

COORDINATED AND INFLUENTIAL EXTERNAL ACTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIAN MILITARY AGGRESSION: CONCLUSIONS FOR UKRAINE

Author:

Dmytro Zolotukhin, Executive Director of NGO "Institute of Post-Information Society"

Summary of EU Strategic Objectives

Overview of EU Strategic Objectives

On 27 June 2024, the European Council reported that EU leaders had accepted ¹ **EU Strategic Agenda** for the period 2024-2029 – a political plan that defines the future direction and goals of the EU ². They also adopted conclusions on Ukraine, the Middle East, security and defense, competitiveness, migration, the Black Sea, Moldova, Georgia, hybrid threats, the fight against anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia, and a roadmap for internal reforms³. In the above-mentioned document, Russia is mentioned 18 times, not only in the context of military aggression against Ukraine, but also military and hybrid threats that it has created, creates and implements against the member countries of the European Union.

Ralf Drachenberg, a researcher and political analyst at the "European Parliament Think Tank", has prepared⁴ an analysis of the EU Strategic Agenda entitled Strategic Agenda 2024-2029: Continuity or Paradigm Shift?⁵.

Drachenberg emphasizes that the "Strategic Agenda 2024-2029" represents an important change in the EU's political priorities compared to the previous "Strategic Agenda", but despite this, the elements of continuity remain quite obvious. The most obvious changes are the importance of security and defence, the importance of enlargement, the addition of new elements regarding EU competitiveness and the visibility of democracy (within the Union and in relations with third countries), which is a top priority.

Less attention is paid to climate and environment issues, although many of the added elements are repetitions of the political issues considered by the European Council in its conclusions over the past 5 years. Thus, the document appears to be a set of previously agreed positions rather than a new set of guidelines. A key influence on the "Strategic Agenda" was Russia's

¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2024/06/27/>,

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/strategic-agenda-2024-2029/>

² https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/4aldqf12/2024_557_new-strategic-agenda.pdf

³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/qa3lblga/euco-conclusions-27062024-en.pdf>

⁴ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2024\)762849](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2024)762849)

⁵ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/762849/EPRS_BRI\(2024\)762849_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/762849/EPRS_BRI(2024)762849_EN.pdf)

aggression against Ukraine and changing the geopolitical context to a more aggressive one towards the EU.

The "EU's strategic agenda for 2024-2029" is based on three pillars:

- 1) "Free and democratic Europe";
- 2) "Strong and secure Europe";
- 3) "Prosperous and competitive Europe".

The first pillar has two sub-priorities – 1) Upholding European values within the EU and 2) Upholding European values globally.

The second pillar "Strong and Safe Europe" has the following directions:

- 1) Ensuring concerted and influential external actions;
- 2) Strengthening internal security and protecting citizens;
- 3) Preparing for a larger and stronger Union (in the context of potential EU enlargement);
- 4) Follow an integrated approach to migration and border management.

The third pillar of "Prosperous and Competitive Europe" agenda also has four pillars:

- 1) Improving EU competitiveness;
- 2) Building on the success of green and digital transitions;
- 3) Promoting an innovative and supportive business environment;
- 4) Harmonious development for all member states and their citizens.

The six priorities of the European Commission⁶ (until the re-election of Ursula von der Leyen), enshrined for the period 2019-2024, mostly correspond to the directions described in the "EU Strategic Agenda":

- 1) European Green Deal;
- 2) Europe is prepared for the digital age;
- 3) An economy that works for people;
- 4) Stronger Europe in the world;
- 5) Promotion of the European lifestyle;
- 6) A New Impetus for European Democracy

These priorities are likely to undergo correction, however, since Ursula von der Leyen was re-elected President of the European Commission, it is likely that the new priorities of the European Commission, as well as the "Strategic Agenda 2024-2029" will reflect the heredity of the goals and add something new.

This fact is also proved by the publication of "Political Guidelines 2024-2029"⁷ (Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029) for the European Commission, published by Ursula von der Leyen. They outline the strategic priorities and actions that the European Commission plans to implement in various fields under the leadership of von der Leyen. This comprehensive document covers international relations, security, economic

⁶ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024_en

⁷ https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/president-elect-ursula-von-der-leyen_en

policy and social issues, with particular emphasis on how these areas intersect with the EU's strategy towards the Russian Federation in the context of the current conflict in Ukraine.

The document, in particular, recognizes the growing geopolitical disputes, in particular from Russia and China. The document emphasizes the use of policies such as energy, migration and climate as instruments of geopolitical influence. According to von der Leyen, a coordinated approach to external activities will be ensured in cooperation with other officials of the EU institutions, which will be supported by a reliable defense strategy, including the creation of the EUROPEAN DEFENSE UNION and the EUROPEAN DEFENSE FUND to finance defense initiatives, investment in defense capabilities, joint procurement initiatives and the creation of a single market for defense products and services.

Priority will be given to major projects such as the European Air Shield and cyber defense, countering the manipulation of information from abroad, increasing digital and media literacy, and increasing awareness of the situation. Increased regulation of content created by artificial intelligence and transparency.

Another key task in the document is the solution of migration problems through comprehensive strategies, including humanitarian assistance, and the search for long-term solutions for stability and integration.

In addition, the document reflects the issues of energy security and the use of energy as a weapon by Russia; issues of digital transformation, its capabilities and challenges, including cyber threats; as well as climate policy issues.

Summary of key strategies and actions

The global processes resulting from the unprovoked Russia's aggression affect a wide range of issues that can be converted into serious risks for the items of the "EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029". All 11 above-mentioned directions of the "EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029" have a connection with the ongoing military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

1) Free and democratic Europe

EU leaders emphasize that Russia's unprovoked aggression has again brought war to the European continent. It is unlikely that the values of a free and democratic Europe can develop at a time when the political elites and special services of the Russian Federation openly declare that they are waging war on the territory of Ukraine against the West.

2) Strong and secure Europe

A strong and secure Europe is impossible without Ukraine. And, moreover, it is not possible with the ongoing, or even frozen war on the territory of Ukraine, which at any moment can flare up again. Given the likely outcome of the political processes taking place in the United States as one of NATO's leading countries, EU leaders need to be prepared for a worsening security situation in the near future. The source of such deterioration will not be events in the United States and the Transatlantic community, but Russia's aggressive policy, which will receive encouragement from any hints of unity among the allies.

3) Prosperous and competitive Europe

The instruments of sanctions policy, which in fact have turned into instruments of economic war, as well as the discussion about secondary sanctions, obviously adversely affect the health of the European economy. However, no lifting of sanctions is politically impossible at the moment, since Russia's political elites are not going to change their behavior. And if the European Union refuses to put further pressure on Russia without any changes in the behavior of the Russian Federation, it will be a betrayal of the values that are a priority for the European community. At the same time, it should be noted that eight finance ministers of the European Union on July 24, 2024 published⁸ on the pages of the online edition of The Guardian, his political statement on the need to deepen sanctions against Russia.

4) Ensuring concerted and influential external actions

The agreed external actions and the real influence of the EU on world processes are the subject of this report and are crucial for the strategic development of the EU. Examples of insufficiently effective external actions that can harm the interests of the EU are the uncoordinated visits of Hungarian President Viktor Orban to Moscow and Beijing, for which he used the Hungarian presidency in the European Union.

Among other things, it is advisable to recall the EU's position on Nagorno-Karabakh and the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict, as a result of which the situation was radically changed by force without any consideration of European interests, in conditions when both sides of the conflict were dissatisfied with the position of the EU member states, which could have a negative impact on further relations, both with both countries-parties to the conflict and with their partners (for example, Turkey).

5) Strengthening internal security and protecting citizens

The recent assassination attempt of the CEO of the German strategic enterprise Rheinmetall, committed by Russian intelligence; accusing Russia of committing a series of sabotage with explosions at ammunition depots in Vrbetice (Czech Republic), which occurred in 2014; constant cyber attacks and media influence on political processes; inspiring and facilitating the deterioration of the migration situation (in particular, Russia's recent use of refugees to deliberately cross the Russian-Finnish border) – all this suggests that Russia's actions not only aim to destroy Ukraine, but also pose an immediate threat to every EU citizen. Therefore, in order to strengthen internal security and protect EU citizens, strategic steps and concerted external actions in the context of aggression have a high priority.

