Hybrid CoE Paper 20

Ukraine's position in Russia's strategic thinking: Domestic, regional and international order

Hybrid CoE

Lucjan Kubica – September 2024

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Summary

Russian elites and leading politicians claim a special right to intervene in Ukraine. They base this right on various considerations, ranging from "centuries-old civilizational and spiritual ties" to the need to secure their sovereignty and defend their status as a great power. According to the Russian elites, Ukraine is an artificially created state on Russian territory, while Ukrainians are not a real nation. Instead, they have been weaponized by the US and its allies to prevent Russia from becoming one of the pillars of a new, more multipolar world. According to the Kremlin, Ukraine is being wedged against Russia to weaken and then dismantle the country from within. This Hybrid CoE Paper looks at Ukraine's position in Russia's strategic thinking. It deciphers the Russian logic behind the Kremlin's policy towards Ukraine, describes the future that Russia has foreseen and designed for Ukraine in the desired end state of its war of aggression, and illustrates the main characteristics of Russia's hybrid threat and hybrid warfare operations against Ukraine and the West.

An in-depth study of Putin's speeches and Russian strategic documents strongly suggests that the current Russo-Ukrainian war is about controlling the whole of Ukraine and subjugating it politically. As this appears to be out of reach at present, Russia's alternative aim is to annex most of Ukraine's territory and downscale its military and economy, thereby diminishing the geopolitical significance of the state.

The way that Russia perceives Ukraine and Ukrainians has a direct impact on how it wages war and the types of hybrid threat tools it employs. In addition to enhancing the effectiveness of its military forces, Russia uses various hybrid threat tools to substantiate its claims that Ukraine is an artificial nation and state. To this end, in the occupied territories, Russia is systematically and methodically destroying everything associated with the Ukrainian identity in these lands, including pro-Ukrainian citizens. Russia's hybrid threat activities against the West have also evolved since the full-scale invasion, shifting from intimidating the West to deter it from helping Ukraine to more physical and violent operations against EU and NATO countries.

Introduction

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, there have been various ideas and proposals on how to end the war. Most of them, however, by focusing on Russia's territorial gains and Ukraine's NATO membership, have overlooked the main drivers behind the Russian invasion. This Hybrid CoE Paper discusses how Russia sees Ukraine, what its objectives are, and what kind of end state it envisages for the war. The analysis seeks to decipher how Russia perceives Ukraine and its envisioned place in the Kremlin-promoted *Russkiy Mir*. Russian officials, including the most important one – President Vladimir Putin – have very openly and repeatedly expressed their "vision" of Ukraine's history, identity, and statehood. The paper examines the most important characteristics of this vision. It also describes how the image of Ukraine and Ukrainians influences Russia's use of hybrid threat tools in the war, and the implications for the EU and NATO.

The research involved an analysis of Putin's most significant official speeches and interviews, combined with a study of Russia's key strategic documents. Only material authorized and published on the Kremlin's official website was analyzed.

The study draws heavily on Putin' official speeches, recognizing that he is a conduit for the worldview of the Russian elites that surround him, help him to rule the country, and define its global objectives. Their understanding of the surrounding world and their geopolitical perspective on foreign affairs are deeply rooted in Russia's strategic culture and its long history of perceived confrontation with the so-called Western world. At the same time, the Russian regime is highly personalized and focused on Putin, so his ideas also drive state policy. Additionally, he has exerted tremendous influence over the composition of the state elite, appointing his trusted associates to the highest official posts, while rewarding others with lucrative state contracts. In turn, the Russian elites reinforce and reaffirm Putin's worldview and translate it into state policy. A large part of the public interventions of other Russian officials (e.g., Lavrov, Shoigu, Peskov, Gerasimov and Zakharova) basically repeat the main themes already presented by Putin. During official appearances, Putin pays particular attention to carefully supporting his arguments with references to Russian politicians, historians, philosophers and thinkers, as well as state documents and artefacts from different historical periods and different political spectrums.

The most fundamental document regarding Ukraine is the essay "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians", published in July 2021 and signed by Putin himself, which presents the key principles of Russia's perception of Ukraine. The analysis of this document was further deepened by examining speeches and interviews given by Putin since the invasion, beginning with his address on 21 February 2022 and ending with the presidential address to the Federal Assembly on 29 February 2024.[1]

Russia's perception of Ukraine finds more detailed application in several of Russia's strategic documents, which were designed to set out Russia's geopolitical view of global affairs and its envisaged role on the international stage. For

1 The sources gathered for the purpose of this research were collected until the cut-off date, 14 May 2024.

the purpose of this Hybrid CoE Paper, several of these were analyzed, including the "Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation" from 2010 and 2014, the "Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation", the "Strategy of the National Security of the Russian Federation", and "The Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation". When it comes to Europe, Russia's vision of a new balance of power and Ukraine's place in it was analyzed based on Russia's proposal for new security agreements between Russia and NATO, and Russia and the United States (the proposed "Agreement on measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization" and the "Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on security guarantees").

The first section below describes Russia's perception of Ukraine in three dimensions that are key to Russia's own identity and statehood, conceived as a global power. In these three dimensions, Ukraine is defined through the prism of Russian identity, as an element of the international power struggle, and as a fundamental component of the Russian vision of the regional order. These factors determine Russia's strategy towards Ukraine and the preferred end state of the war, as described in the second section. The third section describes how Russia's overarching strategy and vision of Ukraine determine its hybrid threat operations and tactics against Ukraine and the West. The last part of the paper offers key conclusions and takeaways for policymakers in the EU and NATO and their member states, which could guide them in formulating their own policies regarding the Russo-Ukrainian war, aid to Ukraine, or future relations with Russia.

I. Ukraine's position in Russia's strategic thinking

Ukraine in Russia's thinking on identity

In the official discourse, the Russian authorities claim rights not only to a large part of Ukraine's territory, but also to its cultural heritage, history, and historical figures. The Kremlin's narratives about Russia's thousand-year history as a state only make sense if the history of Kyivan Rus[2] from the 10th to the 13th centuries is rewritten to tell uniquely or solely a story of Russia and its statehood. In the process, Russian officials and historians have quite successfully conflated the two separate terms 'Rus' and 'Russia' so that they appear to be synonyms describing the same country, rather than two distinct historical phenomena, which they actually are. Through this manipulation, they attempt to exclude other nations, primarily Ukrainians but also Belarusians, from any claim to the Kyivan Rus heritage and history.

