



MILITARY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN UKRAINE

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The paper analyzes the military strategic objectives of the Russian Federation during the three years of military operations in Ukraine.

Although most analysts tend to see the Russian Federation as dangerous because it has been imperial, thus irrational in a Nation's Age, the author of the article tends to see it having been engaging its military forces in operations meant to bring about only achievable military strategic objectives.

Should we compare the pictures – Russian Federation being irrational or rational – we believe that the latter is the more dangerous. On the one hand, while irrationality could cause grave threats to the other actors, it tends to cause the more serious danger to the irrational actor itself, danger provoked by all of the irrational costs. On the other hand, a rational approach will cause painful, unwanted, unplanned costs for the other actors, while bringing mostly strategic advantages to the Russian Federation.

Keywords: *national instruments of power; military strategic objectives; culminating point of victory; nuclear confrontation.*

Introduction

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, started on February 24, 2022, lays in front of us a process going on for almost three years. And this is a conflict on which the media and a great number of pundits present information and analyses that will lead one to think the attacker is absolutely irrational, following three main thinking lines.

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Firstly, the two countries, we are suggested, or even told, have almost zero history of conflicts between them. Thus, it was illogical for the Russian Federation to start a conflict with Ukraine. In these times, a rational Russian Federation would have had its national interests better served by great investments in civilian economy areas, investments that would have improved the lifestyles of its citizens. What is more, Ukraine represents a zero-threat to the Russian Federation, making thus the Russian intent to attack even more irrational.

Secondly, the desired end state of the Russian Federation is irrational. The majority of strategic thinkers of our time believe that the Russian Federation is switching direction and is trying to become a tsarist entity, instead of continuing being the post-USSR state that the West was used to working and doing business with. Currently, it is trying to conquer and incorporate Ukraine. And this is only a first step. Thus, in a nationalist world, where conquering other countries is impossible, Russia is taking irrational decisions.

Thirdly, in a world where the relations between states of any kind are mostly sustained by diplomacy, the Russian Federation is mostly using its military instrument of power. And this is again irrational because diplomacy, for example, is vastly less costly than the aforementioned military instrument of power.

Given the fact that this is only an article, work that does not provide the necessary space to address all the points above, we will only focus on the third – the way the Russian Federation uses its military instrument of national power. Thus, we will focus on the way Russia defines its strategic military objectives in the conflict with Ukraine.

In order to make our research clear, the article will try to determine whether the military instrument is used rationally or not. Thus, the article will analyze if the following theory is right or not – *the Russian Federation is using its military instrument irrationally in its conflict with Ukraine*.

The scientific process that will provide a solid answer to this theory will be structured the following way. In the first place, we will provide information about the background history of the two entities – the Russian Federation and Ukraine – that is important for understanding the overall situation. Secondly, we will describe the most important theoretic information, absolutely necessary to understand the current situation and be able to describe any strategic course of action. Thirdly, we will apply the aforementioned theory to the current events and, based on it, we will decide if the Russian approach is rational or not. Fourthly, we will confront the Russian military strategic objectives with possible NATO military strategic objectives regarding Ukraine.

1. Strategic Outlook

After several decades of peace and apparently civil relations in Europe, the revival of the Russian Federation, the inheritor of the Soviet Union, brings with it a new security competition between the western block – now represented by an enlarged NATO – and itself, the Russian Federation.



Even though the vast majority of those commenting or analyzing the events in Ukraine consider that these are the fault of an expansionist Russia that starts wars because it does not like peace, we stand in the camp of those considering that the international relations is a game where states rarely do the things they like, most of the time doing things they think they have to do for their national survival. In this international relations school, called Offensive Realism, the engine of world events *is not greed, it is fear* (Mearsheimer 2001). Thus, in an environment where there are no authorities above state level, authorities that a state could turn to in case of an outside unmanageable security threat, the only means for survival is accruing as much power as possible.

Those fortuitous countries, blessed by geography or smart policies with sizable resources and populations, have the resources and instruments to convert this latent power into palpable power – military power. Those that have enough power, military principally, to theoretically make a run to becoming regional hegemons qualify for the title of *great powers*.