6) Preparing for a larger and stronger Union (in the context of potential EU enlargement);

Ukraine's membership in the EU is a strategic goal of Ukraine and the leaders of its member states. Ukraine's membership can strengthen the Union and bring a lot of good to the strategic development of Europe. However, because of the war, the EU cannot become strong, constantly adjusting its foreign policy in the context of the next threats and unfriendly actions of Russia.

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jul/24/russia-economic-growth-western-sanctions-vladimir-putin-moscow>

7) Taking an integrated approach to migration and border management

Russia uses migration processes as a hybrid weapon, using special measures of special services, at least in two dimensions – first inspires and facilitates the process of moving refugees from remote regions to the borders of the EU, which we could see in the case of a migration crisis on the border between Belarus and Poland and Lithuania, as well as on the Russian-Finnish border recently. And, then uses media and political tools in EU countries to incite hatred of migrants (for example, the case of "the raped girl Lisa" in Berlin) and radicalize political discussions, maintaining financial ties with radical right parties in France, Germany and Italy.

8) Improving EU competitiveness

The development of a free market is possible only in the safe space of movement of goods. However, at the moment, business and economic exchange has become one of the arenas of military confrontation. Including because of sanctions restrictions. Given the fact that countries such as China, North Korea, India, Brazil, the UAE maintain economic relations with the Russian Federation as an object of European sanctions, this increases the risks for the natural development of markets and competitiveness of the EU.

8) Building on the success of green and digital transitions

One of the key elements of the modern world confrontation, which was intensified and radicalized by Russian aggression, is the energy market and the development of the digital space. Since Russia is an exporter of large volumes of hydrocarbons, the world processes, including in Europe, will also largely depend on this aspect.

Environmental issues have an extraterritorial impact, so the success of the green transition in the countries of the European Union will not be able to cause a sufficiently positive impact if Russia continues to carry out extremely harmful actions for the climate, creating a danger for European countries.

Such threats include, for example, the continuation of the hidden trade in hydrocarbons through the Baltic Sea with the help of the so-called "shadow fleet". According to reports, the average age of ships that are part of the "shadow fleet" and carry Russian oil is 40-60 years. Cargo insurance operations are carried out in an opaque way, or not at all. At the same time, no one checks the condition of this "shadow fleet", and counterparties turn a blind eye to the condition of ships. Thus, how can one believe in the success of the "green transition" of the EU countries if serious threats to the ecology of the Baltic Sea, which is, in fact, internal for European countries, remain unattended?

9) Promoting an innovative and supportive business environment

According to experts in the economic sphere, sanctions against the Russian Federation can be called an economic war, since there is no political possibility and prospects for easing or lifting sanctions. Therefore, the sanctions regime against Russia will not only be maintained, but also strengthened. In the context of the actual economic confrontation, as well as in the context of the war on the territory of Ukraine, it will be extremely difficult to talk about the development of a healthy and favorable business environment and trade. However, even if the hot phase of the war in Ukraine stops, Russia's political elites are unlikely to decide to

change their political course to confrontation with the West. Therefore, the key to a healthy development of European business can only be the defeat of the Russian political regime and its replacement with a more democratic and healthier one.

11) Harmonious development for all member states and their citizens.

The harmonious development of Europe at a time when there is a bloody war on the continent, in which cities are destroyed and children die, is not possible. The volume of refugees and displaced persons, the increase of which is inspired by the policy of the Russian Federation, will continue to change the security and political landscape of European countries and radicalize the position of citizens of EU member states, which will create a favorable environment for the development of populist political movements and parties. This, in turn, will create serious risks for the real development of European communities due to the attractiveness of populist solutions that can deepen schisms within the EU.

Thus, almost every strategic direction of the officially established European agenda during the period 2024-2029 will feel the influence of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. And that is why a clear understanding of the goals and strategy of the European Union regarding the war in Ukraine should be the key to achieving effective solutions in the context of the activities of the European Parliament and the European Commission during the current political cycle.

Importance of a coherent and influential EU foreign policy

A coherent and influential EU foreign policy is crucial in the context of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine and is not only an important tool for supporting Ukraine, but also a key to the security and stability of the whole of Europe.

The EU's common position demonstrates unity and solidarity with Ukraine, reinforcing its international support and countering Russia's attempts to split Europe. It also makes it harder for Russia to manipulate individual EU member states. The agreed EU sanctions against Russia have a significant economic impact, limiting its ability to finance the war and support the military-industrial complex. The EU plays a key role in providing humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, supporting millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. Besides, the EU's military assistance helps strengthen Ukraine's defense capability and deter further Russian aggression, providing military deterrence of Russia and preventing the spread of conflicts on the European continent.

In fact, the EU is securing its vital interests by supporting Ukraine, which is holding back Russia's military onslaught. The EU has significant diplomatic influence in the international arena, which can be used to mobilize support for Ukraine, isolate Russia and promote a just peace. Russia's aggression against Ukraine is not only a threat to Ukraine, but also to European values of democracy, the rule of law and territorial integrity. The EU's cohesive foreign policy makes it possible to defend these values and counteract Russia's attempts to undermine the European order.

The EU's common energy policy is aimed at diversifying energy sources and reducing dependence on Russia, which strengthens Europe's energy security.

A key aspect of the agreed and influential EU foreign policy should be the realization that the current configuration of political forces within the Russian Federation, which not only made possible unprovoked military aggression against an independent state on the European continent, but also continues to support and legitimize this aggression, poses an existential threat to the entire European community and its unity within the European Union.

Without concerted and deliberate external action to change this situation, which has led to the outbreak of the most bloody and uncontrolled war on the European continent in this century, one cannot hope to achieve or at least positively develop any strategic goal of the European agenda.

The harmonious development of the European community will be critically impossible not only until the cessation of hostilities, but throughout the time when the political forces that led to the outbreak of war will be completely changed to healthier ones.

Introduction

Purpose and context

The objective of this document is 1) to assess the effectiveness of the EU's common foreign and security policy in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine in the context of the strategic agenda and strategic development goals of the EU and its governing bodies; 2) to analyze the differences in the positions and actions of the EU member states regarding Russia's aggression and their impact on the overall EU policy; 3) to analyze the EU's response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine: sanctions, military assistance, diplomatic efforts, energy policy; 4) to propose recommendations to improve coordination and effectiveness of EU foreign policy in such crisis situations.

The survey of experts and monitoring of the expert field of the EU member states proves that the European Union still does not have a clear understanding of its interests and goals in the Russian-Ukrainian war. And, also, despite the unwavering support of Ukraine as a victim of unprovoked military aggression by the Russian Federation, and large-scale assistance to Ukraine, the political elites of the EU are still not able to articulate the desired outcome of this conflict and the desired status of the parties and the status of the EU after its end.

Despite public assurances of the desire for Ukrainian victory, Western politicians mostly avoid discussing and articulating the Russian defeat. Although, in the text of the Guarantees of Long-Term Assistance to Ukraine, adopted in the context of the Declaration of the Washington NATO Summit, NATO member states enshrined *"confirmation of their determination to support Ukraine in building a force capable of defeating Russia's aggression today and deterring it in the future"*⁹.

However, discussions about what the words "defeat Russian aggression" mean are not currently underway. Despite the large number of reports, proposals and documents produced by opposition-minded citizens of the Russian Federation who are in exile in the EU countries,

⁹ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm

there is no discussion about which Russian Federation and what format of relations with it would be favorable for EU member states.

The aim of this document is to start such a discussion, in the context of the EU's concerted and influential external action and the promotion of values shared by the European community outside the EU.

"Lessons learnt" and the context of EU-Russia relations

The Russian Federation carries out aggressive actions against the EU through cyber attacks on critical infrastructure, spreading disinformation and interference in elections, financing extremist movements, political assassinations and espionage. These actions are aimed at destabilizing the European Union, undermining its unity and weakening its positions in the international arena.

