

# INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY

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## Topics:

- Ukraine – European Union
- Foreign and Defense Policy of Ukraine
- The course of the Russian-Ukrainian war



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- **THEME ANALYSIS:** *The Munich Security Conference and the rethinking of the new world order*



*Photo: Munich Security Conference 2023  
Source: MSC*

Munich Security Conference (MSC) 2023 marked a fundamental change in the European security order, its perception by key actors and their vision of Russia's place in Europe. Russia was considered as an integral part of the European security order, even after 2014 and on the eve of last year's full-scale invasion. **However, now Russia is finally perceived as a threat to the European security architecture.**

The analytical report published by the organizers of the Munich event defines Russia as a state that is trying to revise the existing world order. China's assistance to Russia and the silence of many developing countries are noted. The general world trend noted in the document is the **struggle between autocracies and democracies**, and for the victory of the latter, according to the authors of the document, it is ***not enough to preserve the status quo***. "Liberal democracies need to use this momentum. If they succeed in re-envisioning the liberal, rules-based order as one that better represents the many countries in the world that have hitherto been confined to the role of rule-takers, as one that better delivers on its promises, and as one that truly benefits everyone equally, they may enlarge the coalition of committed stakeholders and render the order much more resilient. If the revisionist moment we are currently experiencing spurs the renewal of this liberal, rules-based order, President

Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the people of Ukraine will have played a big part in this achievement," the document states.

The general tone of the discussions was categorical towards the aggressor country, and the positions of the main powers of the Euro-Atlantic space leave no hope for the Kremlin regime for any favorable scenario. The participants of the event sent a large number of signals to the Russian leadership and other members of the international community: from the intention to help Ukraine defeat Russia, to the irreversibility of punishing Russian war criminals.

British Prime Minister *Rishi Sunak* said that Ukraine needs to be provided with all the means necessary to strike back, including tanks, armored vehicles and long-range weapons. Moreover, ***Rishi Sunak stated the need to provide Ukraine with security guarantees by NATO before its full membership.*** Probably, the Prime Minister is considering the possibility of implementing this idea in accordance with the model of the Kyiv Security Compact. This idea is proposed to be discussed in the near future so to officially conclude an agreement at the NATO summit in Vilnius. US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken also reiterated the thesis about security guarantees.

At a panel discussion with the participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, Analena Burbok and Anthony Blinken, high-ranking officials from the USA and Germany confirmed their intention to support Ukraine for as long as necessary. A year since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the resistance of the Ukrainian people has radically changed the rhetoric of Ukrainian partners. Now European and American diplomats are already using the arguments previously given by Ukrainian diplomats. In particular, *Annalena Burbok* emphasized that without the help of partners, the situation with Bucha and Mariupol would have happened all over the country.

US Vice President *Kamala Harris*, during her speech at the Munich Security Conference, emphasized the bipartisan support for Ukraine, which will continue in the future, and recalled the violation of human rights by the russians on the territory of Ukraine. In an emotional speech, Harris said that the United States has officially determined that Russia has committed crimes against humanity. "And I say to all those who have perpetrated these crimes, and to their superiors who are complicit in those crimes – you will be held to account,"<sup>2</sup> she said. Such high-level statements will not remain mere words. The creation of a tribunal regarding the crime of Russian aggression against Ukraine is one of the main lines of activity of Ukrainian diplomacy. The Vice-President's statement probably indicates the readiness of the United States to facilitate the implementation of the clause of the Peace Formula regarding the restoration of justice.

NATO Secretary General *Jens Stoltenberg* was no less decisive in his statements. Stoltenberg noted the main lessons of this war: ***first***, NATO countries should continue to support Ukraine and provide it with all necessary means to win. ***Second***, the security situation on the continent

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<sup>1</sup> Re:vision Munich Security Report 2023, February 2023,  
URL: [https://d3mbhodo116ikf.cloudfront.net/2023/Munich%20Security%20Report%202023/MunichSecurityReport2023\\_Re\\_vision.pdf](https://d3mbhodo116ikf.cloudfront.net/2023/Munich%20Security%20Report%202023/MunichSecurityReport2023_Re_vision.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Remarks by Vice President Harris at the Munich Security Conference, 18.02.2023,  
URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/02/18/remarks-by-vice-president-harris-at-the-munich-security-conference-2/>

has changed in the long term, so it is necessary to further strengthen the security of the Alliance. This implies a continued increase in defense budgets. It is significant that the Secretary General noted that the **war started by Russia has a global dimension** and that what is happening in Europe now may happen in Asia tomorrow. This thesis shows that after the summit in Madrid, NATO has finally moved away from maintaining exclusively the Euro-Atlantic area issues. *Third*, it is necessary to strengthen resilience, protect cyberspace, supply chains and infrastructure. In this regard, Stoltenberg noted the danger of dependence on authoritarian regimes, in particular the PRC. The biggest lesson of the war, the NATO Secretary General called, is that North America and Europe should stand together, maintaining unity.

