks, commit suicide, or be killed in car accidents, as was the case with some of the Soviet Communist Party functionaries after the defeat of the hardliners' coup in August 1991.

We do not have the funds to make reparations. And even if we had them, we would not pay due to the economic hardships it would impose on the population. Do you want Russians to revolt and replace us with a new Putin?

Abkhazia and South Ossetia back to Georgia? We cannot leave Russian passport holders alone with vengeful Georgians; there will be a humanitarian disaster and a large number of refugees.

The new regime will attempt to portray itself as a bulwark against imminent chaos in Russia, as well as the only political actor capable of reform,

just as Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin, and even Vladimir Putin himself did previously. The safety of Russian nuclear power plants and the fate of its nuclear weapons will weigh heavily on the Western minds, as they did in the early 1990s. The West will be forced to choose between pursuing justice and focusing on the reconstruction of Ukraine and its NATO and EU accession processes, while simultaneously not letting Russia slip into total chaos, and possibly even gradually lifting sanctions.

So far, this appears to be the most plausible scenario. However, there will be an additional complication though. Contemporary Russia is not the former Soviet Union. The Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, to the best of its members' ability and understanding, defended the national interests of their Soviet Union – as they understood them. Unlike the Soviet regime, the main task of the Putin regime is survival, the preservation of power and property of the ruling clique. Brezhnev, Andropov, and their ilk ruled the Soviet Union but did not own it in the same way that the current Russian 'elite' does. That also means that the vast majority of the population directly or indirectly relies on Russia's rulers for a living. Will those who come after Putin be willing and able to act regardless of narrow personal considerations? Will self-preservation trump selfishness? There is a strong possibility that it will not.

If the struggle for power becomes prolonged the question of Russia's survival as one state may well become topical. According to the 2010 census, 81 percent of the population identified themselves as Russians (Demoscope Weekly 2022). Even massive migration from Central Asia did not change the figure dramatically since. At the same time, regional identities during the post-Soviet period became very pronounced. Moscow is universally disliked, as are most capitals in most countries. If regional elites decide that the power struggle in the Kremlin starts to spin out of control, creeping separation of at least some resource rich regions is not that difficult to imagine. It is more likely though that in such a situation competing factions in Moscow will try to secure support of the richest and most influential regions by promises of more money and autonomy. A looser federation, perhaps even a confederation, seems more likely than the emergence of a dozen states in place of today's Russia.

The Ukrainians and many of their supporters argue that Russia's neighbours will never feel safe and secure unless it is forcibly dismantled and denuclearised. The minority among Putin's critics and opposition activists,

the majority of whom are now living in exile, side with the Ukrainian view. The majority insists that a 'better Russia' is still possible.

The problem with the 'divide and disarm' strategy is that it requires a multinational expeditionary force of epic size and effectiveness, as well as an inordinate amount of political will to keep it going in such a vast country. It is not totally impossible but extremely difficult to imagine NATO and its allies, including Ukraine, proceeding with such an operation.

What is far more feasible and practical is for Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia to join the EU and NATO as soon as possible, without regard for offending Moscow's sensibilities. With proper training, Western armaments and technology, and political backing, battle-hardened Ukrainian forces will be able to play the role of the indispensable security provider for the Black Sea region, serving as the main check against the potential new Russian expansionism. The United States and their allies may well request and receive permission from Kyiv to deploy missile defence systems and (if necessary) nuclear weapons on Ukrainian territory. If Moscow cannot be trusted, it can be deterred.

If one accepts that, on the one hand, Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova will become full members of the EU and NATO, while Russia will remain weakened but whole – minus the Crimea – the question is how will the country evolve after the war is lost (or deemed totally unwinnable), and Putin is gone? Can Russia gradually adapt to and adopt the rule of law and – ultimately – democracy?

First and foremost, one must consider not so much the power struggle in the Kremlin or the state of the Russian economy. Nobody knows anything specific about the former. What is known about the latter is that commodity-based economies, such as Russia's, have a safety cushion that keeps them afloat for a long time. What is frequently lacking in many scenarios of Russia's future is a realistic assessment of the state of Russian society and the way it sees itself and the world. An important example from the not so distant past will help.

In summer 2020, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was poisoned during a trip to Siberia and nearly died. At the time, the Levada Center, the only independent and trustworthy Russian pollster, conducted a poll. It showed that 30 percent of those surveyed considered the poisoning to be staged, 19 percent – a provocation by Western intelligence services, and another 7 percent – the result of a conflict within the Russian opposition. Only 15 percent saw what happened as an attempt by the authorities on the life of

a political opponent. If we add the first and second figures together, it turns out that half of those Russians who knew about the events around Navalny's poisoning (and this is the majority of the population) saw them as a gigantic theatre. In their view, the German chancellor, the president of France, the US secretary of state, doctors, biochemist experts, and Navalny himself and his family all willingly participated in a huge theatrical performance.

A significant portion of Russians lives in a fictional universe populated by shadowy operators and operetta villains who act contrary to logic and common sense. It is wrong to ascribe all this nonsense only to the hypnotic effect of television propaganda. Between 18–24 years old (who tended to consider the version of the assassination attempt the most likely one) and the 55-year olds (who are most inclined to believe state propaganda), there were – and still are – those who are 30-40-50 years of age. Many of these people understand how to go online and search for information.

We are talking about a conscious refusal on the part of not all, but a sizable proportion of Russians, to become acquainted with alternative points of view to the official one. Furthermore, in the eyes of the majority of Russians, Navalny committed an unforgivable offence: he “stuck his head out,” while the rest of the citizens try to do the opposite and keep their heads down. It is easier to believe in gigantic international conspiracies than to admit that things are going wrong in the country and one's civic responsibility is to act to right the wrongs. In a way, it is comfortable to be a cynic, to squint suspiciously at everyone – Putin, Navalny or Ivan Petrovich from the next apartment – and imagine oneself to be wise and far-sighted.

For the majority of Vladimir Putin's 23-year reign, his regime consistently implemented three policies. All three, I believe, stem from Putin's personal assessment of the reasons for the Soviet Union's demise. All three are intended to keep the authoritarian regime afloat. The first policy is to ensure that the Russian consumer sector functions properly, so that stores are well-stocked with goods – to avoid people standing in lines to buy meat or shoes, as they did in the Soviet Union - and to chastise the government for the deficit. Consumption is something the Russians are not ready to sacrifice for anything. The second policy is to keep check-in counters open at Russian international airports. This attitude, which was so different from the Soviet practise of closing borders, ensured that a steady outflow of the dissatisfied left Russia over the years. It erupted into a monstrous outpouring in 2022. As a result, millions of people who could have acted as change agents for the country are now living elsewhere and have little influence in Russia.

The third policy is well-illustrated by the public opinion poll I cited above: relentless propaganda of cynicism, political passivity, and endless 'whataboutism.' Its main point is not only, or even primarily, the advantages of Russia's authoritarianism over all other countries, but rather a view of the world in which no participatory system or activity is worthwhile. 'Democracy is just a name for the manipulation of the public by the elites,' 'The West wants to destroy Russia because it wants its oil and gas,' 'America condemns the return of the Crimea but what about its own invasion of Iraq.' In the last 7–8 years, the theme of Western decadence and depravity became a very prominent propaganda tool. The United States and the EU, the Russian propagandists claim, are destroying themselves with permissiveness, abortion, and the expansion of sexual minority rights. These and other propaganda narratives have a real feel to them because they are frequently based on real problems that Western societies are facing, such as debates about the democratic crisis, culture wars, and societal cohesion issues.

It also helps the Kremlin a lot that the Russians generally travel even less than the Americans (who usually serve as an example of an insular attitude) and only a very small minority ever visited Western countries. It is mostly those who live in Moscow and Saint Petersburg.

These policies, combined with selective and well-targeted repressions of the political opposition, independent, journalists and activists, were very effective in a society suffering from the post-imperial trauma of losing 'our great country,' the Soviet Union, and the system that guaranteed relative equality and a safety net. They created a country of non-citizens that go on repeating propaganda slogans even when they suspect that the reality is much more complex if not altogether different. They were made to feel powerless. Resorting to clichés borrowed from television is their method of keeping a mental balance.

Finally, Russia is a rapidly aging society (Interfax 2021), which is descending into a collapse of the demographic pyramid. There may be no way back from it. Combined with emigration, the demographics favour the regime as more and more people depend on the state for survival and less and less are young enough to adopt an active approach to life and politics. Russian society is at the same time fragmented, egoistic, and weak. With the possible exception of the tightly knit, extended family-based societies of the North Caucasus, Russians are nearly completely devoid of solidarity and prefer to stay away from other people's problems, especially if these problems can land them in trouble with the authorities.

The Russian opposition, from Boris Nemtsov to the radical nationalists, from Navalny to the 'new left,' failed in its attempts to shake the foundations of the Putin system. It misjudged the state of Russians' collective mind. Neither the calls for democracy, largely discredited by the painful post-Soviet transition of the 1990s, nor revelations of gigantic corruption that permeates all levels of the government and state-affiliated business, made the Russians abandon their passivity.

The massive moral crisis that Russia is experiencing became clear after Putin launched his February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The majority, or rather the largest segment of the Russian population, immediately retreated into the comfort zone of not so much believing the Kremlin line about the 'special military operation' as rather persuading itself to believe it. There is no anti-war movement to speak of. It is hard to imagine one emerging even if the already significant number of casualties increases further, as it will. Moreover, war crimes committed by Russian forces in Bucha, Irpen, Mariupol, and elsewhere in Ukraine revealed a complete lack of morality and human conscience among the (mostly) professional military. This is significant because the officers and men who committed these crimes represent a substantial segment of Russian society. They are predominantly the inhabitants of small towns and villages. There, habitual poverty, alcoholism, and drug use dehumanised existence to such an extent that pillaging, rape, and murdering harmless civilians, sometimes 'just for fun,' are seen as more or less normal.

It is difficult to imagine a society willingly renewing itself. As a result, I would not bet on its moral rebirth. It is possible, if not likely, that Russia will continue to exist in the shadow of its past, with no post-war German-style reckoning with it. In fact, several countries with recent dark spots exist in this manner, with Japan and Austria being prime examples.

What are Russia's transformation options if it does not disintegrate? In 2022, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a billionaire-turned-prisoner-turned-regime opponent, published a book titled 'How Do You Slay a Dragon?' (Khodorkovsky 2022). The title refers to a popular perestroika-era film, based in turn on a play by playwright Yevgeny Schwarz, which was banned by the Soviet authorities. It represents the end of the authoritarian and imperialistic trend that has dominated Russian history. The book is one of the few attempts to present a comprehensive vision of Russian reforms.

Khodorkovsky sees defeat in the war and restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity as a necessary condition for Russia's transformation. He

argues in favour of ‘re-founding’ the Russian state as a renewed federation with extraordinarily broad powers for the constituent regions. He favours a parliamentary republic over the presidential system. He proposes a radical approach to giving the Russians a stake in the country’s future and an incentive to participate in democratic processes. Khodorkovsky suggests that excess profits from oil and gas exports should be channelled towards personal social security and medical insurance accounts for all citizens, from birth until death. In his view, all of these reforms will be initiated by a Provisional Government of political kamikazes, who will then cede their place to politicians elected under the new constitution.

“How Do You Slay a Dragon?” is written for a future in which the Putin regime collapses completely and is replaced by a pro-democracy coalition of different political forces, so far non-existent or very weak. As I previously wrote, the emergence of a post-Putin government from within the regime is more likely, at least for the time being. I do not believe that the post-Putin rulers will impose a harsher form of dictatorship. In the wake of defeat in the war, partial or full, they will hardly have resources or desire to do this. Defeated dictatorships do not inspire followers. In fact, the new masters of the Kremlin may decide to free political prisoners, gradually liberalise the system and nudge it towards some form of quasi-democracy. They hope that by doing so, they will be able to facilitate the lifting of the sanctions and gain some sympathy from the West. This hope may not be entirely misplaced. Once the war is over and Ukraine wins, the phrase ‘Let us not abandon Russia’ will become a popular slogan in parts of – especially Western – Europe. The growing US-China conflict will fuel such thinking on the other side of the Atlantic. The Kremlin’s new rulers will almost certainly try to play along. However, in Russia, the pace and depth of change will be slow, and the temptation to limit transformation will be strong.

Russia, much less relevant globally than before its assault on Ukraine, will most probably continue muddling through under the watchful gaze of NATO. Its evolution will be slow and take many decades. There will be no place for the 1991-style euphoria. And the transformation’s eventual success is not guaranteed. British analyst James Sherr once told me, ‘If after Putin we get to point when Russia is at peace with itself and with its neighbours, it will be a major security breakthrough for trans-Atlantic security.’ This is a goal that seems realistic, if somewhat distant.

It is risky to apply historical comparisons from the 20th century to the events of the 21st. However, one such parallel sticks in my mind. A friend of

mine, an exile from Moscow, said in spring 2022, “We think modern Russia is akin to Weimar Germany, and Putin - to Hitler. But what if another comparison is true – Putin is a modern day Kaiser, and Russia is the German Empire. If so the Russian Hitler is still to come.”

I try to perish the thought.

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The Changing Geopolitical Tides of the Black Sea

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Abstract:

The Black Sea is a strategically important connectivity hub in the wider region and beyond. This paper examines the interests and priorities of the key stakeholders in the new geopolitical landscape, focusing on areas such as military security, strategic connectivity, and the use of non-military means of power to promote peace and stability. The paper adopts a conceptual approach based on the three pillars of future Euro-Atlantic security architecture, which are closely linked to the security context of the Black Sea. It is crucial for the future that these stakeholders work together to address the challenges and opportunities in this region.

Key words: Black Sea, Strategic Connectivity, Military Security, Non-Military Means of Power, Euro-Atlantic Security Architecture

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of revanchist Russia, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia have become primary theatres for Russia's policy of forcibly establishing its own sphere of influence. This strategic space could be described in terms of the four pivotal seas: the Baltic Sea, the Adriatic Sea, the Black Sea, and the Caspian Sea. In addition to instigating armed conflicts, occupations, and annexations, one of the pillars of Russia's influence operations has been cultivating and supporting other authoritarian regimes. This strategy aims not only to squeeze Western democracy out of those geopolitical regions, but also to prove that liberal democracy, and the solidarity it fosters, are not effective.

In the last 30 years, the area encompassing the four seas has experienced both integrative and disintegrative processes: the Russian-dominated idea of Eurasianism based on various forms of authoritarian rule opposed

to the idea of the free and peaceful Western-led Europe based on liberal democratic rule. As geopolitical theorist Halford Mackinder noted, “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island commands the world” (MacKinder 1919). This space has once again become a key area for defining the future global order.

To achieve primacy in its neighbourhood with limited resources, Russia has skilfully developed blackmailing capabilities to deceive adversaries into concessions. The core of Russia’s hybrid warfare narratives is based on the argument that its national security depends on securing a sphere of exclusive influence in the former Soviet space, also known as the so-called Primakov doctrine. Some specific narratives in this group include claims that NATO humiliated and threatened Russia through an illegitimate intrusion into the Russian sphere of influence. Russian officials have made numerous statements condemning the violation of an imaginary agreement on not expanding NATO eastward. Even though there is no recorded credible evidence to prove the claim, such unsubstantiated claims often resonate even in Western academic and political circles. In contrast, NATO’s open-door policy is enshrined in the Alliance’s founding treaty of 1949, and numerous NATO summit declarations since the early 90s have emphasised the importance of this policy as one of three the key pillars of the Alliance.

Many other similar narratives, myths, and conspiracy theories have been developed to support the argument that the West has a responsibility to avoid provoking Russia (NATO 2022). However, what happened is that Russia failed to liberalize, and Soviet captive nations found European and Euro-Atlantic integration as the only option to secure their statehood and prevent revenant revanchist Russia from claiming back its imperial ambitions. Countries that were not able to get strong security guarantees yet (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova), have been under constant and direct attacks last 30 years by Russia; even the ones led by political elites loyal to Kremlin are under constant threat. Russia has chosen the wider Black Sea region as a theatre for its hybrid operations with a heavy military focus on Ukraine. Even according to the Russian official narrative, Russia launched this War in response to the West’s failure to clearly answer written ultimatums and accept the spheres of Russia’s exclusive influence in its ‘near abroad’.