Since 2014, Russian special services have carried out a number of attacks and sabotage against the countries of the European Union. In 2014, Russian hackers attacked Estonian government and banking sites, causing large-scale disruptions in Internet services. In July 2014, the Russian military shot down Malaysian Airlines passenger plane MH17 over Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board, including citizens of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

In 2015, Russian hackers infiltrated the computer network of the German parliament, stealing a large amount of data. Subsequently, the practice of Russian interference in elections in the EU member states has become almost familiar.

As well as political killings in Europe. Former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter were poisoned in the UK. In 2019, former Chechen field commander Zelimkhan Khangoshvili was killed in Berlin. A German court found that the murder was ordered by the Russian government. In Germany in 2024, an attempt was made on the CEO of Rheinmetall, which is one of the largest weapons manufacturers in Europe. Although no one has been officially charged, there are suspicions of the involvement of Russian special services. In 2015, there was an attempt on the life of Bulgarian businessman Emilian Gebrev, who had business contacts with Ukraine in the context of arms supplies.

In 2018, Russian intelligence officers blew up ammunition depots in Vrbetice (Czech Republic), which killed two people.

Since 2015, cyber attacks on energy facilities in Europe, in particular in France and Germany, have been constantly recorded. Russian special services actively use disinformation to influence public opinion and political processes in European countries. For example, during the referendum on Britain's withdrawal from the EU (Brexit) and the elections in France and Germany, Russia's attempts to spread fake news and manipulate social networks were revealed.

There is evidence that Russian special services finance and support far-right and far-left extremist movements in Europe, seeking to destabilize the political situation and weaken the EU.

These are just some of the known cases of Russian attacks and sabotage against EU countries. The true number of such transactions may be much larger, since many of them remain undisclosed. In fact, Russia has long been waging war against EU member states, which the political elites of the European Union refuse to recognize, due to political and commercial reasons. However, it is time to accept this truth.

The civilized approach of Western countries, which consisted in creating business ties with Russian elites on win-win terms, which would exclude the further spread of mistrust and conflicts, failed.

The countries of Western Europe tried to apply the same tools that became the basis for the creation of the European Union and the successful coexistence of states on the continent. These tools consisted in deepening mutual investment, trade, commercial ties and interdependence with Russia, which resulted in a critical situation for Europe in the sphere of the need for cheap energy carriers supplied by Russia.

Despite the fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin constantly emphasizes that the "Western elites" deceived or betrayed him, in fact, this internal ideology of the Russian elites, which have their roots in the Russian and Soviet special services, has led to the fact that the hand of friendship extended by European countries has been rejected. And, instead, Russia began a war on the continent.

Thus, it can be said with full confidence and responsibility that all attempts to appease the current Russian elite, from the policy of Gerhard Schroeder to peacekeeping visits to Vladimir Putin of Austrian Chancellor Karl Negammer and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, are not only unproductive, but also do not reflect the interests of the European Union.

The titanic efforts of European leaders, who were able to create a format of communication within the framework of the "Minsk agreements" between Ukraine and Russia, were nullified by the actual curtailment of the sovereignty of Belarus and the strengthening of Vladimir Putin's influence on the President of Belarus, and by the decision to launch a full-scale military aggression against Ukraine.

The Russian political elite was formed in the conditions of the ideological Soviet non-alternative confrontation of the West and can have no other format of coexistence than the aggressive pushing of its interests.

Given the above, there is no need to expect changes in the aggressive behavior of current Russian political elites regarding the values and goals of the European Union community. And, therefore, it confirms that **Russia will remain an existential enemy and an existential threat to the European Union until the current Russian political elites are changed or controlled by other forces or other political configuration in Russia.**

Such **internal political changes can occur only when Russian propaganda cannot interpret the current policy of Vladimir Putin and his entourage as the only possible and forced one for the Russian audience**, including, for people from among the regional and business Russian elites.

During one of his election campaigns, Vladimir Putin chose the slogan "Where Putin is, there is a victory". This narrative is firmly entrenched in the minds of Russian audiences. Therefore, it is **critically important to demonstrate that where Putin is, there can be no victory**.

Only by **inflicting systematic significant defeats (decisive defeats) on different parts of the Ukrainian front, in the economic plane and in other parts of the world (Syria, Mali, CAR) will be able to convey information about these defeats** to certain Russian audiences. This can lead to the accumulation of frustration and discontent of Russians, including among the elites.

In combination with effective sanctions, systematic significant military and economic defeats will lead to a situation where Vladimir Putin's authoritarian leadership political regime can be challenged by other representatives of domestic and regional elites, supported by public discontent and tension.

The actions of domestic political and regional elites, aimed at preserving their well-being and disappointed in the weakness of the leader, can create preconditions for Russia's internal political transformation and change of the political regime, or depriving Vladimir Putin of unlimited power.

Since such events can happen suddenly, behind the scenes and unexpectedly, it is critically important to carry out proactive activities to establish ties and communication with various representatives of the Russian elites, and not just rely on the Russian opposition in exile.

The role of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is and will remain mandatory, though not the only prerequisite for waiting for any transformation within Russia. Only the Armed Forces of Ukraine are at the moment the undoubted and only tool that can inspire processes of change within the Russian Federation. Such changes will not necessarily begin even because of the defeat of the Russian army. But no other instrument or approach can bring closer to transformation within Russia, which will guarantee a just, stable and lasting peace.

Given the above, the European community should either accept the long-term, constant existence of existential threats to itself from Russia, or use the only chance for change within Russia, given various scenarios that include the task of the Russian army of tangible and regular defeats.

These scenarios and potential scenarios for Russia are important to work through by preparing contact groups to inform, respond to and prevent challenges for the EU in the context of building a sustainable world.

It should be noted that among the opposition-minded citizens of the Russian Federation, who were forced to flee to the European Union and whose activities are supported by the taxpayers of the European Union, this vision of the development of their own state has been formed. That is, an uncontested change in the political regime and the political elite.

However, in order to effectively study the "lessons learnt", it should be noted that a detailed study of the activities of most opposition Russian movements and organizations operating in the EU countries is often focused on competition for donor resources and the struggle among themselves. Therefore, it is advisable to state that the intensive cooperation of European politicians and governments with the Russian opposition in exile over the past two years has

not brought, unfortunately, any changes regarding the crisis situation that has developed as a result of Russia's armed aggression.

Thus, one of the critically necessary tools to ensure a coordinated influential external action of the EU, which will be the key to achieving the goals of the "Strategic Agenda", is to ensure the infliction of military defeats of the Russian army on the territory of Ukraine on different parts of the front.

Threats to the interests of a coherent and influential EU foreign policy beyond Russia's aggression

Since the beginning of a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Federation has been intensively using foreign political instruments in order to assert its rightness and to take actions to destroy the European Union, to increase the disunity between the national elites of the member states of the European Union, as well as to break and worsen relations between Ukraine and the European Union and to prevent the preservation or increase in the level of assistance provided by the European Union to Ukraine.

In the context of this complex activity, which is actively carried out by the Russian Federation, it should be noted separately the intensive deployment of the international association of the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa).

On the one hand, the BRICS, in fact, is trying to take over the leadership of the G20 economic bloc, which, among other things, includes European countries and creates a certain balance of opinions. For example, in March 2023, at the G20 summit, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was, in fact, ridiculed by the diplomats present from different countries when he said that Russia's goal in Ukraine is to "stop the war that was launched by the West against Russia, using Ukrainians".

On the other hand, the BRICS association is actually becoming an economic platform for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) bloc, where Russia and China are actively promoting their geopolitical and military interests.

On July 4, 2024, following the results of the summit in Astana (Kazakhstan), Belarus joined the SCO, which officially became the tenth member country of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In 2023, Iran joined the SCO.

In addition to the activity of official international organizations of the SCO and BRICS, Russia actively promotes the narrative of the "global majority", openly stating that countries that have more population and political regimes that govern these countries have the right to determine the direction of development of the entire planet.

For the most part, we are talking about countries that do not share the values of freedom and multiculturalism that are fundamental to the European Union.

Thus, to demonstrate an example of the ideology of the so-called "global majority", former employee of the Presidential Administration of Russia and former official of the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia Inal Ardzinba conducted an interview with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who openly expressed anti-Western ideas.