In Russia's interpretation of history, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Russians are descendants of the same state (Kyivan Rus), bound by the same language (Old Russian) and faith (Orthodox) as early as the 9th and 10th centuries. The Russian authorities argue that this unified nation was then artificially divided when the Kyivan Rus empire collapsed in the 13th century. In the Russian official discourse, the country was reintegrated again in the 17th century, when Ukrainians pledged their allegiance to the Tsar in Moscow, who in turn protected their faith and identity against Polonization and/or Latinization.[3]

In his essay[4] and speeches,[5] Putin argues that "since time immemorial" until at least the 17th century, the differences between Ukrainians and Russians in terms of faith, language, and culture were almost non-existent. Therefore, in his view, the most appropriate name for Ukrainians is "Little Russians", indicating that the Ukrainian people are merely a local variant of Russians.[6] According to Putin, changes only began under strong Polish influence, but even despite these influences, he asserts that "it is a historical fact that Russians and Ukrainians are essentially one ethnicity".[7]

What is more, Putin places strong emphasis on the idea that the state of Kyivan Rus, with Kyiv at its heart and much of its territory corresponding to present-day Ukraine, is the cradle of Russian culture and identity. A key aspect of this thinking is the constantly repeated emphasis on Prince Volodymyr and his baptism in Crimea, which, in the Russian interpretation, heralds the beginning of Christian Russia, with its origins linked to the peninsula (increasing

2 The term refers to the polity with its centre in Kyiv, which existed between the 10th and 13th centuries. The term itself is of later origin and was not used at the time of the functioning of this political entity. For more on this, see: Serhii Plokhy, *The gates of Europe*, Basic Books, 2015, pp. 23–48.

3 Vladimir Putin, 'On the Historical Unity of Russian and Ukrainians', 12 July 2021, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181.

4 Putin, 'On the Historical Unity', 2021.

5 Vladimir Putin, 'Address by the President of the Russian Federation', 21 February 2022, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828 and 'Valdai International Discussion Club meeting', 27 October 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/69695.

6 Notably, the term itself has an additional pejorative connotation today, implying that "Little Russians" are a worse/lesser/poorer version of Russians.

7 Putin, 'Valdai International Discussion Club meeting', 2022.

the symbolic importance of Crimea). While calling Kyiv "the mother of all Russian cities",[8] Putin emphasizes that no one can separate these territories and their inhabitants from Russia. To do otherwise would be to undermine the very foundations of contemporary Russian identity as a unique country, a civilization-like project with a thousand-year history.

According to these arguments, there is no historical basis or place for a Ukrainian identity as a nation separate from Russia. Putin emphasizes that the distinct Ukrainian national identity was artificially created by Russia's enemies as part of the rivalry between European states.[9] The same applies to Ukraine's borders. According to the Russian authorities, Ukraine has no genuine borders because virtually all of its lands are historically Russian. In Putin's view, Ukraine as a state – much like its national identity – was artificially created on Russian land. He claims that Ukraine "joined" the Russian Empire with only three regions – Kiev, Zhitomir and Chernigov. The rest of Ukraine's lands were added later, first by the Soviet authorities in 1922 (Donbass and the whole of eastern Ukraine), and then after the Second World War (western territories of Ukraine), and finally in 1954 (Crimea). Putin therefore defines the entire Black Sea region of Ukraine, along with Crimea and the eastern half of the country,[10] as territory that should belong to Russia.[11]

Putin insists that Ukraine has never had stable traditions of "real statehood". From this point of view, Ukraine as we know it today is merely a product of Soviet design and should be called "Vladimir Lenin's Ukraine".[12] In his historical statements, Putin conveniently ignores facts that do not fit his narratives. For example, he does not mention the successes of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921, which forced Lenin to reconsider Ukraine's state-building ambitions. Consequently, when commenting on the advances of Russia's armed forces on Ukrainian soil, Putin repeatedly underlined that these territories had been "liberated".[13]

Ukraine in Russia's perspective on the international order

From Moscow's point of view, what is happening in Ukraine is part of the broader, global geopolitical competition. Recent decades have seen the emergence of new, powerful, and increasingly assertive economic and political power centres (including Russia as well as Asia-Pacific

8 This is actually a quote from the chronicle 'The Tale of Past Years', which consists of a history of Kyivan Rus' from around 850 to 1110, compiled in Kyiv about 1113. The original phrase is 'the mother of the Rus' towns', not Russian. Putin and other Russian officials, when referring to this chronicle, misquote it by replacing Rus with Russia. For more on this, see: Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, 'The Rus' Primary Chronicle', Ukrainian Literature and Culture, 1953, p. 8.

9 These claims are duly reiterated by leading Russian experts. For example, see: Oleg Nemensky, 'Ukraine project. Part I', Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, 31 March 2022, https://riss.ru/news/videocomment/proyekt-ukraina-chast-pervaya/?sphrase_id=86927.

10 Vladimir Putin, 'St. Petersburg International Economic Forum', 17 June 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/68669.

11 Putin, 'Valdai International Discussion Club meeting', 2022.

12 Putin, 'Address by the President', 21 February 2022.

13 Vladimir Putin, 'Meeting of Defence Ministry Board', 21 December 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/70159.

countries) with their own political systems and public institutions. They "inevitably change" the structure of the world order and form a new one. In Putin's view, these changes are irreversible, as the world is moving towards greater multipolarity without a single dominant centre of power.[14] The Russian authorities contend that these changes are impossible to stop. As a result, the world finds itself at a historic crossroads, in the most dangerous, unpredictable, and important decade since the end of World War II.[15]

According to the Kremlin, Western countries are seeking at all costs to preserve their hegemony and unconditional leadership, which serves their own interests and runs counter to global trends. To this end, they have been aggressively trying for decades to impose Western "pseudo-values" and models of behaviour on other countries.[16] This is explained by the Kremlin and its propaganda outlets as an element of the Western colonial mindset, which aims to extinguish the sovereignty of third countries and uphold its unconditional dominance in the global economy and politics.[17] "Western civilization needs the entire planet as a medium of existence and all the resources of humanity to survive at the level it has reached,"[18] Putin claimed in a speech in 2022, echoing Russian philosopher Alexander Zinoviev. According to Putin, the latest signs of this policy are, besides the Russo-Ukrainian war, the West's alleged provocations around Taiwan and the alleged destabilization of the global food and energy markets (caused by the series of sanctions against Russia).