Strategic competition in the wider Black Sea region has witnessed changing tides of Russia’s aggressive revisionism for the last 14 years, starting with the 2008 Russian war against Georgia and culminating on February 24 with

Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This decade has been marked by a pattern of intensified nuclear rhetoric by Russia for achieving its geopolitical goals: in 2008, it was directed against the Allied missile shield in Poland, and as a result of the US 'Reset Policy,' Russia obtained undeserved compromises. The next wave of nuclear rhetoric could be observed since the 2014 annexation of Crimea, aiming to obtain another unjust compromise. While not obtaining concessions similar to those in 2008 or 2014, Putin's rhetoric has been at high intensity until 2020. This led to the preparations and eventual military intervention in Ukraine, followed by the same pattern of high-pitch nuclear blackmailing. This time, Russian terrorist tactics were met with the strength, bravery, and resilience of the Ukrainian people and Western unity. As a result, geopolitical tides are turning against Russia.

To enable and increase the effects of military coercion, Russia has been using other means of coherent hybrid warfare strategy across multiple domains. A recent example of how Russia gradually builds a blackmailing pattern is the short-term timeline leading up to the war in Ukraine. Firstly, Russia began raising tensions by simulating the use of nuclear weapons and occupation of NATO territories in the scenario of the September 2021 'Zapad.' In the same month, after completing the controversial NS2 pipeline, Russia continued raising tensions through the manipulation of energy prices. In October 2021, Russia exploited its proxy Lukashenko for introducing a human dimension into the hybrid mix by instigating a migration crisis at the borders of the Baltic states and Poland. After exploiting different domains to lay the groundwork for the crisis, Russia began to build up its military presence on the Ukrainian border, culminating in ultimatums to NATO (Agreement on measures 2021) and the United States (Treaty between The United States of America and the Russian Federation on security guarantees 2021). Russia's demands were fully in line with the Primakov doctrine. This proved that Russia is coherently moving towards achieving its strategic goal of regaining the sphere of influence since the early 1990s (The "Primakov Doctrine": Russia's Zero Sum Game with the United States 1997). In both instances, Russia sought to use its actions to persuade the West to make three strategic concessions: preventing the further expansion of NATO to the east, ensuring Russia's pre-eminence by prohibiting a US military presence in territories formerly belonging to the USSR but not part of NATO, and refraining from deploying armed forces and armaments in the post-Soviet region, including as part of military alliances.

Russia did not interpret the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a loss of the right to claim a sphere of exclusive influence. Analysis of declassified materials reflecting exchanges between US President Bill Clinton and the first president of independent Russia, Boris Yeltsin, proves that the defeat in the cold war was not perceived by Kremlin as a loss of the status of the world's super-power and did not result in the ending its imperialistic ambitions (NATO Expansion – The Budapest Blow Up 1994 2021). Later, Putin publicly confirmed that, for the Kremlin, the break-up of the Soviet Union was seen biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century (YouTube 2005). Sergei Medvedev explains that the bloodless dissolution of the Soviet Union failed to end the Soviet period of modern Russian history because the Kremlin assumed it still had sufficient tools of influence and blackmail embedded in the post-Soviet area to keep the area under control (YouTube 2022). With the war in Ukraine, Russia hoped to finally legitimise the sphere of its exclusive influence. Today, the future of the whole strategic geopolitical area is at stake in Ukraine, and only Russia's major defeat in Ukraine can mark a delayed, but real collapse of the Soviet empire.

The far-reaching consequences of the war in Ukraine emphasised the importance of security and stability in the Black Sea region. The disruption of vital transportation, trade, and energy routes that connect Europe with the eastern and southern markets have the potential to cause severe crises in multiple critical areas, affecting millions in various regions. A diverse spectrum of actors among the littoral states, the wider region, and external stakeholders are affected by the security deficit and constrained connectivity through the Black Sea. As a result of the turbulent changes in the region, various actors feel the urgent need to adapt to the new geopolitical realities and shifting balance of power.

The Black Sea has acquired many strategic significances in Euro Atlantic security, including economic, energy, military, and political ones. This paper will discuss the interests and priorities of the key stakeholders in the new wider geopolitical equation within the framework of the following major areas: military security, strategic connectivity, non-military means of power, and projecting peace and stability. The paper will follow a conceptual approach based on the three pillars of future Euro-Atlantic security architecture, which are directly linked with the Black Sea security context. Firstly, the US military presence in the region is necessary for exercises and deployments in a fluid security situation, to win time for reform and development processes (Testimony of: Admiral James Stavridis, 2013; Skelton

2010). Secondly, the EU is the main driver of democratization, modernization, economic prosperity, and a credible security actor for providing political deterrence. Finally, further integration of regional countries into NATO is crucial as it is the only military and security organization that can deter Russian military aggression.

Military and Political Deterrence

The situation in which Russia was extending its influence through hybrid warfare while taking advantage of the West's efforts to engage in constructive dialogue has been changing slowly after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. In 2016, the NATO Warsaw Summit Communiqué identified Russia as the source of regional instability that “have damaged Euro-Atlantic security, and threaten our long-standing goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace” (Warsaw Summit Communiqué 2016). Following the Russian annexation of Crimea, NATO allies began a slow process of rearranging their defence posture, with minor increases in defence spending and symbolic military deployment on their eastern flank. The importance of the Black Sea has been recognised on the agenda of European security, as reflected in the NATO strategic concept: “Black Sea region is of strategic importance for the Alliance. We will continue to support the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the interested countries. We will enhance efforts to bolster their capabilities to address the distinct threats and challenges they face and boost their resilience against malign third-party interference and coercion” (NATO 2022).

The military reinforcement of NATO's eastern flank has been marked by increased deployment of US forces and discussions centred on the EU's strategic autonomy. The EU adopted its Strategic Compass, which also indicated European seas as the strategic priority: “Maritime security in the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the North Sea, as well as of the Arctic waters, the Atlantic Ocean and the outermost regions is important for the EU's security, our economic development, free trade, transport and energy security” (A Strategic Compass 2022). These documents, adopted before the Russian invasion in Ukraine, provide a good framework for the practical implementation of the policy that became urgently necessary after 24 February 2022.

The West finally demonstrated that Russia does not enjoy a veto on NATO's decisions. After a recent visit to Kyiv, German President Steinmeier, one of the most vocal proponents of seeking compromises with Moscow even after the 2014 invasion of Crimea, finally admitted the failure of the decades-long European policy towards Russia that was aimed at avoiding conflict at all costs (Sam 2022). NATO is preparing for the historic moment of accepting Sweden and Finland as new members of the alliance. However, the real response to Russia's aggression will be demonstrated in the proven ability of Western institutions to respond to the aspirations of the people of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Any ambiguity and lack of cohesion in the Western approach to the entire Eastern Flank will encourage and ignite further military aggression from Russia, whether under Putin's leadership or that of someone else.

Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia officially applied for membership in the European Union. Granting candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova means that the EU has liberated itself from the taboo of provoking Russia. As stated at the press conference, "the decision that we have taken today strengthens us all. It strengthens Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, in the face of Russian aggression. And it strengthens the European Union. Because it shows once again to the world that the European Union is united and strong in the face of external threats." Although the application is technically about membership, in essence, it is about the perspective of membership, i.e., a perspective of joining the European family when and if those countries satisfy the membership criteria. Joining the EU is a demanding process, but a clear message that the door to the free world is open is urgently needed now more than ever.

European and Euro-Atlantic integration is a civilizational choice made by the people, not just by specific governments. Even if at times Russia has backed regimes in transitioning countries, which turn their back on Western interests and values and have chosen the wrong side in the war in Ukraine, the West should stay on its strategic political course and not punish pro-democracy, freedom-loving peoples for the shortcomings of their governments. In this crucial moment, the answer from the West should be guided by wider strategic considerations. Therefore, NATO and EU member states should seize the momentum, as Russia's violent blackmail and opposition to the enlargement of the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions have been countered by the response to the unprovoked war in Ukraine, to develop a strategy of erasing grey zones in the Euro-Atlantic area.

Fourteen years since the Bucharest summit decision stating that Georgia and Ukraine will become members of NATO, the strategic environment has changed significantly. With Putin waging an unprovoked war of choice against Ukraine and NATO, opening door to the new members, it is crucial to demonstrate that Russia enjoys neither a veto on enlargement nor on other countries' aspirations to join the Alliance. At the Madrid Summit, NATO recognised the strategic importance of the Black Sea region and decided to enhance "efforts to bolster their capabilities to address the distinct threats and challenges they face and boost their resilience against malign third-party interference and coercion" (NATO 2022, 11).

However, the stability and prosperity of the Black Sea region can only be secured with a significantly increased and conceptually redesigned Western military presence in the area. The primary goal of this military strategy should be to create Western political and military AA/AD against Russia in the wider Black Sea area by denying it the ability to blackmail and manipulate through aggressive and escalatory measures. In order to align this process with the declared strategic priorities, both the EU and NATO must move beyond the clichés, taboos, and paradigms of the last decade of an absence of political vision and bureaucratic entrenchment, and take tangible steps towards providing the entire Eastern flank with the sustainable security solutions.

Projecting Peace and Stability in the Wider Black Sea Region

Since its attack on Ukraine, Russia has two futures: it will either be completely defeated by Ukraine and its allies, as anything less would enable Putin or anyone succeeding him to consolidate power, regroup, and engage in other military "adventures." In both cases, in foreseeable future, Russia will not have a stabilising or positive role in the new global security architecture. This makes every country in its neighbourhood a target of Russian aggression, exporting instability through undermining liberal democracy, subverting economic, trade, and energy supply networks, and provoking or instigating new or existing conflicts among different countries in the region. While these strategic challenges will have a far greater impact on global security and stability, for the European security architecture, the Black Sea strategy will play a crucial role as a strategic connectivity hub in the wider region and beyond to the east.

Georgia, with its consistent Euro-Atlantic aspirations and Western support, demonstrated the democratic successes. Georgia's geopolitical identity as an Eastern European democracy in the Black Sea region has been forged through a painful process of statecraft. Even the capture of its territories by the Russian military land capture and the subsequent occupation of these two regions were not enough to derail it from the Western course. It is the most pro-American country in the wider region, and European and Euro-Atlantic integration has 80 percent of public support. In the absence of Western policy, Russia already has been able to make some advances in Georgia by significantly damaging its democratic credentials and emboldening its pro-Russian oligarchic regime, altering its pro-Western foreign policy. These attempts became more noticeable after the invasion of Ukraine. The consequences of Georgia falling prey to the Russian hybrid offensive will further limit the Western ability to serve its strategic political, economic, and security interests, and project its smart power to nations willing to decouple themselves from Russian domination.

The Black Sea holds strategic significance for Azerbaijan and Armenia as a gateway to Europe. However, this can only be achieved if Georgia is able to overcome Russian state capture and find its place among the European family of democracies. On the other hand, this will allow the EU and the United States to successfully mediate the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, taking advantage of the window of opportunity provided by Ukraine's heroic defence and Western unity against Russia (Zolyan 2022).

The comprehensive sanctions on Russia have created significant challenges for supply chains in the region but also opened new opportunities for strategic partnerships. A new chapter in EU-Kazakhstan relations is a good example of this. At the COP27 conference in Egypt on 7 November 2022, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Alikhan Smailov, establishing a "strategic partnership" between the two sides (Romano 2022). Kazakhstan can provide all thirty critical raw materials that the bloc needs, according to a list adopted in 2020 (Critical raw materials n. d.), that are critical to the EU economy. To materialize this commitment secure and reliable supply chains are needed, which brings the necessity of a more comprehensive Black Sea strategy and connectivity to the Caspian Sea.

Russia's ability to disrupt strategic connections in the region remains a concern. This can be achieved through various military provocations or by politically subverting key countries such as Georgia. The cancellation of the

US-led Anaklia deep sea port project by the Georgian Dream ruling party (the informal ruler of the party, Bidzina Ivanishvili, has close ties to Russia) is a clear demonstration of this. As has been the case in recent European history, the decisive victory for liberal democracy over the authoritarianism (i.e., Putin’s “sovereign democracy”) will require strong US leadership and strategic engagement. There is currently significant momentum for this, as evidenced by the strong bipartisan political support on Capitol Hill for the development of a comprehensive US Black Sea strategy. The new bill by Senators Shaheen and Romney urges the Biden administration to make “U.S. policy in the region a priority by developing an interagency report, followed by a strategy, to enhance economic ties, development, strengthen democratic institutions and bolster military assistance” and coordination between the United States, NATO, EU and Black Sea partners, among other provisions (Shaheen, Romney Unveil New Bipartisan 2022).

Strategic Connectivity: The Role of Non-Military Instruments of Power

Russia’s actions in Ukraine can be seen as an implementation of the strategy outlined by Gerasimov, who spoke of using all available instruments of power to defeat an adversary and undermine its will to defend itself. In this case, Russia has chosen to weaponise food in an attempt to exert pressure on the Ukrainian government and population, while also putting pressure on the international community. Historically, the use of food as a weapon is not a new phenomenon, but it has long been recognised as immoral and has been seen as a crime against humanity. In the case of Ukraine, this has taken several forms, including denying the export of grain and fertilisers, stealing grain, trying to sell this grain as its own product, destroying grain stocks, and setting grain fields on fire. This has had a devastating effect on the Ukrainian economy, and it has significantly impacted global export prices for wheat and corn, as prices reached record highs in May 2020, consequently putting the food security of many African, Middle East, and Asian nations at risk. Ukraine is among the world’s leading producers of grain, particularly wheat, corn, and barley. According to the European Commission, it holds 10 percent of the global wheat market, 15 percent of the corn market, and 13 percent of the barley market, as well as majority in the sunflower oil market (Deutsche Welle A 2022). Russia’s use of food

as a weapon has been compared to the Holodomor famine in Ukraine in the 1930s under Stalin, which was recently recognized as a genocide by a Bundestag Resolution (Deutsche Welle B 2022).

In February 2022, Russia's attack on Ukraine led to a block on grain exports, as the country was convinced of its rapid victory, posing a significant threat to global food markets and requiring swift solutions. In response, Turkey stepped forward as a mediator, saviour, and facilitator, playing a crucial role in brokering the Black Sea Grain Initiative agreement between the United Nations, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine on July 22. The Chief of the European Union Foreign Policy, Josep Borrell, directly acknowledged it to "Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu for Turkey's role in convincing Russia to remain in the grain deal" (TRTWorld 2022) to help people in need to access the global breadbaskets. The initiative garnered widespread international support as of urgency and prominence, and Istanbul's role was further emphasised by the establishment of a Joint Coordination Centre (JCC), involving Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Nations, to monitor the implementation around the clock. The 120-days agreement lowered price; by mid-September, over 100 ships left Ukraine with approximately three million tons of grain and other foodstuffs (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2022).

The role of Turkey was highlighted once again when Russia made the unjustified decision to suspend participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative on 9 October, based on a false accusation and in a "retaliatory move for what it says were Kyiv-ordered attacks on Russian vessels" (Macias 2022). This move was not so unexpected, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba wrote on Twitter, "we had warned about Russia's plans to ruin the Black Sea grain initiative. Now Moscow is using a false pretext to block the grain corridor that guarantees food security for millions of people. I call on all states to ask Russia to stop playing his games with hunger and to resume respecting his obligations" (The Odessa Journal 2022). President Erdogan and Turkish diplomacy were able to resume the initiative for another 120 days on 2 November. As of 17 November, the total tonnage of grain and other foodstuffs exported from the three Ukrainian ports reached 11,186,228 million metric tonnes (including corn 42 percent, wheat 29 percent, and rapeseed 7 percent) with a total of 941 voyages (470 inbound and 471 outbound) (Black Sea Grain Initiative 2022). Turkey's involvement in the initiative is important both internally and externally. It could be presented by President Erdogan to his people as a great success, which is very important due to

high levels of inflation and social discontent; he stated, “Although Russia acts hesitantly... we will resolutely continue our efforts to serve humanity.” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2022).

The humanitarian corridor along the Black Sea “from the ports of Chornomorsk, Odesa, and Pivdenniy to the rest of the world” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2022) has been reopened, but it is uncertain how long before Russia may again engage in even more destabilising activities. Continued pressure on important trade and transportation sea lines highlights the crucial role of Turkey in upholding the gateway to the blue waters. The recent agreement by the European Union on the next package of sanctions, including the price cap and also a ban on Russian seaborne crude oil imports, which is in force from 5 December 2022 (Cahill 2022), will affect the utilisation of these sea lines of communication. It will impact the role of Novorossiysk and other Black and Azov Sea ports used to export crude oil exports, as these ports have been mainly used to send crude oil to India, Greece, Turkey, and Italy, which imported some 2.4 million tons of this oil as of July 2022 (71 percent of the total volume of Russia’s oil exports from the Black and Azov Seas). (Exports of crude oil 2022) Additionally, the prohibition of maritime services, such as shipping insurance and financial services on any tanker carrying Russian crude oil, will limit sea transport options. These services are primarily based in the United Kingdom and the European Union, therefore the “ban would apply to virtually all tankers plying the world’s waters” (Northam 2022).