One of the first things a great power will do is build around itself a secure, or security area, an area from which it cannot be challenged by any other peer competitor. Based on the size and the capabilities of each such actor, and based on geography, their security areas will differ in dimensions. The best example in this regard is the USA. Having started as a mere string of thirteen colonies on the American shores of the Atlantic, the United States expanded westwards, dispossessed the native tribes of almost all lands that it now possesses, and took possession of the rest through purchases. Once the “*Manifest destiny*” (Merry 2010) borders had been established, the US declared as state policy the “*Monroe Doctrine*” (Monroe 1823) which it was held dear and implemented to this day, not accepting on the American continent troops from the outside.

With the coming to power of Vladimir Putin, the Russian Federation, which had come close to becoming a failed state, started reorganizing itself internally. With this reorganization of the state, its instruments of national power started to function. For a long while, the main instrument was diplomacy, but diplomacy not backed by a noteworthy military, yielded moderate results. However, the Russian state did not stop in its efforts and, year after year, with a reborn economic growth, married to a better birth rate, helped in rebuilding the military instrument, as well.

With such newly gained capabilities, the Russians became more assertive in international politics. The most important event in this respect was the 2008 NATO Summit held in Bucharest. Even though Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, considered very dangerous to think about the expansion of NATO to include Ukraine and Georgia (Burchard 2022), the US President, George W. Bush, succeeded in advancing this point of view and to make it NATO policy, expressed in the Summit’s official communiqué. Certainly, the Russian President, Vladimir



Putin, who was invited at the Summit, made it very clear that this intended policy constituted a “red line”, representing a grave threat to Russian security (Dawar 2008). Even though his remarks were not taken seriously by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) titular members, the Russian Federation made its point, at least partially, when a few months later responded forcefully to the Georgian attempt to incorporate the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. After only five days of open conflict, Georgia realized it was better to leave things the way they were – Abkhazia and South Ossetia independent from Georgia, but maintain Georgia unharmed.

In order to prevent the perceived “western threat” from maturing before it was too late, the Russian Federation pursued a politically forceful course of action, by incorporating the Crimean Peninsula, which first declared its independence from Ukraine, then requested admission into the Russian Federation. Thus, among other advantages, the port of Sevastopol was preserved under Russian control. A second purpose of the Russian move was probably to deter further NATO expansion, demonstrating to the Alliance, yet again, that Ukraine was a “red line” not to be discounted any more.

NATO started providing to Ukraine solid support, materialized in a constant flow of armaments (BBC, Nato members ‘start arms deliveries to Ukraine’ 2014) and training provided to great numbers of Ukrainian soldiers (BBC 2014). The intent behind all this support was to make Ukraine strong enough to defeat Russia, in case of a new confrontation between the two in the future.

In the attempt to bring about a solution convenient to both itself and NATO, the Russian Federation started putting on Ukraine a different type of pressure. Thus, using the Russian-speaking populations in Eastern Ukraine as a political tool, Russia conducted diplomatic efforts that led to the signing of two accords – the Minsk Protocol (Poroshenko 2014) and the Minsk II Accord (BBC 2015). In both, Russia insisted on provisions that would transform Ukraine into a federal state. Thus, Ukraine would not be able to continue its pro-western demarches, something that proves above any doubts that the Russian desired end state was not a new Russian Empire that included Ukraine, but a Ukraine that was a bulwark in the face of western expansion.

Needless to develop the point that, despite Russia’s wishes and hopes in the Minsk agreements, the West used them, especially the Minsk II Accord, as tools destined to provide the time to forge the Ukrainian military into a force able to fight and defeat the Russians inside Ukraine, should another Crimea-like event arose (Midttun 2022).

Realizing the trend things were taking, on February 24th, 2022, the Russian forces started the invasion of Ukraine, in the now-famed “special military operation”. With the deep cause of conflict being the perceived “western encroachment” upon its security space, the Russian Federation set out to obtain, as desired end state, a Ukraine

that would never become a NATO member. Even though, in order to establish this end state, the Russian Federation has been using all available instruments of national power. In the following pages we will focus on the strategic military objectives that, once established, will contribute decisively to the desired end state.

2. The Culminating Point of Victory (CPV) – the Base of Analysis

An audit of the pronouncements of different analysts dissecting the conflict in Ukraine will have one believe that the Russian military is bent on conquering Ukraine in its entirety and transform it into a province, or greater oblast of the Federation.