In the context of broader geopolitical changes defined by the Kremlin, the US and its allies have weaponized Ukraine to prevent Russia from becoming one of the pillars of the new, more multipolar world.[19] From the Kremlin's perspective, Ukraine's aspirations to join the EU and NATO are nothing more than a continuation of the aggressive conspiracy against Russia, just one element of the above-mentioned global geopolitical rivalry. According to Putin: "The owners of this project took as a basis the old groundwork of the Polish-Austrian ideologists to create an 'anti-Moscow Russia'."[20] At that time, in the 19th century, their goal was to deprive Russia of its historical territories, now called Ukraine. Today, in Russia's view, the citizens of Ukraine have been artificially turned against Russia, taken hostage by the imposed government,[21] and brainwashed by nationalistic and neo-Nazi ideology.[22] As Russia sees it, this

14 Putin, 'St. Petersburg International Economic Forum', 2022.
15 Putin, 'Valdai International Discussion Club meeting', 2022.
16 Vladimir Putin, 'Eastern Economic Forum plenary session', 7 September 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/69299.
17 Corresponding narratives are particularly promoted in Russian propaganda and disinformation aimed at the Global South in an attempt to reinforce anti-colonial and anti-American sentiments.
18 Putin, 'Valdai International Discussion Club meeting', 2022.
19 Vladimir Putin, 'Presidential Address to Federal Assembly', February 21, 2023, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/70565.
20 Putin, 'On the historical Unity', 2021.
21 Vladimir Putin, 'Address by the President of the Russian Federation', 24 February 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843.
22 Putin, 'Meeting of Defence Ministry Board', 2022.

time the main aim is to eliminate Russia as a global competitor.

Putin claims that the West has never really stopped trying to "finish off" Russia by inciting conflicts in post-Soviet countries.[23] According to him, the West's goal is to provoke disintegration processes within the Commonwealth of Independent States, aimed at destroying Russia's ties with its traditional allies,[24] while simultaneously weakening and dividing the Russian Federation from within.[25] As with the Soviet Union, the West seeks to disintegrate the Russian Federation so that it becomes irrelevant as an international player[26] and therefore strategically defeated.[27]

From the Kremlin's point of view, the Russo-Ukrainian war is an example of a modern 21st century battlefield on which Russia is defending its independence.[28] Russia is therefore not actually fighting the Ukrainian army in Ukraine, but the entire military machine of the West.[29]

According to the Kremlin, the conflict began years ago with US influence operations and the manipulation of the identity and consciousness of Ukrainian citizens, who were effectively turned against the Russians. As Putin sees it, the US organized the coup and installed the anti-Russian puppet government in a series of events (the 2004 Orange Revolution, the 2014 Revolution of Dignity).[30] "They prepared the Kiev [sic] regime, which they controlled, and Ukraine, which they had enslaved, for a large-scale war."[31] Putin maintains that the US has been pouring countless weapons systems, cutting-edge military equipment, and advisers into Ukraine. What is more, he stated that by integrating Ukraine into NATO's control systems, the Alliance was directly commanding its armed forces, even individual units and squads.[32]

In all its strategic documents, Russia strongly emphasizes that the real adversary and main source of the current increasing global

23 In addition to Ukraine, Putin often cites alleged Western funding of terrorist organizations in the Caucasus. See e.g., Vladimir Putin, 'Presidential Address to Federal Assembly', 21 February 2023, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/70565.

24 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 'Стратегия национальной безопасности Российской Федерации от 02 июля 2021 г.' [National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation of 2 July 2021], https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/1784948/.

25 Vladimir Putin, 'Meeting of Defence Ministry Board', 2022.

26 Vladimir Putin, 'Address by the President of the Russian Federation', 21 September 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/69390.

27 Vladimir Putin, 'Plenary session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum', 16 June 2023, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/71445.

28 Putin, 'Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly', 29 February 2024, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585.

29 Putin, 'Address by the President', 21 September 2022.

30 On several occasions, Putin shared a second theory regarding the reasons behind the "coup". According to this theory, a group of oligarchs and politicians organized the coup to secure all the money and resources they had stolen from the country. They tried to hide behind the pro-EU agenda, but in fact they were manipulating people just to legalize their money. For more on this, see: Vladimir Putin, 'St. Petersburg International Economic Forum', 2022 and 'Valdai International Discussion Club meeting' 2022.

31 Putin, 'Presidential Address to Federal Assembly', 2023.

32 Putin, 'Address by the President', 21 February 2022.

geopolitical instability is the US and its allies. In this context, Ukraine is a manipulated and instrumentalized artificial state without any agency of its own, whose successes on the front are only possible thanks to the massive clandestine military and intelligence support from NATO. Correspondingly, the Ukrainian blue and yellow colours seen and supported in the West are merely a product of the psychological warfare waged against Russia in an effort to suppress it as a new rising global power.

Russia says it intends to eliminate the remnants of US dominance in global affairs in order to facilitate and strengthen multipolarity.[33] The way to achieve this is, firstly, to get rid of US influences in Ukraine and, more broadly, in the post-Soviet region. Secondly, by forcing NATO to withdraw its military forces back to the 1997 NATO border. And finally, by negotiating with the US to remove its nuclear capabilities from Europe.[34] In Russia's vision of a new security arrangement in Europe, a militarily neutralized Central Europe should serve as a buffer zone between the Russian Federation and the rest of the continent, while Ukraine, along with other former Soviet republics, should remain fully subordinate to Moscow. Putin has repeatedly signalled his willingness to discuss these issues with the US,[35] with the starting point for such a discussion being the proposals presented in the letters to the US and NATO in December 2021.[36]

Ukraine in Russia's perspective on the regional order

Russia's perspective on the regional order is determined by its understanding of state sovereignty and its pursuit of great power status. Both are closely related to Russia's obsession with controlling its neighbourhood. According to Putin, a sovereign state is one that sets the rules governing the world, not one that follows laws imposed by others.[37] Against this background, only a few countries in the world might be considered sovereign. These are the global powers that define the direction for all foreign relations.

