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## **POLITICAL AND MILITARY LESSONS OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the article is to draw conclusions on the future course of the war and the future of NATO-Russia relations, analyzing the aims, causes, political and military lessons of the Russian-Ukrainian war that started on 24 February 2022, from a year and a half's perspective.

The Russian President has stated that the aim of the "special military operation" is to demilitarize Ukraine, denazify it and liberate the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. As Ukraine did not pose a military threat to Russia at the beginning of the Russian aggression, demilitarization cannot be considered a valid objective. Denazification (ending the cult of Bandera, removing extremist nationalists from political life of Ukraine and the Ukrainian army, investigating atrocities committed by extremist nationalists against the ethnic Russian population, bringing the perpetrators to justice) was an unrealistic objective given the official Ukrainian domestic policy of creating a new Ukrainian identity and the double standards of the EU and OSCE on national minority issues and the use of banned symbols. The most complex problem, the status of the Russian minority and the separatist territories, could have been resolved by implementing the Minsk agreements, but the Russian military presence in the separatist territories after 2014 calls into question whether Moscow was serious about the

Minsk agreements. In the meantime, it has also emerged that Ukraine, France and Germany did not intend to implement the Minsk agreements, they did not prefer a peaceful settlement, and they actively supported the preparation of the Ukrainian army for the liberation of Luhansk, Donetsk and Crimea, which would have led to Russian military intervention in any case. This fact does not justify the legitimacy of the Russian special military operation, but merely puts it in a different light. It seems that the real aim was to overthrow the anti-Russian Ukrainian regime, to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO, to eliminate the Western military presence in Ukraine and to drastically resolve the situation of the Russian minority in Ukraine.

In the Russian view, the series of reasons for the war began with the failure to keep the US-German promise to Gorbachev that if the united Germany could remain a member of NATO, the organization would not expand eastwards. Despite the official position, the West sees NATO expansion as its own unilateral and forced expansion, because it believes that the inevitable disintegration of Eastern Europe makes NATO expansion inevitable in order to contain instability. NATO's defensive nature and the extension of the defense zone are a guarantee for dealing with the instability that is likely to arise. According to another Western approach, European security depends on effective cooperation between the five great powers, which has been undermined by US foreign policy driven by US domestic policy, essentially aimed at the unconditional expansion of NATO. The expansion would have been more acceptable by not integrating the new members into NATO's military structure, by not insisting that NATO membership be accessible to everyone, and by maintaining the de facto nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe. Ukraine's hasty invitation to join NATO was a disregard for the organization's membership requirements, a subordination of those requirements to US political will, a disregard for Russia's security needs, and a rejection of the OSCE's basic principle of "one and indivisible security" (no country can improve its own security situation at the expense of others). Ukraine is not expected to meet these requirements in the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, the same applies to Ukraine's accession to the EU.

The lessons of the war so far can be summarized as follows: - NATO enlargement and the export of Western democracy will continue, the collective Western policy towards Russia and Ukraine will not change, the confrontation between the United States and Russia will escalate to the extreme, the chances of a negotiated settlement of the war will diminish day by day, and the chances of a NATO-Russian military confrontation will increase day by day. - The collective West helps and supports Ukraine militarily, economically and financially until the

significant all-round weakening of Russia, but does not define the criteria for all-round weakening, which makes the strategy incomprehensible. - We can assume, on the basis of concrete historical examples and an analysis of Russia's internal situation that the collapse of Russia is unlikely, despite tens of thousands of sanctions and Western military support for Ukraine. - It is pointless to hope for a change in Russian policy, as Western sanctions are already directed against the Russian language, culture, sport and existence of Russia, which further strengthens the internal support for the Russian leadership. - The crisis in Ukraine has highlighted a central problem in contemporary political theory and practice: politicians steadfastly deny that something as seemingly moral as democracy can be destructive. Yet a number of countries have already demonstrated that democracy cannot be practiced where there are no stable, accountable institutions and where there is no political culture that values the rule of law.

**Keywords:** Russia, Ukraine, war, objectives, causes, Russian position, Western position, political lessons, military lessons, conclusions.

