

ISSN: 2450-6869

eISSN: 2719-6763

No. 12, 2021

DEFENCE SCIENCE REVIEW

<http://www.journalssystem.com/pno/>

[DOI: 10.37055/pno/149894](https://doi.org/10.37055/pno/149894)

The Ontology of the War in Ukraine – Cold War Revives

Original article


Patryk Reśkiewicz^{1,D}

ORCID  [0000-0003-3724-575X](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3724-575X)

Received: 2022-03-24

Krzysztof Najdzik^{1,D}

Revised: 2022-03-24

ORCID  [0000-0002-5783-5450](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5783-5450)

Accepted: 2022-05-08

¹Military University of Technology

Final review: 2022-05-08

A – Research concept and design, B – Collection and/or assembly of data, C – Data analysis and interpretation, D – Writing the article, E – Critical revision of the article, F – Final approval of article

Peer review:

Double blind

Keywords: Belarus, Ukraine, Geopolitics, New Cold War, Russian Federation

Abstract

Objectives: The identification of political-military determinants of the full-scale phase of the war in Ukraine which has been going on since 2014. The said goal shall be achieved by analyzing the boundary conditions of the Russian security policy against the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the geostrategic conditioning of the Republic of Belarus.

Methods: The following techniques have been implemented in the article: qualitative analysis and critical analysis of the source literature, synthesis – cause and effect associations. The statistical method has also been used. The empirical methods include abstract modelling for the construction of simplified models of the description of reality with reference to the object of analysis.

Results: The three goals mentioned beforehand have been achieved in the article through (1) showing the main strategic and operational assumptions of the Russian Federation with regard to its national security policy, (2) the role of incorporated Belarus in the military operation being carried out, (3) the estimation of the main assumptions of the military campaign.

Conclusions: The neo-imperial policy carried out by the Russian Federation towards the neighboring countries is the main determinant of the warfare in Ukraine. Russian willingness to reestablish the regional order in Central and Eastern Europe determines the next phase of the military campaign. Over the past years, Belarus has been gradually integrated as a Union Member State. It may be assumed that Belarus will become a subjugated country of Russia –which increases the possibility of Belarus being involved in military conflicts carried by the Russian Federation.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 License

Introduction

The events of the 24 Feb, 2022 shall be remembered in the most negative way, sparking a chain of atrocities. The next phase of the war in Ukraine which has been fought since 2014, the transition into a full-scale confrontation, using artillery, armored forces and a greater part of the military potential of the Russian Federation has destroyed the notion of peace and war of the Western countries. In spite of the fact that the events of the end of February were a total surprise for defense systems, the evolution of the security environment in Europe from 2008-2022 triggers a necessity to rethink these presumptions. The acceleration caused by the large scale exercises of the Union State of Russia and Belarus (ZBiR) and the political-symbolical framework towards the regional architecture of security since July 2021 should also be taken into consideration.

Putinism against Central and Eastern Europe is characterized by some constitutive features. Above all, it aims at generating political-military, economic, cultural and historic tensions within the constraints of particular countries. The next step is the restitution of the czar-imperial ideals, with a simultaneous respect towards the Soviet and Russian traditions, which strives for the implementation of the *russkij mir* project and the restoration of the imperium within the wide territorial borders. The aggressive policy of the Russian Federation, exploiting the military power in order to achieve the goals, forced us to change the perceptions of the potential challenges and threats for the architecture of security in Central and Eastern Europe. The Belarussian factor cannot be omitted while analyzing these geostrategic dilemmas, conditioning the success or the failure of the military operation in Ukraine. Two main questions shall be subject to analysis in the said context: the contemporary geostrategic meaning of Belarus and the scope of military cooperation with Russia. The analysis of these issues shall grant us with the understanding of the role of Belarus in the context of the challenges and threats generated at the Ukrainian theater of war.

1. The Determinants of the War in Ukraine

The Ukrainian nation has been experiencing the following variables since 1991: (1) multifaceted threats from the side of the so-called aggressive “Russian world” towards national subjectivity and cultural identity; (2) *in statu nascendi* the creation of the backbone of economy, unfavorable structure of mutual relationships with the Russian market (perennial economic-political venality with the presence of pro-Russian oligarchs), the Russian power raw material supply chain being jeopardized (the area of the political-economical extortion);

(3) the character and the reach of Russian political pressure (pro-Russian fractions in the Ukrainian parliament), and the provocations of the Russian agents of influence in secret service, the military, the police, judicature, the media – against the promises of the accession to NATO and the EU; (4) the risk of territorial decomposition: the loss of Crimea, the Russian incursion into the separatist Donetsk and Lugansk Oblasts; the recognition of these by Russia – 21 Feb, 2022 as a republic.

The sustenance of territorial unity still remains a challenge for Ukraine and the defiance against the Kremlin way of thinking about the creation of Novorossiia, consisting of the people's republics of Kharkiv, Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia, Odessa, Kherson and Mykolaiv – with a parliament and government on its own. The scenario points at the decomposition of the division of Ukraine along the Dnieper River which means that the right bank part of the country would remain on its side, while the left bank part of the country – the Novorossiia – would become part of Russia.

The state is therefore threatened with the Russian imperialism, spreading hatred towards the sovereignty of the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, for the Kremlin equally important are the directions of the military policy as well as the elements of the cultural-historical rivalry, based on the hegemony of the influence of the Russian Moscow patriarchy on the Ukrainian area. Moscow does not withdraw from the accusations of escalation of the military tensions along the borders made against Kiev, builds up the psychological and information warfare with the use of websites, channels and social media groups, as well as bribed politicians and the Russian agents of influence. The main aim of the destructive strategy remains unaltered – the enhancement of chaos inside Ukraine. The condition for peace is the resignation from the Euro-Atlantic aspirations and coming back to the Russian imperium. The escalation of the tensions around Ukraine grants Russia with a dividend of increased oil and gas prices, freezing the post-Soviet area.

