

# THE IMPACT OF THE UKRAINIAN REFUGEE WAVE ON REGIONAL SECURITY. RISK ASSESSMENT AND EVOLVING SCENARIOS

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**Abstract:** *In today's society, instability and conflict are growing more prevalent, with citizens fearing for what is next, for what some state actor might do, and its impact on our lives and our children. The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict presents a gloomy scenario in which all our beliefs, as European citizens, seem only to survive as glimpses of hope. The probability of such an impactful conflict, and the unlikely military conventionalism related to it makes every citizen of any European country to doubt the safety net in which we thought to be, so far. The most devastating effect, specific and real at this moment, of the near conflict in Europe is an economic one, since a new refugee wave threatens to destabilize all societal equilibrium. On the other side of the barricade, Russia's position is mainly due to the internal challenges it faces, as its economy is destabilized by United States sanctions. Low oil prices at the end of the second decade of the 21st century is causing serious economic problems in the Russian Federation. Thus, the state faces a rather weak demographic outlook in the future, which is why it is looking for solutions for expansion and evolution, both globally and as a major regional player.*

**Keywords:** *Russian-Ukrainian conflict; refugee wave; effects; society; sanctions; regional security.*

## Introduction

Considering the Russian-Ukrainian conflict over time, this is a type of hybrid warfare. The essence of a hybrid war, like any other war, is to redistribute the roles of the subjects of the political process at a global or regional level. However, the current fighting is carried out mainly by military means. Information and communication technologies make it possible to transfer the country under external control with a minimum level of military violence, due to pressure concentrated in the financial, economic, information and psychological spheres and the use of cyberweapons.

Russia seizes several opportunities to ensure a favorable framework for the promotion of its interests in the region, and it is foreseeable that steps will be taken to create/multiply political, diplomatic and media support points (for espionage, influence, and the dissemination of propaganda elements, misinformation and fake news) in Ukraine and Europe.

The present paper presents a methodological approach towards underlying the risks generated by the aftermath of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict for the regional security in Europe. The current research objective is to anticipate a series of consequences after the emergence of the new refugee wave and their impact on regional security, in order to prevent and counteract the associated risks. Structural-wise, as well as presenting the context of this emerging phenomenon in the first chapter (*A new refugee wave*), this scientific paper offers an insight into the issue, through a thorough risk assessment in the second chapter (*Risk assessment on regional security*). The final aspects investigated are possible scenarios that could occur as an aftermath, in the third chapter (*Evolution scenarios of the phenomenon*).

## A new refugee wave

### *Ukraine – a brief history of forced displacements*

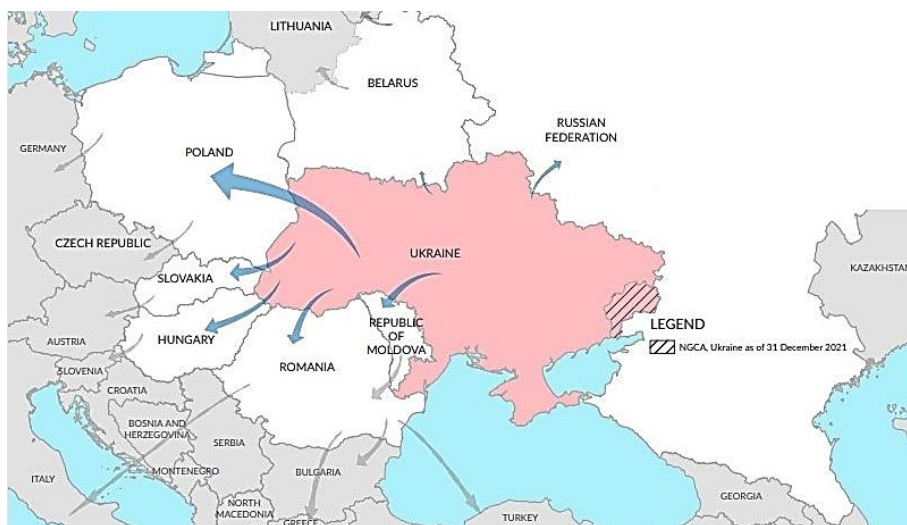
Ukraine is an ex-soviet state (one of 15), that declared its independence in 1991. Concerning its humanitarian position, it is a signatory of the 1967 Protocol and the 1951 Convention since 2002. Its population was roughly 43 million in that time frame. Ukraine has many land borders, and naval ones as well, being a neighboring country of Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Russian Federation, and Moldova (Sandvik and Garnier 2022).

