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- The course of the Russian-Ukrainian war

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- *THEME ANALYSIS: Unless a consensus is reached within NATO member states will probably not ratify Ukraine's application for membership in the Alliance*



*Photo: «Rammstein-3» contact group meeting
Source: YVES HERMAN/POOL/AFP via Getty Images*

One of Russia's main demands to the West before a full-scale attack was the withdrawal of all US troops and weapons from central, eastern, southeastern Europe and the Baltics and a guarantee not to accept Ukraine to NATO. The goal of the Russian Federation in Ukraine was to limit its sovereignty, reduce military-technical cooperation between Kyiv and NATO countries and consolidate Ukraine in its own sphere of influence. 8 months of armed aggression, however, led to the opposite results.

The Alliance has adopted a new strategy, according to which it will increase its presence on the eastern flank, while the number of rapid reaction forces will increase from 40,000 to 300,000 troops. This process is already taking place against the backdrop of the Russian Armed Forces depletion in Ukraine and the strengthening of Ukraine's defense capability. Contrary to Moscow's expectations, NATO countries have provided an unprecedented level of military assistance to Ukraine. Comprehensive support includes the provision of everything necessary for the continuation of armed resistance: from dry rations and winter uniforms for military personnel to modern artillery. Although it should be noted that the partner countries have not yet crossed the psychological barrier regarding the provision of modern tanks, aircraft and medium-range missiles to Ukraine. Nevertheless, the level of support for Ukraine is only increasing with every month of the war and with every terrorist attack and war crime committed by Russia.

Within the framework of the EU, partner countries have already introduced 8 sanctions packages. The eighth package provides for important decisions, such as expanding the list of Russian goods prohibited for import into the EU, including those that contribute to the development of Russia's military-industrial sector and the development of its technologies in the defense and security sectors. The package also lays the groundwork for the required legal framework for the G7 oil price cap. The 9th package is already in development. It may include the confiscation of Russian assets and a ban on the sale of property. Belarus may also fall under the restriction for participation in the aggression against Ukraine.

Further pressure on the aggressor country will increase in the near future. At this time, a consensus has been formed among the governments of the EU and NATO countries and official representatives of these organizations regarding further assistance to Ukraine. In particular, this is evidenced by the statement of the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Alliance, Jens Stoltenberg, that Putin's victory in Ukraine will mean the defeat of NATO.¹ At the same time, Ukraine still stays out of Article 5 on collective defense.

Currently, there is an unprecedented level of interaction between Ukraine and NATO states: firstly, in the context of military-technical cooperation, a decision was made to rearm Ukraine with the weapons of the Alliance. Also, Ukrainian soldiers undergo training on the territory of member countries; secondly, in the context of intelligence sharing. Even before the war, Ukraine met the same number of alliance standards as some of the new member states. Now the Armed Forces of Ukraine are the most experienced army of the continent, which actually protects the eastern flank of Europe. Therefore, the only obstacle on the way to accession is the lack of political will of a number of states and the desire not to be drawn into a direct armed confrontation with the Russian Federation, as was the case before a full-scale invasion.

This is the reason why Ukraine's application for NATO membership caused a very restrained reaction from the North Atlantic Alliance. In the case of Sweden and Finland, the accession was accompanied by active public diplomacy on the part of the allies, and the application itself was preceded by the agreement of such a step within NATO and separately with the governments of the two Scandinavian countries. Ukraine's application for accelerated accession at the end of September in response to another illegal annexation of Ukrainian territories by Russia became a surprise to many member states. In response, Jens Stoltenberg only stated that any democracy can apply for membership and the traditional phrase that the Alliance's doors remain open. There is currently no consensus in the United States of America on Ukraine's accession to NATO. Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser to the US president, said that the issue of Ukraine's accession is not yet a priority and the process in Brussels should be taken up at a different time.² According to Politico, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the US Congress Nancy Pelosi, in her turn, replied that the US is very committed to democracy in Ukraine and added: "Let's win this war. But I would

¹ Ольга Глущенко, Україна розробила нову угоду про безпеку з боку Заходу – ЗМІ, 11.10.2022, URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/10/11/7371475/>