The Kremlin believes that controlling former Soviet republics and influencing other countries in its immediate neighbourhood is a crucial element of sovereignty in this sense and a practical application of superpower status. This so-called "sphere of influence" is a precondition for the Kremlin to retain its role of a leading power in Europe, on the one hand, and to position itself among those few countries that shape the emerging new world order, on the other.

33 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 'The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation', 31 March 2023, https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/.

34 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 'Treaty between The United States of America and the Russian Federation on security guarantees', 17 December 2021, https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790818/?lang=en and 'Agreement on measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization', 17 December 2021, https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790803/?lang=en&clear_cache=Y.

35 Vladimir Putin, 'Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly', 2024.

36 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 'Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on security guarantees', 2021; 'Agreement on measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization', 2021.

37 Putin, 'St. Petersburg International Economic Forum', 2022.

From Moscow's point of view, the alternative is to become just an ordinary state, deprived of influence in global and regional affairs, and forced to follow international rules established by others. According to Putin:

> *"For a country like Russia, existence, mere existence, is impossible without sovereignty. Without sovereignty, Russia would cease to exist, at least in the form it exists today and has existed for a thousand years. (...) Therefore, our main objective is to strengthen sovereignty. (...) Russia must assert its financial, economic, and technological sovereignty in order to have a future."*[38]

For Russia, keeping Ukraine under its influence and forcing a new security arrangement in Europe means preserving both its sovereignty and its international clout (as a great power). However, Russia's claims over Ukraine are more profound than those over other countries in its neighbourhood that the Kremlin influences or seeks to influence. Moscow's pretensions to Kyiv as part of its "sphere of influence"[39] are further reinforced by claims that the roots of the Russian state and culture originate from the very territories that constitute present-day Ukraine (see section one). For Russia, losing control over Ukraine is tantamount to losing part of its own territory and identity. In this context, Putin openly admits that a military clash, or war, was inevitable due to Ukraine's refusal to accept Russia's terms.[40]

38 Vladimir Putin, 'Results of the Year with Vladimir Putin', 14 December 2023, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/72994.

39 Putin, 'Eastern Economic Forum', 2022, and Putin, 'Address by the President', 24 February 2022.

40 Putin, 'Meeting of Defence Ministry Board', 2022.

II. Russia's grand strategy for its war against Ukraine

The most preferred scenario: "Vassalization" of Ukraine

Russia's officially stated goals of the so-called "special military operation" against Ukraine are denazification, demilitarization, and the neutral status of Ukraine. However, it is clear from Russia's strategic documents and Putin's speeches that the primary objective in relation to Ukraine is total control over the entire country, similar to the case of the Warsaw Pact countries controlled by the USSR. This means having a say in its defence, foreign, economic, cultural, and domestic policies ("denazification"). Equally important is the neutralization of Ukraine in terms of its military power. In Russia's view, the Ukrainian military should be downsized, with certain weapons systems and military equipment removed from its stocks ("demilitarization").

Achieving the two main objectives of "denazification" and "demilitarization" would automatically mean achieving Russia's third stated objective – "the neutral status of Ukraine". At this stage, it is not certain whether "neutral status" would mean the cessation of integration processes with the EU. However, it is hard to imagine that Russia would allow Ukraine to integrate with the EU, which in practice would entail profound legal and structural changes in the country. In the military sphere, the neutral status should resemble that of Belarus, which is nominally neutral, although its military forces and operational plans are in fact integrated with those of Russia to a large extent, while its territory is available to Russian armed forces.

Russia's demands were made clear in the drafts prepared during the failed Istanbul peace talks in 2022.[41] The Russian negotiators tried to push Ukraine to declare itself a permanently neutral and non-nuclear state. Ukraine was also asked to abandon its ambitions to join NATO or to allow any foreign military forces on its territory. Furthermore, Russia demanded a considerable reduction in Ukraine's army by limiting the number of tanks, missiles, and troops. During the talks, Russia also demanded amendments to Ukraine's constitution, and the revocation of several Ukrainian laws, mainly regarding Soviet-era history and the country's historical policy (recognition and commemoration of the "Great Patriotic War").[42] These conditions were just the starting point for Russia. Further details determining Ukraine's fate were to be negotiated in subsequent bilateral and/or multilateral negotiations. The Istanbul peace talks are a good point of reference for reviewing Russia's demands towards Ukraine, as since 2024 Russia has constantly referred to them in its information operations towards the EU and NATO as a potential starting point for a peace agreement.

Russia's preferred scenario regarding Ukraine envisages the restoration of all ties modelled on the past, when Russia controlled the country to a greater (e.g., during the Russian Empire, USSR) or to a lesser extent (e.g., during the presidency of Viktor Yanukovych from 2010 to 2014). In this scenario, the authorities in Kyiv would be forced to accept territorial losses by officially recognizing the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts, and Crimea as new subjects

41 The talks were organized in Istanbul in March 2022 in several rounds.

42 Marcin Kędryna, 'Jakub Kumoch ujawnia kulisy negocjacji. Rosja nie chciała pokoju, tylko kapitulacji Ukrainy' [Jakub Kumoch reveals the backstage of the negotiations. Russia did not want peace, only Ukraine's capitulation], 13 May 2024, https://i.pl/jakub-kumoch-ujawnia-kulisy-negocjacji-rosja-nie-chciala-pokoju-tylko-kapitulacji-ukrainy/ar/c1p2–26324503.

of the Russian Federation. The nominally independent Ukraine would be further integrated into the Russian Federation through the integration project (re-establishing economic ties with the Eurasian Economic Union, EEU) and bilateral agreements (securing a privileged position for Russian companies and/or oligarchs, etc.). An important element of this new "rapprochement and reconciliation" with Russia would take place through cultural projects (promotion of the Russian language, endorsing Russia's version of history, revision of post-Maidan transformations, and forcing the most pro-Ukrainian citizens out of the country).[43]

Second preferred scenario: Partition of Ukraine

As the first two years of the war have shown that Russia is unable to control Ukraine militarily and impose a puppet government in Kyiv, the Kremlin has been trying to fulfil its stated objectives for the war ("demilitarization", "denazification" and the "neutral status of the country") through other means. In the second preferred scenario, Russia aims to achieve the demilitarization of Ukraine by destroying its industrial base and military-industrial complex, and by depleting the Ukrainian armed forces on the front line. Putin claims that, as an alternative, once Ukraine is ready, Russia would be willing to agree to the demilitarization of Ukraine on its own terms, by setting certain parameters.[44]

Regarding the "denazification" of the country and its vassalization, Russia is currently trying to achieve both objectives by incorporating the occupied territories of Ukraine and by downsizing the country, rendering it economically, militarily, demographically, and therefore strategically irrelevant. This process began when, on 30 September 2022, Russia officially incorporated four new entities into the Russian Federation (the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts), although it does not fully control any of them. By incorporating them into the constitution, the Kremlin makes it difficult to reverse the entire process, and complicates any future arrangements.