Ukraine has been a country of origin, a place of migration since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and a place where ethnic nationalists have returned after being exiled under communist rule.

Specialized authors research provides a deep understanding on forced displacement affecting European security, with Europe-Asia Studies being a key reference point, especially in the 72/3 issue (2020). Many authors have researched aspects of interest about internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Kuznetsova and Mikheieva 2020, 690-706). The correlation between migration and gender has also been explored (Kuznetsova 2021, 1-20) (Уварова and Ясеновська 2020, 1-30), in regions such as Donbas (Sasse și Lackne 2020, 354-382) (Sereda 2020, 404-431) and Crimea (Charron 2020, 432-454). Other studies have examined the correlation between migration and humanitarian crises (Уварова and Ясеновська 2020, 1-30), among others (Scrinic 2014, 77-88) (Quinn 2015, 27-33) (Bulakh 2017, 1-8). The portrayal of internally displaced people in mass media (Rimpiläinen 2020, 481-504) and how they are viewed and treated in everyday life as outsiders in host countries (Lazarenko 2021, 1-20) have also been topics of research.

There is widespread concern about Ukrainian economic crises, triggering a high migration count (Klokiw 2019, 757). Nevertheless, the US admitted only 30,000 refugees per year through the 2001 Patriot Act. A separate count was kept for all migrants coming from former Soviet Union countries in the following years. In 2004, however, restrictions were eliminated due to the US's acceptance of a more expansive quota in European countries (Vertovec 2011, 241–256).

On the other hand, between 2000 and 2011, Ukraine was a leading refugee host country (Capps, et al. 2015, 341-367). The aftermath of the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula led to higher migration numbers of Ukrainian citizens. By 2018, the Ukrainian population made up the highest fragment of European refugees admissions in the last 10 years (Klokiw 2019, 757).



**Figure no. 1.** Ukrainian refugee situation  
*Source: (UNHCR 2022)*

Currently living in Ukraine's neighboring countries, there is a significant number of migrants (3,821,049 people) who fled the war between 24.02.2022 - 26.03.2022, leaving behind the life they knew, some of them having to abandon parents, grandparents or other elderly people who could not cope with the move.

**Table no. 2.** Total refugee intake from Ukraine in neighboring countries

Country name	Refugees admitted
Poland	2,267,103
Romania	586,942
Republic of Moldova	381,395
Hungary	349,107
Slovakia	272,012
Russian Federation	271,254
Belarus	6,341

Source: (UNHCR 2022)

A total of over 50,000 additional Ukrainians left the Donetsk and Luhansk regions for the Russian Federation between 21 and 23 February, before the invasion began.

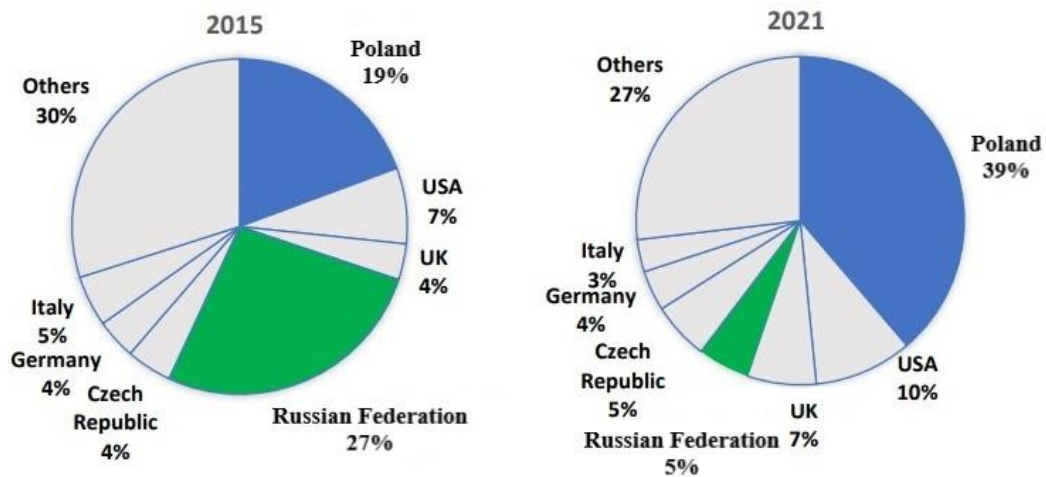
#### *Ukrainian remittances and their economic importance*