² У Білому домі вважають, що вступ України в НАТО "не на часі", 01.10.2022, URL: <https://suspilne.media/287410-ne-na-casi-bilij-dim-vvazae-so-vstup-ukraini-v-nato-treba-rozkladati-v-insij-cas/>

be for them having a security guarantee." Instead, Democrat Mike Quigley expressed support for Ukraine's bid. "Ukraine's struggle is the reason we formed NATO in the first place. After the Second World War, we recognized that an authoritarian regime cannot be allowed to wipe out a democratic country. I think we need to support this", Quigley said.³ That is, ***part of the political elite in the USA supports the idea of membership for Ukraine, but the position of Joe Biden administration is decisive, and it consists in the desire to avoid a direct confrontation with the Russian Federation.***

Domestic political factors will also influence the position of the state leadership. In November, midterm elections will be held, in which the lower house of Congress and a third of Senate members will be re-elected. According to polls, the majority of Americans oppose sending US troops to Ukraine (only 26% support the idea), but 43% support sending US troops to Ukraine's neighboring NATO countries.⁴ Therefore, before the elections on November 8, the US leadership will stick to the existing course and try to avoid serious foreign policy decisions, on which political opponents could earn dividends.

Among the states of the North Atlantic Alliance, there are also those that have already supported Ukraine's intention to become a member of NATO. These are 11 countries, mainly CEE states: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Canada, North Macedonia, and Montenegro. Nine of them issued a joint statement confirming the decision of the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008 regarding Ukraine's future membership (and calling for increased military aid).⁵ Until a consensus is reached within NATO, member states will probably not ratify Ukraine's bid to preserve unity within the bloc. Therefore, currently the partner countries will continue consistent military support to Ukraine, however, outside the Alliance.

So far, the conditions for Ukraine's accession to NATO are not created, but the Ukrainian leadership is trying to create them. To strengthen the actual integration of Ukraine into the Euro-Atlantic security structures, the Kyiv Security Treaty initiative was developed as a transitional stage before full membership in the North Atlantic Alliance. So far, however, there is no formalization of cooperation between Ukraine and partner countries. Instead, the interaction takes place within the framework of the informal "Rammstein Coalition", which in fact does not require legal commitments from the United States and other states participating in the initiative. Nevertheless, Kyiv adheres to a fixed Euroatlantic course. Now this is not only the vision of the government, but also of the Ukrainian population. Ukrainian citizens now have the highest percentage of support for NATO membership in history. 83% are in favor of membership, only 4% are against. At the same time, 86% of respondents would support Ukraine's accession to the European Union in the event of a referendum.

³ Заявка України щодо НАТО стала несподіванкою для адміністрації Байдена - Politico, 01.10.2022, URL: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2022/10/1/7147876/>

⁴ Majority of Americans say U.S. should back Ukraine until Russia withdraws, 24.08.2022, URL: <https://www.axios.com/2022/08/24/american-support-ukraine-poll>

⁵ Членство в НАТО: як країни відреагували на заявку України, 07.10.2022, URL: <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2022/10/07/infografika/polityka/chlenstvo-nato-yak-krayiny-vidreahuvaly-zayavku-ukrayiny>

The Russian-Ukrainian war should lead to a NATO membership for Ukraine.

Both sides will benefit from this: the North Atlantic Alliance will strengthen the eastern flank of Europe at the expense of the most experienced and combat-ready army on the continent. Brussels and Washington will influence the processes that will take place in post-war Ukraine. This is important for the stability both of Ukraine and Europe. Security guarantees, in turn, will prevent another attack by the Russian Federation. Otherwise, leaving Ukraine outside of Article 5, means leaving a vulnerability on the eastern flank of the Alliance.

- *THEME ANALYSIS: NATO's nuclear deterrence should begin not on the Russian-Polish border, but on the Ukrainian-Russian one*



Photo: US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan with US President Joe Biden, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, Special Climate Envoy John Kerry at the White House in May
Source: Stefani Reynolds via Getty Images

At the end of September, the Russian Federation, after holding demonstrative pseudo-referendums in the occupied territories, has announced a new illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory. Luhansk and Donetsk regions have "joined" within administrative boundaries, while uncertainty remains regarding Zaporizhia and Kherson regions. At the time of the illegal annexation, Ukraine kept control over settlements in all four regions. Thus, according to its domestic legislation, Russia interprets this as an occupation of its territory.