The decisions to ban the use of the Black Sea limits options for Russia to fuel its war machine. However, geographical factors still play a role, while some nations such as Hungary import Russian oil and gas through pipelines. The location of the Black Sea at the crossroads of Europe and Asia provides a natural connection for the import of gas, crude oil, and refined oil from Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. Istanbul plays a key role in this process through the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) project, which starts at the Georgia-Turkey border. This pipeline is the most important section of the Southern Gas Corridor linking to the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) and the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), reinforcing the role of Turkey as an energy hub, which is of great importance for Europe (TANAP Natural gas Transmission Company n.d.).

It allows the connection of gas fields in Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan with the European market and integrates Georgia into the wider Black Sea gas region (Sabadus 2021). This has been recognised by President von der

Leyen, who during a visit to Baku in July 2022 emphasized Azerbaijan's role as a crucial partner in expanding supplies through the Southern Gas Corridor. The expansion of capacity in 2023 to 12 billion cubic metres and 20 billion cubic metres in the future "will help compensate for cuts in supplies of Russian gas and contribute significantly to Europe's security of supply" (Statement 2022).

The potential for the expansion of gas supplies through the reopening of the Baku-Tiflis-Erzurum pipeline has been identified as a means of "cater[ing] to extra volumes from Azerbaijan to Türkiye" (Türkiye's Black Sea gas field 2022). Additionally, Blue Stream, a major trans-Black Sea gas pipeline, with a capacity of 16 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year from Russia to Turkey, could be utilised. However, the stability of this pipeline is uncertain, as was the case with Nord Stream 2, which could potentially disrupt supplies.

Kazakhstan has also announced plans to extend crude oil export to Europe using the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. Approximately 3.5 million tonnes per year of Kazakh crude oil could start flowing in 2023 through another Azeri pipeline to Georgia's Black Sea port of Supsa (Kazakhstan to start oil sales via Azeri pipeline to bypass Russia 2022). Kazakhstan is already the EU's third-largest non-OPEC supplier, delivering over 70 percent of its oil exports to the EU and, according to President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, is ready to support overcoming regional and global energy security (Abbasova 2022). Future prospects are promising, as there is an overall consensus between the EU and five Central Asian nations. It was clearly expressed in the 'Joint press communiqué by Heads of State of Central Asia and the President of the European Council' by stating "Participants stressed the crucial importance of developing a regional vision of and cooperation in building sustainable connectivity between Central Asia and the EU, in line with the EU Global Gateway strategy and the national transport and transit development objectives of Central Asian countries" (Joint press communiqué 2022).

Turkey's role as mediator and guarantor of grain deals and regional energy hub could also be a part of a deal to allow for an offensive against the Kurds in Syria. While this goes against the Russian agenda, Moscow may be forced to accept it due its limited solutions and capabilities to influence the situation. For NATO, Turkey's geostrategic location, guarding the strategically important Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Straits, denies movement of the Russian navy and is crucial for Ukraine as it prevents reinforcement

from the Black Sea Fleet and possible amphibious operations against Odesa. The 1936 Montreux Convention openly refers to Russia aggression and 'war', denying Russian military vessels access to the Black Sea. This positive role could also impact the US approach toward Patriot missile sales and cooperation with the Turkish defence industry, and potentially even the re-inclusion of the nation in the F-35 program. President Erdogan's ambition to be a global actor, based on balancing during the war in Ukraine, presents both an opportunity and a challenge for NATO cohesion and can be used as a tool to pressure the EU on visa policy and customs restrictions. Ukraine is grateful to Turkey when for its food exports, weapons deliveries (e.g., the famous Bayraktar TB2), and the closing of the Turkish Straits. Turkey's interests with Russia still differ on issues such as Nagorno-Karabakh and Syria, but the war presents an opportunity for Turkey to rebuild relations with the Middle East. A dominant position in the Black Sea Region is important for Istanbul as it supports many facets of the national aims and ambitions.

A CEPA study recognised the Black Sea region as "the centre of four great forces: Democracy on its western edge, Russian military aggression to its north, Chinese financial aggression to its east, instability in the Middle East to its south" (Hodges 2021). This is particularly relevant especially when considering the current security situation in the region, which has been further complicated by the war in Ukraine and the weaponisation of food and natural resources. The Russian Federation has used a combination of instruments of power in an attempt to recreate the second Soviet Union through the forcible redrawing of national borders. This has included military aggression with the aim of conquering sovereign nations on short notice, as well as economic measures designed to prevent intervention from the West. However, the use of food and natural resources as weapons, as well as the exploitation of the Black Sea region as a means of creating a global food crisis and limiting gas and oil supplies, have not been successful in achieving these goals.

This is due, in part, to miscalculations toward Ukrainian capabilities and its will to defend and a wrong assessment of the West's cohesion and dedication to support the attacked nation. For Russia, the Black Sea region has always been of great strategic importance, and the annexation of Crimea annexation was an attempt to dominate this maritime domain and gain access to the Mediterranean Sea, as well as to support its actions in Syria. However, the significance of the Black Sea goes beyond Russian interests, as access and security of sea lines of communications also affect NATO and EU members

(Romania, Bulgaria), as well as the partner nation of Georgia. Their trade is constrained by the ongoing war in general, but also by sea mines and unpredictable Russian actions. Furthermore, the export of grain using the land-based communication or inland waterways is less effective than using the Black Sea due to limitations on volume and inadequate infrastructure.

Conclusion

In order to counteract Russian aggression in the wider Black Sea region, the West must establish a military and political Anti Access/Area Denial (AA/AD) zone. This strategy, based on a paraphrase of Secretary General Ismay's well known formula of "Keeping Russia down, China out, and Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova in" should be implemented in the shortest possible time in order to serve as a deterrent and an indispensable element of containment policy and as an asymmetric pushback to the Russian advance.

To achieve this objective as well as Russia's strategic defeat in Ukraine, the West must take the following political and military steps. Firstly, the lend-lease concept should be expanded to all Black Sea partner nations, in parallel to providing support to domestic democratic forces to consolidate and reinforce democratic political modernisation. Secondly, economic transactions among regional countries should be boosted and secured through the establishment of a US/NATO logistical/transportation training centre and the implementation of permanent exercises to provide security for logistics and transportation. Thirdly, strategic connectivity should be reinforced through increasing investments in military and dual use, multi-modal infrastructure, and logistical infrastructure, making them rapidly expandable and interoperable for any possible contingencies. Fourthly, the development of soft infrastructure should be institutionalised through the unorthodox use and sharing of intelligence as a powerful weapon in both military and informational domains. Fifthly, the freedom and democracy agenda should be put on the offensive through the acceleration of NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia, with a clear roadmap for achieving this goal. Sixthly, democracy should be turned back on track and the geopolitical balance in the Black Sea region should be changed by imposing strong actions on the wider network of Putin's accomplices who obstruct democracy and state institutions. Lastly, EU candidate status and a membership action plan should be granted to Georgia as soon as possible, and

these tools should be used to prevent further democratic backsliding and to strengthen democratic processes in the country.

By implementing these steps, the West will demonstrate its credible commitment to further deter Russian aggression in the wider Black Sea region. Furthermore, this proposed course of action could serve as checklist against democratic backsliding in the entire region, undermining one of the most important propaganda lines of Russian hybrid warfare on Western inability or lack of desire to expand boundaries of freedom and democracy further in Russian sphere of influence. With these bold steps, the democratic West will jumpstart the process of completing the unfinished job of a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace.

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Section III

Russian Vulnerabilities

Russia and Its Energy Achilles' Heel

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Abstract:

Russia is a country with abundant sources of energy. Its economy is heavily reliant on the oil and gas industry, which provides revenue for many non-energy sectors such as equipment manufacturing, field services, and transportation. In the past decade, Russia has made significant contributions to the economic development of its energy industry. In theory, the current version of Russia's "Energy Strategy Through 2035" is based on a comprehensive analysis of the current state of the energy sector in the country. In practice, however, these trends represent a shift from dependence to addiction. However, Russia's continued reliance on its oil and gas industry and disregard for the consequences of its actions will ultimately harm the country's economic development.

Key Words: Russian Energy Sector, Oil and Gas, Russian Economic Development

Introduction

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the USSR government began to treat the oil and gas industry with its newly discovered colossal natural resources as the most important sector of the national economy, capable of generating huge export revenues and creating a solid basis for domestic wellbeing. Other industries were not developed as intensely as this one. Gradually, energy exports created an interdependence with Western consumer nations with Soviet Russia as a major supplier. This interdependence remained a factor of political stability for several decades.

After the demise of the Soviet Union, the new Russian authorities further enhanced the dominant role of oil and gas in the economy to the detriment of other industries, and this strategy has made the country a parasite of natural resources rather than a trendsetter in advanced technologies that had to be imported in increasing quantities.

If Russia followed the course of economic integration alongside developed nations, this status would not have been a liability, but the new ruling group headed by President Putin decided otherwise. First, a series of reforms led to the deterioration of the investment climate, and then the government started weaponising energy interdependence with the West, disregarding the negative impact of this move on the energy sector and on the national economy. Instead of an asset, Russia's energy reserves became the weakest spot of the government. Their use as a geopolitical tool—in a situation where other industries had been all but disregarded—is leading to an economic and social catastrophe.

History Lessons

Energy traditionally plays a vital role in Russia, due to huge fuel demand necessitated by its harsh climate, long travel distances, and because energy resources—starting with wood, peat, coal, etc.—have been more than plentiful. In the 19th century, the Russian Empire expanded south of the Caucasus and gained access to rich petroleum reserves on the shores of the Caspian Sea where the first oil wells were drilled on the Absheron Peninsula (currently in Azerbaijan) in the 1840s. In 1859, the first oil refinery was built in Baku, and by the end of the century, oil extraction in that area totalled 9 million tonnes, which accounted for about half of global production.

After the establishment of Communist rule and civil war in Azerbaijan in 1920, production fell to 2.4 million tonnes, but before Hitler invaded the USSR in 1941 it equalled 23.6 million tonnes, 76 percent of the USSR's total. As the German army was advancing toward Caspian oil reserves in 1941–1942, the USSR intensified search for oil in Tatarstan, and in June 1948, a large Romashkinskoye oil field with initial recoverable reserves of three billion tonnes was discovered there. By 1956, oil production in Tatarstan exceeded that of Azerbaijan and in the 1960s this region was yielding one-third of all oil in the Soviet Union.

The first West Siberian oil was produced in September 1959 in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District in Tyumen. The Soviet government adopted the program of developing West Siberian oil reserves in April 1966. In 1970, the area produced over 30 million tonnes and in 1975, 140 million tonnes. Soon the USSR became the world's largest oil producer. In 1988, West Siberian oil output peaked at 415 million tonnes.

Before WW2, the USSR obtained natural gas mainly from oil projects. In 1939, the country produced a total of 2.3 billion cubic meters of gas, 90 percent of which was in Azerbaijan. In September 1941, a large Yelshanskoye gas field was discovered near Saratov on the Volga River. More discoveries followed there, and the Soviet Union's first gas trunkline between Buguruslan and Kuibyshev became operational in 1943. In 1946, gas from the Saratov Region reached Moscow. In West Siberia, natural gas production started in 1953, and the discovery of the unique Urengoy field, with initial reserves of 10.9 trillion cubic meters, in 1966 paved the way for new large-scale discoveries. In 1970, the USSR produced 198 billion cubic meters of gas.

The discovery of three world-class oil-and-gas-rich provinces—in the Caspian, Volga, and West Siberian regions—predetermined a rapid development of Russia's energy industry but caused an economic distortion toward a strategic emphasis on extraction and export of natural resources to the detriment of other sectors.

It dawned on the Soviet government in the 1960s that the country's tremendous oil and gas resources could not only cover domestic energy requirements but become both the main export staple and an instrument of international political influence, provided a delivery infrastructure was in place. The Druzhba pipeline system, spanning over 8,900 kilometres, was built in 1964–1974 to deliver about 70 million tonnes of oil annually from Almeteyevsk and Samara on the Volga River to Soviet satellite countries: Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

Unlike oil, which could be exported by pipe, rail, or maritime vessels, delivery of natural gas at that time, when transportation of liquefied natural gas was not practiced, was fully dependent on pipelines. Thus, geographical factors dictated a focus on the western destination of gas exports as a pipeline to the east would be too lengthy to justify its construction, and there were no markets in either China or other Asia-Pacific nations. It was Europe that the Soviet government made its target for gas trade.

The history of Russia's gas export pipelines began in 1967 when the Brotherhood trunkline in Ukraine was extended beyond the USSR borders into Eastern Europe. First contracts were signed with Austria and Italy. Gas deliveries to West Germany started in 1973. Another line, the Union from Orenburg, was commissioned in 1980 to reach Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania. In 1984, the Urengoy-Pomary-Uzhgorod pipeline was added to the export infrastructure.

West European governments welcomed the new energy supplier despite criticism from the United States and regardless of the Soviet Union's aggressive policies (the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979). In the 1970s, the 'gas-for-pipes' deal was signed with West Germany: the USSR obtained German-made large-diameter pipes for the construction of trunklines and paid for them with gas.

Energy sales to West European nations and purchases of food and other commodities for hard-currency revenues from those sales delayed the collapse of the Soviet economy and downfall of the Communist regime for at least a decade before the demise of the USSR in 1991. In all aspects, an interdependence was born. The USSR, which was eager to get access to Western commodities, cultivated economic ties with the West, and gas supply played an important role in this policy—and West European nations became gradually convinced that the Soviet Union would be a reliable and indispensable energy supplier regardless of political and ideological differences. They were betting on interdependence and believed it could not be broken by either party: the Soviets depended on the West as the buyer of gas and provider of vital imports as much as Europe depended on energy supply from the USSR.

In the post-Soviet era, the Russian government continued the predecessors' policy of expanding hydrocarbon exports. It did not see other ways of quickly healing the country's ailing economy and preventing social tensions. Under Vladimir Putin, Russia made quite a few attempts to eliminate transit countries from oil and gas export routes.

The Yamal-Europe gas pipeline with the annual capacity of 33 billion cubic meters was built in 1994–2006 to reach Germany via Belarus and Poland, and in 2003, the construction of the Blue Stream gas pipeline across the Black Sea to Turkey began. Currently, this line transports about 12 billion cubic meters a year. The Nord Stream pipeline to Germany with a nameplate capacity of 55 billion cubic meters a year was commissioned in 2012, and another Black Sea line, the TurkStream, became operational in 2020. As to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline in the Baltic Sea, it was built but remains defunct first because of international sanctions and second due its recent destruction. The work on the Power of Siberia gas pipeline to China is underway. It is expected to reach the planned annual capacity of 38 billion cubic meters in 2025.

The Backbone of the Soviet Economy

By the beginning of the 20th century, almost all the world's oil was produced in two countries: Russia (around Baku) and the United States (in Pennsylvania). In 1900, Russia provided 60 percent of export sales of kerosene, but the bulk of oil production targeted domestic consumers—mainly as fuel oil (*mazut*) for heating. The Russian Empire government banned crude oil exports, allowing only kerosene (46.4 percent of total exports of petroleum products in 1913), lubricants (25.3 percent), and *mazut* (6.8 percent) to be sold abroad. The excise tax on petroleum products, which was the largest levy on oil then, accounted for only 1.5 percent of budget revenues.

The Communist government in the 1920s regarded oil exports as a remedy for economic recovery after WWI and the Civil War as production of other exportable goods had shrunk. In 1932, exports of petroleum products fetched 18.7 percent of the country's export revenues. Foreign sales of crude oil in that period equalled just 9.4 percent of total petroleum exports and kept decreasing to almost zero by 1939. The growing domestic demand eroded oil export potential. While in 1932 Soviet Russia exported 28.6 percent of produced oil, in 1939 this share fell to 1.6 percent.