There were no representatives of Russia and Iran at the conference. However, representatives of China were present. The PRC's point of view on the war was expressed by the head of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Wang Yi. In February, Chinese diplomacy consistently tried to undermine Ukraine's initiatives to strengthen support in the confrontation with Russia. In particular, the People's Republic of China presented a peace plan in opposition to the Ukrainian Peace Formula initiative. Xi Jinping consistently avoids meeting with the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy. *At forums and international platforms, China promoted Russian narratives about "legitimate interests" and "root causes" of the "Ukrainian crisis," as Chinese diplomats call the Russian war.* The Munich Security Conference was no exception. On the one hand, Wang Yi spoke against global confrontation and for respecting the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. But, on the other hand, he mentioned the "legitimate security concerns" of states, leveling the principles of the UN Charter, which he referred to before. At the same time, in his speech, Wang Yi announced China's Global Security Initiative, which was later published. Thus, **the People's Republic of China ignores the attempts of Ukrainian diplomacy to achieve a just peace and offers its own initiatives, as if there is no Russian aggression against Ukraine**, completely ignoring the interests of the state whose borders and rights were violated.

Before asking a question to the Chinese high-ranking official at the panel discussion, the head of the MSC, Wolfgang Ischinger, emphasized that there was an exhibition with footage of Russian crimes in Ukraine in the building where the conference took place and invited the guests of the event, including the Chinese delegation, to take a look at this footage. Many of those who previously advocated dialogue with Putin have already understood the essence of the criminal Kremlin regime, including Ischinger, and did not remain aloof from helping Ukraine. However, *China, contrary to the declared principle of a "society of mutual destiny", continues to take a "neutral-pro-Russian" position.* Other conference participants did not share Wang Yi's position, and the views of the People's Republic of China in Munich were not supported.

Next to the idea of fighting authoritarianism, the second line of argument for supporting Ukraine was the fight for an rules-based order. Not all states are ready to support Ukraine in order to protect democracy in the fight against authoritarianism. The result of the vote for the exclusion of the Russian Federation from the UN Human Rights Council clearly testifies to this. Many countries in the world are not democratic. However, almost every state in the world is interested in the principle that a great power does not have the right to attack a neighboring country and seize its territory.

**This year's Munich Security Conference summarized the diplomatic isolation of the Russian Federation in Europe.** The main actors of the Euro-Atlantic space have finally given up on trying to involve the current Russian leadership in constructive cooperation. At the same time, there is still no common vision regarding Russia's place in the new security architecture. *The countries of Europe and North America need a clear strategy regarding Russia, taking into account the potential loss of the aggressor country in a war and its possible disintegration.*

- *THEME ANALYSIS: Joseph Biden's visit to Ukraine and Poland: did it mark the beginning of the implementation and rethinking of the American foreign policy strategy towards Russia?*



*Photo: Volodymyr Zelenskyy meets Joe Biden in Kyiv  
Source: The Kyiv Independent*

Before the anniversary of the Russian all-out invasion to Ukraine, the President of the United States of America, Joseph Biden, unexpectedly visited Kyiv. The trip of the American president was planned in the nearest future to Warsaw, however, after landing at the Rammstein Air Base, Biden continued his journey to Rzeszów and further to Kyiv.

It was the first visit of an American president to Ukraine in 15 years. This trip was full of symbolism and contained a powerful signal to the Russian leadership. Last year, Putin thought that Kyiv would soon fall. However, a year later, the capital of Ukraine is not visited by the Russian president, but by the American one, and he meets with the man whom the leading world media has repeatedly called the leader of the free world - the President of Ukraine.