According to the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, the state maintains the right to use nuclear weapons first. Among the signatories of the NPT, Russia is the only country that has recognised the possibility of using nuclear weapons not for defense or response, but for an attack. However, Russian officials in their speeches previously stated that the military-political leadership of Russian Federation would take such a step in the event of a threat to the existence of their state. This principle can be interpreted broadly,

because Vladimir Putin has a specific interpretation of existing threats.¹ For example, Ukraine, which implements an independent foreign policy and is not under the influence of the Kremlin, is already considered by the Russian president as a threat to his state.

Considering that the illegally annexed territories of Ukraine are defined as Russian in the Russian constitution, Putin can already call the advancement of Ukrainian troops in the occupied territories a red line provoking the use of nuclear weapons. Thus, **the holding of referendums and the consolidation of the South and East of Ukraine in the Russian constitution is a clear raising of stakes. This is a signal to the West that the occupied territories cannot be liberated.**

However, Ukraine has no other choice but to liberate the captured cities, despite nuclear blackmail. In response to another annexation, Volodymyr Zelensky raised the stakes for his part - he rejected the possibility of negotiations with the current Russian leadership, and Ukraine applied for an accelerated entry into the North Atlantic Alliance. At the same time, Ukrainian diplomacy has intensified: in the direction of obtaining additional weapons to strengthen military capabilities and within international organizations. Through its actions: illegal annexation and rocket attacks on Ukrainian cities, the Russian Federation strengthened its support for Ukraine. The EU adopted a new sanctions package, the Rammstein Coalition decided on additional military assistance: NATO countries are strengthening Ukrainian air defense, Germany and France will supply additional howitzers, and the United States has announced a new large-scale aid package.

At the UN, the General Assembly on October 12 overwhelmingly adopted a resolution condemning Russia's annexation of four regions of Ukraine. The document notes: "the conducted "referenda" have no legal force and cannot be the basis for any change in the status of these regions, including their annexation to Russia." After the non-recognition of the annexation by the international community, an important decision was made by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Organization has declared the Russian Federation a terrorist regime. In fact, this decision does not change the state of affairs, but the very precedent of such a characterization of the Russian government by an international organization is important, which can lead to further delegitimization of the current Russian government in the eyes of the international community as well as the recognition of Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism. The next steps should be the exclusion of the Russian Federation from international organizations, in particular the UN. Russia has been violating the charter and principles of the organization for years, and after a full-scale invasion, the state has no moral right to remain not only in the Security Council, but simply to be a member of this organization. The reaction to the attempted annexation of part of the country cannot be only condemnation. Even though Russia is a nuclear state, in order to preserve the existing international relations system that has developed after 1945 and is built around the United Nations, Russia must be excluded.

However, even diplomatic isolation, full or limited, will not be enough to change the behavior of the Russian Federation in the international arena and prevent the use of nuclear weapons by the aggressor country. Already now, according to the British edition "The Guardian", the EU and NATO countries are discussing the possibility of such a scenario and

¹ «Угроза существованию страны». В Кремле объяснили, в каком случае Россия применит ядерное оружие, 23.03.2022
URL: <https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2022/03/22/14656981.shtml>

ways to prepare the population to prevent chaos and panic in their countries if Russia explodes a nuclear bomb in or near Ukraine.²

At the same time, there is no effective containment of the Russian Federation from such actions yet. Jake Sullivan, US national security adviser, threatened Moscow with "catastrophic consequences," without being specific. French President Emmanuel Macron said that France would not use nuclear weapons against Russia in the event of a retaliatory strike on Ukraine. For this, Macron was criticized by Ben Wallace, because France thus "revealed his hand".³ The most decisive comment was made by the head of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell. He stated that Russia would receive a conventional response after the use of nuclear weapons, but as powerful from a military point of view that the Russian army would be completely destroyed.⁴