Given these data, it is critical to investigate remittances in relation to European refugee crises. Remittances are monetary funds sent back home by migrants to their families and friends. They are important for the growth of foreign funding in developing nations. Overall, remittances sent to some European countries are considered greater than private capital transfers or intergovernmental development funds (Anghelache, Niță and Badiu 2016, 79). Their economic impact is largely dependent on the destination in which they are used in the receiving countries. Research data regarding the connection of remittances to poverty, education, and development levels in countries have been compiled by many authors and organizations over the past decade.

Countries	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (Q1-Q3)
Poland	19.1%	26.4%	33.6%	32.8%	29.8%	27.5%	38.7%
United States	7.4%	7.6%	7.3%	7.8%	8.3%	10.2%	9.7%
United Kingdom	3.5%	3.4%	3.3%	3.5%	5.0%	8.5%	6.8%
Russian Federation	26.4%	18.5%	13.9%	9.8%	10.6%	7.2%	5.1%
Czech Republic	4.5%	5.0%	4.7%	7.6%	9.3%	7.0%	5.7%
Germany	3.9%	3.9%	3.4%	3.8%	3.9%	4.3%	4.0%
Italy	5.0%	5.5%	4.8%	4.4%	4.2%	4.0%	3.2%
Cyprus	3.5%	3.3%	3.1%	3.1%	3.3%	3.5%	2.8%
Israel	1.6%	2.3%	3.0%	3.0%	2.9%	3.0%	2.8%
Greece	2.7%	2.4%	1.9%	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%	1.4%
Netherlands	1.0%	0.9%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.6%	1.4%
United Arab Emirates	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%
Singapore	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%	1.2%	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%
Canada	1.4%	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%	0.9%	0.7%
Spain	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%
Turkey	0.6%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%
Switzerland	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%
Portugal	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%
Norway	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.3%
Virgin Islands, British	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	1.4%	1.5%	1.6%	0.4%
Others	13.7%	13.4%	12.2%	12.8%	12.3%	13.7%	12.5%

**Figure no. 2.** Sources of remittances to Ukraine

Source: (World Bank Group 2021)



**Figure no. 3** Remittances received by Ukraine in 2015 vs. in 2021

Source: (World Bank Group 2021)

Remittances are beneficial, because they can reduce poverty in underdeveloped countries and promote their evolution. As specialists describe “Remittances directly increase the income of the recipient's household. In addition to providing financial resources for underdeveloped families, they affect poverty and well-being through indirect multiplier effects as well as macroeconomic effects” (Ratha 2003, 157-175).

Study of macroeconomic models in specialized economic literature was conducted to delve deeper into the subject and the implications for refugee receiving countries. An example is a theoretical model developed by Vargas-Silva (2009, 1-37), which presents the relationship between remittances and macroeconomic conditions in the host and destination countries. Researchers found that remittances are often a major source of household consumption in the country of origin. However, migrant workers have a greater risk of poverty, because of their lack of financial experience, labor market discrimination, and low incomes (Anghelache, Niță and Badiu 2016, 84).

#### *Brief review of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict*

For an objective and factual analysis, this paper describes the military development of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, since February 2014, when the Crimean Peninsula was annexed by the Russian forces.