The analysis of Putin's speeches and interviews leads to the conclusion that, at the current stage of the war, Russia is aiming to regain what the Kremlin considers to be stolen lands, the "historical Russian lands", given to Ukraine by the USSR.[45] While the exact definition of these "Russian stolen lands" is unclear, they would likely include all the southern and eastern oblasts of modern Ukraine (see Map 1). Putin proudly stated at the end of 2022 that one of the "significant results" of the ongoing "special military operation" was the incorporation of new territories, and the transformation of the Sea of Azov into an inland sea of the Russian Federation.[46]

Control over the above-mentioned territories enables Russia to pursue a policy of "denazification", the first features of which can be

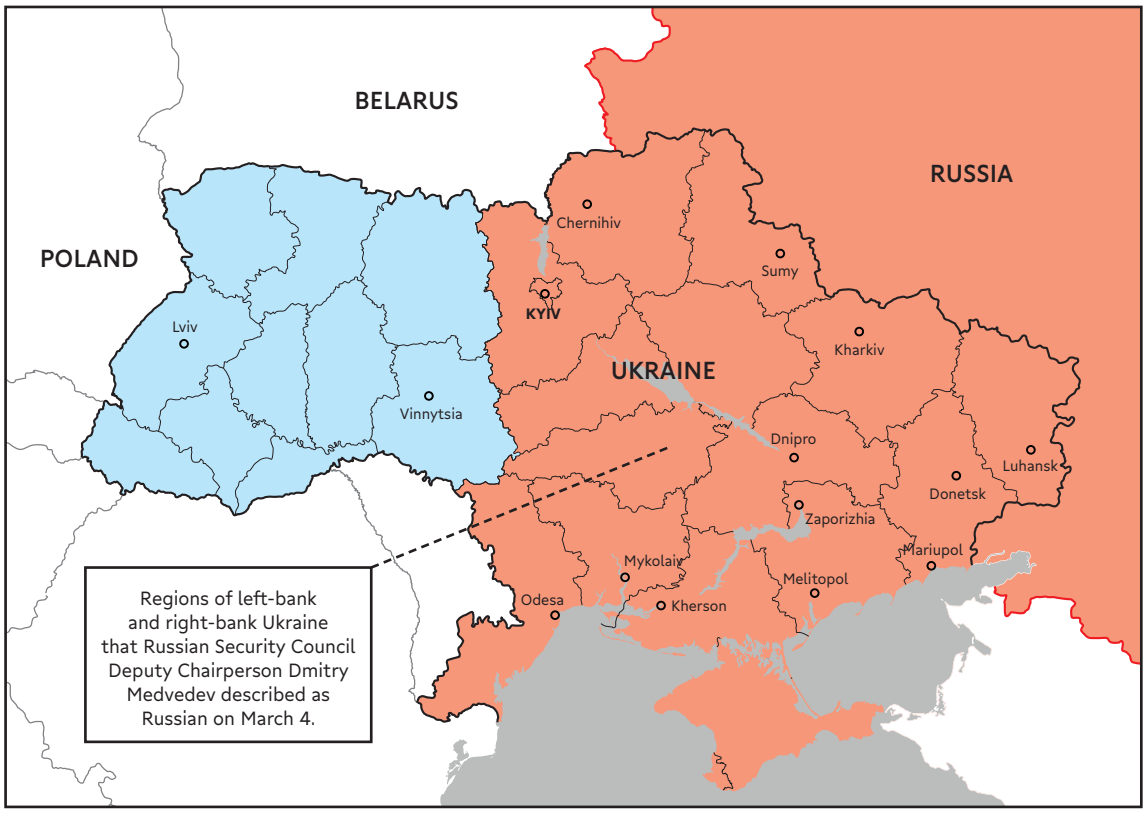
43 Putin, 'On the historical Unity', 2021.

44 Putin, 'Results of the Year with Vladimir Putin', 2023. Some initial proposals for this type of demilitarization were already presented during the Istanbul peace talks.

45 Putin, 'On the historical Unity', 2021 and Putin, 'Results of the Year with Vladimir Putin', 2023.

46 Vladimir Putin, 'The annual meeting of the Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights', 7 December 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/councils/by-council/18/70046, also https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDbLYT0zFkc.

Map 1. Ukrainian territory that Russia considers to be part of its own territory.



Red colour: Parts of Ukraine that Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, has claimed are "historical Russian lands" that should be reincorporated into Russia.

Blue colour: Parts of Ukraine that Medvedev has proposed should be divided between Romania, Hungary, and Poland.

Medvedev referred to a similar map during his speech at the World Youth Festival, organized by Russia in Sochi on 4 March, 2024.

Source: Institute for the Study of War, 2024.

observed on the ground in the occupied territories. Overall, it means the physical destruction of everything associated with Ukrainianness in these territories, including pro-Ukrainian citizens. Only after "the return of what is ours",[47] and the complete subordination of the occupied territories, downscaled and neutralized economically, politically, and militarily, might Ukraine be allowed to follow its path of integration with the EU. "If Ukraine wants to be a semi-colony, that's their call", but not with the "historical Russian lands", as Putin stated.[48] Under no circumstances would Russia accept Ukraine having a free hand in joining NATO, which Russia sees as "the main external military threat to the country".[49]

Third scenario: Complete victory and occupation

Although it appears that Russia is currently making every effort to implement the second preferred scenario described above, the Kremlin is not abandoning its primary goal of controlling the whole of Ukraine. Russia still hopes to achieve its most preferred outcome of the war with further military successes at the front, accompanied by hybrid threat operations. Hence, a third scenario cannot be ruled out, which could emerge as a combination of the first two. This might take the form of a complete military victory, the collapse of the Ukrainian army and state, the incorporation of a large part of Ukraine's territory into the Russian Federation, and the subsequent occupation of the remaining lands with a puppet government leading the country.