However, most likely, partner countries will choose to increase assistance to Ukraine in response to the use of nuclear weapons by Russia. Perhaps it will be the delivery of ATACMS missiles, MQ-9 Reaper drones, or A-10 aircraft. However, a strike on the Russian Armed Forces on the territory of Ukraine or the destruction of the Black Sea Fleet, as suggested by Lieutenant General Ben Hodges⁵, are unlikely scenarios, taking into account the current US strategy. The White House is trying to control the escalation and avoid a direct confrontation with the Russian Federation. For this reason, Ukraine has not yet received ATACMS missiles, modern aviation and modern tanks from partners. For the same reason, Ukraine remains outside the North Atlantic Alliance. Washington will not change its strategy if Russia uses tactical nuclear weapons against the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

However, this strategy is a failure. Nothing deters Vladimir Putin, and in recent years, especially since the election of Joe Biden, the head of the Kremlin has been raising the stakes. Russia understands only force, and therefore it is necessary to increase pressure on the aggressor in all dimensions, without waiting for the use of weapons of mass destruction. In the diplomatic dimension, Russia should be excluded from the UN. A country that is trying to change existing borders through a war of conquest in violation of the laws and customs of war has no place in an organization. In the military dimension, it is necessary to strengthen the capabilities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine by providing modern aviation, tanks and medium-range missiles. Liberation of the whole of Ukraine is a matter of time. **The more forces and means Ukraine has, the faster the war will end.** Otherwise, Ukraine will liberate its territories, but over a longer period of time and with bigger human losses. At the same time, deterrence from a Russian nuclear strike must be decisive. Only in the event of a

² Dan Sabbagh, West makes plans to avoid panic if Russia uses nuclear bomb in Ukraine, 14.10.2022, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/14/west-plans-avoid-panic-if-russia-nuclear-bomb-ukraine-putin>

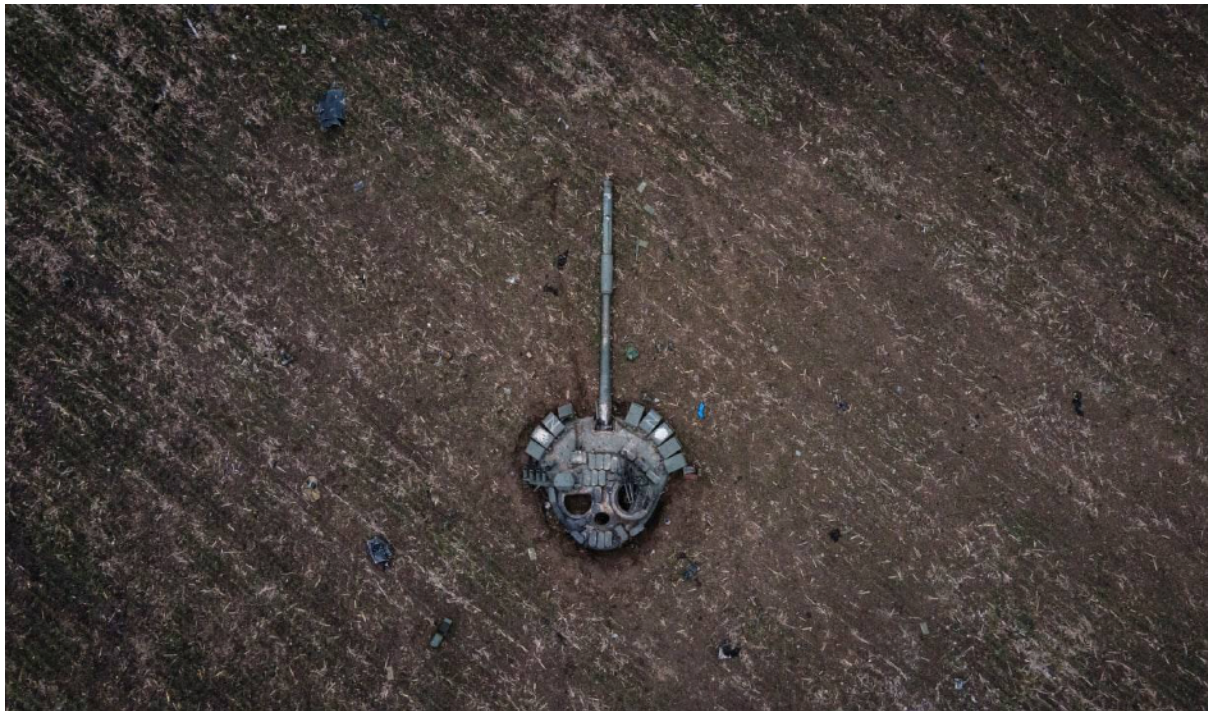
³ «Розкриття карт». Британський міністр оборони відреагував на заяви Макрона щодо реакції у разі ядерного удару РФ по Україні, 14.10.2022, URL: <https://nv.ua/ukr/world/geopolitics/ben-volles-doriknuv-makronu-cherez-zayavi-pro-reakciyu-u-razi-yadernogo-udaru-ostanni-novini-50276700.html>