Thus, based on the foregoing, shaping the foreign policy of the European Union in the context of the war in Ukraine, it is necessary to realize the fact that thanks to the active activities of the Russian Federation, an axis of cooperation is being built in the world between political elites who openly declare anti-Western and anti-European ideas, as well as openly speak about the values shared by the European community.

The countries that are parts of this authoritarian political axis include North Korea, China, Iran, Russia, Belarus, Venezuela, Cuba.

Using the narrative of the "global majority", Russia promotes the idea that Western countries have pursued and are pursuing colonialist policies towards the countries of Africa and Asia and use the values declared by the West to the detriment of the traditional customs of the countries of the "global majority". The consequence of such a policy was a sharp and total weakening of the presence and influence of the countries of Western Europe in Africa. Thus, the large-scale resources of European countries (in particular, France), which were invested earlier in the fight against terrorist groups and in leveling the control of Islamist militants in Africa, were actually wasted.

After all, despite the large-scale political and military operations and missions in the region, all of them were curtailed, and Russian mercenaries, including from the Wagner group, gained control of the situation.

Key objective of EU foreign policy in the context of Russia's aggression

The report "From Strategic Partner to Strategic Challenge?"¹⁰, which was approved by the Political Assembly of the European People's Party on June 28, 2021, that is, even before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, refers to a radical change in the EU's policy towards Russia from cooperation to confrontation. Russia has been identified as a major strategic challenge threatening peace, security, democracy and the international order. A few months after that, Russia attacked Ukraine, confirming the correctness of the direction, but insufficient persistence of European policy.

The EU policy towards Russia is reflected in the following long-term areas of work:

- rethink the EU's relationship with Russia to adapt policy based on a realistic understanding of the Kremlin's goals and actions;
- to ensure the unity and stability of the EU, in the context of Russia's active actions aimed at dividing and undermining European and transatlantic unity;
- to provide support for democratic movements, civil society and the rule of law in countries affected by Russian aggression;
- strengthen sanctions against Russian subjects and persons involved in human rights violations, aggression and corruption, and ensure coordination of these sanctions with international partners;
- to deter Russia by strengthening NATO's forward presence and readiness, developing joint anti-hybrid defence capabilities and consolidating security resilience in the Eastern Partnership countries. In the context of the publication of strategic guidelines

¹⁰ https://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2021/06/Russia_Paper_28_June-1.pdf

for the European Commission and the re-election of Ursula von der Leyen, the creation of the European Defence Union and the European Defence Fund was added to this context;

- eliminate dependence on Russian energy resources to prevent manipulation and blackmail and completely abandon purchases of Russian liquefied gas;
- to counter Russian disinformation campaigns and propaganda efforts aimed at destabilizing democratic societies;
- prevent Russia's economic participation in strategic projects and minimize the possibility of financing the war.

During the war years, many official documents, analytical reports¹¹ and expert articles¹² were published on the EU's strategic attitude to Russia. However, the policy priority in the EU remains "preventing escalation" and preventing the military defeat of the Russian army, since the defeat of Russia is regarded by individual experts as a source of risks.

This position is partly the result of reflexive management on the part of Russia, which deliberately and skillfully promotes the narrative that in case of defeat it will definitely use nuclear weapons.

Russia's reflexive management has been successful, which has led to the fact that the European Union still does not have a clearly articulated goal and the desired format for ending Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The absence of a conscious goal is converted into the absence of clear political signals and concrete actions to achieve the formulated goals.

This problem is pointed out by Member of the European Parliament Andrius Kubilius¹³, who emphasizes that "*in some Western capitals, in particular in Berlin, there is a fear of what will happen in Russia if the Putin regime collapses*".

In March 2024, the Brussels think tank Friends of Europe published a report entitled "**Revenge, implosion or reform – three scenarios for Russia after a defeat in Ukraine**"¹⁴, which reveals in detail the possibilities of the development of the situation in Russia after the military defeat inflicted on the Russian army. Scenarios for the development of the situation in the Russian Federation, in the event of the defeat of the Russian army, are concentrated around three basic capabilities:

- continued concentration of power in the Kremlin (elite consensus);
- lack of consensus of elites (turmoil);
- refederalization of the Russian Federation and subjectivization of regional elites without disintegration of the Russian state.

A large circle of experts involved in the creation of the document called the refederalization scenario the least likely, but most desirable scenario that would open the way to new opportunities and a new Russia.

¹¹ <https://camegieendowment.org/research/2022/11/a-paradigm-shift-eu-russia-relations-after-the-war-in-ukraine>

¹² <https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/germany-and-russias-war-aggression-against-ukraine-third-year>

¹³ <https://libmod.de/en/russia-sanctions-interview-andrius-kubilius/>

¹⁴ <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/revenge-implosion-or-reform-three-scenarios-for-russia-after-a-defeat-in-ukraine/>

Later, the think tank "Friends of Europe" published another report entitled "**Ukraine: cost of inaction – What's at stake for our economies, politics and democracies**"¹⁵, which reveals the likely negative consequences of the lack of a clear, transparent and effective policy of the European Union regarding Russia's aggression in Ukraine and military defeat Russian army in Ukraine.

Thus, the analytical capabilities of the European Union can provide the European Parliament, the European Commission and the national governments of the EU member states with a comprehensive multifaceted and multi-level analysis of the current situation and highlight the desired scenarios for the development of the conflict, as well as the undesirable consequences of the lack of a proactive position.

The most desirable and beneficial for the European Union end of Russian military aggression would be the situation. in which individual military defeats of the Russian army in Ukraine of different scale and significance, as well as economic pressure and a reasonable policy of cooperation with individual representatives of political elites could lead to the subjectivization of individual regional elites, which could in the long term ensure the refederalization of the Russian Federation, which would result in a reboot of the system of democratic mechanisms of checks and balances that would make it impossible to repeat military aggression.

Moreover, experts and historians, in particular Timothy Snyder and Anders Aslund, emphasize¹⁶ that historically, military defeats usually led to reforms and a change of leadership in the Russian Federation – as happened after the Crimean War (1853-56), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) and the war in Afghanistan (1979-88). Vladimir Putin has reintroduced Stalinist-level repression and opted for eternal war, a project that is likely to end in his death. While regime change ultimately depends on Russians, the West should welcome the prospect of political change within Russia, as it is in the EU's interest.

German researcher Stefan Meister, head of the International Order and Democracy Programs of the German Council for Foreign Relations (DGAP), notes from 2022 that under the current political regime in Moscow there will be no reset of relations between the EU and Russia. Only a profound regime change in Russia will create an opportunity for a fundamentally different EU policy towards the country. In his opinion, the key prerequisite for political changes in Moscow – but not a guarantee of this – is the defeat of Russia in Ukraine.

Instead, failure to achieve this result threatens the European Union with even greater cataclysms and a constant increase in risks in the security, economic, political, digital and climatic spheres.

On 29 February 2024, the European Parliament (EP) adopted Resolution P9_TA (2024) 0118¹⁷ "**Regarding the murder of Alexei Navalny and the need for EU action in support of political prisoners and oppressed civil society in Russia**".

EP deputies, committed to Ukraine, introduced the following text in the text of this resolution:

¹⁵ <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/ukraine-cost-of-inaction-whats-at-stake-for-our-economies-politics-and-democracies/>

¹⁶ <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/western-strategy-to-help-ukraine-defeat-russia-once-and-for-all-by-anders-aslund-2024-05>

¹⁷ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2024-0118_EN.pdf

"The EP deplors the imperialist policy of the Russian regime and strongly condemns the continuation of Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine;

Reiterates that the EU, its Member States and like-minded partners around the world should continue to provide political, economic, financial and military support to Ukraine, including support for civil society and long-term support for Ukraine's reconstruction, as this is the best response to the repressive and aggressive actions currently being taken by the Kremlin regime;

is convinced that Ukraine's decisive victory can lead to real changes in the Russian Federation, in particular de-imperialization, decolonization and refederalization, which are necessary conditions for the establishment of democracy in Russia..."