Immediately after WWII, the USSR exported no crude oil and small volumes of refined products until 1948. In the 1950s, however, the country started supporting its foreign satellites, often at the expense of national economic interests, and supply of oil at artificially low prices was one of the tools of this support. From 1955–1960, exports of Soviet oil (mainly crude) to 'socialist' countries tripled and to 'developing' nations, increased 2.6-fold. The prices for the Soviet Union's Eastern European allies did not compensate for production and transportation costs, and the recipients were able to sell petroleum products (made from Soviet crude on Soviet refining equipment) to the West at a significant premium.

Even after the 1973 oil crisis, which boosted the process worldwide, the Soviet Union continued this practice. Starting in 1975, the USSR fixed the price of oil it exported to Eastern Europe as an average global price for the previous five years, to protect the economy of the satellites from oil price volatility.

Figure 1. Share of fuel and electricity revenues in the USSR budget

	1940	1965	1970	1975	1980	1981
Budget, billion roubles	18	102	157	219	303	321
Energy revenues, billion roubles	0.03	1.27	1.80	7.55	23.28	28.67
Share in budget, %	0.18	1.24	1.15	3.45	7.69	8.94
	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Budget, billion roubles	373	372	376	377	402	472
Energy revenues, billion roubles	38.29	32.30	31.69	28.26	27.43	24.61
Share in budget, %	10.28	8.69	8.42	7.50	6.82	5.22

Source: "People's Economy of the USSR" annual reports

In the meanwhile, the Soviet government was boosting investments in oil and gas, which it was willing to make the principal source of export revenues. Other sectors, such as civil machinery manufacturing, agriculture, consumer goods, were underfinanced. The 1970s may be regarded as the period when the country made its choice of critical dependence on oil and gas. The share of energy revenues in the Soviet budget soared from 1.24 percent in 1965 to 10.28 percent in 1985 (See *Figure 1*), although the percentage may be much higher as officially published statistical records were distorted for political reasons and cannot be trusted.

From Dependence to Addiction

Official records in the post-Soviet period show a somewhat fluctuating growth of the oil and gas share in Russia's federal budget revenues (See *Figure 2*), but the Russian Ministry of Finance includes only the mineral extraction tax, export duties, and windfall tax in the sum of such revenues, disregarding such levies as oil and gas producers' corporate income tax, dividends due to the state, personnel income tax, and other levies. Independent estimates may raise the share of oil and gas in the federal budget's revenues to over 60 percent.

Figure 2. Share of oil and gas revenues in Russia's federal budget

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Budget revenues, trillion roubles	3.5	4.1	5.4	5.1	6.3	7.8	9.3
Oil and gas revenues, trillion roubles	0.7	0.9	1.0	2.2	2.9	2.9	4.4
Share in budget, %	20	22	19	43	47	37	47
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	
Budget revenues, trillion roubles	7.3	8.3	11.4	12.9	13.0	14.5	
Oil and gas revenues, trillion roubles	3.0	3.8	5.6	6.5	6.5	7.8	
Share in budget, %	41	46	50	50	50	51	
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Budget revenues, trillion roubles	13.7	13.5	15.1	19.5	20.2	20.6	
Oil and gas revenues, trillion roubles	5.9	4.8	6.0	9.0	7.9	5.2	
Share in budget, %	43	36	40	46	39	26	

Source: RF Ministry of Finance reports

In 2020, despite the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the global economy and low energy prices, oil and gas exports fetched Russia \$167.7 billion, 49.6 percent of the country's total export revenues. In 2019, the figures were higher (\$265 billion and 62.1 percent).

The oil and gas industry remains a prominent source of revenues for many non-energy sectors of the Russian economy, such as equipment manufacturing, field services, construction, transportation, metals, pipes production, and so on. The industry's annual capital expenditures were estimated in 2019 to exceed 1.5 trillion roubles (about \$23 billion), one-third of the overall capex in the Russian economy.

The 2001–2011 period witnessed a particularly quick growth of the oil and gas revenues' role in Russia. A 2002 reform of oil and gas taxation resulted in an increase of the state share in appropriation of these revenues.

The growing energy prices and a boost of export volumes brought new funds into the federal budget. An upsurge occurred in 2005 when the share of oil and gas revenues jumped from 19 percent in the previous year to 43 percent as the price of a barrel of Russia's Urals export blend grew from \$34.40 to \$50.80 and kept growing.

Encouraged by this bonanza of cash, the government launched a campaign to de-privatise commercial oil companies that had become private-owned in the 1990s. In 2003, after the infamous Yukos case, the assets of this commercially efficient company ended up in the hands of state controlled Rosneft. Later, in a series of a dozen takeovers, Rosneft established control over such private companies as TNK-BP, Bashneft, Udmurtneft, and others. In 2005, Gazprom took over Sibneft from private owners and renamed it Gazprom Neft.

The official so-called breakeven price of a barrel, an index the Russian Ministry of Finance uses to balance the income and expenditures in the federal budget, started to play a large role. The higher the index, the larger expenditure the government can plan. While in 2007 the breakeven price equalled \$26.70, in 2008 it was as high as \$57.90, and between 2009 and 2014 it exceeded \$100. From 2001–2010, the growth of oil prices accounted for almost 50 percent of Russia's GDP growth. The GDP in that decade increased by 59.2 percent, according to the World Bank data.

In the early 2000s, the Russian government did not regard the growth of oil prices as a stable upward tendency. In 2004, a 'stabilization fund' was established to accumulate that portion of oil revenues which was sold higher than the breakeven price. In 2004, the breakeven price equalled \$20 per barrel and in 2005, \$27 per barrel. These surplus cash earnings were to help maintain the budgetary balance in the future if the oil price started to fall. This fund was split into two parts later but in 2018 became one, the National Wealth Fund which remains the government's large rain-day hoard but is occasionally used to help finance the government's selected projects. In July 2022 its size was officially recorded as 10,775 billion roubles (\$185 billion).

The global economic crisis of 2008–2009 had a negative impact on Russia's stock market and financials but did not affect its oil and gas industry significantly. Oil production in 2008 edged down just 0.7 percent and in 2009 even went up 1.2 percent. Global oil prices started recovering quickly in 2010 and reached a pre-crisis level in 2011.

During the crisis, the Russian government evidently concluded that the focus on oil and gas as the basis of the national economy was the right

strategy, any crisis that may erode the size of budgetary revenues would be short-lived, and the general movement toward higher energy prices would guarantee success in a long-term perspective. In that period, an instrument for supporting the oil and gas industry in times of low prices was adopted, the devaluation of the national currency. The instrument was employed with success in 2009, 2014, and 2016. It enabled the industry to cut down the costs of production and transportation and boost the volume of exports, replenishing the state budget.

This approach, however, had its liabilities. Russia's manufacturing industries suffered from the rouble devaluation because they had to spend more in servicing their hard-currency credits they obtained to import equipment and technologies. As a result, they were decreasing investment in development, thus enhancing Russia's tilt toward an economy based on exploitation of natural resources.

Reserve funds that were accumulating surplus revenues of oil and gas exports became another anti-crisis tool for the Russian government. In 2005–2008, the funds received 7.7 trillion roubles, 33 percent of the country's total capex. This hoard could have been used to develop manufacturing industries, but the government preferred to tap it only for co-financing oil and gas projects, such as Yamal LNG when international sanctions obstructed borrowing from Western banks.

The discrimination of non-energy sectors of the national economy in favour of oil and gas created a vicious circle: high dependence on oil and gas production led to crises when energy prices were sagging; then the crises made the government to devalue the national currency; then the weak rouble depressed investments in manufacturing industries; and Russia's dependence on natural resource exploitation became more and more pronounced.

Beneficiaries at Home and Abroad

The list of priorities in the current version of Russia's "Energy Strategy Through 2035" opens with the following: "Guaranteed safeguarding of the country's energy security as a whole and on the level of the Russian Federation's divisions, particularly those on geostrategic territories." These territories are regions along the Arctic coast and the Far East, which the government regards as vital for national defence. These regions suffer more

than any other part of the country from depopulation and economic depression. The government expects the oil and gas companies to contribute to these regions' social and industrial development—not only by fuel supply but also by infrastructure projects such as export pipelines and Arctic maritime transportation. The LNG projects of Novatek and Rosneft's Vostok Oil project, for example, fit the description.

From a geopolitical angle, energy supply remains an instrument of the Russian government. Russian gas is sold at a discount to those former Soviet republics that follow—or pretend to follow—Moscow's political line (e.g., Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan) but such 'unruly' countries as Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, and Ukraine were often faced with gas bills with the prices on the EU level or above that level. In Europe, Russian gas contracts have also become politicised, as Gazprom's behaviour during the 2021 winter gas crisis in the EU and the disruptions of gas flows during Russia's war in Ukraine have demonstrated. Some EU member nations' critical dependence on Russian energy supply prevented the West from launching tough sanctions against the aggressor, such as a comprehensive oil and gas imports embargo.

In addition, oil and gas revenues help the government to buy the loyalty of Russia's political and financial elites. Apart from direct financing from the federal budget, these elites receive support through lucrative contracts awarded by Gazprom, Rosneft and other state companies—and can redirect such cash flows to bank accounts of corrupt government officials in foreign tax havens.

A Parasite on Natural Resources

Vladimir Putin's ideology in the energy sector was initially formed in 1991–1996 when he was responsible for foreign relations of the mayor's office in St. Petersburg. One of his tasks was to procure imported food and commodities for the population in exchange of energy and raw material exports. At that period, Russia could not offer competitive industrial products or advanced technologies but possessed immense natural resources for sale. It seemed to Putin and his subordinates in that period (Igor Sechin and Alexay Miller who later became the CEOs of Rosneft and Gazprom) that export of natural resources would guarantee quick and permanent profit for decades to come.

This ideology became a national strategy when Putin became president of Russia and gradually established control over first the gas industry and then, over most of the country's oil production, and initiated a tax reform to collect as much revenue from the resource rent as possible.

Putin's occasional declarations about the need to drop the oil addiction, develop advanced technologies, and create 25 million hi-tech jobs remained empty rhetoric. When his adventurous foreign policies provoked international sanctions, it became impossible for Russia to cooperate with the rest of the world in technological progress, leaving the nation with just one option: to continue exploiting natural resources. The notorious 'import replacement,' aka 'sovereign technologies,' has proven to be an inadequate means of maintaining a semblance of industrial development.

So far, there is no evidence of the Russian government's intention to take practical steps to abandon or, at least, decrease its dependence on oil and gas. The government appears to believe—and proves in in such strategic documents as the 2019 "Energy Security Doctrine"—that the developed nations' notion of determination to switch to greener energy and sustainable economy belongs to the category of 'risks,' 'threats,' and 'challenges' as far as Russia is concerned. According to Vladimir Litvinenko who heads the St. Petersburg Mining University and used to be the scientific coach for Putin's Ph.D. thesis, the West's decarbonisation strategy "was politically motivated by a desire to deprive Russia of markets and condemn it to poverty."

Prior to the Ukraine war and ensuing international sanctions Putin was convinced, and declared it in October 2019, that oil would "remain source number one in the global energy balance for the next 25 years even though its share would gradually decrease and the share of renewable energy, increase." The Russian government has not prepared a comprehensive plan for trimming down the country's dependence on oil and gas. Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak suggested an accelerated monetisation of Russian hydrocarbon resources before they lose their value, and Minister of Energy Nikolai Shulginov in January 2021 came up with a proposal to cut down state financial support of renewable energy projects by 30 percent, allegedly to keep electricity prices from growing.

A strategy that rejects the global trend toward decarbonisation and clean energy translated into the conservation of technological backwardness, and the sanctions against Russia as an aggressor make the situation even worse for this energy-rich country. Before the invasion of Ukraine, independent experts suggested, somewhat idealistically as later events demonstrated, that

the Russian economy might be saved through the radical improvement of the investment climate, which must become attractive for international investors with their technologies, know-how, and capital. The solution, they assumed, ought to include the following measures: decreasing political tensions in Russia's relations with the West; safeguarding ownership rights for business and technologies; de-monopolisation of economy, encouragement and support of small and mid-sized businesses; and tough anti-corruption measures and a restriction of interference in business by law-enforcement officials.

The Russian government acts in an exactly opposite manner, which does not leave chances for an economic revival—or even for maintaining the economy in the current shape.

Dire Consequences

Energy resources are Russia's most competitive trade commodities. In 2020, the coronavirus year, they brought 49.6 percent of total export value to the Russian budget. In 2021, their share increased to 54.3 percent as compared to 10.4 percent for metals, 7.7 percent for chemicals, 7.3 percent for food, 6.6 percent for machinery, and 3.5 percent for timber and pulp.

This distorted structure of exports makes the Russian economy extremely vulnerable to pressure from such factors as: a drop in oil prices; acceleration of the movement toward decarbonisation and green energy on Russia's traditional energy markets (e.g., the EU, China); political tensions and conflict causing sanctions and embargos against Russian energy exports; and the Russian government's decision to manipulate energy export flows as an instrument of achieving political gains.

The probability of replacing energy exports with other exportable commodities or services is very low given the long-lasting emphasis on oil and gas. Development of renewable and alternative sources of energy in Russia is in a nascent stage. Any significant decrease of energy exports is bound to have a dramatic economic and social effect on Russia, and a shortage of export revenues undermines Russia's potential to finance large infrastructure projects, maintain the national defence potential, and keep the living standards from declining.

The deterioration of the oil and gas industry will impede development of some key sectors of the national economy, such as equipment

manufacturing, field services, transportation, construction, metals, and so on. A shrinking access to hard-currency revenues would be translated in diminishing access to imported commodities, some of which are of critical importance for Russia. Russia has invested tremendous funds in upstream and infrastructure projects, which may become idle (and never reach reimbursement). Finally, the geopolitical role of Russia in the countries that receive its oil and gas will suffer.

So far, the attitude of the Russian government demonstrates that such consequences are disregarded, and the vitally important oil and gas industry is being sacrificed in favour of military encroachments in Europe.

Estonian Fears, Hopes and Efforts: The Russian War against Ukraine

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Abstract

Debates following events in February 2022 in Estonian society have been hot, and despite diverging opinion, there has emerged a mainstream viewpoint of how to assist Ukraine, how to respond to Russia, what to expect from NATO allies, and how to deal with the inner cohesion of Estonia's multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society. The least problematic has been the understanding of how to help Ukraine, with Estonia emerging as the leading donating nation *per capita*. As to Russia, most of the Estonian public and elite supports significantly more severe sanctions than are currently enacted. Although there have been voices which have demanded straightforward intervention of NATO into the conflict, the strongest consensus is behind the view according to which the West should not get directly involved, yet it should indirectly support Ukraine in a greater degree than it has managed to do so far. Despite its membership in NATO, the Estonian political and military elite has been afraid that Russia is about to use the same logic of argument and action against the Baltic States.

Key words: Estonia, Russian Invasion of Ukraine, NATO, Sanctions, Estonian Society

Among the Estonian elite, Russian war against Ukraine is not expected to end before the end of 2022, but it may well also last to the end of 2023. Estonian predictions in this question are mostly following the US and UK official sources. The main question for Estonia is if, and when, after the end of the war in Ukraine, Russia might be ready and motivated to challenge NATO in the Baltic states.

Views on the future European relationship with Russia differ a lot, between the ethnic groups and the political parties. The current governmental coalition and most Estonian speakers would prefer Russia losing the war in Ukraine, and this together with sanctions causing regime change in the Kremlin. However, it is unclear what would be the obligation for a new and hopefully more liberal-minded Russian government.

The Soviet Past and Ruski Mir

Although Estonia's contemporary perception of Russia is most acutely influenced by Russia's aggressive stance in recent decades, the deeper source of the ill feelings towards Russia relies on Estonia's painful historical experience with Russia. These feelings are also aggravated by the still unresolved challenges of social segregation between the Estonian and Russian-speaking communities and the concomitant security threats emanating from Russia. The high-water mark of the painful history of Soviet occupation in Estonia are the massive killings and the deportation of tens of thousands of Estonian citizens to Siberia in the 1940s and 50s. During the last two decades, the Estonian elite has been especially concerned about Russia's near abroad and "borderization" policy (Toal and Merabishvili, 2019). Russia appears to rely on a geopolitical reading of its identity in the terms of a traditional land-power, which necessitates maintaining physical control and a sphere of influence over its border regions to guarantee safety and security (Karaganov and Suslov, 2019). Over more than a decade the Kremlin has promoted a narrative of "Global Anti-Russia" in the form of the NATO Alliance threatening Russia's independence. Especially the coloured revolutions have been troubling the Russian leadership. In this context, gaining control over its neighbor's territory, resources, infrastructure, strategic locations, and military capabilities sounds like a rational strategy from a geopolitical perspective, in order to avoid a situation where the "enemies" get control over Russia's bordering countries (Karaganov and Suslov, 2018). In order to understand Russian neo-imperial ambitions in the post-Soviet space, one needs to be versed in the *Ruski Mir* concept. Within the frame of this concept the Kremlin attaches to states like Ukraine, but also the Baltic States, an emotional geostrategic value. The concept of *Ruskiy Mir* has been developed as an ideological tool in Russia since the late 1990s (Svarin, 2016). It refers to the mythical ideal of Russian culture and Russian language. It

is important to realize that with this narrative, Russia has simultaneously been constructing its own inner social cohesion and attempting to tear apart that of its neighbours. On the one hand, Russia has been actively forging narratives that enable it to consolidate the national spirit. Vital in this regard have been the memories of the World War II and the special role that Soviet Union played in it (Persson, 2022). Nevertheless, especially in recent years, it has gradually evolved into the idea that Russia should protect and support anyone who identifies as Russian, speaks Russian, and considers Russia to be his or her cultural pivot. Crucially, the breadth of the term has ever widened and has come to include Central and East European states and the Russian diaspora in distant countries as well (Veebel, Ploom, Sazonov, 2021).