⁴ Боррель пригрозив російській армії "повним знищенням" у разі ядерного удару РФ по Україні, 13.10.2022, URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/10/13/7371799/>

⁵ Якщо Росія застосує ядерну зброю в Україні, США знищать Чорноморський флот, — генерал, 21.09.2022, URL: <https://focus.ua/uk/voennye-novosti/530178-esli-rossiya-primenit-yadernoe-oruzhie-v-ukraine-ssha-unichtozhat-chernomorskiy-flot-general-ssha>

direct threat from the United States and Great Britain, the Russian Federation can refuse to strike with nuclear weapons.

Ukraine is left outside the security guarantees and the NATO nuclear umbrella. This allows for a nuclear escalation by Russia, which will be the final nail in the nuclear non-proliferation regime. **NATO's nuclear deterrence should begin not on the Russian-Polish border, but on the Ukrainian-Russian one.** Such an approach will not become an escalation, but on the contrary, it will become a deterrent. After all, the world is not on the verge of a large-scale nuclear war. **The World is on the verge of losing the taboo on the use of nuclear weapons, which is fraught with danger in the medium and long term and therefore requires decisive action from the leaders of nuclear states.**



Source: Army FM

■ *Changes at the front*

In the first half of October, the Armed Forces of Ukraine dealt powerful blows to the occupying forces. The main event was the attack on the Crimean bridge, probably by detonating a truck with explosives. The Crimean bridge, in addition to its symbolic significance for the Putin regime, also has a direct practical significance. Equipment and materials are supplied through it to support the enemy's southern group. Damage to this path reduces the carrying capacity of the bridge.

In response, the Russian Federation launched a massive missile attack on Ukrainian cities. The Russian Federation continues to strike critical infrastructure with ballistic missiles and drones received from Iran.

In the Luhansk direction, the Armed Forces of Ukraine continued offensive actions in the direction of the settlements of Svatove and Kreminna.

In the Bakhmut direction, the situation remains the most difficult. This is the only direction where the enemy is gradually advancing. The city of Bakhmut is under continuous shelling, but the defense forces of Ukraine are holding their positions and restraining the Russians on the outskirts of the city.

In the Kherson direction, Ukrainian troops resumed offensive actions along the entire front line, which runs from Davydov Bridge to Dudchany, after conducting concentrated artillery training of the battlefield. According to information published on social networks by the military, the attack is being carried out by mechanized units with the support of aviation: fighters and helicopters.

In the Zaporizhzhia direction, the occupier continues to set up defensive positions. The cities of the Zaporizhzhia region and the regional center are regularly bombarded with rockets.

■ *Military assistance*

In the first half of October, Ukraine has received the following weapons:

From Germany:

- air defense complex "IRIS-T"
- sanitary machines (36 units)
- "MARS II" anti-aircraft guns and "PzH 2000" self-propelled guns (quantity not specified)

From the USA:

- 4 HIMARS installations

From the Netherlands:

- missiles for the anti-aircraft missile complex, probably "NASAMS"

From Great Britain:

- AMRAAM missiles for air defense systems

From France:

- Caesar self-propelled gun (6 units)

From Lithuania:

- 120-mm mortars on the chassis of the M113 tracked armored personnel carrier (the number is not specified)

From Romania:

- \$400,000 to the NATO special trust fund for Ukraine

From Estonia:

- winter equipment, equipment and ammunition

From Portugal:

- Ka-32A11VS transport helicopters (6 units)