Since the Munich conference in 2007, the Russian security policy has frequently evoked the elements of (1) Aleksander Dugin's theory, being fortified by the thesis of Lev Gumilyov, mentioning the exceptionality of the geopolitical status of the *russkij mir* and (2) the projections of Alexey Salmin (a Russian historian), highlighting the importance of the concentric axis of the Russian imperial geopolitics of the "five circles" (the replica of the USSR zones of influence and interest), sanctioning the lifetime of the Great Russia limotrophe (Potulski, 2010, p. 232).

The identification of the goals of Russian security policy in the "Putinism epoch" is characterized by the will to rebuild the Russian hegemony over the "traditional" areas of

influence. Furthermore, it can easily be noticed that Vladimir Putin treats the rising position of the super powerful country through the creation of his own sub-alliances (in the ad hoc manner), and subsequently exploits them in order to contend with the multifaceted confrontation with the US and the following coalitions: (1) Euro-Atlantic in the European zone, as well as in the Middle East, and (2) Asian-American in the Pacific areas of influence.

The implementation of the said goals principally relies on:

- strengthening the role of the Russian Federation (accumulating the soft power potential) in relation with the former Soviet republics;
- the destabilization of the circumstances in the Caucasus region (Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia);
- carrying out hybrid warfare against Ukraine (tolerance warfare) – aiming at the dissolution of the state and the Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), as well as interfering with the information and economic space of Poland, Finland, Sweden and Norway;
- the intensification of efforts leading to the disintegration of the international structures (NATO and EU) perceived as enemies when it comes to regaining the areas of influence in Central and Eastern Europe – unclear attitude of Turkey and Hungary towards the issue;
- the involvement in the development and implementation of modern military technologies – including hypersonic weapons;
- reinforcing of the military capacity – e.g. creating Space Troops, enhancement of the Arctic bases;
- deploying new military formations and Private Military Corporations in the Baltic Sea region (enhancing the so-called anti-access potential A2/AD),
- improvement cooperation with the Belarussian army constituting a part of the “defensive” capacities of Russia – with the perspective of “absorption” of military structures as a union state;
- carrying out information war as part of the new generation warfare theory, aimed against the democratic structure of NATO and the EU;
- inspiring and supporting Russian minorities in the Baltic states.
- There are four distinctive geopolitical features when one wants to track general notions regarding strategies and strategic goals of the Russian Federation in its security policy which have been visible since 1989 (Menkiszak, 2019, p.11-12):
- strategic control over the post-Soviet territories;

- establishment of a security buffer zone in Central and Eastern Europe (especially through controlling the most important geopolitical spots, such as: the “Smolensk Gate” and the Moravian Gate);
- striving for minimalization of the US influence and presence in Europe with further detachment thereof, according to the Kindelberger Trap;
- striving for maximizing the Russian influence in Europe, according to the Kindelberger Trap.

All of the geopolitical and/or geostrategic goals described hereinabove are mutually connected and function in the loopback scheme, particularly with regards to the penultimate and the last of them. They will probably be developed by expansion into other areas of rivalry with other entities of the security environment what is presently experienced by Ukraine. Military threats imposed by Russia are experienced in the region, and giving rise to economic tensions, especially connected to raw material supplies and energy, as well as political and information influence with the use of cybernetic tools. They have been implemented with the use of a wide variety of enemy actions, which include an open spectrum of political, economic, diplomatic, intelligence and military actions.

Thus the Ukraine war is nothing but Russian demands posed against the American hegemon with regards to the regional security architecture. The Russian pression and subsequent demands towards the West have been opposed, nevertheless. We should refer to Vladimir Putin’s essay on the crucial role of the Ukrainian interior (Domańska, 2021) for the Russian world, followed by the Russian MoD and Ministry of Foreign Affairs statements, both of them containing ultimatums, in order to witness Russia deceptively identifying itself as a “strict judge” of the international affairs. Teleologically, the structure of all these documents have been designed as an implication of the Vienna order (1815) and the Yalta-Potsdam order (1945). In both cases small states were governed by stronger states without the participation of the former ones.

Geostrategic Situation of Belarus and the Military Operations

The situation of Belarus makes it a crucial factor in the geostrategic calculations of the Russian Federation as Belarus is situated along the “land bridge” joining Central and Eastern Europe with Moscow – the “heart” of Russia. The strategic artery leads through the so-called “Smolensk Gate”. The geopolitical meaning of Belarus is caused by the fact that it is situated perpendicularly to the Smolensk Gate. The corridor is a strategic platform giving way to Russian projection of power in three strategic directions (Figure 1):

- North-East (the Baltic states);

- West (Poland through the Brest Gate);
- South-West (Ukraine).