To bring an example of the externally intrusive interpretation of *Russkyi Mir* by president Putin, according to him, “Russia’s border doesn’t end anywhere” (BBC, 2016). In the eyes of Russia’s political elite, Russia has its “privileged interests and status,” or “unique,” or “historically specific” relations with some neighboring nations. This applies also to partly Slavic-populated regions, pending on this reading (Berls, 2021). The protection of those who identify themselves as Russians has served as a source of legitimacy and center of gravity for many Russians’ ideological narratives already for many years. As Vladimir Putin asserted, “*Millions of Russians and Russian-speaking people live in Ukraine and will continue to do so. Russia will always defend their interests using political, diplomatic and legal means*” (Prague Post, 2014). It is likewise possible to quote former Russian Prime Minister and President Dmitry Medvedev: “*Protecting the rights and interests of Russian citizens abroad remains our most important task*” (Estonian Public Broadcasting, 2016). Based on the influence of the narratives, when launching a war against Ukraine in 2022, Putin had reason to believe that a significant share of the people living in Ukraine would support Russia’s military invasion or that it would at least help him divide the society and create internal tensions and chaos in Ukraine. This would result in the separation of some regions in Ukraine. This way, Putin expected to get control over Ukraine. As it turned out, this judgment was largely unfounded and in practice Russia has had very limited success only in the East and South of Ukraine.

Public Attitude: Polarisation based on Language Lines

By many Estonian speakers, Russian speakers in Estonia (or in Ukraine) are still perceived as occupants. In spite of the change of generations, the latter are seen as people who were sent to Estonia after the Second World War to replace the Estonians recently deported to Siberia. During the Soviet time, this created a fear that the Estonian speaking population would be gradually substituted by the Russophones. Today, while Russian speakers form around 25 percent of the Estonian population, they still represent about 50 percent of the population in Tallinn, Estonia's capital, and more than 90 percent of the populations of Narva and Kohtla-Järve, two cities among the five largest cities in Estonia.

By 2022, differences of understanding Russian actions in Ukraine and Russia's expected behaviour towards the Baltic states, have grown between Estonian speakers and pro-Kremlin Russian speakers. The main reason is the success of Russian propaganda and narratives among some of the most vulnerable Russophone groups in Estonia. The picture depicted above has been somewhat complicated by the large influx of the Ukrainian refugees during 2022. The level of Ukrainian refugees exceeds 40,000 by August 2022. The Ukrainian refugees are primarily perceived, and thus welcomed, as victims of Russia, but also as a politically friendly labor force. At the same time, the Russian migrants bringing with them security risks are not seen as welcome. So, Estonia is focused on integration of the Ukrainians who have already arrived and keeps the border closed to Russian migrants.

The closure of the border for Russian tourists became an issue in August and September 2022. Due to the flight restrictions imposed by Western countries, Russian tourists had started to exploit the still remaining option of using their previously acquired Schengen visas to enter any of the bordering Schengen countries and go on holidays, by taking flights from there (Postimees 2022a). As the pressure to such countries as the Baltic ones increased significantly, the question of whether this option could be morally approved triggered a heated discussion, not merely among Estonian politicians, but also in the wider Estonian public. The Baltic states emerged as leaders in attempting to achieve an EU-wide ban on such movement of Russian tourists (ERR 2022a). While the EU decision has been delayed, the Baltic states preceded on their own to enact the ban in September 2022 (Kivi 2022). As long as Finland remains the country where the largest numbers of Russian tourists pour into the EU, it is also expected that the Finnish

government will follow suit and enact the ban (Ibid.). This question receives the most heated comments among the Estonian speaking public. The debate concentrates on the one hand on the question of what constitutes a real pressure on Russia's public, to step out publicly to stop Putin and end the war. On the other hand, the question concerns the individual responsibility of Russian citizens enjoying their holidays in Europe while their army is destroying a nation that has expressed a wish to live according to European values (Lucas 2022). Also, the Russophone social media in Estonia has not seen some heated debates on the issue (Bökova 2022). Overall, the ascription of guilt (or responsibility) by the Estonian speaking majority to Russian citizens in this issue does not follow cultural or language-based differentiation, but strictly a juridical one. Last but not least, a considerably clear aspect of the matter is also a pure security problem of FSB agents potentially entering Estonia with malevolent plans (Politsei ja Piirivalveamet 2022).

A concomitant issue next to Russian citizens going on vacations through Estonia is, of course, the question of the responsibility of a relatively large number of Russian citizens who live in Estonia for the Putin regime. However, as they are not in a position to directly influence Russian politics, their responsibility in this regard has been left aside. Where Russian citizens living in Estonia come directly to the center is the question of a right to acquire, carry and use firearms in Estonia (Ots & Hindre 2022). Where, in both issues, the Estonian Russophone public comes into play is (if applicable) their partial identity with the Russian public through their information room being dominated by the Russia-controlled media. Therefore, a closure of border, as well as the ban of firearms, may come across as a harassment, even if of a relatively minor scale.

Perhaps the most direct, if also a strongly symbolic, problem that surfaced due to the Russian aggression in Ukraine has been the World War II memorial T-34 tank removal from Narva. For the Estonian public it had become a crucial issue of not allowing any symbol of the Russian war machine to stay intact in the Estonian public space (Postimees 2022b; Kiisler 2022). On the other hand, for local Russian speakers, the tank commemorated the World War II efforts of Russia, symbolizing not the war, but bringing peace to Europe. Next to that level, probably a more daily meaning of the tank was to be a part of a local Russian identity, a place to take one's wedding vows and photos (Nikolajev 2022). Yet, it is important to realize that not all Russophone people identify themselves with the tank (Straube 2022).

There are two relevant contexts in which to place the connotations that the tank carried and carries. First is the Russian propaganda that had not only solidified the place of World War II memories in the identity of local Russophones, but also exploited the memories of war to bolster Russia's imperial ambitions nowadays (Solman 2022). The second context is the Estonian integration policy. The tank had stayed in its place for over 30 years since Estonia became independent, only to become an unbearable issue in 2022. As such, it symbolizes the rather low profile of Estonian attempts to tie the Russophone minority to Estonian society. A more sustained and efficient integration policy would have probably removed the tank earlier, even if only symbolically from the central place of the local Russian identity.

Altogether, it is worthwhile to exemplify the implications of the differences among language groups in Estonia towards the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Estonian speakers tend to support the strongest possible measures against Russia, they are happy that Europe acts together, many of them find EU/NATO measures even too soft to have a sufficient and quick effect on Russia, and sanctions are seen as working but rather too slowly. At the same time, Russophones mostly support Russian version of interpreting the Ukrainian war and are therefore not only critical of but even angry towards the Western and Estonian countermeasures.

Policy trends: what has been done after 24th February 2022

On a popular level, Estonians are sensitive to any Russian interference both in Estonia and also in the whole of Europe. All signs of such an activity on behalf of Russia as well as the confirmed cases find a lot of attention in the media and in social media. The sensitivity can be so strong that in some cases, Russian interference is suspected even without actual facts supporting it. On a professional level, Russian interference is constantly analysed by the State Chancellery and by the Ministry of Interior. Drawing from both sources, it is no wonder that Estonian politicians and officials seldom consider themselves not merely as experts of Russian hybrid warfare but likewise as among the truth-tellers in this field. By the same token, the other Europeans are seen as more blind or even naïve. Thus, the latter need to be warned.

As Estonia itself is one of the leading nations that has donated the highest sums *per capita* to Ukraine, the wider Western help is also closely and

critically followed. In that regard, the CEE countries are held in esteem, as well as the United Kingdom and the United States. On the other hand, Germany, France, and Italy are considered much more suspiciously.

Most of the Estonian military and political elite considers only the United States to be capable to deter or properly respond to Russia. Nevertheless, based on Ukrainian experience, also collective effort from other NATO members states might have a sufficient effect. Still, participation of nuclear powers is essential, otherwise Russia is seen to turn the conventional confrontation quickly into nuclear blackmail. The United States, while contributing a lot when measured in dollars, has, however, been unable to take a convincing political position against Russia. More is needed, especially when a nuclear bluff or blackmail is expected from the Russian side. Therefore, in the Estonian eyes, the US needs to have a more clear and decisive strategic position on Russia at the moment and after the war ends.

Next to the United States., the UK is treated as the second most capable nation to respond to Russia in a way the Kremlin can understand. Often, as far as strategic messaging to Russia is in the limelight, the UK is seen as even the leading strategic force to send clear messages. The UK has a central place in the Baltics, as it has played key roles in both supporting Ukraine against Russia and by keeping Baltic deterrence credible in the recent years. Considering the growing risks, more British contribution is welcomed in Estonia and in Ukraine.

The EU on the other hand, even if the implementation of the sanctions was relatively quick, has not performed according to needs and expectations. A more united and integrated Europe is needed to counter current security and energy risks and threats. Still, more hopes are on the US-UK axis than on the EU. In comparison to the UK and the United States, for the Estonian taste, France, Germany and Italy have been too hesitant and lacking clear strategic messages. The economic, especially energy-related ties appear to weigh too heavy on their shoulders and tend to drag them down to look for compromises with Putin. At the same time, many CEE countries have been much more agile in responding to Russia. As Poland in particular has been punching above its weight in responding to Russian aggression against Ukraine, it is they, that have been viewed as the informal group leader. Poland is seen as a good example of how to send military equipment quickly and in big quantities. Likewise, the Czech and Slovak republics are seen as the ones who help as much as they can despite their small size.

Next to the West, a critical question touches the role of non-Western third nations like China, but also Turkey as a de facto friendlier nation towards Russia. According to the Estonian elite, global views and third countries' policies will ultimately play a crucial role, and the West should actively try to engage them as allies. We should engage with everyone who helps to defeat Russia, even when we need to compromise the democratic standards. The position of third countries including China, India, Brazil, Egypt, Vietnam, Bangladesh, etc., is vital as Russia is hoping to reduce the impact of the Western sanctions through trade with those states. These states may also help Russia to receive technologies sanctioned by the Western countries. In Estonia, mostly the position and role of China is debated, sometimes India as well, while the rest of the countries are rather left aside. Altogether, in the current situation all reasonable allies are seen as welcome. Most complicated questions often concern the closest NATO allies. Some of them have already started to support Russia. From the Estonian perspective Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey have been doubtful partners in the past in relations with Russia. However, this should not limit working together with these states at this time.

Estonian Donations to Ukraine

Per capita, Estonia has been among the biggest donors of military and other aid to Ukraine, in May 2022 being a world-leading nation (Hankewitz, 2022). Altogether, by May 2022, a total of €230 million worth of military aid has gone to Ukraine from Estonia, consisting of about 3,000 EUR-pallets and 20 units of machinery. In addition to Javelin anti-tank missiles and 122mm Howitzers, Estonia has sent minesweepers, anti-tank grenade launchers and guided anti-tank systems, as well as other military and supporting equipment. Estonia has also delivered 4x4 armored vehicles to Ukraine. In addition, the state has helped deliver tens of millions of euros worth of privately collected aid, all of which has reached Ukraine. "Since the beginning of the conflict, we have continued to support Ukraine with both military and humanitarian aid and have also supported the sending of large-scale private aid to Ukraine" (Estonian Public Broadcasting, 2022b). Next to the gunnery and munitions, Estonia is considering deploying military personnel in support of the UK's initiative to train Ukrainian forces. The country also plans

to send medical supplies and set up a field hospital for Ukrainian troops in partnership with Germany.

According to the Minister of Defence, Hanno Pevkur, “The Estonian Defence Forces are especially proficient in training reservists for combat in an intense conventional war against a larger adversary – meaning, precisely for the kind of war that Ukraine is in right now,” said Pevkur.” Also, “our moral responsibility is to continue supporting Ukraine. They are fighting for our shared values, and if there is anything we can send to Ukrainians, we have to do so.” By August 2022, the Estonian government had provided Ukraine with a total of 250 million euros (\$251 million) in military aid, including howitzers, anti-tank munitions and weapon systems, grenade launchers, communication equipment, light weapons, tactical gear, medical supplies, and food (Manuel, 2022). This way, Estonia has donated one-third of its military budget to embattled Ukraine to strengthen its fight against Russia (Donmez, 2022).

As for humanitarian aid, Estonian people, government, and private sector have given over 20 million euros to Ukraine in total. (MoFA) Even if shocking, war in Ukraine has not been surprising for Estonians. Sharing a similar past and thence an urge to maintain their freedom, the need for help is well received. According to Nordstat, more than half of households in Estonia have donated money to Ukrainian causes. Volunteer groups have also bought, donated, and delivered a large number of SUVs that were requested by the Ukrainians to aid with the defense efforts (Estonian Public Broadcasting, 2022).

According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, per GDP, Estonia has donated far more to Ukraine than any other nation, including the US, the UK, or other larger European economies. Back in April, it was estimated that Estonia has donated €220 million, considering the country’s population, it is the largest donor per capita (Hankewitz, 2022). Along with Estonia’s donation, its fellow Baltic state Latvia also donated nearly one-third of its military budget to Kyiv, while Poland donated nearly 13 percent and Slovakia 11.6 percent, according to an infographic accompanying the tweet (Donmez, 2022).

Conclusions: Lessons learned for Estonian political and military leaders.

Russian war against Ukraine has revealed the weaknesses of Estonian deterrence posture and its defence capabilities. Therefore, activities to rethink Estonia's defence strategy and to bring the forces and equipment to the level needed have already started. For example, the new aims include doubling the size of the Defence League, and procuring mid-range air-defence and MRLS rocket launchers. The main acute concern touches Estonia's ability to improve its deterrence posture and defence capability quickly enough to avoid possible Russian aggression in the upcoming years. Biggest complications have been identified to be caused by long procurement cycle of weapon systems and current high demand in the global market. On the positive side, budgetary concerns have been bypassed and the coalition has supported extraordinary allocation to defence forces for reforms and capability building.

Although activities and changes of situation and tactics in Ukrainian battlefields are, of course, continuing to impact Estonian positions in terms of what is needed and where to improve, the main thrust of the needed strategic changes are relatively clear. NATO's deterrence in the Baltics had so far been relying on a deterrence by punishment, bringing only so-called trip-wire troops over to be located in the three small states. However, as the Ukrainian war has demonstrated that Russia may embark on risky, if not irrational, conventional attacks, the need for permanently stronger presence in the Baltics, mounting to deterrence by denial, has become a new norm.

Before the Russian attack against Ukraine on 24th February 2022, it was considered that a Russian initiated imperial war could expand from Ukraine to Moldova and/or involve Belarus, but it will not reach- NATO territory. However, during the conflict this position has changed based on Russian aggressive rhetoric and conduct. Now it is rather believed that Putin could target NATO territory knowingly, even if not by nuclear assets. Current prediction according to Estonian CHOD Martin Herem is that if Russia is not defeated in Ukraine, the attack against the Baltic States will follow in upcoming years. Accordingly, Estonia is preparing for a possible full scale conventional conflict with Russia. It is against this backdrop that the current deterrence level is not perceived as enough against Russian ambitions. In parallel, Estonia is supporting Ukraine as much as possible by hoping that Russian losses there will at least postpone if not cancel Russian military plans against the Baltic States.