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE RUSSIAN SPECIAL MILITARY OPERATION IN UKRAINE**

The Russian President has identified the objectives of the special operation in Ukraine as denazification, demilitarization (maximum reduction of military capabilities), achieving Ukraine's neutrality (removal of the Ukrainian political leadership) and liberation of the pro-Russian separatist areas. The content of these has been explained in some detail, except the denazification.

Before I begin to interpret this, it is important to note that for Russia the Great Patriotic War is still of symbolic and very important national unifying significance. The simplistic slogans of Nazism and fascism still carry a strong emotional message and can be used to mobilize a wide range of Russians today, as can the term 'denazification'. (1) Ukrainians and the West believe that denazification is Russian propaganda - there are no far-right parties in parliament anymore and the Ukrainian president is Jewish. If there were Nazis, they no longer exist.

For clarity, it is worth examining the issue through the contemporary emergence of World War II fascist symbols (e.g. the ultranationalist salute "Slava Ukrayini") and the ultranationalist leadership of Stephan Bandera, as well as the activities of ultranationalist political movements and paramilitary groups that played a key role in the 2013-14 takeover and the subsequent war against separatists.

In World War II, the slogan "Glory to Ukraine", with the addition of "Glory to the heroes", became the motto of Bandera's followers, the Ukrainian Nationalists Organization and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, i.e. it took on a distinctly extreme right-wing connotation, and its use was banned after World War II. It later regained popularity after the fall of the Soviet Union and became the official salute of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in 2018. The motto appears in a variety of forms and places, including on the graves of soldiers who took part in the execution of Polish civilians in World War II and are now considered Ukrainian heroes. It is no coincidence, therefore, that in Russia and in non-Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainian areas, "Glory to Ukraine" ("Slava Ukrayini") is still a typical Nazi salute, that Bandera and his followers are also mostly considered Nazis. Given the past, it seems a bit strange that many Western politicians today also use the greeting "Glory to Ukraine" ("Slava Ukrayini") (1)

Ukraine's national awakening has a short and not very rich history, so creating a glorious Ukrainian past is key. Part of this is the Bandera cult, which will spread rapidly from 2022 and points to the emergence of a new Ukrainian identity, where the creation of an independent, national Ukraine is the main goal and the past will be interpreted and rewritten accordingly. The sins committed for the sake of this sacred goal can be forgiven and silenced, and the national heroes thus created are pure and eternal.

Since gaining independence, Ukraine has understandably sought to break with its Soviet past, which has been complemented from 2005, but especially from 2014, by a conscious move away from the Russians, also at the level of government programs. Since February 2022, this disengagement has manifested itself in extreme anti-Russianism in everything, at all times, everywhere, at all levels. In the light of all this, it is no wonder that the illegal activities of Ukrainian ultranationalist political movements and paramilitary groups, which played a decisive role in the 2013-14 takeover and especially in the civil war that followed, have never been and will never be investigated in Ukraine. Let us not forget! The crimes committed in the name of the sacred goal of preserving independence and territorial unity can be forgiven and silenced, and the national heroes thus created are pure and eternal.

A few words about other types of national grievances in Ukraine that fuel anti-Russianism, whether well-founded or not. In the Soviet era, the atmosphere in Ukraine was distinctly pro-Ukrainian until 1932 (in 1929, 97% of secondary schools taught in Ukrainian, between 1923 and 1933 the proportion of Ukrainians in Kiev increased from 27% to 42%, 66 out of 88 Ukrainian theaters performed in Ukrainian, 13 in Yiddish and only 9 in Russian), but in 1932, the Ukrainian famine brought about a drastic change.

Today's Ukrainian historiography treats the famine as a genocide known as the holodomor, and the EU condemned it in 2022, despite the fact that the mass starvation of the population was most likely not the result of anti-Ukrainian, deliberate action.

It is also a fact that Stalinist paranoia did not spare Ukraine in 1937 - many people died or were sent to the gulag, but even here there is no clear trace of explicit anti-Ukrainianism. In view of all this, however, it is perhaps no coincidence that a fairly broad Ukrainian national movement, often with a far-right flavor, emerged against the Soviet regime in the run-up to the Second World War, with a domestic and mainly foreign base (1).