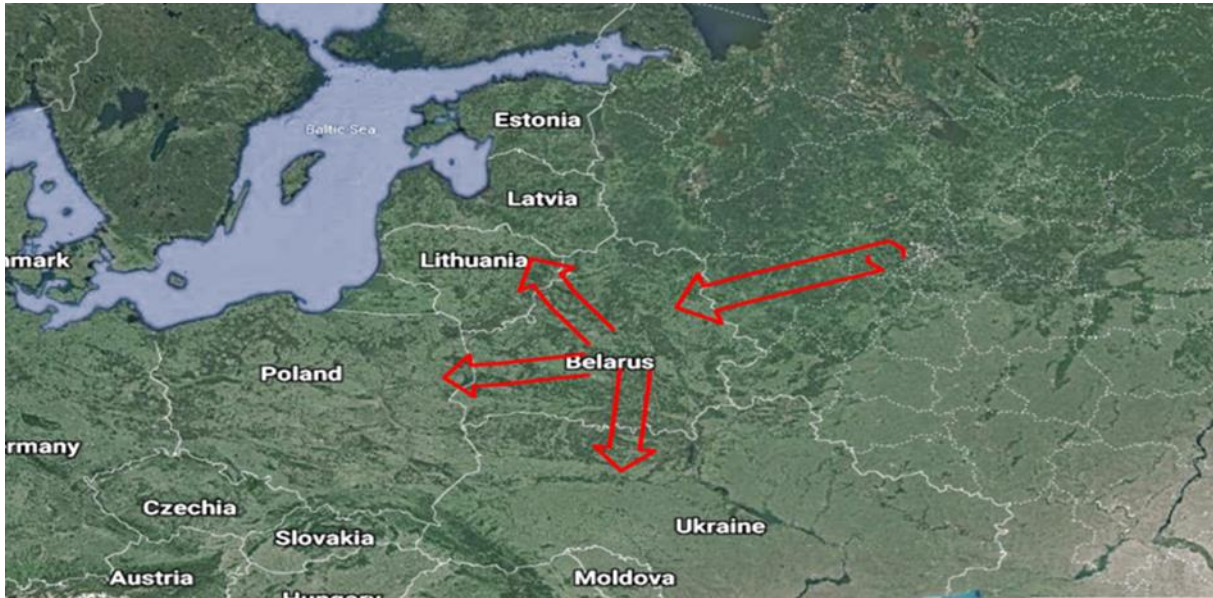


Fig. 1. The Geostrategic Meaning of Belarus – West Direction

Source: own work

The said geostrategic conditioning makes Belarus the essential element of Russian planning on the western direction. Threatening NATO and Ukrainian forces from several directions facilitates the generation of numerous security dilemmas for the region. This can be especially witnessed today during a full-scale military operation led by the Russian Federation on the largest scale since WW2. Belarus has been referred to as a strategic partner of the Russians since 2014. As a result of Belarusian presence and Russian assets of air defense systems, potential support which could be given to Ukraine is significantly hindered.

The Russian Federation has been pursuing a constant presence of its military forces on the Belarussian territory. Up until 2020, in spite of over 40 Russian-Belarussian agreements on security and military matters, a full integration of military assets could only be referred to in the context of two projects – the foundation of Regional Group of Armed Forces (active only during war) and joint defense of the Belarussian borders and air space. Russian forces were not deployed in Belarus, neither perennially nor for short-term rotations. The Russian presence was only limited to exercises within the Belarussian borders. With the arrival of 2021, the situation started to change rapidly, reaching the point of climax in 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine.

The first signals of the increase of the presence of Russian military forces in Belarus were sent in August 2021, when the Belarussian MoD stated that Russian artillery divisions were deployed to Grodno in order to create a joint training center for air force and air defense (Ministry of Defense, the Republic of Belarus, 2021). This was the result of agreements concluded by Sergei Shoigu and Wiktar Chrenin in 2021. The center is mainly responsible for the training of multipurpose aircraft crews and handling the modern systems of air defense. Additionally, the assets constituting the joint training center of air force and air defense will be used for the purposes of joint military campaigns. At the beginning of September 2021, the first SU-30SM were introduced to the base, along with the S-300 missile systems (Muchin, 2021a).

The escalation of the Polish-Belarussian crisis in November 2021 showed another dimension of the approaching integration of Moscow and Minsk. The administration of the Belarussian MoD informed the public about the increase in the activity of the air forces and air defense units implemented along with the Russian air-space forces in the western and north-western directions. The operations were carried out with the use of the Tu-22m3 strike bombers. It was also said that the flights of strategic bombers would be carried out on a regular basis as an adequate means of reactions to the current security circumstances in the region (Sabak, 2021). The fact that “Niezawisimaja gazieta” featured an article on the newly adopted war doctrine of the Union State is worth noticing (Muchin, 2021b). It was fully published in February 2022. The said document outlined the contemporary perception of danger for the Union State. From the perspective of Minsk and Moscow, the main threats are generated by the aggressive policy of NATO, the Baltic states, Poland and fascist, unpredictable Ukraine. Russia and Belarus are thus “forced” to strengthen their military cooperation (Postanowlenije ot 4 nojabria 2021 g. №5). Doctrinal provisions expressed in this way suggest that they were written in order to legitimize Russian presence in Belarus territory. It was particularly visible during the large-scale joint maneuvers “Allied Resolve 2022” – preceding the Russian aggression on Ukraine on 24 February, 2022.

The maneuvers were carried out during another escalation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine stemming from the concentration of Russian forces at the borders of Ukraine and on the occupied Crimea. The exercises comprised two phases. The first phase commenced at the beginning of January and continued until 9 February. The main goal of this phase was to transport the units of the Western Military Circuit to Belarus as a way of inspection of the Union State reaction forces.

The active phase took place between February 10 and February 20. Operational groupings exercised defense and counterattack – the active phase took place at the Obóz-Leśniowski, Hoża, Osipowicze, Brest, Domanovo training fields, as well as at the Baranovichi (61st Fighter Air Base), Lyda (116th Guards Assault Aviation Radomskaya Red Banner Base), Moczuliszcze (50th Composite Air Base) and Luninets. The exercise was primarily designed to increase interoperability of the allied armies, testing the strategic transport of forces from the Far East and East Siberia, testing the Belarussian transport-logistics system and the development of the integrated system of air defense (the S-300 and S-400 systems and radio technology assets) (Gawęda, 2022).