To achieve effective deterrence by denial, the role of the allies also becomes crucial. In that regard, there are worries in Estonia in terms of the strategic partners. When the U.S. and the UK are considered to meet the needs and expectations, that cannot be straightforwardly said about France, Germany, and Italy. Thus, although not directly applicable, a longtime trust in NATO and relative distrust in EU's defence arrangements has been confirmed for the Estonian elite. At the same time, Baltic cooperation and unity is working well and the partnership with Poland has become stronger. Both are considered as also vital for Estonia's survival.

To turn to the security and defence policy of Estonia in some more detail, major decisions have been taken, new approaches introduced, and investments made. Even when Russian aggression against Ukraine was in general expected and foreseen in Estonia, the amplitude of the war and Russian tactics used in Ukraine have initiated changes at the strategic level in terms of deterrence and assurance posture, up to redefined benchmarks in terms of fighting capability (firepower, ammunition reserves etc.) and social resilience.

The main processes include several decisions. A need to switch from deterrence by punishment to deterrence by denial has been well received by NATO. At the Madrid summit in 2022 the NAC considered the assets and structures needed to prevent Russian aggression in the region, and decided upon deploying a division to each Baltic state including also division HQ. Estonia has also prioritized additional consultations on allied assistance in case of regional escalation. In terms of individual defence, there has been recognized an immediate need for mid-range air defence capability, and improving the readiness and size of the paramilitary national Defence League, increasing its active members from 10,000 to 20,000. To meet the immediate needs for development, extraordinary budgetary allocations to Defence Forces of 800mil-1bil euros were approved for new capabilities, building up ammunition reserve and developing new structures.

But the Russian invasion also poses important questions about Estonia's integration policy. The best litmus test in this regard is the Narva tank. In a context where for more than 30 years the Estonian integration policy had relatively minuscule ambitions, actions, and success with the Narva (and other North-Eastern Estonian Russophone) people, the removal of a tank by the decision of central government, over the head of local council government, acquired a certain flavour of revenge to it. At the same time, since the tank entered the public attention in the summer of 2022, it was also

impossible – considering the brutalities that Russia committed in Ukraine – to allow the tank to stay in its place. Yet, it is to be wondered, if a more subtle approach by the Estonian government would have been more efficient, whereby the Estonian Russian speaking community would have been left alone in juxtaposing its long-term embrace of the policies of the Russian Federation, with the brutal reality of a Ukrainian war which the Kremlin brought home to the Donbas Russophones. This kind of contemplation over an inner identity issue could perhaps have won over more hearts and minds compared to the robust tank removal, an externally imposed problem. Nevertheless, the reality which necessitated the rather simple self-enactment of the Estonian community mirrors showed well, the relatively underdeveloped nature of Estonian integration policy.

Finally, coming back to Estonian views of the events in Ukraine, defining victory or success for Ukraine in the current conflict has been a topic to be avoided among Estonian political community in debates during recent months. Under the current circumstances in Ukraine, it is more about damage limitation, than about achieving something that would make Ukraine, Estonia, NATO, and EU feel victorious. The best possible scenario would be that Russia is forced out from the Ukrainian territory and that will cause a regime change in the Kremlin. The best possible outcome for Estonia is that the war will cause regime change in Russia and bring more, if not fully, democratic forces to power. Also, military and economic weakening of Russia might be sufficient to secure the Baltic states for upcoming 3–5 years. But Russia needs to suffer 50 percent more losses in Ukraine to start to struggle with internal complaints and a loss of public support. The impact of economic sanctions is present, but it is slow and it is likely to start having visible effects on Putin's popularity from the end of 2022.

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Russian Military Might: Recovery is Sooner Than We Think

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Abstract

Russian aggression against Ukraine has put its military might to the test, resulting in substantial losses and setbacks for Moscow during the war. This article will explore the prospects for the Russian military to recovery and replenish its lost capabilities in the face of economic scarcity and sanctions. It will look at how Russia and other major powers were able to modernise and build up their military power in the past, and whether this phenomenon could be replicated in the future. The article will look at a few preconditions for military recovery deriving from lost legacy equipment as well as many unknowns for the West in terms of Russia's future military trajectory. Through an analysis of these trends and tendencies, the article will estimate the possible return of Russian military capabilities.

Key words: Russian Military, Ukraine, Sanctions, Economic Scarcity, Autarky, Recovery, Modernisation

Introduction

The prelude to Russian aggression against Ukraine hinted at the powerful military under Moscow's command. The use of Russia's military might against Ukraine revealed the limits of this ostensibly powerful army. The perceived might of Russia's military heralded a predicament for any opponent in Europe, as one of the legitimate nuclear powers, a country with its own military industry, and numerically the largest army in terms of manpower in Europe.

Nonetheless, the Ukrainian military has put Russia's military might to a test that no expert, military or civilian, would have predicted. The Russian military has suffered significant losses and setbacks just a few weeks into the

war. A few months into the war, the Russian military has suffered significant territorial and military losses in occupied territories, as well as the loss of some of its best naval, land, and air military equipment. All of these trends indicate that the Russian military will not be able to recover anytime soon. While Russia's aggression against Ukraine continues in ways that no one questions Russia's status as a terrorist state, experts are conducting thorough investigations into Moscow's potential military recovery and replenishment of lost and missing capabilities.

Multiple experts predict that Russia will regain its military capabilities in five years, with many predicting that it will take even longer to replace lost military equipment, personnel, or modern hardware. To assess these conditions, the authors of this article will investigate what prospects Russia has for regaining military power in the face of significant sanctions and economic scarcity (if Moscow would have to rely on the military autarky). On the other hand, the authors will focus on key moments when Russia was effectively modernising and expanding its military power. These main patterns will allow us to forecast the possible return of Russian military power.

Sanctions and Isolation

Research from before Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 suggests that sanctions have had a small negative effect on the Russian economy in general. To this point, Gurvich (2015) found that sanctions have a negative effect on the Russian economy, but that this effect is 3.3 times lower than the estimated effects of the oil price shock. Pestova and Mamonov (2019) found that sanctions caused a decrease in the amount of outstanding Russian corporate external debt, but that the effect is modest and uncertain. Kholodilin and Netšunajev (2018) 2014 found that sanctions are unlikely to trigger a profound change in Russian foreign policy. However, the current political tensions have had an impact on financial and non-financial indicators, including a possibly persistent effect on government bond yields. In total, even though sanctions were meant to act as a deterrent by punishment to dissuade Russia from committing any other unacceptable actions (Gould-Davies 2020), the Kremlin still calculated this from these previous paradigm, the effects would be minimal enough to endure.

In the post-2014 sanctions regime, unilateral technological sanctions from the United States, EU, and Canada focused primarily on the restriction

of export and re-export of technologies tied to the defence and resource extraction sectors, albeit in somewhat vague terms. Nonetheless, such actions led to problems in the planned military modernisation plans, especially regarding T-14 Armata tanks and the Su-57 fighters (Veebel 2020), that envisioned a technological transformation of the Russian armed forces, a belated and botched introduction of Serdyukov's "new look" through Shoigu's implementation and interpretation, which should have boosted its production of anti-ship missiles, increased the efficiency of its electronic warfare projects and air defences and helped Russia come to parity in the production of drones and precision-guided munitions (Gorenburg 2017).

Nonetheless, import substitution as a holistic policy regarding the technological needs of the military failed in this context, while some workarounds have been found, especially in third countries and jurisdictions outside of the sanctions regime. Nonetheless, some of these products that use sanctioned technological materials are the Iskander 9M727, the Zarya Radar Process, Baget Computing Machine, and the Kh-101 Cruise Missile (Byrne et al. 2022), together using over 80 sanctioned components that Russia is unable to produce domestically. The stricter post-2022 sanctions regime, although more encompassing, will therefore face many of the same issues of the previous sanctions regime. Therefore, it is exactly through these third countries Russia can continue to try to work around the extant sanctions regime.

Russian wishful thinking has already centred on China as one of these possible third parties through which sanctions could be contravened. Russia has directly stated China as a friendly state from the 2016 state security doctrine onward, and the renewal of Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation in 2021, as well as the statements and meetings during the 2022 Winter Olympics seemed to confirm this deepening collaboration. However, the war in Ukraine has underlined some fissures in this partnership, with the most exemplary situation being the recognised "concerns" from the Xi-Putin meeting in Samarkand.

In the context of the current war, Beijing has mostly balanced its relations with both Moscow and Kyiv through 'distance diplomacy,' neither fully supporting nor fully denouncing the 'Special Military Operation' of Russia against Ukraine. A Russia that is weak and on the verge of collapse is not advantageous for China, but neither is complete chaos and collapse of the European market space, which China sees as an important zone of economic development, the terminus of the Belt and Road project. In this case,

an immediate ceasefire would be the ideal situation for China, as it leaves a militarily depleted Russia more dependent on China but still with its own agency in its own neighbourhood and European markets would stabilise as a result of lessened tensions.

On the technological front, as China is a net oil and gas importer, it has not developed nor can provide the tech in this field. Although China does have the capability to produce some of the necessary computer parts for Russia, it has been reticent to offer anything other than lukewarm verbal support of Russian policy in Ukraine. The main sources for microchips needed for precision missiles and other modernised equipment would come primarily from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. As a grey zone in its own right, Hong Kong has previously acted as an area in which Russia was able to work around technological sanctions in the post-2014 context, but due to the political pressures of the One China policy and ensuing social turmoil, this status as a liminal area for sanctions implementation becomes less and less pronounced. This is where Iran, not China, becomes more crucial for Russia to contravene the post-2022 sanctions regime.

It is not only due to the current tensions that Russia and Iran have found themselves closer together. The Russian “turn to the South” had been part of a wider foreign policy strategy to limit the influence of the United States and Turkey in Central Asia, and it had been solidified by the 2014 sanctions causing economic insecurities (Abassy, Krzywdzińska, and Kosowska 2021). Iran additionally has shown other states who have become subject to Western sanctions how to contravene them, which makes Iran an especially interesting case for forming stronger sanctions against Russia (Meister and Jalilvand 2022). Especially after the current war and protests in Iran, Moscow and Tehran have become more intertwined in their marriage of convenience.

The most exemplary part of this cooperation has been the Russian use of *Shahed* drones against civilian populations and military targets in Ukraine, paired with Iranian personnel who have come to train the Russian military how to use them. These drones, most interestingly, contained sanctioned technology that both Russia and Iran should not have been able to procure (Ismay 2022). Although at a slower rate, Iran therefore can act as a front through which to procure sanctioned technologies, and unlike the case of China, there is something that Russia can offer to Iran: expertise in nuclear sciences and weaponry. In this way, Russia and Iran have a sustained reason

to continue their partnership through any systemic shocks and additional hardships.

Nonetheless, it is not only the technologies that Russia needs for its munitions and other systems that are crucial for it to be able to sustain a warfighting force; the logistics of moving this materiel across the wide territorial expanses of Russia are entirely dependent on the railway system, as it has been since its construction. In the same way that the Russian military industry is dependent on import to keep itself technologically advanced and functional, civilian machinery and transport is equally dependent. Rail is dependent on cassette bearings that are only produced externally, so as these bearings begin to degrade due to normal wear and tear, even the ability to transport materiel and soldiers to the frontlines will become more and more paralysed.

Russia's Leaps with the Military Advancement

Major powers have always advanced their military might during wars or in preparation for special operations or full-scale wars to support their geopolitical ambitions (like Russia in the case of limited warfare since the seizing of Crimea and hybrid warfare against Ukraine since 2014 or full-scale war since February of 2022 at the end of its military modernization). Russia's military modernisation and advancement has always occurred in an attempt to make its defence capabilities more relevant for the contemporary security environment, despite the fact that all other major powers have reduced their military spending and capability roster (Renz & Thornton, 2012). The Russian leadership has always adjusted their military needs to the Kremlin's political and ideological ambitions, rather than defensive or offensive ambitions. Furthermore, Russia's military adventurism always implies a need to replenish lost military capabilities with new equipment, making Moscow's military mightier during combat. In similar circumstances, all major powers would share this profound goal.

Military modernisation has never been easy, especially under harsh sanctions. Furthermore, due to domestic structural interests and corruption, any military reform (and not just military) has not been simple. For example, former Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov wished to enact quite radical reforms but was frequently stymied, particularly during the implementation phase, by the general staff and the officer corps' blocking power (Renz

and Thornton 2012). There were efforts to modernise the military during Boris Yeltsin's reign, but it was not until Putin's first eight years in office that military modernisation became a top priority (Mäkinen, Smith, & Forsberg, 2016). This military reform in Russia resulted in the little war that shook the world in August 2008 to support Moscow's international ambitions against Georgia. This was one of the painful lessons learned when Russia's poor performance in the 2008 Georgia war forced an urgent realisation that re-equipment was required if the military was to be transformed into a modern and effective fighting force (Bukkvoll, 2009; McDermott, 2009; Renz and Thornton, 2012; Trenin, 2016).

Despite vested interests, corruption, and a variety of obstacles encountered by Serdyukov during the Russian military's transformation, Sergei Shoigu continued the reform. Despite obstacles such as recruitment, equipment, and funding shortages, the military underwent significant reform to become a modern fighting force, even though it was never a match for such dominant powers as the United States. Russia could project its power in Europe, particularly in the post-Soviet space, allowing Putin to bring this geopolitical region closer to Moscow (Klein & Pester, 2014). If not for conventional forces, the modernisation of nuclear strategic and non-strategic forces has always raised concerns about Russia's intentions and ambitions, all of which run counter to Western European and US efforts to limit nuclear military arsenals (Kristensen & Norris, 2017). Military modernisation within Russia has always been possible when there is political will and ambition. This was especially visible in the aftermath of the war against Georgia (2008), since Russia's entry into the Syrian civilian war in 2015 was intended not only to gain new clients in the MENA region, but also to ensure the testing and modernisation of its latest military equipment. The end of this modernisation at the beginning of 2022 marked the beginning of Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, which continues to this day.

Another factor, no less important than military ambition, is the resilience of society and the need for the military to support the elites' ambitions. The Second World War was one of the most vivid periods for military modernisation. From 1939 to 1944, Nazi Germany underwent the most significant modernisation of its air force (four, two, and one engine places experienced 4422 percent point change with their speed, range, and weight qualities). In contrast, despite receiving Allied support to fight Hitler's armies, the Soviet Union's aircraft modernisation in the same time period and categories was only 215 percent points (around 20 times lower). Nazi Germany, particularly

in the final years of the war, had the most isolated and sanctioned military, whereas Soviet Russia had the support of the Allies (See Table 1).¹

The same thing happened with the tank upgrades. Despite the fact that Soviet Russia is a land power and that tanks were crucial during WWII, Nazi Germany improved their tanks by 670 percent points, the United Kingdom by 228, Japan by 333, but the United States and the Soviet Union only increased their capabilities by 115-120 from 1939 to 1944. Despite the sanctions and isolation, Nazi Germany advanced its military might by better utilising domestic resources (see Table 2).² The evidence from the Second World War allows us to conclude that military advancement can occur even when any military power is rapidly losing equipment and even during isolation/sanctions.