Russian troops attacked Crimea amid the quick invasion and quickly took over vital key points, all without wearing any distinctive military emblems (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation 2018). Ukrainian laws and worldwide norms were abused when the imperialist state put together a speedy submission, which rendered Crimea its claim. The Russian press claimed that 97% of the voters were in favor of the border extension. Other than that, a report by the President of Russia's Board with respect to Human Rights and Respectful Society was discharged, which stated that merely one-third of them were present for the referendum, and of those who voted, just half of them concurred with the issue, despite the Russian press disinformation (Gregory 2014).

After the submission, the Russian Federation marked a settlement with the Republic of Crimea, to start the integration of the society. The view had been changed amid this brief extension, so much that the citizens were saying that they “went to rest in one nation and woke up in another” (Gregory 2014). After these events, a critical pro-Ukrainian share of the populace cleared out their previous homes. In this manner, the primary displacement wave started early on, sometime before the Russians were able to pick up control of the region.

The constrained relocations, which happened within the Crimea territory, were a coordinated result of the illegitimate attack of the Russian forces. Indeed, although this tragic invasion demonstrated to be troublesome to the everyday lives of Ukrainians within the Crimea region. This situation produced for Ukraine an unforeseen opportunity to reestablish the international conventions that the country is a signatory of, and the opportunity to recreate a stronger society bound (Uehling 2017, 62-77).

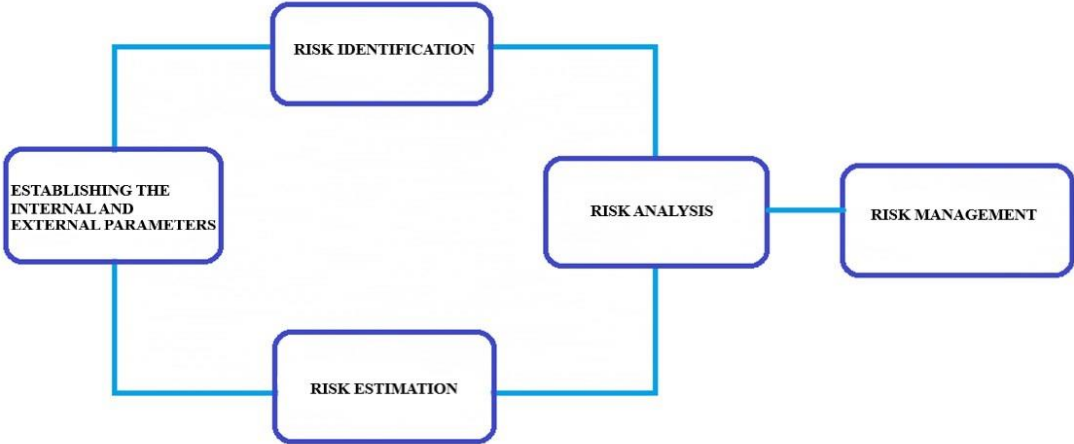
As a result, a new Ukrainian civil society was reborn from its own ashes, more resilient and stronger overall. This aspect could be observed in the current development of the conflict, where numerous examples can be given: from Ukrainians singing the national anthem and telling Russian soldiers to “go home”, to citizens refusing to show their passports to Russian occupants and even unarmed civilians forming human shields to stop tanks from invading their country (Stewart and Newman 2022).

**3. Risk assessment on regional security**

*„When you take action, you need to consider the risks involved.”*

Eugen Lovinescu

In establishing the risks and their evaluation, applied to the current migration issue, the stages of the risk analysis were used, according to the studied literature (Novac and Brezeanu 2020, 121-124) (IOSUD 2016, 14-15) (Romanian Government 2018, 1): Establishing the internal and external parameters; Risk identification and risk estimation; Risk analysis; Risk management.



**Figure no. 4.** Risk assessment phases  
*Source: (Novac and Brezeanu 2020, 121-124)*

An example of an institution that performs risk analysis is the National Institute for Intelligence Studies (INSI), which operates within the “Mihai Viteazul” National Intelligence Academy since November 1, 2010. INSI is a structure with responsibilities for organizing and conducting the scientific research component of the university. Through it, a series of publications have been developed, which involve current risk analysis (IOSUD 2016, 14-15).