This formulation by Western politicians of the vision of **Ukraine's victory and its consequences is new to the agenda. The wording "de-imperialization, decolonization and refederalization** of the Russian Federation" appeared at the highest political level of Europe for the first time and is the result of progressive and regular work of advocacy campaigns, which are joined by both representatives of Ukrainian civil society and members of the Russian opposition movement in Europe.

Besides, this approach, in its essence, is radically different from the hopeless context of the discussion about "disintegration/dismantling of Russia" or "supporting the liberation of the enslaved peoples of Russia".

Such rhetoric can contribute to the beginning of a discussion about the need to transform the Russian Federation, which will ensure the liberation of Ukraine and prevent the recurrence of aggression, and, on the other hand, will eliminate the fear of Western political elites of defeat and destructive processes within the Russian Federation.

Refederalization excludes and does not allow the collapse of the federation into small national (feudal) formations, although it does not exclude the further struggle of individual political movements, ethnic groups and nationalities within the Russian Federation for independence or autonomy. On the other hand, it includes the maximum weakening of the federal center (the destruction of the power vertical); and increasing the subjectivity of the regions, according to previous versions of the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

Increasing the ability of the subjects of the Federation to protect their interests, as opposed to the "vertical of power" created by the colonial regimes of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, will reduce the effectiveness of the Kremlin's decisions to mobilize or intensify hostilities. At the same time, the emergence of new centers of power in the regions will ensure the preservation of manageability of socio-economic processes in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Including, in the long term, a potential reformatting of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation (Senate), which consists of regional representatives, provides the President of the Russian Federation with the right to use armed forces outside the state. This will weaken the power of the President of the Russian Federation and reduce the importance of the figure who occupies this position.

Thus, the key interests of the European Union's foreign policy are not only the cessation of hostilities and the restoration of Ukraine, but also the transformation within the Russian

Federation, which, on the one hand, will bring Russia and the EU closer to healthy bilateral relations and will make it impossible to repeat or escalate military aggression, and, on the other hand, – ensure the financial and other material capabilities of the restoration of Ukraine, the conviction of war criminals and the restoration of the so-called "business as usual" with Russian counterparties at a new, much healthier and safer level.

On 17 July 2024, the European Parliament adopted resolution P10_TA (2024) 0003¹⁸, which in clear terms confirmed the above-mentioned strategic goals of the EU in relation to Ukraine.

EU Security and Defence

Despite the repeatedly stated and debated existential interests of the European Union towards Russia and the format of ending the aggressive war that Russia unleashed on the European continent, the key strategic directions of the work of the national governments of the EU and the whole European Community remain only "containing Russia" (containing and deterrence), preventing escalation through meager supplies of weapons for the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and prioritizing a diplomatic solution to a situation that can only lead to the freezing or postponement of the hot phase of the conflict for future generations of Europeans.

That is, in other words, it is about transferring responsibility for changes in the world to their descendants, instead of passing on a better world to them.

The reasons for this policy are the lack of awareness of European political elites about the processes and events within Russia, as well as in international relations, of which Russia is a part.

Thus, in the process of forming EU foreign policy, so-called blind spots appear in the understanding of real events that negatively affect the policy-making process.

For example, such "blind spots" in the Western understanding of the processes within Russia can be called climate threats, curtailing the rights of women and LGBT communities, putting pressure on indigenous peoples and ethnic groups, etc.

Climatic risks are created by Russia due to operational practices and negligence in the development of minerals in Siberia, the Arctic, the Caspian Sea and other regions, as well as due to the transportation of hydrocarbons by pipeline (concomitant air pollution due to uncontrolled emissions of compressor stations) and sea routes (risks of using old sea vessels).

Climate Action Tracker¹⁹ constantly assesses Russia's actions as premature and critical, but the EU's green transition policy in no way takes these risks into account. The EU continues to purchase hydrocarbons from Russia (in particular, the purchase of LNG by European consumers). In addition, the war in Ukraine also creates the preconditions for a climate catastrophe on the European continent, given the undermining of the dam in New Kakhovka and the negligent maintenance of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

Feminist movements in the Russian Federation face various forms of oppression and restrictions that suppress their ability to advocate for gender equality. The level of domestic

¹⁸ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0003_EN.pdf

¹⁹ <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/russian-federation/>

violence against women in the Russian Federation has reached an alarming level (81st place among 156 countries in The Global Gender Gap Index 2021²⁰). "The international LGBT movement" is generally recognized in Russia as an extremist organization, which leads to the fact that belonging to the LGBT community is now outlawed.

The indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation continuously suffer from oppression, constant cultural and linguistic deprivation, denial of their right to self-determination. A disproportionate number of non-Russian populations are conscripted and sent to war, resulting in huge casualties among ethnic minorities. Instead, state propaganda massively promotes the unification of identity, in particular, through songs such as "Ya russkiy" ("I am Russian") by the artist Yaroslav Dronov, who also became the subject of sanctions.

Thus, the European academic and political communities, in fact, ignore the critical problems of the Russian Federation, which pose a threat to the strategic goals of the EU in the sphere of dissemination and upholding of values by instruments of foreign policy.

The reason for this disregard is the narrative that Russia is an authoritarian nuclear power and nothing can be done about it, only to accept and try to restrain it. On the other hand, significant financial resources spent by Western taxpayers to support the quasi-opposition activities of Russian organizations outside the Russian Federation are limited only to public events, media activity and statements that nothing can be done under the current political regime in the Russian Federation.

Last but not least, the reasons for the "blind spots" in the understanding of the Russian Federation are large-scale Russian propaganda, which, among other things, operates through the powerful tools of Russia's foreign presence, both diplomatic and cultural (Rossotrudnichestvo), and through academic circles (Russian studies, etc.)

Such an approach in combination – on the one hand, the low level of awareness of policymakers about the processes in Russia, and, on the other hand, focusing on the tools of "deterrence" dooms the EU's foreign policy to a loss of subjectivity in the most acute areas of geopolitical processes.

As for Russia itself, unlike the European Union, its military-political leadership has a clear position on its expansion and destabilization of European communities, which it is not afraid to implement by all available means.

For example, migration has become one of the hybrid instruments of destabilization of the European Union. Over the past two years, Russia has been using migration as a tool to destabilize Finland²¹. These tactics include organizing the movement of migrants to the Finnish-Russian border to create pressure on Finland. Since mid-2022, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of migrants arriving at the Finnish border from Russia. Many of these migrants come from the Middle East and Africa and arrive without visas. In response to the influx of migrants, Finland closed its eastern border with Russia in December 2023 to prevent further arrivals of migrants. The Finnish government has extended these closures several times and plans to maintain them until the situation stabilizes.

²⁰ https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

²¹ <https://mixedmigration.org/russo-finish-border-games/>

At the same time, Finland is developing new laws to strengthen its border security. These laws include provisions to block asylum seekers at the border and more effectively manage migrant flows. The legislation is aimed at reducing the number of asylum seekers, tightening citizenship requirements and reducing benefits for refugees.

However, from a political point of view, the migration crisis fueled anti-migration sentiments in Finland, which benefited right-wing parties such as the Finnish Party. This political shift has led to harsher immigration policies and increased support for measures to prevent illegal migration.

Finland turned to the EU for help in resolving migration pressure. The European Commission is involved in resolving the situation and ensuring that the measures taken by Finland comply with international obligations, while ensuring the protection of its borders.

Such a scheme of hybrid influence has been used by Russia for many years, including the migration crisis on the Belarusian-Polish border. Russia's efforts have led to a significant radicalization of the political agenda in the EU, which has crystallized through the popularity of ultra-right-wing parties, changing the political landscape of the European community and making it vulnerable to populist tendencies.