Even though this supposed desire could seem in keeping with the precepts of Offensive Realism, the semblance resists only to a superficial look. And that is because any rational state actor will shirk from just “aggression” and lean strongly toward “calculated aggression”. While the term “aggression” means using all means necessary to solve a problem, regardless of the aftermath, calculated aggression tempers the attacker and forces him to consider the consequences. Thus, while a Russian Federation such as the one described by analysts will do everything in its power to conquer Ukraine, a rational Russia will pose itself questions like: “is conquering Ukraine (i.e. total victory) doable?”, in case the answer is “yes”, “what are the costs of doing it?” and, most importantly, “having paid these costs, where would the Russian Federation be situated in the international power system?” Because, in a ruthless international system, no rational power will ever want to collect *pyrrhic victories*.

And these are exactly the questions that shape the military part of planning such a war effort. Fortunately, military science has the right tool to help answer these questions – CPV (Clausewitz, On war 1976).

Developed by Carl von Clausewitz, CPV designates the point, during a war, where/when the initial power of the attacker has been consumed to a level where he has only enough strength to segue to defence and preserve the gains made to that point. By which time, the attacker will strategically find himself in two situations. The first situation is positive and has at its core an attacker that planned so finely as to have achieved his desired objectives and has achieved his intended end state by this point. The second situation presents a poor, or misfortunate, strategic planner, whose strategic objectives are still to be achieved. The latter planner has only two options. First, to take account of the situation and move to defence, as prescribed by von Clausewitz. Without reaching the desired end state, this actor could try to leverage the gains made to that point into obtaining a better peace than the one he proceeded to break. Secondly, he does not realize his dire strategic situation and continues the war effort on the offense, area where he is continuously becoming weaker, with defeat lurking behind every turn of events.



It is worth mentioning how the CPV comes about. In von Clausewitz's view, the attacker has an initial success, due to better preparation and surprise. The balance of power is further inclined in his advantage by factors like: the defender loses strategically important capabilities, and other international actors tend to side with the attacker who might already look like the victor. However, with the war continuing, the successful attacker starts to leave behind populations, some of which are not friendly. They can become a problem for the soft-skinned logistic lines that follow the fighting forces, and the problem can degenerate to the level where the offensive is stopped. Moreover, with an attacker's victory still in the future, unfriendly state actors will be tempted to step in and to provide support to the defender, fighting the attacker by proxy (one of the favourite strategies of the great powers in trying to increase their relative strength).

3. The Russian Military Strategic Objectives – Unlimited vs. Limited

The first decision to be taken by the Kremlin with regard to the war in Ukraine was the kind of victory, or the kind of objectives, to pursue – total victory, coupled to unlimited objectives, or a partial victory, associated with limited objectives.

A total victory would have required an enormous number of troops and other capabilities dedicated to the effort. Only to occupy the western half of Poland, a smaller, less populous country, Nazi Germany had allotted 1.5 million troops who, compared to the Polish forces, were enormously better trained and enjoyed state-of-the-art equipment. Poles apart, Ukraine was a 2.5 times larger country, more populated, defending with forces who had been trained and equipped by NATO, for at least the previous eight years.

Moreover, a total victory, at conventional level, would have meant a long period of time, fact that, besides from tying down great numbers of Russian troops, would have opened the door for other great powers to engage the Federation in a war-by-proxy with greater chances of success.

The mere number of troops sent into Ukraine – approximately 170,000, neither in the best shape nor outstandingly equipped, is the main indicator that the Russian Federation was seeking a quick campaign, with very limited objectives. While the desired end state was the same – prevent NATO's expansion into Ukraine, the military instrument seemed to be of secondary importance to the diplomatic one. The military operation seemed to be meant to force a negotiated resolution to the conflict, resolution that favoured Russia.

And the Russian plan was working. In April 2022, negotiations were already underway, which, without having reached a conclusion, seemed to be going in the desired direction – end of conflict and a neutral Ukraine. However, the mentioned negotiations were stopped at the express request of Boris Johnson, the then-UK Prime Minister (Orbán 2023).



With the negotiations-based course of action out of the question, the Russian Federation was left with only developing one course of action based on the military instrument, with strategic military objectives being left to bring about the desired end state.