Occupation of the country and subordination of the incorporated lands would require massive resources, but no more than Russia is currently spending on its war against Ukraine. This scenario, although unlikely, would also allow Russia to fulfil its political objectives outlined above.

47 Putin, 'St. Petersburg International Economic Forum', 2022.
48 Ibid.
49 'The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation', 2014, point no 12.

III. How Russia's perception of Ukraine influences its hybrid threat operations

Actions against Ukraine

The way that Russia thinks about Ukraine and Ukrainians directly influences the way it wages the war, and the types of hybrid threat tools it uses. At the very beginning of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, when the Kremlin still hoped to turn Ukraine into its vassal (the first scenario above), Russia used much softer hybrid threat tools, focusing primarily on military targets and enhancing the performance of its armed forces, for example through disinformation, psychological operations, and cyber tools. However, Russian operations evolved as the Kremlin switched from seeking to vassalize Ukraine to attempting to partition it (the second scenario described above). Military shortcomings and the pro-Ukrainian attitude of the majority of Ukrainian society have further determined the brutal and violent nature of Russia's hybrid threat toolbox. Its armed forces have not hesitated to systematically and consciously utilize tools that violate the laws of war and international humanitarian law. This is particularly evident in the way that Russia uses hybrid threat tools to degrade the performance of the Ukrainian armed forces and to maintain control over the Ukrainian population in the occupied territories.

Firstly, to facilitate its military operations and reduce the potential of Ukraine's army, Russia constantly targets civilian infrastructure and the population. In Russia's eyes, they are merely non-uniformed soldiers in a modern war, while the civilian infrastructure is considered part of the military infrastructure. This is why Russia has heavily bombed the energy sector (power plants, electricity grids, etc.)[50] and critical infrastructure (the Kakhovka Dam, factories, industrial complexes).[51] At the same time, Russia is attacking purely civilian locations in order to terrorize society (bombing evacuation routes, hotels, railway stations)[52] and hamper Ukraine's military performance (targeting ambulances and vehicles marked with the red cross, field sanitation points, evacuation routes, and hospitals).[53] On several occasions, Russian officials have claimed that they are striking high-value targets, even though the attacked locations are purely civilian (e.g., a restaurant).[54]

The same logic applies to the occupied territories, where Russia is using all available

50 Sławomir Matuszak, 'Russia's new large-scale attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure: losses and challenges', Centre for Eastern Studies, 17 April 2024, https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2024–04–17/russias-new-large-scale-attacks-ukraines-energy-infrastructure.

51 James Glanz et al., 'Why the Evidence Suggests Russia Blew Up the Kakhovka Dam', *The New York Times, 16 June 2023,* https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/06/16/world/europe/ukraine-kakhovka-dam-collapse.html and Alla Hurska, 'Russian Attacks on Ukrainian Critical Infrastructure Become Hybrid Threat to Europe', *Eurasia Daily Monitor, Volume: 21 Issue: 74, 14 May 2024,* https://jamestown.org/program/russian-attacks-on-ukrainian-critical-infrastructure-become-hybrid-threat-to-europe/.

52 Human Rights Watch, 'Death at Kramatorsk Train Station', 21 February 2023, https://www.hrw.org/video-photos/video/2023/02/21/death-kramatorsk-train-station.

53 Michael S. Baker et al., 'Russia's Hybrid Warfare in Ukraine Threatens Both Healthcare & Health Protections Provided by International Law', Annals of Global Health, 2023; 89(1): 3, 23 January 2023, https://doi.org/10.5334%2Faogh.4022.

54 Ivana Kottasová, 'Kramatorsk restaurant strike shows that in Ukraine, death can come any time, anywhere', CNN, 28 June 2023, https://edition.cnn.com/2023/06/28/europe/kramatorsk-deadly-strike-ukraine-war-intl/index.html.

tools and stopping at nothing to gain complete control over the Ukrainian population and eliminate any resistance. This is why many violent non-military tools have been used against civilians. Russian soldiers regularly "screen" the population (e.g., by checking their phones and browser histories).[55] The primary targets of these killings and deliberate acts of torture have been pro-Ukrainian activists, former participants in the 2014 Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO), individuals with any connection to the Ukrainian state (officials, clerks), supporters of the Maidan revolutions, combatants, journalists, writers, and even members of the middle-class.[56] In addition to targeted killings, Russia also uses other acts of violence (rape, torture, kidnapping, and indiscriminate killings) as a means of terrorizing[57] and paralyzing the occupied population.[58] In most of the liberated territories, Ukrainian investigators have uncovered torture chambers and hidden mass graves.[59]

The second major goal of Russia's hybrid threat strategy towards the occupied territories is to undermine their local Ukrainian identity. This involves destroying, relabelling, or simply stealing Ukrainian cultural and historical artefacts,[60] as well as further integrating these territories into the Russian Federation. Russia employs various hybrid threat tools to support its claims that Ukraine is an artificial nation and state. Since the outset of the full-scale invasion, Russia has focused on changing the ethnic composition of the occupied territories. As a result, many Ukrainians, including children,[61] have been deported to Russia, while Russians – mainly teachers, scholars, administrative workers, and security personnel (FSB, police) – have been brought in to settle in the occupied territories.[62] Once the situation on the front had stabilized,

55 Julia Friedrich, '"They Came to 'Liberate' us and Left us With Nothing": Life Under Russian Occupation in Ukraine', Global Public Policy Institute, July 2024, p. 6, https://gppi.net/2024/07/30/life-under-russian-occupation-in-ukraine.

56 Hanna Arhirova, Vasilisa Stepanenko and Lori Hinnant, 'Thousands of Ukraine civilians are being held in Russian prisons', the Associated Press, 13 July 2023, https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-russia-prisons-civilians-torture-detainees-88b4abf2efbf383272eed9378be13c72?s=03.

57 United Nations, 'Widespread use of torture by Russian military in Ukraine appears deliberate: UN expert', Press Release, 15 June 2023, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/06/widespread-use-torture-russian-military-ukraine-appears-deliberate-un-expert.

58 Harriet Barber, 'Castration, gang-rape, forced nudity: How Russia's soldiers terrorise Ukraine with sexual violence', *The Telegraph, 28 November 2022,* https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/terror-and-security/how-russian-soldiers-terrorise-ukraine-sexual-violence/.