In addition to using migration processes as a tool to destabilize the EU, Russia is weaponizing other areas:

- energy – through the impact on the European energy market;
- cyber security – through cyber attacks on critical EU infrastructure, including government systems, energy networks and financial institutions;
- disinformation – through reflexive control operations, which may not even be fakes, but create the context necessary for destabilization and radicalization of relations (for example, the grain crisis on the Ukrainian-Polish border);
- economic leverage – through indirect investment in strategic sectors to influence the political decisions of individual EU countries;
- social networks – through the use of botnets and artificial intelligence to organize information campaigns that contribute to polarization and undermine confidence in democratic institutions in the EU;
- finance – through Russian oligarchs and criminal groups using offshore schemes to launder money and finance illegal activities, which undermines the economic stability and security of the EU financial system;
- financing of extremist movements in the EU countries, which causes an increase in violence and social unrest;
- political influence – by interfering in electoral processes and supporting pro-Russian politicians and parties in order to influence political decisions in EU countries.

These areas show Russia's multifaceted approach to destabilizing the EU, using various tools to undermine socio-economic stability and political unity. Thus, it is safe to say that at the moment **when Russia considers the European Union exclusively as its opponent and enemy**, carrying out unfriendly hybrid actions against it, aimed at deep destabilization and long-term damage, the **political leaders of the European Union are limited only to "detering Russia"**, which, in the future, can lead to strategic threats to the existence of the European Union.

Such a "containment strategy" has as its integral part the support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which, in fact, provide the same "containment of Russia" at a considerable distance from the borders of the European Union. However, it is also obvious that under the influence of Russian propaganda, which includes generating fear of the defeat of the Russian army, which, allegedly, can lead to the use of nuclear weapons, **the support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is carried out exclusively in a dosed and limited manner, which makes it impossible to gain a specific advantage over the enemy.**

The Russian military and political leadership are well aware of this and is taking special measures to support this bluff, which aims to convince the EU of the lack of any humanity and readiness to kill hundreds of thousands of innocent people in order not to compromise its interests.

Such reflexive management measures go far beyond issues relating to countering disinformation and foreign manipulation (FIMI) and do not have appropriate opposition and scrutiny by European countries.

The EU's policy of metered and limited provision of weapons to Ukraine sooner or later will lead to a weakening of the containment of Russia by the exhausted forces of the Ukrainian army. If this happens, the armed forces of the EU member states will have to really restrain Russia themselves.

By its actions on unilateral demarcation of borders in the Baltic Sea²², Russia demonstrates the desire by hybrid methods to check the real weight of NATO's security guarantees.

Thus, sooner or later, the "containment strategy" can turn into a "war strategy", which Europeans will have to lead instead of Ukrainians.

In this context, one should pay attention to examples of the situation in certain countries of Africa, where the military presence of Western European countries has been reduced to zero, due to the large-scale deployment of mercenaries of the Wagner group.

The current situation around anti-terrorist missions led by European governments in Africa reflects a scenario where EU member states lose their foreign policy influence by refusing to assume responsibility and leadership in protecting democracy. The same can be said about the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh, which was radically resolved by instruments of force, while European countries put forward proposals for diplomatic formats of solution. Such processes obviously seriously weaken foreign policy and influence of external actions of the EU, which negatively affects the vital interests of the European community.

However, unfortunately, the consequences of the weakened EU foreign policy do not remain outside the EU, but begin to affect internal processes, in particular through migrants living in EU member states.

Thus, in the context of France's policy in Africa, there were repeatedly recorded situations when supporters of Russian policy in African countries (Mali, CAR, Chad, etc.) carry out active public activities in Paris and other EU capitals, holding rallies, public meetings, seminars and other activities, which have as its leitmotif the condemnation of all European

²² <https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/news/russias-push-to-change-baltic-sea-border-sparks-concern-in-the-region/>

politics in African countries, and the image of EU countries as colonialists and mercantile capitalists, inciting revanchist sentiments among migrants living in the EU.

Russia can also exert informational influence on Ukrainian refugee communities, fueling frustration that Western governments are not providing Ukraine with enough weapons. Such frustration can be converted into revanchist sentiments of anti-European orientation, which may negatively affect the internal political situation in the EU, despite the political course in full support of Ukraine.

Cooperation between NATO and the EU

The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO has obviously strengthened the security context of the European Union, creating an additional resource of protection against threats posed by Russia.

NATO also plays an important role as a nuclear umbrella over those EU countries that do not have their own nuclear weapons and are unable to respond to Russia's irresponsible geopolitical behavior in the context of nuclear deterrence. However, the biggest advantages of the North Atlantic Club may be NATO's biggest vulnerabilities.

Undoubtedly, one of Russia's strategic goals is the destruction of unity between Western partners, both within NATO and within the EU. And, for the destruction of trust and unity, it is not necessary to have a significant armed or military superiority.

The key goal of Russia, in the context of an attack on a NATO member country, if such a decision were made, would not be to gain military superiority in battle, since this is hardly possible. Instead, the key objective would be to undermine the unity of NATO members at the time of the decision to invoke Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which requires a coordinated and clear military response to an attack against a NATO member state.

If, in response to an armed provocation by Russia, or any hostile actions that Russia may attribute to a mistake or an excess of the performer, the decision to apply Article 5 of the treaty is not made, or is delayed on the basis of fear of escalation, then this will be considered the achievement of Putin's goal, and indicate the ineffectiveness of the North Atlantic Treaty. To achieve this goal, Putin does not need to fight NATO or throw large military units into battle. For this, one missile with a nuclear, or not a nuclear warhead, is enough.

Therefore, along with strengthening NATO's capabilities and ensuring unity and mutual understanding, one of the components of the EU's foreign policy should also be the realization that it is mainly about the degree of risk-taking competition. And, in this context, the Russian military-political elite will always win, since it does not need to take into account the mood of society or ensure the fulfillment of the terms of the social contract with voters.

One response to the threat to NATO member states is to strengthen the military capabilities of Ukraine, which is already at war with Russia and can use any means of destruction throughout Russia's territory. Therefore, the issue of fear of escalation can be partially removed by shifting this role to Ukraine, in the process of providing it with resources that will allow to inflict military defeats on Russian units.

NATO Headquarters is holding a competition for the position of Russia Policy Coordination Section Head, which will be responsible for the development and implementation of policies and strategies related to NATO policy towards Russia²³.

Therefore, a critically important aspect for the EU is the creation and development of official structures that would correspond to similar NATO units in order to ensure synchronization and coordination of the vision and individual external actions between NATO and the EU.

Policy of sanctions against Russia

According to European and opposition-minded Russian experts, the EU's sanctions policy at the moment has actually turned into a means of economic war. Since, the application of sanctions implies that the object of sanctions changes its behavior. At the moment, we cannot imagine a situation in which there would be political expediency and the ability to lift the sanctions imposed on Russian entities and sectors of the economy. At least if the current Russian regime continues its current policy. And, we do not observe any grounds or hints of its change.

Thus, in the event of a change in behavior by the object of sanctions, or even by paying fines, or restoring legality, the EU will have a reason to decide on the lifting of sanctions. However, at the moment, the political leadership of the Russian Federation not only clearly and transparently demonstrates a conscious refusal to change its policy, but also uses the sanctions regimes of Western countries as an excuse for its aggressive actions towards Ukraine and other countries. In addition, the Russian Federation and its political leaders constantly declare that the political elites of Western Europe do not have independence, but only act as indicated by Washington.

Thus, the confrontation in the economic sphere will, as expected, squeeze resources from both sides and negatively influence the overall economic potential of the EU. Therefore, even the continuation of the policy of imposing subsequent sanctions packages on Russian enterprises and industries will not achieve the necessary goal due to the fact that it was necessary to do this earlier and on a larger scale. As well as providing Ukraine with the necessary weapons.

Since Russian political elites are not going to change their policies, the only way out of the impasse is to ensure the ability of the Ukrainian army to inflict military defeats on the forces of Russia's invasion, which will result in the creation of a potential for political change in Russia.

At the same time, it is necessary to work on finding ways to create a space for negotiations between representatives of the European community and representatives of the Russian regional and business elites, in order to convince the latter of the choice of an alternative to the official Kremlin policy, on the basis of material interest in ensuring their future, in contrast to the currently uncontested business turn to the Asian and Eastern regions. Such negotiations could include the prospect of some targeted lifting of sanctions, in exchange for specific political changes and a rejection of loyalty to the Kremlin.