However, even in this situation, for the Russian Federation, the war seemed to have remained limited. And to provide a justification for this statement, we will appeal again to Carl von Clausewitz. In his magisterial work, the Prussian advances *the trinity* (“primordial hatred”, embodied in the people – “the play of chance and probability”, embodied in the military commander – “subordination to policy”, embodied in the political decider) (Clausewitz 1976), as the triplet that decides the type of war to be waged. A war of limited objectives will be the result of less involvement from the people, and with great interaction between only the politicians and the military. They are able to give the war a rational course. The more the people are involved, the more passion comes into play and along with it, unlimited objectives (e.g. total destruction of the enemy). In our case, the decision by the Kremlin to maintain the label of “*special military operation*” and wage the war without conscription, hint at the strong decision of adhering to limited objectives, unlimited objectives spelling out the strategic doom of the endeavor. In an unlimited war, the Russian forces would have reached the CPV before achieving their objectives and establishing their desired end state.

With regards to the new military strategic objectives, they will have to be dictated mostly by the CPV, and in order to locate it as well as possible, one has to look at the ethnicity map of Ukraine (Wright 2022). Ethnically, we can speak of two different countries – Eastern Ukraine and Western Ukraine. Eastern Ukraine is populated in its majority by ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers. These Christian Orthodox people, who felt oppressed by Kiev to the point of starting a civil war trying to gain their independence, represent a natural ally for the Kremlin in this conflict. Thus, in their midst, the Russian invasion forces will move freely without worrying greatly about possible guerrilla actions in their rear. That is, once the conventional Ukrainian forces have been pushed out of these areas.

However, in Western Ukraine the situation is reversed, with the vast majority represented by a Catholic, ethnically Ukrainian majority, complete with Polish, Romanian and Hungarian minorities, neither one manifesting pro-Russian inclinations. Thus, an eventual thrust in Western Ukraine would certainly encounter the kind of problems Napoleon Bonaparte encountered during the occupation of the Iberian Peninsula and during the campaign against Russia.

In a nutshell, at the moment, the CPV is represented by the ethnic barrier because it is the line that, once crossed, has the potential of provoking strategic defeat to Russia. Thus, the military strategic objectives will have to answer two questions: “What is to be done with Eastern Ukraine?”, and “What is to be done with Western Ukraine?”



Taking into account all the analysis above, formulating an answer to the former question seems more facile. Given the fact that it is mostly inhabited by friendly people of Russian culture, population more facile to assimilate by the Federation, the Kremlin can settle for conquest and incorporation of these areas in the Federation. When this article was published, the Russian forces had occupied almost four of the eighth oblasts of Eastern Ukraine and their offensive rhythm seems to be on a crescendo. Once occupied, all four oblasts conducted referenda and requested incorporation in the Russian Federation, request promptly acceded to by the Kremlin. For the remaining four eastern oblasts, the course of action will most likely be similar, under the condition that the Russian forces will be able to defeat the Ukrainian military forces defending there, or force them to retreat westwards.

The situation becomes thornier when one has to answer the latter question – *what to do militarily with Western Ukraine?* Even losing Crimea and the eight eastern oblasts, Western Ukraine remains a sizable territory, populated with a large anti-Russian population. Having lost Eastern Ukraine, Western Ukraine would lean even more strongly towards integration in the western institutions, especially NATO, and would support any anti-Russian policy.

Unfortunately, given the fact that currently the Russian Federation can only use its military instrument, the answer is a push to transform Western Ukraine into a failed state. And it can do this by attempting to destroy whatever physical assets that could facilitate, if left untouched, the functioning of Western Ukraine and the survival of its military forces as a coherent instrument. At the time of writing, the Russian forces, without putting boots-on-the-ground in Western Ukraine, seem to be focusing on exactly this kind of course of action, using medium range missiles to destroy critical civilian infrastructure [e.g. the power grid in Western Ukraine (Fenbert and Hodunova 2024)] and critical military infrastructure [e.g. missile factory in Dniepro (Syngaivska 2024)], and threatening to use these same weapons to destroy “decision-making centers” in Kiev (Denisova and Independent 2024).