In his speech in Kyiv, Joe Biden emphasized that many did not believe that Ukraine would be able to fight back against Russia, but "Kyiv stands and Ukraine stands... and America stands with you"<sup>1</sup>, the US President said. In fact, Joe Biden thus has admitted that he himself did not believe in the possible success of Ukraine. However, the resistance of the Ukrainian people

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<sup>1</sup> Байден в Києві оголосив пакет додаткової допомоги Україні, 20.02.2023,  
URL: <https://ukrainian.voanews.com/a/6970425.html>

forced the US to reconsider its posture and gradually increase aid to Ukraine. The main motive of Joe Biden's speech was support for Ukraine and the unity of partner countries around this issue.

The 80-year-old Biden made a 20-hour trip across the Atlantic to the warring country, although before that he persistently refused this idea. *The visit of the American president to the warring country testified to the reassessment of the place and role of Ukraine in the American strategy.* If earlier Washington agreed that Ukraine is a periphery of Russia, now the success of Ukraine means the success of the United States of America. That is why Ukraine continues to receive military and economic support, and in relations between Ukraine and the USA, as well as the countries of the Group of Seven and the EU, one of the constant main topics of discussion is the issue of Ukraine's implementation of democratic reforms. It is not enough to end the war in favor of Ukraine. Ukraine must become a successful democracy. Currently, **Ukraine is considered by the USA as a NATO outpost in Eastern Europe, the first line of defense of the Alliance and a place where, in the event of an armed confrontation, combat operations will take place.**

In the public space, high-ranking officials of NATO member states, Britain, Poland, and the United States are already talking about the need to provide security guarantees to Ukraine. **However, this vision does not provide for the inclusion of Ukraine in the North Atlantic Alliance, which contrasts with Ukraine's strategic course towards full membership in the EU and NATO.** Currently, the discussion refers to providing Ukraine with the means to ensure its own security, increasing its capacity for self-defense to such a level that Russia will not be able to carry out a repeated attack. Such a model of security interaction is contained in the document "Kyiv Security Compact" proposed by the Ukrainian side.

At the same time, the role of the main partner of the USA in Eastern Europe is assigned to **Poland**, where Joe Biden went after meeting with Volodymyr Zelenskyy. There, the US president addressed the Polish population and held a meeting with the leaders of the Bucharest Nine (B9) countries. The American president's speeches in Kyiv and Warsaw were made before and after Vladimir Putin's annual address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. It was a measured move that first allowed Biden to send a signal about the role of the United States in Ukraine, and then to respond to the statements of the Russian president.