²³<https://www.nato.int/structur/recruit/documents/Head,%20Russia%20Policy%20Coordination%20Section.pdf>

One of the tools to strengthen the competitiveness and development of European business against the background of the tightening of sanctions could be a political course to gradually squeeze Russian suppliers and manufacturers from those markets where they could be replaced by European businesses.

Government and international support of Western companies in the direction of facilitating the replacement of Russian companies in certain business niches could be an effective alternative to creating numerous exceptions to the sanctions procedures that enable Russian businesses to continue supplying their goods.

Diplomatic relations and dialogue

One of the diplomatic instruments of the European Union is the EU Public Diplomacy²⁴ format, which is part of the EU Global Strategy²⁵ in the field of foreign and security policies that were adopted before Russia unleashed a global war on the European continent.

Part of the EU Public Diplomacy format was the EU Public Diplomacy-Russia platform, which is currently funded by the governments of EU member states and is intended to communicate and financially support anti-war movements of citizens of the Russian Federation who are in EU countries.

These Russian opposition-minded movements and organizations are used to disseminate relevant content to a Russian-speaking audience. However, according to experts and media analysts, such activities in no way can lead to any changes in the processes taking place in Russia.

Therefore, it is advisable to talk about certain contradictions in the rhetoric of representatives of the European political elite, who take a critical position regarding the ability of the Ukrainian armed forces to indirectly influence the Russian regime by inflicting military defeats on the Russian army.

On the one hand, politicians and experts are skeptical about the possibility of forming preconditions for changing the political regime in Russia by setting a military defeat for the Russian army, saying that even defeat will not be a problem for Vladimir Putin.

On the other hand, European politicians and experts are optimistic about the possibility of democratizing Russia by distributing Russian-language content (video, anti-corruption investigations and analytical reports on the future of the Russian Federation) by the Russian opposition in exile among an audience that is under the totalitarian propaganda influence of the Kremlin.

This contradiction is the result of a lack of discussion about the goals and expectations of the European community from a coherent foreign policy towards Russian aggression. In particular, determining the priority of areas of diplomatic work.

The priority of Ukrainian diplomacy is, at the moment, the promotion and implementation of the Peace Formula of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which was supported by many states

²⁴ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/public-diplomacy_en#45912

²⁵ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en

at the inaugural summit in Switzerland in June 2024. However, just before the summit, the current Russian President Vladimir Putin announced his ultimatum, which consists in putting forward the conditions for the annexation of five Ukrainian regions (Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk, Lugansk regions and Crimea), which showed his unwillingness to enter into adequate communication in the format of the Formula of Peace.

Thus, one of the ways of positive coordinated external influence from the EU can be making efforts to support and promote measures that would contribute to the implementation of the Peace Formula of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which enjoys support both within Ukraine and among the international community.

It should be noted that diplomatic representatives of Russia and President Vladimir Putin personally very often voice absolutely unfulfilled diplomatic conditions for entering into dialogue.

Starting with the demand to "sew in from Europe", which was put forward by the North Atlantic Alliance of NATO before a full-scale invasion, and ending with the requirement for the Ukrainian armed forces to liberate the sovereign territories of those regions that are already partially occupied by the Russian army.

The Russian side deliberately uses techniques in diplomatic dialogue that make further cooperation impossible. This means that the Russian side is trying to weaponize diplomatic dialogue and aims not at reaching compromises and agreements, but at manipulating and intimidating its opponents.

This awareness should not only be adopted by the diplomatic service of the EU and member states, but also spread in multilateral formats of diplomatic interaction in which the EU participates (UN, OSCE, IAEA).

The diplomatic influence of the EU should take into account the capabilities and activities of Vladimir Putin and the Russian special services, aimed at splitting the unity of the European Union. An example of such attempts is the activity of Hungarian President Viktor Orbán, who used the status of the presidency of Hungary in the European Union for his own political gain, without having a mandate from member countries to conduct any negotiations. Such actions of Orbán were condemned by the adopted resolution of the European Parliament P10_TA (2024) 0003²⁶.

Obviously, his actions were pre-planned with the participation of Russian special services and the Foreign Ministry and caused serious damage to the EU's unified position on Russia's starting the war in Europe.

In order to avoid the spread of risks for a single and influential EU foreign policy in the future, it is necessary to work on promoting proactive leadership political positions and processes in order to prevent the emergence of a media or ideological vacuum that Viktor Orbán or another senior political representative of an EU member state can use. Since, the EU has no levers to prohibit such destructive activities of someone.

²⁶ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0003_EN.pdf

Thus, diplomatic work should be based on proactive leadership and intensive promotion of EU interests, which should be approved in advance and accepted at the highest level.

Strategic issues of Ukraine-EU relations

The European policy towards Ukraine serves as a strategic basis for the wider EU policy on its own security in the context of the war unleashed by the Russian Federation on the European continent.

By supporting Ukraine's European integration, the EU seeks to promote stability and security in Eastern Europe by countering Russian influence in the region. Ukraine's integration into European structures is a commitment to democratic values, market economy and the rule of law, challenging the authoritarian model of Russia and contributing to the spread of decentralization trends within the Russian Federation.

Moreover, the EU's involvement in Ukraine demonstrates its commitment to supporting sovereign nations in their quest for self-determination and independence. The policy also serves as a message to Russia that the EU remains steadfast in its support for countries seeking closer ties with Europe, reinforcing the EU's role as a global actor promoting peace and stability.

Ukraine's membership in the European Union can ensure more effective security and development of the Union, primarily through the prism of threats from the Russian Federation.

If earlier European politicians and experts, planning and implementing the EU's relations with Ukraine, had to look at relations with Russia and balance between values and commercial attractiveness and security, now Ukraine's membership in the EU will mean the presence of powerful security capabilities on the EU's border with Russia, creating a barrier to potential threats and increasing regional stability.

Ukraine's inclusion in the single European market will open up new economic opportunities for both the EU and Ukraine. This will boost trade, investment and economic cooperation, creating new jobs and promoting economic development in the region.

Ukraine has large reserves of natural resources, in particular gas and oil, and is an important transit route for energy resources from Russia. Ukraine's membership in the EU can contribute to the diversification of energy supply, reducing dependence on Russian energy carriers and increasing the energy security of the Union. And, in case of Russia's military defeat and the processes of changing the political elite in the Russian Federation, it opens up the possibility of new, more stable and predictable economic relations in the field of supply of hydrocarbons through Ukrainian transport systems.

Ukraine's integration will contribute to strengthening democratic values, the rule of law and human rights in the region. This will positively affect the internal policy of the EU, contributing to stability and democratic transformation in neighboring countries.

Significant military potential and experience in countering hybrid threats to Ukraine will ensure the effective achievement of the goals of the EUROPEAN DEFENCE UNION.

Ukraine's participation will allow the Union to respond more effectively to modern challenges.

Ukraine's membership in the EU will promote academic, scientific, cultural exchange and mutual enrichment. Ukraine has a high level of education and qualified personnel, which can positively affect the scientific and technical development of the Union.

Thus, Ukraine's accession to the EU can be a powerful incentive to strengthen security and contribute to the economic, political and social development of the European Union, making it more resistant to internal and external challenges.

The intensive, leadership policy of the EU in the context of Ukraine's membership in the European Union will open the door to a more balanced, clear and powerful strategic position regarding the threats from Russia and the authoritarian axis of countries, which includes Belarus, China, North Korea, Iran.

The policy of Ukraine's membership in the EU will trigger changes within the European Union, as well as strengthen the EU's position in the region.

Implementation of a coherent and influential EU foreign policy

Within the framework of the resolution of the European Parliament P10_TA (2024) 0003 adopted on July 17, 2024²⁷, the European Parliament calls on the European Commission to offer long-term financial assistance for the reconstruction of Ukraine, based on the experience of the newly created Ukraine Facility.

The European Parliament also called on the Council of the European Union to maintain and expand its sanctions policy against Russia and Belarus, ensuring monitoring, revision and increasing the effectiveness and impact of sanctions; systematically consider the issue of circumvention of sanctions by companies based in the EU, third parties and third states, as well as take and strictly implement restrictive measures against all entities that contribute to circumventing sanctions and providing the Russian military complex with military and dual-use technologies and equipment.