The maneuvers transformed into an operation on an tremendous scale. It is estimated that 60,000 to 80,000 soldiers participated in the exercise in Belarus (around 30,000 Russians). Within the first 7 days, 33 echelons (trains) with equipment and Russian soldiers were transported to Belarus. Undoubtedly, this was an operation on an unprecedented scale. As a comparison, the Zapad-2021 exercises were carried out with 29 echelons which were being transported to Belarus over a month. Furthermore, it should be added that the “Allied Resolve 2022” exercises were unprecedented as (Ibidem):

- strategic maneuvers were held in winter for the first time;
- the forces of the Western Military Circuit, constituting the backbone of the Russian contingent in Belarus, would be exercising on the European fields (outside Russia) for the first time;
- they were the first exercises of the Belarussian Armed Forces which would be participated almost fully;
- Belarussian units would for the first time cooperate with tactical units from the Far East which had not taken place before;
- strategic equipment was deployed in Belarus for the first time being a part of exercises, e.g. two S-400 divisions, Iskander-M ballistic systems, electronic warfare systems 1RŁ257 Krasucha-4.

As it could be assumed, Russian forces did not return to their permanent bases and stayed in Belarus, even though the maneuvers were over on 20 February, 2022. According to the Chief of the Staff of Belarus general Wiktar Hulewicz, Alaksandr Lukashenka and Vladimir Putin had made a decision to prolong the testing of the reaction forces on the Belarussian land “in conjunction with the increasing activity at the external frontiers of the Union State of Russia and Belarus and the escalation in Donbas” (Interfax, 2022).

The constant presence of Russian soldiers within the borders of Belarus significantly harms the safety architecture in the region and creates a new dimension of influence on the political-military situation in Ukraine. The deployment of the S-400 air-defense systems will give new capacities. The Russian Federation will be able to create a complex, multi-layered A2/AD environment in the air space thanks to the deployment of S-400 systems in Belarus and the integration of these with the air-defense systems. The range of the systems means that aviation assets operating in the airspace of the Baltic states and parts of the airspace of Poland and Ukraine will be endangered and deprived of freedom of operation (Figure 2). The situation is similar when it comes to the Iskander-M systems deployed in Belarus. These systems are designed to destroy the ground objects in the operational depth of enemy within 500 km. These systems are capable of destroying critical communication hubs (harbors, airports, railway stations) in the northern and central parts of Ukraine hindering logistics support operations (Figure 3). The system itself can be characterized as a system of twofold application – capable of transporting nuclear charges. Therefore, Russia can exploit the Iskander systems in psychological warfare so as to intimidate the neighboring regions. The Russian strategy envisages the use of non-strategic nuclear charges in regional conflicts in order to draw the confrontation to an end on favorable terms for the Russian Federation according to the presumption that there is no political will nor social endorsement for a conflict that can transform into a full-scale nuclear war (National Institute for Public Policy, 2017, p. 25).