¹ For detailed information about World War 2 planes, see Military Factory (visited 28.11.2022, <http://www.militaryfactory.com/aircraft/ww2-aircraft.asp>)

² For detailed information about World War 2 tanks, see Military Factory (visited 28.11.2022, World War II Tanks <https://www.militaryfactory.com/armor/ww2-tanks.php>)

Table 1: The Advancement of Aircraft, 1939–1944

GERMANY						USSR					
Planes	Model A	Model B	A	B	% Change	Planes	Model A	Model B	A	B	% Change
Speed						Speed					
4-engine	Dornier Do 24T-1 (3-engine), 1937	Arado Ar 232 Tausendfussler (Millipede), 1941	211	211	0.00%	4-engine	Petyakov Pe-8 (AM-35A), 1940	Petyakov Pe-8 (AM-35A), 1940	277	277	0.00%
2-engine	Focke-Wulf Fw 187A-0Falke (Falcon), 1937	Arado Ar 234B-2 (Blitz), 1944	329	461	40.12%	2-engine	Tupolev SB-2, 1936	Petyakov Pe-2 (Pawm), 1941	255	336	31.76%
1-engine	Arado AR 68G, 1934	Focke-Wulf Ta 152H-1, 1945	190	472	148.42%	1-engine	Sukhoi Su-1, 1940	Yakovlev Yak-3, 1944	398	407	2.26%
Range						Range					
4-engine	Dornier Do 24T-1 (3-engine), 1937	Arado Ar 232 Tausendfussler (Millipede), 1941	2952	830	-71.88%	4-engine	Petyakov Pe-8 (AM-35A), 1940	Petyakov Pe-8 (AM-35A), 1940	2299	2299	0.00%
2-engine	Focke-Wulf Fw 187A-0Falke (Falcon), 1937	Arado Ar E.381 (Kleinstjager), 1944	519	967	86.32%	2-engine	Tupolev SB-2, 1936	Petyakov Pe-2 (Pawm), 1941	746	932	24.93%
1-engine	Arado AR 68G, 1934	Focke-Wulf Ta 152H-1, 1945	258	1243	381.78%	1-engine	Sukhoi Su-1, 1940	Yakovlev Yak-3, 1944	447	559	25.06%
Weight						Weight					
4-engine	Dornier Do 24T-1 (3-engine), 1937	Arado Ar 232 Tausendfussler (Millipede), 1941	1320	21000	1490.91%	4-engine	Petyakov Pe-8 (AM-35A), 1940	Petyakov Pe-8 (AM-35A), 1940	11000	11000	0.00%
2-engine	Focke-Wulf Fw 187A-0Falke (Falcon), 1937	Arado Ar 234B-2 (Blitz), 1944	3000	3300	10.00%	2-engine	Tupolev SB-2, 1936	Petyakov Pe-2 (Pawm), 1941	2205	3520	59.64%
1-engine	Arado AR 68G, 1934	Focke-Wulf Ta 152H-1, 1945	0	0	0.00%	1-engine	Sukhoi Su-1, 1940	Yakovlev Yak-3, 1944	700	1200	71.43%

Table 2: The Advancement of Tanks, 1939–1944

Germany (1939–1944 Tank power development index)				USSR (1939–1944 Tank power development index)							
Tanks	Model A	Model B	A	B	% Change	Tanks	Model A	Model B	A	B	% Change
Speed											
Light tank	SdKfz 101 Panzerkampfwagen I (PzKpfW I) / Panzer 1, 1935	SdKfz 141 Panzerkampfwagen III (PzKpfW III) / Panzer 3, 1939	25	25	0.00%	Light tank	BT-7 (Bystrochodnij Tankov), 1934	T-70, 1942	32	28	-12.50%
Heavy tank	Panzerkampfwagen Neubaufahrzeug (PzKpfW NbFz V / VI), 1934	SdKfz 182 Panzerkampfwagen VIB Tiger II / King Tiger (PzKpfw VIB) / Panzer VIB, 1944	16	24	50.00%	Heavy tank	KV-1 (Kliment Voroshilov), 1939	KV-85 (Kliment Voroshilov), 1943	22	22	0.00%
Weight											
Light tank	SdKfz 101 Panzerkampfwagen I (PzKpfW I) / Panzer 1, 1935	SdKfz 141 Panzerkampfwagen III (PzKpfW III) / Panzer 3, 1939	6.6	25	272.73%	Light tank	BT-7 (Bystrochodnij Tankov), 1934	T-70, 1942	15	14	-6.67%
Heavy tank	Panzerkampfwagen Neubaufahrzeug (PzKpfW NbFz V / VI), 1934	SdKfz 182 Panzerkampfwagen VIB Tiger II / King Tiger (PzKpfw VIB) / Panzer VIB, 1944	26	77	197.67%	Heavy tank	KV-1 (Kliment Voroshilov), 1939	KV-85 (Kliment Voroshilov), 1943	49.6	52.2	5.24%
Range											
Light tank	SdKfz 101 Panzerkampfwagen I (PzKpfW I) / Panzer 1, 1935	SdKfz 141 Panzerkampfwagen III (PzKpfW III) / Panzer 3, 1939	84	106	26.19% ³	Light tank	BT-7 (Bystrochodnij Tankov), 1934	T-70, 1942	217	224	3.23%
Heavy tank	Panzerkampfwagen Neubaufahrzeug (PzKpfW NbFz V / VI), 1934	SdKfz 182 Panzerkampfwagen VIB Tiger II / King Tiger (PzKpfw VIB) / Panzer VIB, 1944	75	68	-9.33%	Heavy tank	KV-1 (Kliment Voroshilov), 1939	KV-85 (Kliment Voroshilov), 1943	208	93	-55.29%
Crew											
Light tank	SdKfz 101 Panzerkampfwagen I (PzKpfW I) / Panzer 1, 1935	SdKfz 141 Panzerkampfwagen III (PzKpfW III) / Panzer 3, 1939	2	5	150.00%	Light tank	BT-7 (Bystrochodnij Tankov), 1934	T-70, 1942	3	2	-33.33%

Germany (1939–1944 Tank power development index)				USSR (1939–1944 Tank power development index)			
Tanks	Model A	Model B	% Change	Tanks	Model A	Model B	% Change
Heavy tank	Panzerkampfwagen Neubaufahrzeug (PzKpfw NbFz V / VI), 1934	SdKfz 182 Panzerkampfwagen VIB Tiger II / King Tiger (PzKpfw VIB) / Panzer VIB, 1944	-16.67%	Heavy tank	KV-1 (Kliment Voroshilov), 1939	KV-85 (Kliment Voroshilov), 1943	-20.00%

Aside from evidence that major powers (such as Nazi Germany) were able to adjust to changing war requirements and dynamics, we must consider two additional factors when assessing Russia's ability to recover as a major military power. The first is the elimination and loss of obsolete (legacy) military equipment during entrenched warfare (such as Russia's current war against Ukraine), but the second is a lack of information about what Russia has and does not have in its military arsenal. Furthermore, the uncertainty and lack of information about Russian military capabilities, resources, and plans add to the uncertainty and thus risks. The war is still going on, and Russia's military development and plans are certainly not static.

Moscow's military strategy, like that of any other major power, is constantly evolving as new technology and tactics are developed. It is not only technological advancement, but also the ability to replace old versus new military equipment during wartime and thus operationalise resources for the aggregate military might. Novel technologies that advance targeted capabilities, such as Iranian drones, can be used for asymmetrical or unconventional warfare (Freedman, 2013). Many countries, for example, are improving their strategies through the use of artificial intelligence, robotics, and cyber warfare. Russia has previously used disruptive technologies and has been one of the powers advancing such capabilities (which are also less costly).

With significant battlefield losses against a Ukrainian army supplied with Western intelligence and technology, Russia may refocus and adjust to expeditionary operations. If Ukraine does not have the full capability for pre-emptive strikes, such a possibility must always be considered. To achieve the Kremlin's goals, this strategy employs forward-deployed forces (already present along NATO's borders), special operations teams, and intelligence networks. Finally, militaries are using predictive analytics to identify potential threats and develop counter-strategies. If Russia does not engage in detailed analytics, it will undoubtedly learn during the war. The challenge for Ukraine and the West is that there are far too many unknowns about Russia's potential military development pivots.

Conclusion

The prospects for Russian military recovery are difficult to predict. According to one point of view, the harsh sanction regime is depriving the Russian military industry of cutting-edge technology (something that could be supplied by the West, South Korea, Japan or Taiwan). The Russian military lacks the technological edge and sophistication without these significant components. Nonetheless, we must consider the gaps in sanction regimes as well as the Western experience from WWII. During the last war, Switzerland provided financial and trade conditions not only for the German Reich, but also for the Soviet Union (Sraders, 2021). When there are significant needs within Russia, the search for loopholes and few partnerships will be even more intense (like in the case of Iran where Russia is receiving drones from Tehran).

On the other hand, the experience of the German Reich during the Second World War suggests the possibilities for military industry advancement during the conflict. During the previous war, the Allies helped Stalin defeat Hitler. This isolation of the German Reich (with few loopholes and opportunities to trade through centres like Switzerland) did not preclude the German Reich from making robust military adjustments, as seen with planes and tanks. Not only did the German Reich succeed, but its adjustment efforts were far greater than those of any other Axis or Allied power.

It is also important to note Russia's critical need to replace lost equipment and personnel. When the Russian military has performed poorly in the past, such modernisation has always been an answer (after Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008, or change of strategy against Ukraine, for example, opting for atrocious and unjust missile and drone strikes against such urban centres as Kyiv). Such a military approach allows Russia to buy time to recover or completely adjust its military strategy as Russia's sense of impunity grows. The West is not doing enough to avert the impending humanitarian disaster, but Ukraine cannot defend itself against indiscriminate strikes against civilians without substantial Western military support. Ukraine requires military supplies and assistance in order to retaliate against Russian Federation targets and neutralise the ground-based heavy artillery, missiles, and rockets that are destroying Ukrainian cities and killing women and children.

The West is currently allowing the Kremlin the luxury of changing its military strategy for missile and drone strikes that are beyond the reach of

the Ukrainian military (if the previous military strategy did not work, this causes more casualties, and a war of attrition is the way for the Kremlin to pursue its political objectives). The lack of an appropriate Western strategy or self-deterrence in terms of direct and overt support for Ukraine allows Russia to assault Ukraine while imposing red lines on US and NATO military support for Ukraine, allowing Putin to rattle his nuclear sabre or keep the option of using chemical weapons on the table without fear of retaliation. Ukraine should be permitted and given the means to launch counter-attacks against the sites used by the Kremlin for large-scale missile and drone strikes (Straus, 2022). As a result, Russia's geopolitical goals of deterring Western support for Ukraine have already been met. The modernization of Russian military power extends beyond new hardware to methods of atrociously terrorising Ukraine and its people with complete impunity. This period of time, as well as the West's self-deterrence, allows Russia to look for loopholes and ways to modernise its military. Russia will return sooner than we expect.

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Can Commerce Tame Russia? What the Crisis Tells Us about the Nature of Warfare in the Modern Era

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Abstract:

Russia has been using trade to balance its domestic and foreign policy interests in a world where the prospects of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) have limited the prospects for direct military confrontation between great powers. This article looks at the role of trade, or more broadly commerce, as it is being used strategically to constrain Russia. It suggests that Russia has turned trade into a domain of warfare, and to this end, the question of whether or not it can constrain Russia is the wrong one.

Key words: Russian Economy, Weaponisation of Trade, Sanctions, Deterrence

Introduction: Trade and Commerce as a Component of Strategy

“That trade has been weaponized has become mainstream thinking. It is acknowledged widely that the politics of trade are now overriding economic rationales. This argument may have seemed like crazy sensationalism two years ago when *The Weaponization of Trade: The Great Unbalancing of Politics and Economics*, (Harding and Harding, 2017) was first published. However, when a front cover of *The Economist* (The Economist, 2019) bears the headline ‘Weapons of Mass Disruption’ and its accompanying image is of a bomb falling through the sky with ‘Tariffs’, ‘Tech Blacklists’, ‘Financial Isolation’ and ‘Sanctions’ written on its side, the idea that trade has become a weapon in states’ arsenals for the maintenance of national security is no longer just hyperbole” (Harding and Harding, 2019).

The attempt to constrain Russia using economic rather than direct military means is a test case in the use of trade and commerce strategically to constrain the actions of another state. Trade has become a tool of the ‘all means’ approach to warfare in a great power conflict that is multidimensional and multinational in origin. These are characteristics that derive from

the inter-dependencies between nations that developed through the post-Cold War era of globalisation (Farrell and Newman, 2019).

The battle lines are drawn, not just between Russia and the 'West' (the United States, NATO, the European Union, and allies such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Australia), but also between China and the 'West.' They are drawn across finance, technology, commodities such as oil, and wheat supply chains, and increasingly over human rights and climate change. As such, these battle lines challenge the very nature of market economics and trade itself. In short, who we do business with, how we do business, and what that business entails has become the concern of national strategy in a way that has not been seen on this scale before; in short, trade has become strategic, as the concept of military power alone has diminished in importance.

This is the battle for the 21st century. Nation states are using trade to balance their domestic and foreign policy interests in a world where the prospects for Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) have limited the prospects for direct military confrontation between great powers. As we can see with Russia at present, the nuclear peace is fragile. So how do Nation States protect national interests, build power and constrain aggression in an adversary and can it ever be successful?

This article looks at the role of trade, or more broadly commerce, as it is being used strategically to constrain Russia. It suggests that Russia's own approach to deterrence has turned trade into a domain of warfare, and to this end, the question of whether or not it can constrain Russia is the wrong one. Rather, we should be looking at the motivations for using it as a weapon, the means that are being used (sanctions and export controls in particular), and the credibility of the threat that it represents.

Over the course of the months since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the United States, NATO and the EU have learned much, not just about the use of trade to achieve strategic objectives, but also about its limitations. It has not been without collateral damage on both sides, the evidence that it has indeed starved the Russian military of cash is limited, and what is absolutely clear is that it has accelerated the separation of the economic, technological, and financial world into an 'eastern' and a 'western' sphere of influence. While it will have excluded Russia from the globalisation of the last 30 years, it will not have excluded it from any new system that emerges. Whether or not the 'West' will have control over that new paradigm is moot, but its actions now have made sure that power relations in the next 30 years will be very different in their construction from the past 30 years.

Russia and Trade as a Domain of Warfare

At the start of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, President Putin put Russia's nuclear forces on high alert (Seddon et al. 2022). This did two things: it made NATO and its allies aware, if they were not before, that Russia would take a 'hair trigger' approach to nuclear deterrence – a nuclear response would be justified if there was a non-nuclear or even a non-military attack on Russian interests (MFARF, 2020).

The second thing was to bring trade, trade finance, and economics directly into conflict as a domain of warfare. Russia is the 10th largest exporter in the world, accounting for some \$602 billion of world exports in 2021. While this is dwarfed by the \$3.6 trillion of global exports accounted for by China, and by the \$1.9 trillion and \$1.7 trillion accounted for by the United States and Germany respectively, Russia accounts for nearly 9 percent of all oil and gas exports trade in the world, making it systemically important to the global economy in general and oil markets in particular. More pertinently from a Western perspective, however, Russia's oil and gas sector has contributed between 17.3 percent and 21.7 percent to GDP between Q1 2021 and Q2 2022 (Statista, 2022) and historically overseas trade has contributed some 46 percent to its GDP (Chon, 2022). As only 9 percent of Russia's exports went to China in 2021, while nearly 52 percent went to the EU, the United States or Turkey, NATO and EU members were able to exact a heavy influence over revenues to the Russian economy. Similarly, the United States, the EU, the United Kingdom, and Turkey constitute around 45 percent of Russian imports, including critical electronic components for the production of its military hardware. In other words, by restricting trade, particularly exports of oil and gas and imports of electronic equipment, the strategic advantages of limiting revenues available to fund Russian military were seen as outweighing the strategic disadvantages to the West.

The other domains of warfare, such as maritime, land, air, space, information, and cyber are acknowledged components of 'multi-domain warfare' (UKMoD, 2020), but trade and economics have always only implicitly been aspects of conflict. The current crisis has been fought using sanctions on businesses and individuals, export controls to limit trade in certain products from toasters through to semi-conductors, limits on Russian central bank access to markets, and exclusion from the SWIFT payments system. This is the explicit use of economic weapons directly to constrain the actions of another state. Putin's reaction has escalated their use into an existential threat.

It is almost trite to say that this is a seismic shift in the post-war structures that have guaranteed peace for more than 70 years now. The fact that Germany has committed to spending more than 2 percent of its GDP on military and has agreed to send weapons to Ukraine is the ultimate testimony to how it views its role in Europe's future now that its role as a civilian rather than a strategic power can no longer be sustained.

This demonstrates just how the nature of modern warfare has changed and has been changing since the Global Financial Crisis. From a Russian perspective, the current war in Ukraine is pure geopolitics: strategic access to resources and re-uniting cultural and linguistic ties that are misrepresented by current borders. This is an old industrial war and is currently being fought as such.

From the perspective of the rest of the world, however, it is a war being fought in a multitude of domains, from football sponsorship to military and traditional 'industrial war' to global trade and finance; its endgame is control of the 21st century, economically, militarily, politically and culturally. The weapon of choice is the trade, investment, and the trade finance system.

Within this, the economic domain becomes one where the core weapon is to contain threats by shutting off trade and finance that enables technology to move into military contexts, that allows finance to be raised to buffer the effects of enforced financial isolation, or by limiting capital flows and investments to make sure that there is no Western money supporting the Russian economy.

The aim of course has been to starve Russia of cash, create a run on Russian banks and rouble liquidity, and thereby to cause the collapse of the Russian economy. Financial markets – currencies in the short term but over the longer term, investments as well – are being used as the nuclear option to constrain the actions of its political leaders.

This is a new paradigm. It is a world in which peace and war can co-exist; it resembles a game of "Go" where strategic encirclement is the goal rather than a zero-sum absolute victory.