After the Ukrainian revolution (Maidan), the takeover of the Ukrainian opposition, the emergence of unprecedented anti-Russianism (everywhere, in everything, at all times), the outbreak of civil war and the emergence of Russian separatist territories, the Russian annexation of Crimea, which was done by a disputable referendum, was a serious violation of international law. (The basic purpose of the Russian annexation of Crimea was to prevent the expected US military presence in Crimea.)

The covert Russian military presence in the pro-Russian separatist territories after 2014 calls into question whether Moscow was serious about restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity under the Minsk agreement. However, it has also become clear that Ukraine, France and Germany misled the World: they did not intend to implement the Minsk agreements, which were proclaimed by a UN resolution, they did not prefer a peaceful settlement, they did not want to help resolve the national minority issue in Ukraine, and they prepared the Ukrainian armed forces, in cooperation with the United States and other NATO members, for the liberation of Russian-occupied territories (Luhansk, Donetsk, Crimea), the initiation of which would have led to Russian military intervention in any case. This fact does not justify the legitimacy of the Russian special operation, but merely puts it in a different light.

To sum up, demilitarization, the reduction of Ukrainian military capabilities, cannot be considered as a legitimate objective of the special operation, as Ukraine did not pose a

military threat to Russia in February 2022. Denazification (presumably the elimination of the Bandera cult, the removal of extremist nationalists from Ukraine's political life and the Ukrainian army, the investigation of atrocities committed against the ethnic Russians after Maidan, the prosecution of the perpetrators) was an unrealistic objective, given the official Ukrainian domestic policy of creating a new Ukrainian identity and the double standards of the EU and OSCE on national minority issues and the use of banned symbols. Despite this, it might have been more appropriate to continue to call for an international investigation into the atrocities committed by extremist Ukrainian nationalists, for those responsible to be punished and for minority rights to be respected in all international forums.

It seems that the real goal was the overthrow of the anti-Russian Ukrainian regime, the prevention of Ukraine's NATO membership, the termination of the Western military presence in Ukraine and the drastic settlement of the situation of the Russian minority in Ukraine.

The latter was to be solved by occupying the territory of Novorossiya, which Catherine the Great created and annexed to the Russian Empire. Russian foreign policy failed to achieve these goals, so war followed - the continuation of the policy by other means. Russia's special military operation in Ukraine is the same kind of aggression that the United States has committed against Iraq, Libya or Yugoslavia. The difference is that in the latter case, the West inexplicably supported the aggressor, the United States, while in the former case it quite understandably supported the victim, Ukraine.



*Geographical units of Ukraine (1)*

## THE CAUSES OF RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

According to Russian sources, the process that led to the war actually began when the US-German promise to Gorbachev that if a united Germany could remain a member of NATO, NATO would not expand eastwards was broken by the West. Almost all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including the former Soviet republics, were admitted, and NATO expanded to the borders of Russia. The Russians protested against the expansion from the start, but tolerated it because they had no choice.

A turning point was Ukraine's invitation to join NATO, decided at the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, which was opposed by Germany, France, Italy and the Benelux countries, as well as Hungary, but these countries were not strong or determined enough to resist US pressure. In any case, according to opinion polls, two thirds of the population of Ukraine were opposed to NATO membership in 2008. The takeover of power in 2014 was necessary to come to power in Ukraine a government that willingly followed the expectations of the Americans (2)

*In relation to the takeover, it should be noted that the Leninist thesis of the basic situation of revolutions (the rulers no longer can, the subjects no longer want to live in the old way) did not hold in Ukraine at the end of 2013.*

*The largely passive population was mobilized only by the populist promise of rapid European integration (the possibility of an association and free trade agreement). However, alongside the passivity of the majority of the population, there was dissatisfaction among small and medium-sized entrepreneurs with the growing burden, among oligarchs with the need to share power, among some circles of the ruling Party of Regions with the Yanukovich family's takeover of the ruling party, and the EU and the US with Kiev's last-minute backtracking on signing the EU Association Agreement.*

*It is well known that Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich did not sign the document, which directly led to the Maidan protests. Yet Yanukovich struck a huge deal with Russia in return for refusing to sign the Association Agreement: gas prices for Ukraine were reduced to USD 268 from USD 410, Kiev received a USD 15 billion soft loan without any political conditions, Russian investment in Ukrainian industry was promised, and as a result Ukraine would not have needed the draconian IMF loan. However, the Ukrainian opposition, sponsored by the European powers and the United States, intensified the populist demagogy (3). The radicalization of events could no longer be stopped, the coup-like takeover of power by the opposition took place and the protesters' objectives were largely met: Yanukovich was*