Judging by the political program that Ursula von der Leyen proposed before her re-election as head of the European Commission, the European Commission will pay more resources and attention to security and defense issues. In this context, deepening cooperation with Ukraine, against the background of negotiations on EU membership, can give a new impetus to equipping the Armed Forces of Ukraine with the necessary weapons and equipment, including in order to protect the interests and values of the EU in the war with Russia.

The joint publication of the finance ministers of eight EU countries on the need to strengthen sanctions against Russia demonstrates the political will to intensify work at the level of the Council of the European Union in the field of making decisions on real and powerful sanctions mechanisms.

²⁷ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0003_EN.pdf

The diplomatic efforts of the European External Action Service should focus on finding a format of coexistence between the EU and Russia that would eliminate as much as possible any future risks and threats to the European continent, and implement the Never Again 3.0 narrative.

External action should not be limited to working exclusively with Russian opposition organizations in Europe, but should extend to intensive cooperation with the Ukrainian expert community on the security factors of the European Union, on Ukraine's membership in the EU and on joint concerted external action, not only in relation to Russia, but also in relation to other states that represent an authoritarian axis that threatens the democratic world.

In addition, European diplomacy should represent the real interests of the European community regarding the threats emanating from the activities of the countries of the authoritarian axis, at the sites of international organizations (UN, OSCE, PACE, IAEA, etc.).

The agreed foreign policy action of the EU in the context of Russia's aggression should have an articulated goal in relation to armed aggression, and measurable results of specific actions that can be assessed, and not just the continuation of the creation of Russian-language content and events with the participation of Russian opposition.

The agreed EU foreign policy action should be flexible to the new circumstances and geopolitical situation, but be guided by the declared values of freedom and democracy and the long-term interests of the European community, which should be articulated.

The purpose of the implementation of the EU foreign policy should be successful and mutually beneficial membership of Ukraine in the EU, a just end to the war and preventing its recurrence in the future, a long-term vision of the EU's relations with the de-imperialized, demilitarized and re-federalized Russian Federation.

The achievement of the objective and implementation of the EU's foreign policy should be carried out in full coordination together with the EU Member States and international partners who share the values of democracy, freedom, inviolability of territorial integrity and compliance with the UN Charter.

Recommendations on the development and implementation of the EU strategy towards Russia

Lobbying and promoting ideas on the development and implementation of European strategy and policy towards the Russian Federation, Ukrainian structures in Ukraine and abroad should consider that representatives of European political elites and the expert community consciously or unconsciously reject and do not accept the idea that the European Union needs a new strategy and policy towards Russia that meets the realities of the present and the prospects for the future.

Despite the approval of 14 sanctions packages, the adoption of tough political resolutions by the European Parliament and the effective work of the European Commission under the leadership of Ursula von der Leyen, discussions at the level of the Council of the European Union and the European Council, which includes the leaders of the EU member states, can be quite unfavorable for Ukraine's interests.

A large number of political advisers and experts close to the leaders of the EU member states believe that Russia's military defeats in Ukraine can inspire processes within the Russian Federation, the results of which will be extremely negative for the interests of the EU member states. Therefore, supporting Ukraine in words, many are not ready to take concrete steps to achieve military defeats of the Russian army.

Taking this into consideration, it is advisable to communicate and promote specific actions of the EU towards Russia and Russia's aggression not as a "strategy towards Russia", but as a "coordinated external influence of the EU to achieve its goals".

Another aspect that inspires skepticism about Ukraine's capabilities is the lack of an articulated plan for how Ukraine is going to achieve its planned goals, and what exactly the planned goals are. Narratives about "reaching the borders of 1991" and "the collapse of Russia" are perceived as maximalist-infantile and directed at internal Ukrainian propaganda.

At the same time, an alternative narrative that has its supporters in the EU is the understanding that "Ukrainians are fighting a war instead of Europeans". This narrative needs to be supported, but at the same time focused not on Ukrainian interests, but on interpreting and framing European interests so that they coincide with Ukrainian ones.

Thus, the section "Summary of the EU's Strategic Goals" sets out how the main officially enshrined theses of the European agenda can be converted into discussions on the defeat or more aggressive containment of Russia.

At the same time, attention should be paid to the so-called "blind spots" (blind spots) in the approaches of European political elites to the problems that have their source of activity of the Russian Federation. The key of such problems is migration processes, which completely changed the political landscape of the European Union, bringing to the surface of the political mainstream far-right and populist political currents. Thus, the key direction of the development and implementation of the EU's strategy towards Russia is and will remain strategic communications and public diplomacy, which should be carried out in a more disciplined way, in terms of the formulation of narratives and the base of argumentation of these narratives.

It is considered expedient to promote the thesis not that "*it is necessary to help Ukraine win, because it is right and corresponds to European values*", but that "*it is necessary to defeat Russia so that European goals and agenda have a chance to be implemented into reality*". In both cases, the "call to action" of such communication for European political elites may be the same, but its context will be radically different.

In communication, it is also advisable to use the so-called "salami tactics" in the context of the defeat of the Russian Federation, when the global goal of "Ukraine's victory" or "reaching the borders of 1991" is not declared, which are perceived as impossible. When arguing, it is advisable to prove which EU interests will be strengthened if the Russian Federation suffers a specific defeat in a particular situation or problem (sanctions policy, economic isolation, political isolation, kinetic action on the battlefield).

One of the main goals of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, in the context of promoting issues of the EU's strategy towards Russia, is to promote the maximum presence of Ukrainian

experts and official representatives in the EU's political decision-making centers. Because the presence of Russian oppositionists in the political circles of the EU, including many infiltrated agents of the Russian special services, is currently much denser than the presence of Ukrainians.

Under no circumstances will the Foreign Ministry of Ukraine be able to use sufficient resources to promote the above-mentioned narratives. Therefore, it is necessary **to use the help of civil society and expert communities**, but to maintain control over the narratives that will be promoted. Taking into account these recommendations.

In order to maximize efforts, it is considered appropriate to take measures to develop the infrastructure of EU governing bodies, in particular the EEAS in the context of **strengthening the EEAS Russia policy coordination section**. In connection with the election of the former President of Estonia Kaja Kallas as the head of the EEAS, this opens up **new opportunities for promoting ideas for the creation and development of sections and offices aimed at analyzing Russia**. In this work, it will be indispensable to use the opportunities of civil society and experts.

At the beginning of a new political cycle in the EU, when the commissioners and their teams will try to show themselves, ideas for studying lessons learned around issues related to Russia will have a special appeal and relevance.

In the process of planning events, it is advisable to take into account and contribute to the processes of synchronizing the promotion of the necessary narratives both in the European and North Atlantic communities. In other words, the diplomatic track of work on the EU in the context of the strategy towards Russia should be as synchronized as possible with the diplomatic track of NATO.

It should also be borne in mind that the work of European governments and politicians with opposition-minded Russians is an integral and inescapable part of the process of promoting strategic issues towards Russia. Therefore, it is advisable to take a leadership, proactive position in this process, influencing the context and the nature of cooperation with the so-called "good Russians", rather than completely rejecting this line of work and ignoring their activities.

In this context, it is advisable to use already officially adopted documents, for example, the above-mentioned, Resolution P9_TA (2024) 0118 of the European Parliament of 29 February 2024, which sets out a strategic framework for relations with the Russian Federation.

In the context of recent political statements and published expert studies, it is considered appropriate to expand the strategic framework towards Russia and to promote for European political elites not ideas of policies or strategies towards Russia, but policies and strategies regarding the anti-democratic authoritarian political axis of states, which includes China, North Korea, Iran, Russia, Belarus, Venezuela, Cuba.

In general, this report outlines tools that could help promote the interests of the EU in the context of the aggressive activities of the Russian Federation. Offering and further developing these tools with European partners, experts, MEPs' assistants and other officials could significantly strengthen Ukraine's foreign policy positions.

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Author:

Dmytro Zolotukhin



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Institute of Post-Information Society

E-mail: postinfo.society@gmail.com

postinfosociety.com

Telegram: [@postinformatio](https://t.me/postinformatio)