In short, the West can no longer ignore the economic domain because the thinly veiled nuclear threats point out exactly how Russia might react to anything it does not like. This is not a game that can be won – it is a strategic game where all the outcomes are sub-optimal. If we exclude Russia entirely from the SWIFT system, then there is a likelihood, not just that Russia switches off oil and gas supplies to Europe, but also that Russia accelerates the expansion of its equivalent to the SWIFT inter-bank messaging. This is

an economic nuclear option – two separate electronic financial systems built on separate technologies and internets with banks in the front line as they fight to implement ever-changing exclusions, sanctions, and regulations. Dollar hegemony will be consigned to the history of lost empires, not least because the renminbi is increasingly being used to price trade transactions in China, and because oil and gas contracts between Russia and China are increasingly priced in renminbi (Harding and Harding, 2019).

During the Trump era, it became clear that no-one won from a trade war. However, it was equally clear that trade weaponisation ran the risk of escalating into full-blown conflict between increasingly nationalistic countries (Harding and Harding, 2017; 2019). The risk has always been that economic nationalism would break down international structures of the post-war era and re-balance political power from the global era.

Is Russia Constrained, and If So, For How Long?

Despite early indications to the contrary, the Russian economy has not collapsed. The most recent predictions suggest that Russian GDP fell by around 4 percent in the last quarter compared with a drop of around 4.1 percent in the previous quarter (Mosolova, 2022). Around 1,000 Western businesses are assumed to have ended their Russian operations, and inflation was 12.9 percent in October. Some \$300 billion of Russian foreign exchange assets have been frozen during the process of economic tightening since February 2022. The MOEX Russia Index has fallen by more than a third over the same period. Around 1,500 new sanctions and 750 amended sanctions have been imposed on Russian entities, including strategic defence businesses, and supply of critical technologies to Russian businesses has been prevented as a result (OFAC, BIS and DoS, 2022).

However, even though the Russian economy is in a technical recession now, and even though this is the biggest recession in 20 years, it is important to note that in spite of the cost to the domestic economy for individuals in the form of lower standards of living (Norrlöf, 2022), the impact from a geoeconomics point of view has not been as severe as the initial estimates suggested. Overall, the IMF predicts that Russian GDP will fall by 3.4 percent this year, compared to forecasts of over 8 percent in April. (IMF, 2022) The value of the rouble has not collapsed, and evidence from shipping data is coming through suggesting that Russian oil trade is alive and well, albeit

functioning through ‘dark’ ships and shipping routes, therefore benefitting from higher market prices even if the trade volume is lower (S&P Global Market Intelligence, 2022).

Reliable Russian economic data has been limited since the early stages of the crisis. The country ceased to publish trade or economic data for public consumption, and this makes it hard to assess with any degree of accuracy what is happening precisely on the ground. However, we can learn from the last time that substantial economic sanctions were imposed on Russia – in 2014 after its annexation of Crimea – and what becomes clear is that Russian economists will have been modelling the impact of sanctions and export controls on the country for a long while, building up its resilience to counter those deleterious effects. Russia, although some 45 percent of its revenues come from oil and gas, has a strategic advantage in that it controls nearly 8.5 percent of world oil and gas exports in 2021 and nearly 20 percent of all EU27 imports of fossil fuels. Its capacity to influence the global price of oil, as well as EU oil and gas supply, is therefore substantial, as was shown at the beginning of the COVID pandemic when Russia walked away from OPEC discussions and triggered a major collapse in the oil price.

Interestingly, since 2014, Russia has also worked on other fronts to increase its influence over global trade and supply chains. For example, according to Comtrade data: first, Russian imports of fish from Belarus more than doubled in 2014 after the EU imposed sanctions on fishery and agricultural products that limited direct trade between the EU and Russia; second, Russia became the world’s largest exporter of wheat in 2017 after restrictions on agriculture trade finance by the EU and the United States and oil embargoes resulted in a pivot of its sectoral export strategy from 2014 onwards; third, Russia’s imports of gold grew from \$35 million to \$538 million between 2020 and 2021 ahead of the invasion of Ukraine. Fourth, Russia’s trade with China has increased from \$40.1 billion in 2015 to \$72 billion in 2021, reflecting a strategic eastward pivot. Trade in fossil fuels has risen from \$19 billion to \$49 billion, which is 68 percent of its total trade with China.

Russia’s alternative to the SWIFT payments system, the SPFS, has been attracting new participants since its inception in 2014. While it is difficult independently to verify its size and importance, it is said to have included 23 non-Russian banks before the Russia-Ukraine crisis, including from Turkey, Belarus, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Switzerland. China and Russia began to develop links between their two systems in 2021 (Wikipedia, 2022). According to Russian authorities, it now has 440 entities, 100 of

which are outside of Russia and some 50 who have joined in the first half of 2022 (Norrlöf, 2022).

Russia's economic management through the process of sanctions has been measured and strategic. While the country may be constrained, the economic impact has been limited and, as Rumers and Sokolsky point out, "Russia's national security establishment is careful in calculating the correlation of forces and is averse to taking undue risks" (Rumer and Sokolsky, 2020). At the outset of the crisis, Russia put up its own interest rates to 20 percent, put capital controls on outflows of capital by individuals, and required 80 percent of assets owned abroad by Russian businesses to be converted into roubles. Oil and gas contracts were also converted to roubles while the sanctions regime permitted, meaning that the restrictions placed by the West on the Russian economy generally and the rouble in particular had a limited economic impact.

Major Western opposition, such as NATO and the EU, the United States, and the United Kingdom, were limited in the extent to which they could use military tactics to constrain Russia. Direct military engagement in Ukraine would have threatened Europe and the world with nuclear conflict, and while it is still something that cannot absolutely be ruled out, the explicit motivation for any action at present is simply to limit the funding of and technological aspects of the Russian war machine. The aim therefore was not to "sink" the Russian economy, but to disconnect its access to the means it had of maintaining or expanding its military operations.

Can Anyone Win?

No one can win in the current conflict. The West will hold Russia to account so that its actions in Ukraine are seen as a "strategic failure" so its reputation is damaged. China will not overtly come to its aid because it cannot win from explicit involvement at this stage. The Allies cannot win because military intervention would have unimaginable consequences. Everyone's best plan is to know and understand the behaviours, beliefs, and strategic cultures of their opponents. We must hope that all sides recognise that a strategic game is one which lasts for a long time, if not forever, and in which power ebbs and flows between strategic competitors because the alternative is MAD.

But it is the unintended consequences of modern conflict that define it. As the Russia-Ukraine crisis progresses, it is possible to look at the collateral

damage caused by economic measures in the same way that analysts would assess the effect of military weapons.

Here, the results are ambiguous. For sure, it will be very hard to reintegrate Russia into the global financial system in the same way that it was integrated before the crisis. There has undoubtedly also been an impact on how daily business is conducted in the country; however, due to a lack of data and statistics, it is hard to be precise regarding the impact that externally imposed sanctions have had. But we do know that the rouble has remained remarkably strong, and that Russia's oil sales outside of the EU have remained robust, meaning that its exports have not been damaged to the extent that might initially have been expected.

More concerning is the impact of the crisis, as well as the subsequent sanctions and trade restrictions, on inflation in the EU, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Between February and March 2022 alone, trade values increased by an unprecedented 51 percent with some components, such as base metals, rising by 92 percent, copper and nickel by over 70 percent, oil seed by 76 percent, and clothing and footwear both by more than 70 percent. The value of oil and gas trade rose by 53 percent. The trickle through into prices in shops is being seen as a result.

Foreign policy began to seep into trade with US tariffs on iron and steel in 2018 as a means of constraining Chinese economic influence. US restrictions on high-tech businesses working with or in China deepened the use of trade in national strategy, and this has been followed by sanctions and embargoes by the EU, the United States, the United Kingdom, and allies restricting global trade with Russia to constrain its military power using economic means. However, the unintended consequence of using trade in foreign policy has been to create an inflationary backlash that affects people on the ground all around the world.

Trade, in the sense that it has been used strategically in foreign policy, has been weaponised. Inflation is the result and this affects everyone.

So, Will Russia be Tamed?

The motivation for using economic and trade means rather than military ones is clear. It alludes to something much more significant about conflict in the modern, digital era. Military options are extremely limited – not least because Russia's "Basic Principles of the Russian Federation on Nuclear

Deterrence' (MFARF, 2020), which loosen the circumstances under which Russia might feel sufficiently threatened to launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike. Its scope is vague, but it includes in its list of potential threats, military activity in adjacent territories (such as Ukraine) and conventional weapons like short and medium range missiles without a nuclear warhead (Starchak, 2020). MAD is more likely if NATO overtly uses conventional means to limit Russia's ambition in the region, a concept that Russia may also be testing.

If we are asking ourselves about the "taming of Russia," we need to ask whether we are looking at ameliorating its nuclear threat or looking at limiting its capacity to fight conflicts in the future. From the Russian nuclear doctrine, there is sufficient ambiguity to suggest that an economic threat could be seen as an existential threat, and therefore, as President Putin suggested back in February 2022, a nuclear reaction is justified. The current action quite clearly does not tone down the rhetoric surrounding the potential use of nuclear weapons, and to this extent, there is no sense in which Russia has been tamed.

A key feature of deterrence rests in the credibility of the threat that has been issued. Does Russia credibly intend to use nuclear weapons to combat economic measures? As previously stated, the answer to this question would be a qualified no, as the risks that the Russian security establishment takes tend to be measured; its economic reaction has been carefully calculated and has minimised the risk to the Russian economy, if not to the Russian people's standard of living.

However, the credibility of a threat must also be equally applied to the use of economic and commercial weapons. This is where the question around how far the West can limit Russia's long-term capacity to fight conflicts becomes relevant. As long as there is dollar hegemony in international markets, the measures imposed by NATO and its partners are a potent means of maintaining an international rules-based order.

However, as the case of Russia demonstrates, they constrain in the short term rather than the long term in a world that has been restructured of the principles of global interdependence over the last 30 years. China and Russia control large parts of the rare earth metal supplies, for example, that dominate electronics and digital sectors around the world, as well as military supply chains and production, and of course the transition away from fossil fuels and towards "clean" energy. Interestingly, it is these base and rare metals that have seen the biggest increases in price since the start of the crisis.

In other words, as Russia is aware, NATO and its allies have a limited window during which access to funds can be restricted. However, in the longer term, the global economic system will adapt. Russia has already sought new allies in China, India, and the Middle East, and while many of these appear to be marriages of convenience, they are nevertheless important in ensuring that the Russian economy can stay afloat while it adapts to a new paradigm where the influence of the dollar and international markets is tempered by a growing digital, technological, military and financial world driven by China. Where Russia presents an “immediate threat to the free and open international system”, China is the only strategic competitor with “the intent and the power to reshape that system” (Fontaine, 2022.) As such, Russia’s power is “tamed” only for as long as it takes it to adjust to this new paradigm.

And it will certainly adapt. Russia’s strategic culture is based on a long history of tensions with Europe, and the narrative that the West is hostile to Russia is one that pervades public discourse and political culture – especially since 2014, when Russia has grown increasingly dissatisfied with the status quo of globalisation. Since President Putin’s return to power ten years ago, the strategy has been to expand Russia’s global reach through the tools and economics of globalisation itself. The approach is to disrupt from within a system rather than from without – doctrines that have been self-evident since the 19th century (Humink, 2022).

Nowhere is this disruption clearer than in its current approach to economics as a domain of warfare. Inflation strikes at the heart of Western market capitalism because it is the essence of market failure: too much money (in this case, dollars) chasing too few goods (in this case, oil and gas). Of course, there is collateral damage, as the Russian economy bears its own inflationary cross, but the Russian sense of injustice at the effects of Western influence on its own strategic position in the world makes it a price worth paying while the economic model adapts to a new paradigm.

Modern conflict is multidimensional, but so is modern peace, as the zero-sum nature of winning or losing is no longer relevant in a world where war and peace coexist, and where foreign policy and influence are defined as much in economic and trade terms as they are in military terms.

In the words of the new NATO strategic doctrine, “Euro-Atlantic security is undermined by strategic competition and pervasive instability” (NATO, 2022). This is currently due to Russia’s actions in Ukraine, but there is no indication that the strategic competition with China will diminish in

the near term, and it will create a new strategic paradigm in the future. The current crisis will take time to resolve, and Russia's role in the emerging new era will be no less significant. Taming Russia implies that there is a conflict to be won, and that economic measures will be sufficient to result in victory for the West. There is currently no explicit conflict between NATO and Russia in that no-one has declared war, still less a definitive outcome.

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Conclusion

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In the end, these chapters on Russia's potential futures have illuminated a range of possible paths for the country's future evolution and its relationship with the West and the rest of the world. Some authors, such as Serfaty, Lindley-French, Lough, and Bērziņa-Čerenkova, have stressed the significance of Russia's interaction with other major powers, others, such as Terry, de Wijk, Moorhouse, von Eggert, Gvineria, Kutelia, and Šliwa, have underscored the diverging paths of the Russian idea, while others still, including Krutikhin, Veebel, Ploom, Šrāders, Allik, and Harding, have commented on Russia's extent weaknesses. It is our hope that the discussions and debates in this volume will aid and steer academic and policy-making discussions on Russia in the years ahead.

In each of these prognoses, it is clear that Russia will continue to be a source of insecurity for its neighbours. This is a result of Russia's ongoing aggression and interventionist foreign policy, as well as the isolation it has imposed on itself through its decision to invade peaceful neighbours. The tensions between Russia and these countries are unlikely to dissipate in the near future, even after the war concludes, and there is no returning to the peace and stability of before the war, as the wounds it has inflicted will take generations to heal before the memories of the Second World War and the sequel Cold War had faded into oblivion. It is our hope that the discussions and debates in this volume will aid and steer academic and policy-making discussions on Russia in the years ahead.

As Russia continues to wither and becomes ever more isolated from the global community, the country becomes even more unpredictable than it has been in the past. This is because a declining Russia is likely to be more tumultuous and less able to control internal actors with their own agendas separate from that of the Kremlin. In addition, a declining Russia may become more aggressive and assertive in its foreign policy than under Putin as it descends down the path of imperial decline. This makes it even more challenging for other nations to foresee Russia's actions and respond accordingly, adding to the overall uncertainty and unpredictability of the situation. In this tumultuous and uncertain time, Russia is a force that is increasingly difficult to predict and understand. It is like a rabid bear, now unleashed and raging, its actions unpredictable and dangerous.

Even as Russia confronts a host of self-imposed challenges and obstacles, it would be unwise to underestimate the country's resilience, even in an authoritarian context. Russia has demonstrated again and again that it is capable of bouncing back from even the most chaotic situations. For example, the country managed to recover from the upheaval of a devastating civil war and the massive destruction of World War II, each time resulting in authoritarian and bureaucratic centralisation. In the 1990s, Russia was confronted with the collapse of its economy and political system, but it was able to overcome these challenges and emerge as a major global power, following many of the same authoritarian patterns of the past. This history of resilience suggests that Russia may be able to rebound from its current issues and continue to play a significant and disruptive role on the world stage. The challenge for the West especially is to predict and cope with the refined Russia that indulges into its past, pivots away from Europe, the West and over peaceful co-habitation with the others Kremlin chooses the rule where the strong eats the weak.

Despite the uncertainty and haziness of potential futures, transatlantic unity remains the only variable that Western policy makers can influence in regards to Russian actions. As such, it is our only credible deterrent against further aggression. When the United States and Europe speak as one and present a united front, Russia is less likely to engage in belligerent actions that would be detrimental to our shared interests. This is because Russia is more likely to be deterred by a strong, cohesive, and clear response than by individual, fragmented, and sometimes appeasing actions.

Furthermore, transatlantic unity sends a powerful signal to Russia that its actions will not be tolerated and that there will be consequences for any aggression. This message serves to protect and defend against Russian aggression. In contrast, a lack of unity and consensus among the Western nations only serves to embolden Russia and encourage it to pursue its own interests without regard for the interests of others, the bloody results of which have been seen in the cities and villages of Ukraine.

And to that point, no matter the situation, this transatlantic future should be shared with Ukraine as well. In the post-war paradigm, the United States, Europe, and Ukraine must stand together as a bulwark, each contributing their unique strengths and capabilities to present a united front against any future Russian aggression. Only by standing together can we hope to deter further belligerence and ensure the security and stability of the region. Like a feral and panicking animal at the times of the utmost weakness, Russia might opt for a lookout for another prey to compensate for its domestic fears.



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