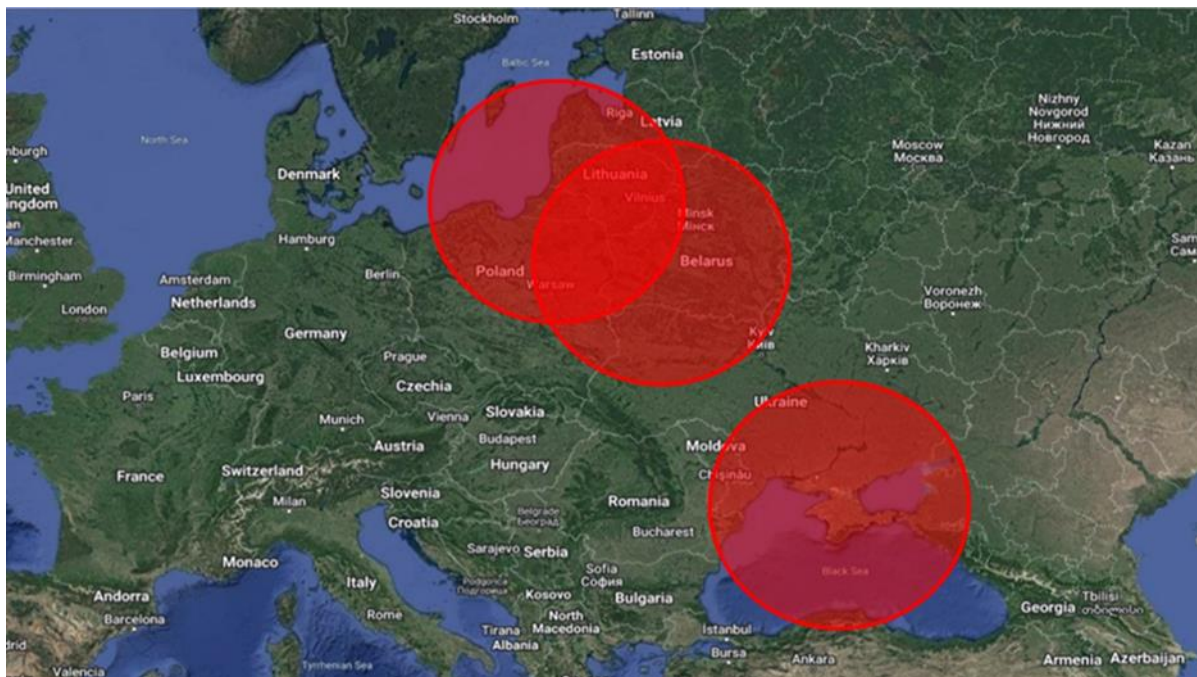


Fig. 2. The Potential Range of Russian Systems of Air Defense S-400

Source: own work

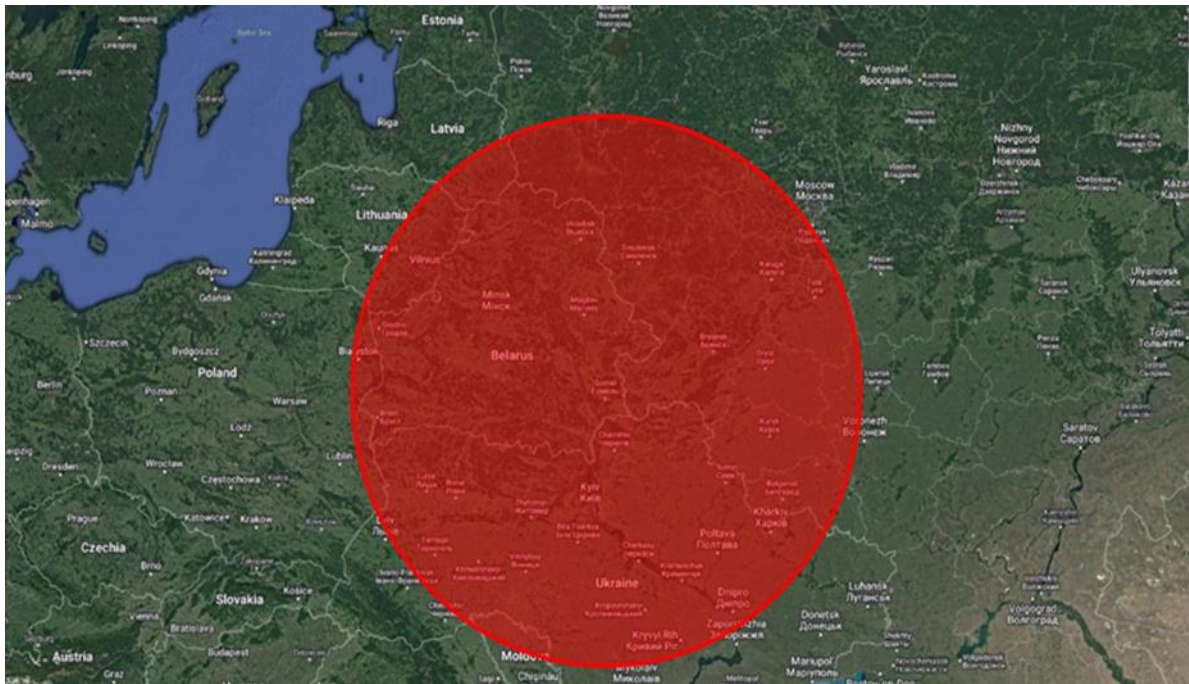


Fig. 3. The Potential Range of Russian Iskander-M Systems from Belarus

Source: own work

It should be, however, highlighted that the use of these systems will mostly be of demonstrative nature – conventional warhead – as it was on February 28, 2022 when the Iskander system was launched from Belarus to hit the Ukrainian airport in Zhitomir. A potential use of tactical nuclear weapon could be interpreted in twofold way. On the one hand, it could be perceived as an element of the conventional failure of the Russian campaign in Ukraine – the use of tactical nuclear weapon in smaller scale conflicts (local wars) signifies a failure in the realization of political-military goals. On the other hand, as a clear signal for the Euro-Atlantic states, it would signify that in case of further escalation of conflict and excessive (in the opinion of the Russians) involvement of the West, the Russian Federation will be ready to carry out a nuclear attack in the European theater of war.

The present concentration of forces and assets in Belarus should be seen as demonstrative/offensive forces, concentrated as military formations, in the northern flank of Ukraine. As Anna Dwyer states, “Not only do Russia and Belarus consider Ukraine as a state totally dependent on NATO, but they also approve of operations carried out against Ukraine from the Belarussian territory, even if this is contrary to their official political declarations” (Dwyer, 2022).

In spite of the fact that the Belarussian army remains neutral according to the official statements, it should be regarded as an assailant state. After all, Belarus has agreed to:

- the deployment of Russian troops on its territory;
- delivering an attack in the Kiev direction from Belarus;
- artillery shelling of Ukraine by Russian units deployed in the territory of Belarus;
- using airports by Russian airplanes shelling Ukrainian cities.

It should be assumed that the forces of Belarus will become involved in the Ukrainian conflict. According to the General Staff of the Ukrainian Forces, the Russian Federation is supposed to take action so as to involve Belarussian troops in Ukraine. In the Brest region, there are two battalion tactical groups (BTG) ready to launch an incursion into Ukraine, namely: the 38th Guards Air Assault Brigade from Brest and the 103rd Guards Airborne Brigade, and in the border region of Belarus north of Kiev, there are two more BTGs from each of the said units (Wilk, Żochowski, 2022). This information is in alignment with Lukashenka's words who confirmed that along the Brest-Pinsk axis there are elements of two Belarussian brigades: 38th Guards Air Assault Brigade from Brest and the 103rd Guards Airborne Brigade. According to the president of Belarus, the main aim of these units is to screen and protect the south-west part of the Belarussian-Ukrainian border.

2. The Estimation of the Main Directions of Operations of the Russian Federation

The prediction of further potential directions and objects of attack of the Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine. The scenario portrays an assault from three directions (Figure 4):

- the Kiev Operation – isolate, encircle and besiege Kiev;
- the Dnieper Operation – the occupation of central Ukraine – the siege of Kharkov and Dnieperpetrovsk;
- the Odessa Operation – the siege of Odessa, joining the Russian forces in Transnistria.