Also, for the objective assessment of the observed risks, an algorithm has been established, visible in the table below: Overall assessment of the risk = (Likelihood + Impact)/2, where the two can range from 1 to 5, 5 being the most likely/the most threatening for the regional security.

**Table no. 2. Risk Assessment Table**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Short description</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Overall assessment</b>
Migration flow will be tiered, leading to chaos in border areas.	Non-Ukrainians will be discriminated against, such as Afghans who left their country due to the Taliban's return to power, making the immigration process difficult.	4	2	3
The emergence of protests in European countries due to Ukrainian immigrants being internally discriminated against.	Capable men who can fight will not be allowed to leave the country, in response to possible mass mobilization. Information regarding these actions have already been reported through mass media (Al Jazeera 2022).	5	2	3,5
The emergence of insurgent groups in European countries, due to separation and deaths inside separated Ukrainian families.	Separatist and extremist insurgent or terrorist organizations may emerge in European host countries, due to separation and death occurrences in already separated Ukrainian families.	5	4	4,5
Russian Federation gains regional influence and power, through the annexation of some Ukrainian regions.	The elaborated plan to annex Ukrainian regions such as Herson, Mîkolaiv, Odesa and Zaporojie (Gaidău 2022) may prove to be successful if the Russian Federation uses the same tactics as it did when it annexed the Crimean Peninsula, via a counterfeit referendum.	4	5	4,5

While all the risks presented are worth pondering on, of utmost importance is not allowing the more impactful ones to materialize in threats. Among these, the Russian annexation of Ukrainian regions and the emergence of insurgent groups in European countries stand out as possible future threats to the regional security.

#### **4. Evolution scenarios of the phenomenon**

To achieve the objectives of this research, I will describe the scenario, according to a public Disposition elaborated by the Romanian General Staff (Dispoziție privind planificarea, desfășurarea și analiza exercițiilor în Armata României. SMG-91. Unclassified 2011, Annex 7) cited in Petrescu Dan (Military Scenario, Fundamental Conceptual Framework For The Exercises Conducted At Tactical-Operational Level 2015, 215-218).

The term is defined as “a hypothetical conceptual framework that sets up a probable security crisis or other situation, of strategic, operational or tactical level, generated by military or non-military threats that affect the interests of Romania and its allies, endanger national security and the stability of certain areas at the regional level, the settlement of which requires the use of armed forces” (Petrescu 2015, 215-218). It is the product of a complex process, characterized by the realization of a judicious corroboration between military art, military science and the experience of planners. In this paper, I used a longitudinal scenario (Stiftung 2014, 7), in which I described the most relevant activities carried out by the Russian Federation to support the hypothesis which will be announced shortly.

From a geopolitical point of view, the anaconda policy is the theory that has underpinned the vision and actions of the Russian Federation since the beginning of the Cold War. In a broad sense, this policy is explained by a behavior similar to the giant reptile: wrapping itself around a state and strangulating it. Extrapolating, this would be achieved through a system of alliances oriented in the direction of encircling and leaving the enemy with no defense possibilities (Săgeată 2008, 66).

Nicholas Spykman, the scientific founder of this strategic doctrine, anticipated the domination of the Heartland by Russia and China, which would develop over time a potential for tension and even conflict with the states of Rimland. This conception was the basis of the strategic containment policy, applied by the United States of America during the Cold War (1945-1989), aimed at condemning the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Communist Bloc states to isolation and economic stagnation by limiting access to the sea, developing a broad system of geostrategic alliances and encouraging local dissent (Săgeată 2008, 67).

For a better understanding of the Russian Federation's vision of their relationship with The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, we need to analyze the concepts promoted by their current strategic documents: Military Doctrine of 2014, the 2020 – 2024 National Security Strategy, the Conceptualization of Foreign Policy of 2016, the Foundations of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic for the 2020-2035 Period, the 2020 Nuclear Deterrence Strategy. The Doctrine (Russian Government 2014), for example, states that nuclear weapons remain the most valuable guarantor of the country's defense and security. Other key points in the document are the modernization of Russian military equipment to deal with threats in a world of growing instability.