Treating Western Ukraine like this will have a double-fold effect. On the one hand, with an utterly destroyed infrastructure, and under constant Russian threat, Western Ukraine will have, atop of the economic problem, a compound demographic problem. Besides the falling birth rate before the war, currently, Ukraine registers large numbers of men lost to war (killed or gravely wounded in action), thus lost for the Ukrainian economy, and growing numbers of war refugees, whose prospects, and probably will, to return are shrinking with every passing day (Sauer 2024). Such a country will be at least difficult to be incorporated into NATO.

On the other hand, if the western countries insist on rebuilding Ukraine and make it a NATO member, they will be presented with a double-faceted problem. In the first place, the level of destruction in Western Ukraine is soaring with every Russian missile attack and so is the level of funds necessary to be invested by



the European countries in reconstruction. In the second place, with the European economies registering a steady decline, the prospect of rebuilding Ukraine to the level of re-making it functional is fast becoming unattainable. Not to mention that every major step in the direction of Ukrainian reconstruction will be easily reset by the Russian Federation with a new missile salvo.

4. The Viability of the Assessed Russian Military Strategic Objectives

The previous analysis was conducted from a Russian perspective, and we consider it correct. The assessed CPV is based on the demographic fracture between the pro- and anti-Russian populations in the pre-war Ukraine.

For a complete analysis, we have to ask ourselves “what are the chances that the determined CPV remains, thus making Russia’s partial victory with the current limited objectives attainable?” For an answer to this question we need to take a look at the probable course of action of the Ukraine-NATO tandem.

So far, the war between the two actors, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, has been one of attrition, a type of war imposed by the Russians, where what counts is not the square kilometers occupied, but the casualty exchange ratio, that is which of the two can cause the other more casualties for every casualty of its own. Up to this point, even this parameter seems to favour Russia greatly. The Federation has been able to keep the masses away and only use volunteers and mercenaries (e.g. the Wagner Group), while Ukraine has reached a point when even with forced conscription (Hockenos 2024) registers an average age of over 40 (Safronova, Choursina and Krasnolutska 2024).

With these dwindling numbers, only two drivers appear to be theoretically able to change the fortunes of this war – very advanced western weapons transferred to Ukraine and western forces on the ground, fighting alongside the Ukrainian forces. We will turn first to western weapons.

The western transfers of weapons, as mentioned before, started in 2014, after the Russian annexation of Crimea, and accelerated after February 2022. Thus, with the passage of time, capabilities of all sorts, from the individually-operated ones (e.g. Javelin anti-tank missile), to medium-range ballistic missiles (e.g. US-made ATACMS and UK-made Storm Shadow) and supersonic multi-role fighter aircraft (i.e. the US-made F-16), going through armoured vehicles (e.g. German-made Leopard and US-made Abrams tanks), have seen service in this conflict, on the Ukrainian side.

Even though these systems produced good tactical outcomes at the beginning, the Russians have so far found efficient countermeasures, staying with the attritionist approach. Thus, the very good air-defence and at least good air attack capabilities have allowed the Russian forces to establish air superiority whenever and wherever



it was needed. Moreover, every time a ground-based weapon system seemed able to locally tilt the balance in Ukrainians' favor, their opponent just took note of the fact, switched to defence and let the Ukrainians go on the offense, reducing thus their own losses and inflicting more losses on the enemy. So, notwithstanding the West's providing conventional weapons to Ukraine, the CPV has a great probability of remaining intact, along with the Russian strategic military objectives.

Currently, the vertical escalation has reached a point where, given full permission to use them in depth, Ukraine fired ATACMS and Storm Shadow missiles against Russia to no great effect, but Russia escalated with firing at Ukraine an experimental hypersonic ballistic missile – the Oreshnik, to a great effect (Rumble 2024). Furthermore, Vladimir Putin signed an update to the Russian nuclear doctrine, lowering the threshold and provisioning for a nuclear first strike against nuclear-armed states that contribute, even conventionally, to threatening the national integrity of the Russian Federation (Faulconbridge and Kolodyazhnyyand 2024).