1. THE KIEV OPERATION – ISOLATE, ENCIRCLE AND BESIEGE KIEV

1A – the isolation of Kiev from Western Ukraine

- an assault from Mazyr (Belarus);
- taking over railway and road hubs in Korosten and Zhytomyr;
- the destruction of the 95th Air Assault Brigade in Zhytomyr;
- the destruction of the fighter aircraft Su-27 base in Ozerne south of Zhytomyr;
- the offensive in Berdychiv;
- the destruction of the 26th Artillery Brigade in Berdychiv;
- taking over the railway and road hubs in Koziatyn;
- the seizure of the Mazyr-Korosten-Zhytomyr-Fastiv railway;

- the neutralization of the Ukrainian combat support forces, advancing from south-east Ukraine.

1B – the siege of Kiev from the west

- the assault from Homel (Belarus);
- the attack on Chernihiv;
- the destruction of the 61st Mechanized Brigade HQ in Chernihiv;
- the destruction of the 1st Tank Brigade in Honcharivske south of Chernihiv;
- the destruction of the 169th Training Centre in Desna;
- crossing the Dnieper at the Vyshhorod dam (Ukraine cannot destroy the dam as blowing it up would cause the flooding of the regions of Kiev situated lower);
- the transport of forces to Fastiv in order to encircle Kiev from the west;
- the destruction of the Central Aviation Headquarters and the MiG-29 Vasytkiv Air Base east of Fastiv;
- siege of Kiev from the west.

1C – the siege of Kiev from the east

- assault from Klyuchev (Russia – the Bryansk Oblast);
- the seizure of the rail and road hubs in Bakhmach and Nizhyn;
- the seizure of the Nizhyn airport and (potentially) using the airport as an advanced operations base;
- the protection of the Bakhmach-Nizhyn-Kiev railway;
- the assault on Kiev;
- the siege of Kiev from the east.

1D – the Isolation of Kiev from the south

- assault from Bryansk;
- the seizure of the railway and road hub in Konotop (the Sumy Oblast);
- the destruction of the 58th Motorized Brigade in Konotop;
- the protection of the Bryansk-Konotop-Bakhmach railway;
- the seizure of Pryluky road hub (the Chernihiv Oblast);
- crossing the Dnieper at the Kaniv dam;
- the assault in the direction of Bila Tserkva (the Kiev Oblast) and the isolation of Kiev from the south;
- the destruction of the 72nd Mechanized Brigade and the 1129th Anti-aircraft Missile Artillery Regiment in Bila Tserkva;

- the neutralization of the Ukrainian combat support forces coming from the south of Ukraine.

1E – the Protection of the Left Flank in the Kiev Operation (Potentially)

- the assault from Kursk (Russia) in the Sumy direction;
- the destruction of the 27th Rocket Artillery Brigade in Sumy;
- the assault on Lubny (the Poltava Oblast);
- the destruction of the Su-27 jet fighter base in Mirhorod (the Poltava Oblast);
- the seizure of the Romodan railway hub (the Poltava Oblast);
- the assault in the Dnieper direction;
- the destruction of the 156th Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment in Zlotonosha (the Cherkasy Oblast);
- the protection of the Bakhmach-Romodan railway;
- the neutralization of the Ukrainian combat support forces, coming from the south-east of Ukraine.

2. THE DNIEPER OPERATION – THE OCCUPATION OF CENTRAL UKRAINE

2A – the Seizure of Central Ukraine

- the assault from Belgorod (Russia);
- the seizure of railway and road hub in Poltava;
- the destruction of 46th Air Assault Brigade and the 18th Army Aviation Brigade in Poltava;
- the crossing of the Dnieper River at the Kremenchuk dam;
- the destruction of the 107th Rocket Artillery Regiment in Kremenchuk;
- the destruction of the 57th Motorized Brigade in Kropyvnycki (the Kirovograd Oblast);
- the protection of the Odnorobivka – Poltava – Romodan - the Kremenchuk dam – Koristivka railway;
- the neutralization of the Ukrainian combat support forces, coming from western Ukraine.

2B – the isolation of Kharkov

- advancing from Belgorod (Russia);
- the destruction of the 92nd Mechanized Brigade in Chuhuiv (the Kharkov Oblast);
- the destruction of the 203rd Training Aviation Brigade base in Chuhuiv;
- the seizure of the railway and road hub in Lozov;
- the protection of the Odnorobivka-Lozovo railway;

- the destruction of the Ukrainian brigades stationed in Sievierodonetsk (the 53rd Mechanized), Bakhmut (54th Mechanized) and Druzhkivka (81st Airmobile).

2C – the crossing of the Dnieper River and the Encirclement of the Kryvyi Rih

- the assault from Valuyki;
- the seizure of the railway and road hub in Iziium and Sviatohirsk;
- the protection of the Valuyki-Sviatohirsk railway;
- entering into the Dnipro city;
- the destruction of the 25th Airborne Brigade, the 93rd Mechanized Brigade, the 1039th Anti-aircraft Missile Artillery Regiment in Hvardiske and Cherkaske;
- the destruction of the 138th Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade's base in Dnipro;
- crossing the Dnieper river at the Kamenske dam;
- the destruction of the 17th Tank Brigade in Kryvyi Rih;
- encircling and destruction of the city.

2D – the Siege of the Dnipro city (DNR forces¹)

- the advance through the Ukrainian battlefield;
- encirclement and siege of Dnipro.

3. THE ODESSA OPERATION: THE SIEGE OF ODESSA, JOINING THE RUSSIAN FORCES IN TRANSNISTRIA

3A – the Siege of Zaporizhzhia (DNR forces)

- assault from Donetsk;
- advance through the Ukrainian battlefield;
- entering into Zaporizhzhia – the main Ukrainian logistics supply center for the Donbas battlefield;
- the destruction of the 55th Artillery Brigade HQ in Zaporizhzhia;
- encirclement and siege of the city from the East;
- the protection of the Dnieper beachhead in Rozumivka and the construction of a floating bridge;
- the encirclement and the siege of the city from the west;
- the destruction of the 301st Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment in Nikopol.