59 Chris Livesay, 'Torture chamber, mass grave found in Kherson, Ukraine after Russia's retreat', CBS News, 19 November 2022, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/torture-chamber-mass-grave-found-in-kherson-ukraine-after-russias-retreat/.

60 Nata Druhak, 'Looting, Stealing, Destroying: How Russia Weaponized Art Theft', ERIC, 21 March 2023, https://european-resilience.org/analytics/looting-stealing-destroying-how-russia-weaponized-art-theft.

61 RFE/RL, 'More Than 700,000 Ukrainian Children Taken To Russia Since Full-Scale War Started', 31 July 2023, https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-children-taken-ukraine/32527298.html.

62 Karolina Hird, 'The Kremlin's Occupation Playbook: Coerced Russification and Ethnic Cleansing in Occupied Ukraine', ISW, 20 February 2024, https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/fact-sheet-kremlins-occupation-playbook-coerced-russification-and-ethnic-cleansing.

Russia continued renaming and relabelling towns and villages (by reinstating monuments to Lenin and reverting to Soviet town names, such as Bakhmut-Artiomovsk). At the same time, the occupying forces consolidated their rule through local administration (e.g., documents, passports, taxes) and infrastructure (e.g., new telecommunications service providers).[63] With the help of new personnel, the administration has focused on re-educating the younger generation.[64]

Activities against the West

The Kremlin repeatedly emphasizes that the real adversary and threat is the US and its allies, while Ukraine has simply been manipulated and weaponized. Therefore, at the same time as its hybrid threat operations against Ukraine, Russia is directing its activities against the West. It believes that breaking the unity and spirit of the West, its main opponent, would mean winning the battle over Ukraine. From the Kremlin's point of view, if the EU and NATO are consumed by internal problems and divisions over their external policies, they will not have the time and resources to help Ukraine.

Russia's hybrid threat operations have also evolved along with the developing situation on the front line. In the first phase of the war, the Kremlin tried to intimidate the West to deter it from helping Ukraine (e.g., through nuclear blackmail and disinformation).[65] Then, when these efforts failed and the war continued, the focus shifted to attempts to weaken the financial, economic, and military ties between Ukraine and the EU and NATO, and to "persuade" the West to change its policy towards Russia.[66] The Kremlin sought to achieve this by dividing and paralyzing any meaningful decisions regarding assistance to Ukraine, for example by amplifying disputes and differences, influencing public debate on Ukraine, and souring public opinion, for example through gas cut-offs,[67] blocking Ukrainian grain exports,[68] and massive disinformation operations.[69] Much of Russia's propaganda and information campaigns are aimed at convincing EU and NATO countries that Ukraine is an artificial state, riddled with corruption, and not worth defending.

63 Hird, 'The Kremlin's Occupation Playbook'.
64 Lauren Said-Moorhouse, Oleksandra Ochman, 'This is what the "Russification" of Ukraine's education system looks like in occupied areas', CNN, 16 May 2022, https://edition.cnn.com/2022/05/16/europe/russia-ukraine-education-intl-cmd/index.html.
65 Igor Gretskiy, 'Putin's Nuclear Blackmail: How Far Is He Willing to Go?', ICDS, 12 April 2022, https://icds.ee/en/putins-nuclear-blackmail-how-far-is-he-willing-to-go/.
66 Szymon Kardaś, 'Russia: threats and offers of energy cooperation', Centre for Eastern Studies, 13 October 2022, https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2022–10–13/russia-threats-and-offers-energy-cooperation.
67 Christoph Steitz, Nina Chestney, 'Russia deepens Europe's energy squeeze with new gas halt', Reuters, 31 August 2022, https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/new-russia-gas-halt-tighten-energy-screws-europe-2022–08–30/.
68 European Council, 'How the Russian invasion of Ukraine has further aggravated the global food crisis', https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/how-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-has-further-aggravated-the-global-food-crisis/#0.
69 Mark Scott, 'As war in Ukraine evolves, so do disinformation tactics', *Politico, 10 March 2022,* https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-russia-disinformation-propaganda/.

Russian disinformation outlets have focused in particular on creating false and fake content about the waste, theft, and resale of Western material support. This has been reinforced by fake reports about the luxurious life of the Zelenskys.[70]

In 2024, Russia has visibly engaged in more physical and violent hybrid threat activities (e.g., sabotage, arson, assassination attempts, espionage, GPS signal jamming) as the EU and NATO remain committed to their policies of supporting Ukraine.[71] The apparent increase in the number of incidents related to hybrid threats in Europe seems to be designed to negatively influence the societies of EU and NATO countries, and to change their perceptions of the current geopolitical situation in Europe. Russia wants to draw public attention to the constantly deteriorating security situation of ordinary citizens and link it directly to the pro-Ukrainian policies of the EU and NATO. The Kremlin hopes that growing war fatigue will translate into an increase in the popularity of political parties and individuals who advocate a more conciliatory policy towards Russia.

Hence, Russian propaganda constantly repeats narratives about its readiness for dialogue with the West, the need to resume the Istanbul peace talks, and the necessity to restore economic and political relations.[72] Russia is trying to persuade more countries to take a more favourable view of its policies. This is being done, on the one hand, by worsening the security situation in Europe and, on the other, by tempting European leaders with the prospect of a new opening.

However, the overarching objective of Russia's hybrid threat operations is to "convince" the EU and NATO to accept Russia as one of the centres of the new multipolar world. According to the Kremlin, once this happens, it will be easier to agree on a new security arrangement in Europe. Russia sees itself and the West as equal partners in this new security arrangement, where Russia's vital interests and security concerns would be discussed (see the December 2021 proposals).

70 Olga Robinson et al., 'How pro-Russian "yacht" propaganda influenced US debate over Ukraine aid', BBC, 20 December 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-67766964.

71 Keir Giles, 'Russian disruption in Europe points to patterns of future aggression', Chatham House, 1 May 2024, https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/05/russian-disruption-europe-points-patterns-future-aggression.

72 Euroactiv, 'Aborted Istanbul peace deal could be basis for Ukraine talks, says Kremlin', 13 April 2024, https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/aborted-istanbul-peace-deal-could-be-basis-for-ukraine-talks-says-kremlin/.