*forced to leave his position, a new European-oriented government was formed, and a new president was appointed who immediately signed the association agreement.*

*However, the future consequences were obscured: the break-up of Ukraine, thousands of deaths and injuries on the Maidan (Revolution of Dignity) and civil war, a million Ukrainian citizens forced to leave the country, the Crimean Peninsula was occupied by Russia. The invitation of Ukraine to NATO was undoubtedly a hurried step. The conditions for accession to the Alliance include the working democratic political system based on the market economy, the fair treatment towards national minorities and the commitment to democratic civil and military relations (4). In the case of Ukraine, we cannot talk about these today.*

According to most Western interpretations of NATO enlargement, from a geopolitical point of view, NATO enlargement is the creation of a new border between Western and Eastern Europe, designed to prevent the unification of Eastern and Western Europe into a single geopolitical structure.

This new frontier is not created by mutual consent between two equal partners (Western and Eastern Europe or the United States and Russia), but by the unilateral and forced expansion of the West. The inevitable disintegration of Eastern Europe makes Western European expansion inevitable in order to manage the coming instability.

"The future of the West depends primarily on the unity of the West. During the development of civilizations, researchers distinguish turbulent times and a period of war against each other. After the war period the development can lead to the creation of the universal state of the given civilization, which can be a source of renewal, but can also be a sign of decline. Current Western civilization has passed the stage of warring states and is moving towards the formation of the universal state. The nation-states of the West now form two semi-universal states, one in Europe (the European Union) and one in America (the United States). However, these two entities are connected by an extremely complex network of formal and informal institutional ties." (5).

The universal states of previous civilizations were empires, but the political form of the two current semi-universal states of Western civilization is democracy, so the emerging universal state will not be an empire, but a set of federations, confederations and international structures.

Huntington does not see this process as a law of social development, he merely says that it is only a chance to create the political unity of Western civilization, to establish a specific new universal state. „From this point of view, the accession of a few countries of little strategic



importance in themselves to the North Atlantic Alliance essentially only means the entry of these countries into the 21st century scene of the greatest (and perhaps last) adventure of Western civilization.”(5)

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's vision of the future sees the end of the Cold War as the end of a five-hundred-year historical cycle of European civilization. According to Lavrov, since then two visions have coexisted: the first is that the world is destined to become a global Westernised world, gradually adopting western values, and the second, which is shared by Russia, is that the world is becoming a global arena of competition between civilizations, where the main issue will be the formulation of complementary or alternative values and models of development (6).

The other Western approach to NATO enlargement is that European security depends on effective cooperation between the five great powers, which has been undermined by NATO expansion and the US foreign policy. The NATO enlargement was seen by all sections of Russian public opinion as a breach of the 1990 deal. This led to a rejection of Russia's cooperation with the West. The result has been the emergence of threats to international security: the collapse of political and economic stability; the failure of the START process, and the intensification of Russia's ambitions for political influence and territorial acquisition.

This result could have been mitigated by refraining from integrating new members into NATO's military structure, by not insisting on the openness of NATO membership to all, and by maintaining the de facto nuclear-weapon-free zone that existed in Central and Eastern Europe (7).

Despite the threats, the West chose confrontation. The invitation and accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO's Madrid Summit in 2023 was an extremely important change in European security environment. Their accession will be crucial not only because of geopolitical changes and the strengthening of the Baltic countries and the defense of the Alliance's North-Eastern territories, but also because of the rapid and radical change in the way the two formerly traditionally neutral Nordic countries perceive threats and security.

This is a very good illustration of the change in the European and transatlantic security environment as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war, and the depth of the impact of this change. "The alliance demonstrated its unity against Russia. In fact, more than that. On the one hand, that it will spectacularly confront the threats and security demands of the Russian leadership,

and on the other hand, that it will build the European security architecture against Russia for the foreseeable future, with all its political and military consequences." (8).