3B – the Opening of the Land Corridor from Crimea

- the assault from Taganroh (Russia);
- advance through the Ukrainian battlefield;

¹ Donetsk People's Republic

- the disconnection of the Donetsk forces so as to encircle and besiege Mariupol;
- the destruction of the 56th Motorized Brigade in Mariupol;
- the seizure of the railway and road hubs in Melitopol and Fedorivka;
- advance into Nova Kakhovka (the Kherson Oblast);
- joining the forces advancing from Crimea;
- crossing the Dnieper at the Kachovka dam;
- the assault on Kherson;
- the destruction of the 11th Aviation Brigade and the 208th Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade in Kherson;
- the protection of the Crimea-Fedorivka-Nova Kakhovka-Snihurivka road.

3C – the Seizure of the Coast and Advancement from Transnistria

- assault from Crimea;
- advance through the Ukrainian battlefield;
- entering into Nova Kakhovka (the Kherson Oblast);
- the destruction of the 57th Motorized Brigade in Nova Kakhovka;
- joining the forces advancing from Donbas;
- crossing the Dnieper River at the Kakhovka dam;
- assault on Mykolaiv;
- the destruction of the 36th Naval Infantry Brigade and the 79th Air Assault Brigade in Mykolaiv;
- the destruction of the Su-25 fighter aircrafts in Kulbakino east of Mykolaiv;
- the destruction of the 38th Anti-Aircraft Missile Artillery Regiment in Nova Odessa;
- the encirclement and the siege of Mykolaiv;
- the protection of the beachhead at the Southern Bug River north of Mykolaiv;
- the construction of floating bridge at the Southern Bug River;
- in case railways bridges on the Ingul River in the vicinity of Mykolaiv and at the Southern Bug in the vicinity of Pisky remain unharmed, the protection of the Snihurivka-Kolosivka-Raukhivka-Odessa railway;
- joining the Russian forces at the Kobleve beachhead.

3D – Landing Troops Operation in Kobleve

- the assault of the Kobleve beach;
- the blockade of the Ukrainian forces in Odessa (the 28th Mechanized Brigade; 35th Naval Infantry Brigade, the 45th Air Assault Brigade) and the prevention of reaching the regions located south of the Bug River;

- providing combat support of the Russian forces in Kobleve with the Black Sea Fleet – shelling with the use of naval guns, providing supply;
- the assault on the northern Odessa outskirts;
- the destruction of the 28th Mechanized Brigade in Chornomorets;
- the siege of Odessa from the east;
- part of the joint forces advance north of Ivanivka in order to join the Russian and Transnistria forces advancing from Transnistria.

3E – the Attack from Transnistria

- tying up the Ukrainian forces in Odessa with the use of artillery and border attacks in order to hinder the destruction of the Kobleve beachhead;
- when the Russian troops leave the Koblevo beachhead, passing to Ivanivka north of Odessa and a simultaneous crossing to the Black Sea coasts south of Odessa;
- joining the Russian forces in the vicinity of Ivanivka advancing from the east and from Crimea;
- the destruction of the 35th Naval Infantry Brigade in Datschne;
- encirclement and siege of Odessa from the west.

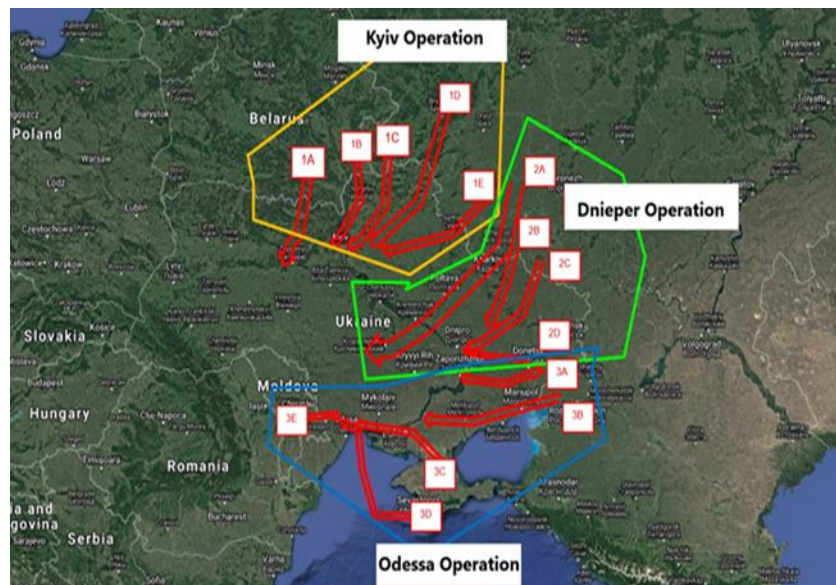


Fig. 4. The Direction of the Assault of the Russian Forces – prediction

Source: own work

Conclusions

The neo-imperial policy maintained by the Russian Federation towards the neighboring countries constitutes the prevalent determinant of the operations in Ukraine. The desire to review the global order, including the regional order in Central and Eastern Europe which is essential for Russian security matters, and the lack of reaction of the Western countries have all triggered the subsequent phase of the armed conflict. The legal-political constructs brought on the international level were supposed to guarantee a favorable division of the new *zone of influence*, as if to imitate the one known from the Cold War period. Generally speaking, the *New Cold War* fought at the Baltic-Black Sea Belt is characterized by a high saturation level of historical symbolism, as well as the construction of relations patterns on the basis of confrontation and mutual deterrence in two opposing political and military blocs.