From NATO:

- equipment for combating drones. In particular, hundreds of means for jamming drones

From Spain:

- Hawk anti-aircraft systems (4 units)

Several aid packages were also announced. In particular, the package from the US for 725 million dollars provides for: additional ammunition for highly mobile HIMARS artillery missile systems; 23,000 155-mm artillery shells; 500 high-precision 155-mm artillery shells; 5,000 155-mm rounds for remote anti-tank mine (RAAM) systems; 5,000 units of anti-tank weapons; HARM aviation anti-radar missiles; more than 200 high-mobility multi-purpose

wheeled vehicles (HMMWV); small arms and more than 2,000,000 ammunition for them; medical devices. Canada has announced an aid package that includes 500,000 units of winter clothing, cameras and drones, and \$2 million to provide satellite communications.

Source: Mil.ua.

■ *Russia: internal and external challenges*

Against the backdrop of the military successes of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, there is an increase in tension among the elites inside the Russian Federation. In recent months, the military leadership, the country's Ministry of Defense and directly the head of the department, Sergei Shoigu, have been severely criticized for defeats at the front. In particular, in October, the head of the private Wagner group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, and the head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, publicly criticized the military command for failing to quickly respond to the aggravation of the situation.¹ This happened against the backdrop of the de-occupation of Lyman. Ramzan Kadyrov placed responsibility for the failure in Lyman on Colonel-General Alexander Lapin. The head of Chechnya also called on the leadership of the state to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine. Prigozhin, in turn, continues to recruit fighters for his PMC and encourages other companies to create their own military units. PMC Wagner operates in the Bakhmut direction and, probably, this direction was not chosen by chance, because the Russians can expect at least some victories there.

According to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), after a video of Russian servicemen from the south complaining about logistics was circulated, a message appeared on the Wagner Telegram channel on October 14 that the Wagner leadership had decided to hand over four SUVs for 126- th coastal defense battalion in support of their efforts to hold the front line in the Kherson region. According to ISW experts, the transfer of the basic equipment for a detachment of conventional Russian ground forces may be another covert criticism of the apparent inability of the DoD to provide basic necessities for its own soldiers.²

Even before that, the militant Igor Girkin, whose broadcasts are popular in Russia, was noted with sharp statements towards Russian command.

The Russian Ministry of Defense has replied on its part. The Chief of the General Staff of the RF Armed Forces appealed to Roskomnadzor with a demand to bring a number of popular bloggers in the Russian Federation to criminal liability for discrediting the RF Armed

¹ Олена Воробей, Кадиров "завив" через провали РФ в Лимані: вимагає використати "ядерку", 01.10.2022,
URL: https://www.unian.net/russianworld/kadyrov-vzvyi-iz-za-provalov-rf-v-limane-trebuje-ispolzovat-yaderku-11997102.html?utm_source=unian&utm_medium=related_news&utm_campaign=multi_related_news_in_post&_gl=1*1amh5k6*_ga*MTg4NDU5MDU2NC4xNjYzMzI3MDk3*_ga_JLSK4Y8K67*MTY2NTkyMzUwNC4xMi4wLjE2NjU5MjM1MDQuNjAuMC4w*_ga_P6EEJX21DY*MTY2NTkyMzUwNC4zMS4wLjE2NjU5MjM1MDQuNjAuMC4w

² ISW: Пригожин хоче виступити перед Путіним, а ПБК "Вагнер" — взяти гору над МО РФ, 16.10.2022,
URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/10/16/7372145/>

Forces. Among them were Igor Girkin, WarGonzo and Rybar. After that, information appeared about the permission for Igor Girkin to go to the front.

The conflict between the Russian Ministry of Defense and the Russian radical wing is not a sign of an imminent rebellion in the Russian Federation. This is evidence of an attempt by the radical wing and individuals associated with the Russian power bloc to redistribute power in the Russian politicum and gain more importance. **Vladimir Putin is in complete control of the situation and keeps the course of the military campaign.** At the same time, competition and contradictions create cracks in the power structures, which reduces the level of control in the power structures of the Russian Federation. **In Russia, the level of management at the middle level is falling, which gives Ukraine additional advantages during the Russian-Ukrainian war.**