## **THE POLITICAL LESSONS OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR**

Andrew R. Novo, Professor of Strategic Studies at the United States National Defense University, summarized the policy lessons of Russia-Ukraine war below: - the war against Ukraine demonstrates the unfortunate reality that military force as a tool for deterrence and the use of military force still matter in relations between states; - nuclear blackmail is a powerful tool for aggressor states, some of which are still fueled by the old-fashioned desire for territorial acquisition; - political realities are shaped by events on the battlefield; - transatlantic relations are essential for international peace and security; - China and Russia are dictatorships that will not be viable in the long term in the current international system. (9)

Stephen M. Walt, senior analyst at Foreign Policy, and Robert and Renée Belfer, professors of international relations at Harvard University, summarized the lessons of the war as follows: - Political leaders can very easily make mistakes. - States unite against aggression. - What we see today as brave and effective leadership (or incompetent negligence) may look different when the guns fall silent, the final conclusions are drawn and the costs are tallied. - The war strengthens the extremists, which makes it difficult to find a compromise. - A strategy of restraint would have reduced the risk of war.

Such a war would have been much less likely if the United States had exercised restraint in its foreign policy, if US and Western policymakers had heeded expert warnings about the consequences of open-ended NATO enlargement (George F. Kennan, CIA Director William Burns, former ambassadors to Russia), if they had tried to integrate Ukraine cautiously and gradually into Western security and economic institutions. In the case of the latter, Russia would have had much less incentive to attack. - Putin bears primary responsibility for starting the war, but the Biden administration and its predecessors are far from flawless. The Ukrainian people are now suffering not only from Putin's cruelty, but also from the arrogance and naivety of Western officials. (10)

## **MILITARY LESSONS OF THE RUSSIAN - UKRAINIAN WAR**

Of particular relevance to the military lessons of the Russia-Ukraine war are the conclusions drawn by the military leaderships of states that have gained considerable experience of war in recent decades.

Conclusions of the Indian military leadership: - Assumptions about the duration of the war need to be reconsidered. A short, quick war may prove to be a flawed assumption. - The land remains the decisive area of warfare and the concept of victory continues to focus on the land. - Long-range precision artillery has proven that distance does not necessarily guarantee safety. - In the field of naval warfare, even modern warships are vulnerable to low-cost offensive assets. - The proliferation of drones and unmanned systems has changed the use of airspace. - Air superiority, and even favorable air situation, is extremely difficult to achieve. - Revolutionary digital and dual-use technologies can reduce the asymmetry that opposing sides may have with respect to conventional assets. - Efforts must be made to establish the national autonomy and independence of the defense industry and to quickly adapt new technologies to existing and new weapon systems. - Information operations take place in a completely new dimension, on several levels, with many tools and in different areas. Adequate competencies and targeted strategies must be available to win the war of narratives. - Aggression in the gray zone between the state of peace and war is increasingly becoming the preferred strategy of conflicts, the scope of which is increased by technological development. Capabilities are needed not only to mitigate the impact of such attacks, but also to keep the adversary in a state of forced response at all times. - The use of trade as a weapon, digital resilience, communications redundancy, the extension of the confrontation to cyberspace, space and electromagnetic space, the full transparency of the battlefield, and the introduction of advanced kinetic weapons are becoming the new strategic arenas of arms race and geopolitical competition. (11)

The conclusions of the Israeli military leadership: - The most important lesson of the war in Ukraine is that the fighting forces require special technical, tactical and operational skills in high-intensity warfare. This kind of warfare requires different skills and abilities than the more common low-intensity warfare against scattered groups of guerrillas or terrorists. This includes the ability of combat forces to conduct highly coordinated combined operations from the battalion to the division level against a massed enemy. - Another lesson of the war in Ukraine is that, although new technologies are very useful, they are not miracle weapons that go beyond the traditional principles of warfare. Cyber-attacks can be countered by cyber