The geopolitical and geostrategic conditioning generate a number of security dilemmas for Belarus, which aimed at being an independent and security stabilizing country in the region, while trying to remain a loyal ally of the Russian Federation. It proved to be extremely daunting to balance the two vectors. Especially that they lay on the contrary sides which results in a collision. Over the recent years, the advancing full integration within the framework of the Union State allows the supposition that Belarus shall become a fully dependent country – one losing its autonomy and the freedom of actions for the benefit of Russia, increasing the risk of being involved in conflicts. The said risk is particularly visible in the time of the full-scale invasion carried out by the Russian Federation which would mean that the role and the scope of involvement of Belarus in the Ukrainian conflict shall rise. The role of Belarus was limited to creating infrastructure and logistics support for the Russian forces advancing on the Kiev direction.

The goals presented hereinabove have been characterized by (1) the portrayal of the main strategic and operational assumptions of the Russian Federation concerning its national security policy, resonating in the Ukrainian interior, (2) the role of incorporated Belarus in the military operation, and (3) the estimation of the main assumptions of the military campaign.

The next step is to observe, analyze and draw conclusions from to the Russian Federation military campaign regarding its declared potential. Quite naturally, in the media the Russian Federation created the image of its omnipotence referring to novelties and “revolutionary” military technologies. The innovativeness of the Russian systems as well as a great advantage over the western constructions have been highlighted in the media – vide the

famous case of the T-14 Armata debate, the construction of hypersonic missiles and nuclear submarines. From the incomplete images of the battlefield that can be seen in the media, main battle tanks advancing in the war are those of the older constructions, such as the T-72 or the T-80.

It is highly plausible that the actions taken so far have not met the assumptions prepared by the Kremlin. Among the goals which have not been achieved, the following can be listed: (1) task forces are too much fragmented, (2) the supplies have not been enough to carry out a *Blitzkrieg* operation with a quick seizure of Ukrainian key cities, (3) poor coordination of air, land and cyberspace operations, (4) wrong calculations as to the actions and the morale of the Ukrainian troops and (5) drawing a dreadfully wrong connection between the political and military aim according to Clausewitz. The necessity of quick seizure of the capital city of Kiev forced the military decision-makers to implement the realization of light infantry tactics. Airborne and Specnaz units were transported to the battlefield whose forays had been preceded by a short rocket campaign. Nevertheless, as it had been highlighted hereinabove, all the outlined theses will be subject to verification when the heated and active stage of operations witnessed by Europe is finished.

Biographical note

Patryk Reśkewicz - a PhD candidate at the Doctoral School of the Military University of Technology in Warsaw. In his research activity focused on issues related to contemporary security architecture on NATO's eastern flank.

Krzysztof Najdzik, PhD - In his research activities focused on security of the Central and Eastern Europe area, foreign and security policy of the Russian Federation and also on theories and models of global and regional security architecture in praxeology of game theory. Professionally connected with local and government administration, realizing tasks in the field of state security.

References

- Domańska, M. (2022) Putin: Ukraińcy to Rosjanie, Ukraina to „anty-Rosja”, Available at: www.osw.waw.pl.
- Dyner, A. M. (2022) Przed atakiem - rosyjsko-białoruskie ćwiczenia Sojusznicze Zdecydowanie, Available at: <https://www.pism.pl/>.
- Gawęda, M. (2022) „Sojusznicze Zdecydowanie 2022”: Wielkie zgrupowanie Rosji na Białorusi [ANALIZA], Available at: <https://defence24.pl/sily-zbrojne/sojusznicze-zdecydowanie-2022-wielkie-zgrupowanie-rosji-na-bialorusi-analiza>.

- Menkiszak, M. (2019) Strategiczna kontynuacja, taktyczna zmiana. Polityka bezpieczeństwa europejskiego Rosji, Warszawa: Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich.
- Muchin, W. (2021a) Sojuznoje gosudarstwo bieriet na priceł samolety NATO, Available at: https://www.ng.ru/armies/2021-08-29/1_8237_aircrafts.html.
- Muchin, W. (2021b) W Biełorussii skoro pojawiatsia rossijskije atomnyje bomby. Nowaja Wojennaja doktrina Sojuznogo gosudarstwa dopuskajet primienienije jadiernogo orużija Rossii w otwiet na massztabnuju agriessiju protiwo niego, Available at: https://www.ng.ru/armies/2021-11-07/2_8294_belorussia.html.
- Potulski, J. (2010) Współczesne kierunki rosyjskiej myśli geopolitycznej. Między nauką, ideologicznym dyskursem, a praktyką, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytet Gdański.
- Sabak, J. (2021) Rosyjskie bombowce Tu-22M3 nad Białorusią, Available at: <https://defence24.pl/sily-zbrojne/rosyjskie-bombowce-tu-22m3-nad-bialorusia>.
- Wilk, A., Żochowski, P. (2022) Rosyjski atak na Ukrainę – stan po 13 dniach, Available at: <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/>.

Other documents

- Interfax. (2022) Naczalnik Giensztaba WS Biełorussii nazwał usłowije dla wywoda rossijskich wojsk iz strany, Available at: <https://www.interfax.ru/world/823353>.
- Ministry of Defence Republic of Belarus. (2021) O rieżalizacyi mieroprijatij po sozdaniju uczebno-bojewogo centra sowmiejstnoj podgotowki WWS i wojsk PWO, Available at: www.mil.by/.
- National Institute for Public Policy. (2017) Fairfax: A New Nuclear Review for a New Age.
- Postanowlenije ot 4 nojabria 2021 g. №5, O Wojennoj doktrinie Sojuznogo gosudarstwa, Available at: <https://www.postkomsg.com/>.