Based on this brief context of the relationship between NATO and the Russian Federation, we have developed a scenario regarding the developments and consequences of the wave of migrants caused by the Russian incursion into Europe.

In the next period, the Russian Federation, according to statements (DW News 2022), will use chemical weapons with a major impact on the Ukrainian population, managing to eliminate the local opposition of pro-active citizens. The reason for this is the fact that the opposition is worrisome for the Russian President because, in their acts of courage against the Russian army, they film the events and post them online, so that the killing of unarmed civilians, in an aggressive and groundless manner, will bring major military support from the European countries, according to present conventions and laws of war. In this context, there are already media sources depicting Russian soldiers surrendering and turning their weapons in front of civilian crowds, even though they are on board heavy armored vehicles (Hotnews 2022).

Thus, by using chemical weapons, most of the citizens left in the country to fight will leave the Ukrainian territory, heading to Western neighbors (Poland, Romania), accentuating the migration phenomenon and, at the same time, providing space for manoeuvre for the Russian forces. So far, Russia's leader, with the support of the government, has managed to

maintain a somewhat justifiable rhetoric for their actions, which creates uncertainty about challenging evidence of non-compliance with the laws of war.

The situation supported by the hypothesized scenario will have serious consequences both for the Ukrainian state, which will most likely fall into the hands of the Russian Federation, with the capture of Kyiv, but also for regional and European security, with the wave of refugees intensifying and creating a new crisis. This economic crisis will put the imperialist state on an equal footing with the European continent. The economic sanctions will prove null and void, allowing the Russian state an unrestricted development of military forces for a future attack.

Another dire situation, which seems to have a more direct impact on the economy of European countries, is the following scenario. Due to the shelling, it can be provisioned that economic support will be needed to help the Ukrainian people, especially for the reconstruction of houses and neighborhoods. Mariupol's officials declare that around 100 artillery shells bomb the local neighborhood every day and at least 30 percent of the houses are damaged beyond repair. Just between March 1 and March 24, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2022) reported that 3,369 families asked for emergency shelter assistance, to repair the damages dealt to their houses.

Another scenario, from an economical point of view, can be constructed, regarding the rise of Ukrainian remittances by at least 8 percent in 2022, as the funds received by Ukrainian families from Russia have declined significantly, from 27 percent in 2015 to only 5 percent in 2021. This confirms a long-time suspicion that Ukraine, unlike other ex-Soviet countries in Central Asia, is not dependent on remittances from Russia - for instance, the Kyrgyzstan Republic is highly dependent on remittances from Russia, with 83% of the total transfers in 2021 relying on the citizens currently living in the Russian Federation (UNHCR 2022).

Another likely scenario in the economical department is that the ruble will significantly weaken against the US dollar. According to UNHCR (2022), a decline of 33 percent is projected to occur, instead of an originally projected growth rate of 3 percent.

## **Conclusions**

Regardless of the outcome of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the vulnerable families and refugees that had left their country, perhaps for a long time, need the support of neighbors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to survive and not lose hope. On the other hand, economically, the Ukrainian migration wave will have a worrisome aftermath for the majority of the European countries, therefore the European Union must analyze possible solutions towards avoiding economic crises and other similar situations. Despite not knowing how long the conflict will last, what kind of development might emerge from it, and what the civilian toll will be, we can do our best to presume future consequences and solutions, such as risk assessments and elaborating scenarios, towards transforming the European continent into a massive defense structure, prepared for the developments of the conflict.

The intervention offered by the present research, although an initial study in the reported issue, aims at developing a common understanding at a European level, of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and its aftermath – for both scholarly purposes and to adapt to modern solutions, as united nations of the European Union.

If the presented hypotheses are to be confirmed, Europe will fit into the scenario of the ruined house, taking into account the impact of the increasing wave of migrants at European level and the probable resulting European economic crisis. These outcomes will put the Russian Federation on an equal footing with Europe and nullify the effects of economic sanctions, making it possible to invest huge sums of money in top military attack systems,



equipment and technologies, for a future military action toward the West, based on the Empire's desire to conquer Rimland.

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