defense and non-cyber-dependent equipment; the mass use of remotely piloted aircraft can be countered by new anti-aircraft weapons and new electronic warfare tools; precision artillery fire, while effective, does not provide all that ground forces require in fire support. While Russian and Ukrainian forces do not have sometimes enough precision artillery, older artillery still provides the basic capabilities. - The third lesson is that the size of the troops still matters. The real fighting force is quantity multiplied by quality and the will to fight. This is particularly true when a high-intensity war involves several fronts and lasts for weeks or months rather than days. Given that new technologies are extremely expensive, and older technologies have been shown to still provide valuable and essential capabilities, it is not necessary to equip every large, well-equipped unit with the latest technology. If some new technologies are regularized in less well-equipped units (for example, the active missile defense system of armored vehicles), then the difference in combat capabilities between well-equipped and less well-equipped units turns out to be less dramatic than previously thought. - The crucial lesson is that a reliable communications system must be established and operated to ensure military command and control using reliably duplicating communication channels. A military unit exists only if there is effective and stable communication between its subunits. Otherwise, it is just a collection of soldiers and military equipment, operating autonomously according to individual judgement of the situation and the existing fighting spirit (12).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Regarding the future development of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the compromise, the negotiated settlement is getting further and further away, the NATO-Russian military confrontation is getting closer: - Ukraine demands the complete restoration of the country's sovereignty, the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the occupied territories, which is unrealistic. - The NATO does not give up on the expansion of the organization, especially on the inclusion of Ukraine, the collective West continues to export democracy, and does not intend to consider Russian security needs in the future either. - Correspondingly, Russia will not be willing to take Western security needs into account, which will lead to further confrontation. - The collective West helps and supports Ukraine militarily, economically and financially until the significant all-round weakening of Russia, but does not define the criteria for all-round weakening, which makes the strategy incomprehensible. - We can assume, on the basis of concrete historical examples and an analysis of Russia's internal situation that the collapse of Russia is unlikely, despite tens of thousands of sanctions and Western military

support for Ukraine. - It is pointless to hope for a change in Russian policy, as Western sanctions are already directed against the Russian language, culture, sport and existence of Russia, which further strengthens the internal support for the Russian leadership. (No serious conclusions should be drawn from the Prigozhin rebellion. The Wagner members were heroes at the time, their actions were not understood by anyone, and therefore the reaction of the authorities was delayed. Prigozhin is a typical example of an arrogant Russian mid-level military leader who overestimated his own role and importance.) - While modern Western weapon systems will significantly increase Ukraine's military capabilities and allow for a limited attack on Crimea, the continued provision and proper training of military personnel will eventually become a problem. - The intention to show results for the West in liberation of occupied territories leads to senseless Ukrainian diversant actions against militarily unimportant Russian territories, civilian and military targets and target persons and Russian responses only further destroy the Ukraine's military and civilian infrastructure. - The main elements of a compromise settlement could include: recognition of the annexation of the occupied territories to Russia, the provision for Ukraine a sea exit (Odessa), a settlement of the situation of national minorities in Ukraine in line with EU standards, and acceptance from Russian side of Ukraine's future membership of NATO.

The crisis in Ukraine has highlighted a central issue in contemporary political theory and practice, namely that something as seemingly moral as democracy can be destructive where there are no stable, accountable institutions and where there is no political culture that values the rule of law. And even if Ukraine had these institutions, Americans do not have the right to impose democratic norms on other states. As for the attitude of the exporters of democracy (EU, USA), it is also completely incomprehensible why they thought that Russia would stand by and watch Ukraine being torn out of the Russian sphere of interest. (13)

The war in Ukraine has exposed NATO's concerns - the overestimation of its importance, the questionable justification for its existence, the failure of its deterrence strategy, the mismatch between threat and defense budget. The Russian-Ukrainian war, which poses a serious threat to Western values and international law, does not affect the defense spending of NATO members, i.e. the defense budget does not reflect the perception of the threat and is not in line with the rhetoric of war. In the second year of the Russo-Ukrainian war, only eleven NATO member states increased their military spending above the expected 2% of GDP. In politics, however, the hierarchy of values becomes visible through the cost of achieving them. A value estimated at two per cent is in politics exactly has two percent value.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact the reason for NATO existence essentially ceased to exist. The future of NATO and its further enlargement depend on finding a credible, realistic, long-term threat that poses an equal threat to all members of the Alliance. NATO policy, from the disintegration of the Soviet Union, to this day, with longer or shorter breaks, was aimed at "finding" this new threat. This policy has proved effective, and Russia has emerged as a new threat. The Russian threat was not created exclusively by Russian aggression against Ukraine, but the process of creation was finalized by this aggression. The Cold War has once again become a reality, but the struggle of communism and capitalism is replaced by the struggle of democracies and dictatorships. (14).

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