Thus, we can conclude that the only support NATO countries could extend Ukraine in escalating vertically the conflict with the Russian Federation is, theoretically, the provision of nuclear weapons. But such a move will most likely push Russia to a nuclear first strike, at least against Western Ukraine. But this only in theory. In reality, the nuclear cloud from an explosion in Western Ukraine has a notable probability of travelling and affecting primarily, besides Western Ukraine, Western Russia and Belarus, and secondarily Poland, Finland, and maybe Hungary and Romania (Maps-on-the-Web 2019). Thus, a Russian nuclear first strike becomes less probable in Western Ukraine and becomes more probable against western targets farther away. From here, the vertical nuclear escalation is easy to follow an exponential upward trend and bring with it the almost complete annihilation of at least Europe, from Atlantic to the Urals, and of most of the continental US (Jacobsen 2024). Thus, this scenario – provide Ukraine weapon systems capable of escalating the conflict – is the less likely to be implemented, if the western leaders remain rational actors.

The second scenario is more dangerous and it features NATO countries putting boots-on-the-ground in Ukraine. This scenario has two sequels. According to the first one, NATO countries will be engaged in the effort to stop the Russian advance, even roll back the gains made so far by the Federation. Should the NATO countries engage in such an endeavour only for the end state of stopping the advance and create thus negotiation space for a political deal that leaves things in their current state – Russia withholds possession of Crimea and the four already annexed oblasts, and Ukraine becomes a neutral state – the analyzed conflict scenario has decent chances of remaining at conventional level. Even though nobody reaches their desired end state, the prospect of escalation in the nuclear realm would most likely convince the parties to at least freeze the conflict and try different approaches. The



CPV will likely move above what Russia can do with the current approach but, a different approach would only be nuclear, with the above described outcome. And the probability of Russia's using nuclear weapons offensively, knowing the end state – Armageddon, is extremely low. As already mentioned, the Russian Federation will try to alter the status quo through a different strategy.

The second sequel is the more problematic. According to this one, the NATO forces deployed in Ukraine have the mission of supporting the local forces in order to regain the territories Ukraine has lost so far, thus to force the CPV move backwards in time and hand Russia a catastrophic strategic defeat. While a NATO failure has chances of bringing the conflict to a frozen state, as described above, a NATO success places Vladimir Putin's Russia in front of a dilemma – accept having fought for three years, maybe more by that time, and lost, an option with grave repercussions, at least for the current Russian regime, or resort to escalation in the nuclear realm, in defence of the Russian borders (in accordance with the Russian understanding of those borders at this point in time), as provisioned for by the latest update to the Russian nuclear doctrine (ICAN 2024). Even if the probability of Russia choosing a nuclear first strike is reduced, given the possible outcome to which that probability is applied, the rational western leaders would still probably shirk from this type of escalation, as well. Thus, rationally speaking, even in this sub-scenario the CPV and the military strategic objectives it determines seem to remain unchallenged.

Conclusions

However painful, an analysis of the Russian Federation's military strategic objectives in Ukraine has to admit the fact that the attacker had been acting very rationally, most of the time.

Thus, instead of desiring, from the beginning of the conflict, to make Ukraine a part of the Federation, this article proves that the Kremlin would have preferred Ukraine to remain in the original borders, but a neutral actor, with no connection to NATO. To force all involved actors accept this idea, the Federation even started the military operation with only enough forces necessary to make everyone understand that it was very serious and the normal path of Ukraine becoming an ally was no longer feasible.

When the Ukrainian powerful resistance made it clear that no Russian desire would be taken seriously, the forces of the Federation started to be reshaped so they would become the main actor, not the supporting one, in achieving the political objectives. Thus, the Kremlin started deploying in Ukraine more forces, and the serious capabilities that would allow them to fight with great advantages, land- and air-based.

However, even when the deployed Russian forces started to be the main actor, its desired end state remained the same – Ukraine is not a NATO member.



In order to make this happen, the Federation has been using its military forces to achieve its military strategic objectives – conquer and bring inside the Russian borders the Russian-speaking, Orthodox, Eastern Ukraine, and transform the Ukrainian-speaking, Catholic, Western Ukraine into an actor that would be impossible to become a NATO member.

At this point in time, the Russian strategy seems to be functioning and Ukraine does not seem to be able to find a better one. So far, the attrition strategy applied by a great power does not appear to be somehow defeated by any maneuverist approach applied by a smaller country, not even one prepared by NATO itself. What is more, not even NATO's involvement so far seems to be able to move the CPV of the Russian operations in a direction capable, not to defeat Russia, but to bring it to more balanced negotiations.

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