IV. Key conclusions and takeaways for the Participating States

- For Russia, the current Russo-Ukrainian war is about either controlling the entire country or annexing most of Ukraine's territory – lands that, according to Putin, were stolen from Russia. In this context, any peace proposals by various international actors that suggest resolving the conflict by accepting Russia's current territorial gains and Ukraine's military neutrality (i.e., no NATO membership) are futile. Russia might, indeed, agree to such a peace deal, but only if it resulted in the complete political subjugation of Ukraine. Otherwise, such a deal would only serve as a temporary tactical solution in Russia's longer-term goal of subordinating Ukraine.

- Russia's perception of Ukraine and the way that Russians define their own country and nation are deeply embedded in Russian literature and political thinking. This specific worldview was further consolidated in Soviet times when, on the one hand, Russians equated the entire USSR with Russia and, on the other hand, the Soviet Russian Republic itself formally lacked certain elements of a "socialist nation-state" like other republics. Without de-imperializing and decolonizing the thinking of Russia's elites and society concerning Ukraine, any normalization of relations between these two states and nations is virtually impossible. As of now, anything but the total subordination of Ukraine will leave the Kremlin unsatisfied and push the next elites and Kremlin rulers to make further attempts (military, political, economic, hybrid) to take control of Kyiv. From the Ukrainian perspective, without a complete and overarching political, cultural, and mental break from everything that Russia defines as the so-called *Russkiy Mir*, Ukraine will not be able to build a successful sovereign and independent state. It seems that the Ukrainian authorities and society are trying to take advantage of the current war to complete this separation. However, the process can only be consolidated and finalized with Ukraine's victory in the war and the successful protection of its sovereignty in all aspects of state functioning.

- The EU and NATO should prepare themselves for the long-term challenge posed by Russia's revisionist policies. The stake in the Russo-Ukrainian war is much higher than the fate of Ukraine as an independent state. It is about Russia's attempts to reshape the international environment and reinforce itself in the global geostrategic competition. In the Kremlin's view, the global order has changed dramatically in recent years. New centres of economic and political power have emerged, and the influences of the old hegemons have weakened. Russia is positioning itself among these emerging powers. As such, it is acting to restore a post-WWII- like security order in Europe. In the view of the Russian elites, after "securing" Ukraine, Russia would seek to dismantle other elements of the security system that were established after the collapse of the USSR at the expense of Russia's interests (e.g., an enlarged NATO and EU).[73]

73 Putin, 'Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly' 2024.

- EU and NATO governments and institutions should consider additional measures to protect their societies and democratic procedures against hostile interference and manipulation. A large number of Russia's hybrid threat operations against EU and NATO member states (disinformation, security incidents, intelligence operations, etc.) are directly linked to Russia's war against Ukraine. The Kremlin's goal is to increase "Ukraine fatigue" and sway public opinion on the war. Western societies are particularly vulnerable to information operations. Russia is therefore hoping that its efforts will, in the long run, translate into election victories across the EU and NATO countries for political forces that support a more conciliatory policy towards Russia. This appears to be Russia's best chance of breaking the West's political unity regarding Ukraine.

- The growing Russian aggressiveness cannot go unanswered, as it will be interpreted by the Kremlin as weakness and an opening for further hostile activities. Judging by the increasing boldness of Russia's hybrid threat operations in the West, EU and NATO deterrence is not fulfilling its task. Russia is emboldened to sabotage the critical infrastructure of EU and NATO countries, recruit their citizens for clandestine hostile operations, and target their institutions and procedures with hybrid threat operations. Politicians in particular need to recognize and acknowledge the wide spectrum of Russia's aggressive activities. This might be the first step in building consistent and adequate responses.

- The consequences of Ukraine's subordination to Russia would be detrimental to the EU and NATO, and their magnitude would depend on which scenario is realized. Ukraine, broken militarily, economically, politically, and financially, will pose a long-term challenge to EU and NATO policies. In the worst-case scenario, the EU and NATO could be faced with a weak and unstable state, deprived of its industrial base and with an economy marginalized to the agricultural sector. The destruction of the country and traumatization of its society would not only trigger another wave of migration but could also result in profound changes in the country's political scene, propelling radical marginal forces to the fore. Whereas Ukraine would be weakened demographically (war losses combined with loss of territory), Russia would strengthen itself by imposing its citizenship on the inhabitants of the incorporated territories. The Russian government has already announced that the next military conscription will cover the territories of Ukraine controlled by the Russian armed forces.

- Russia is justifying its war against Ukraine on cultural and historical grounds, and is deliberately aiming to destroy Ukraine's identity and heritage. Consequently, EU and NATO policies should also take these factors into account by helping to strengthen Ukraine's cultural and historical autonomy, not least through the promotion of its culture and heritage, the translation of Ukrainian literature, and an emphasis on Ukraine in Slavic studies.

Appendix 1: List of analyzed speeches and documents

1. Address by the President of the Russian Federation – February 21, 2022
2. Address by the President of the Russian Federation – February 24, 2022
3. Address by the President of the Russian Federation – September 21, 2022
4. Address on Day of Reunification of the Donetsk People's Republic, Lugansk People's Republic and the Zaporozhye and Kherson Regions with Russia – September 30, 2023
5. Address to citizens of Russia – June 24, 2023
6. Address to citizens of Russia – June 26, 2023
7. Agreement on measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – December 17, 2021
8. Answer to a journalist's question about the current situation at the front – June 21, 2023
9. Article by Vladimir Putin: 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians' – July 12, 2021
10. Council for Civil Society and Human Rights meeting – December 7, 2022
11. Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation – December 5, 2016
12. Interview with Tucker Carlson – February 8, 2024
13. Meeting of Defence Ministry Board – December 21, 2022
14. Plenary session of the 8th Eastern Economic Forum – September 12, 2023
15. Plenary Session of the Eastern Economic Forum – September 7, 2022
16. Plenary session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum – June 16, 2023
17. Plenary session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum – June 17, 2022
18. Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly – February 21, 2023
19. Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly – February 29, 2024
20. Results of the Year with Vladimir Putin – December 14, 2023
21. Strategy of the National Security of the Russian Federation – July 2, 2021
22. The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation – March 31, 2023
23. The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on February 5, 2010
24. The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on December 26, 2014
25. Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on security guarantees – December 17, 2021
26. Valdai International Discussion Club meeting – October 27, 2022
27. Victory Parade in Red Square – May 9, 2022
28. Vladimir Putin congratulated current staff and veterans of the Foreign Intelligence Service on the centenary of illegal intelligence – June 30, 2022

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