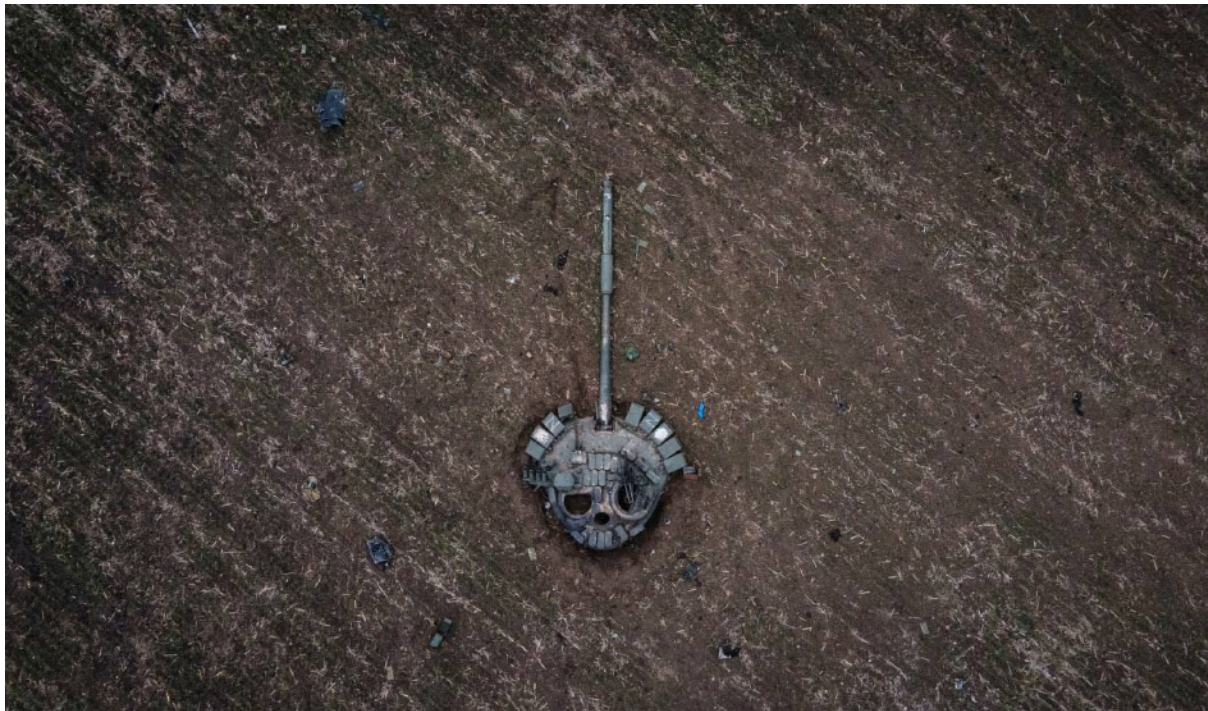
In Poland, the speech was focused **on Euro-Atlantic unity, the strength of the Ukrainian nation and the generosity of the Polish people.** Poland has become one of the main lobbyists of support to Ukraine. The state has provided Ukraine with substantial military aid in the form of heavy equipment and other types of weapons and accepted the largest part of Ukrainian refugees. In a military dimension, Poland has become weaker, due to the transfer of its own weapons to Ukraine, in particular more than 270 tanks, including the modern Leopard 2. At the same time, the state is already replacing the old transferred equipment with the latest types of weapons. Poland ordered 1,400 of the latest domestic-made Borsuk BMPs. The country receives 100 Abrams tanks from the USA and purchases about 250-300 more. Warsaw is modernizing the German "Leopards-2", purchasing American F-35 fighters, additional Patriot air defense systems, Korean light fighters, as well as Korean K-2 tanks, K-9 self-propelled guns. Together with the states of the Bucharest Nine, Poland confirmed its intention to further strengthen the defense capability of NATO's Eastern flank, which is happening against the background of the weakening of the Russian Federation's capabilities



due to losses in Ukraine. **NATO's eastern flank is being strengthened, and the bloc is returning from security to defense tasks.** In the future, the US will continue to invest in military infrastructure in the B9 countries to deter Russia.

Although the Russian Federation has weakened significantly in relative terms, the **USA is still trying to prevent a crushing defeat of the Russian Federation on the battlefield.** Ukraine receives significantly more assistance in armaments compared to the beginning of the war, which indicates the desire of the partner countries to ensure the victory of the Armed Forces of Ukraine on the battlefield. Annual US aid to Ukraine already outpaces Washington's annual spending on Afghanistan between 2001 and 2010. At the same time, the **USA is trying to avoid a crushing defeat of Russia, which could lead to the disintegration of the aggressor state. In the event of Russia's defeat, new challenges would arise before the NATO countries:** the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons; the emergence of many entities in the space of the former Russian Federation, for influence over which they would have to compete with the PRC; possible strengthening of the PRC in case of annexation of Far Eastern territories; or civil war in Russia with potential associated risks. The United States needs a strategy that would offer options for the development of events in case of Russia's disintegration. A clear vision of different scenarios and their possible consequences can help the leaders of the partner countries to make decisive and reasonable decisions.

**Ukraine still remains outside NATO, however, it is now part of the strategic interests of the United States.** This was confirmed by Joe Biden's visit to Ukraine and Poland. The role of an outpost of the democratic world in Eastern Europe is assigned to Ukraine, and the leading powers, in particular the USA and Great Britain, have already expressed their readiness to provide security guarantees for Ukraine in the form of institutionalizing military aid obligations. Thus, ***Ukraine will strengthen its defense capabilities, but will remain outside the scope of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.*** And while Russia's capabilities are diminishing, and Ukraine is getting more and more weapons, NATO's eastern flank is strengthening, because Russian aggression has finally prompted member states to rearm. A weakened Russia is a useful tool that accelerates this process, and at this stage, due to the possible negative consequences of a potential collapse of Russia, the **USA is comfortable with a strategy of controlled escalation, when Russia is not so weak to the level that would lead to the collapse of the Russian Federation, but at the same time already in the near future will not pose a threat to NATO.** However, this approach has its own **DISADVANTAGES.** **First,** NATO's advantage over Russia is achieved at the expense of Ukrainian lives. **Secondly,** authoritarian states are closely monitoring the development of events in the Russian-Ukrainian war. China and Iran are increasingly involved in the war and are gradually increasing their support for the Kremlin. If Russia had been defeated at the end of last year, the European security order would have already been restored. The North Atlantic Alliance would be stronger than ever and could focus entirely on the Asian region and the Middle East. However, this has not happened. And the longer the Russian-Ukrainian war lasts, the longer will be the economic consequences for the countries of the Euro-Atlantic space. All the more authoritarian regimes will unite around Putin's Russia, which will further prolong the war. ***Ukraine must defeat Russia on the battlefield already this year, and therefore pressure on Russia and support for Ukraine must be increased.*** **If this does not happen, the war may drag on, which, in the context of the Iranian nuclear program and the desire of the PRC to establish control over Taiwan, creates threats not only for Ukraine, but for the United States and the North Atlantic Alliance.**



Source: Army FM

#### ■ *Changes at the front*

**Trend:** *The Armed Forces of Ukraine are in a state of total positional defense. The Russian occupying forces, possessing the strategic initiative, continue their intensive offensive.*

The main battles at the front continue to unfold in the east of Ukraine.

**On the Kupyansk and Lyman directions,** the enemy conducted unsuccessful offensive actions in the direction of the settlements of Hryanikyvka, Bilogorivka, Spirne, Vyimka, Nevske, and Fedorivka.

Russian occupation forces continue their **assault on the city of Bakhmut and have probably advanced to the northwest of the city. Russian troops probably captured Dubovo-Vasylivka. Russian forces also made minor gains in the southern part of Bakhmut along the t0513 route.** At the same time, the Defense Forces of Ukraine, despite the difficult situation, intensified counter-attacking actions in the western part of the city. **Bakhmut is semi-surrounded** and the military leadership may soon decide to withdraw all units from there. However, at the moment, there is no such decision, probably due to the effectiveness of the defense of the Armed Forces, as a result of which Russian troops suffer 5-7 times more losses than Ukrainian military. It is also worth understanding that in the case of a retreat from the positions in Bakhmut, the next cities that Russia will destroy with its artillery and air strikes will be Sloviansk, Kramatorsk, Kostiantynivka and Druzhkivka.

**Russian troops also advanced around Avdiivka.** Since the occupiers have not been able to capture the city for more than a year, the Russians focused on trying to take Avdiivka into an operational encirclement, and directed large forces to the settlements of Vodiane and

Nevelske. At the beginning of March, Russian troops massively attacked Avdiivka with tactical air missiles, completely destroying buildings in the city. The Russians continue unsuccessful offensive actions in the direction of Maryinka and Vuhledar.

Currently, both sides, Ukraine and Russia, face the problem of a shortage of shells. According to Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of the "Wagner" PMC, the Russian leadership cut off the emergency communication lines for him so that Prigozhin could not appeal about the lack of ammunition. At the same time, Ukraine expects an increase in the supply of artillery shells from the USA and the EU. At the beginning of March, the heads of the EU defense departments agreed to provide Ukraine with immediate military assistance, during following weeks, which includes 155-mm and 152-mm projectiles.

### ■ *Military assistance*

*In the second half of February, Ukraine has received the following weapons:*

From **France**:

- the first batch of 14 AMX-10RC armored combat vehicles
- AKERON ATGM

From Great Britain:

- APC FV432 Bulldog (Quantity unknown)

From **Poland**:

- PT-91 tanks (Up to 60 units)
- Leopard 2 tanks (4 units)

From **Bulgaria**:

- 40-mm high-explosive fragmentation shots OGi-7MA for RPG-7

From **Germany**:

- 6 BIBER bridge-layers
- 8 Zetros trucks
- 20,000 first-aid kits
- 10 winter camouflage nets
- SurveilSPIRE automated surveillance systems

From **Estonia**:

- rifles
- pistols
- unmanned aerial vehicles
- thermal imagers
- generators and chargers
- clothes for military personnel

From **Denmark**:

- Mowag Eagle armored vehicles

Also, *France* is preparing to transfer 25 AMX-10P armored vehicles to Ukraine. Finland announced the 13th package of military equipment for Ukraine in the amount of 160 million

euros. *Australia*, in turn, announced its intention to provide Ukraine with UAVs worth 33 million euros.

The *US* announced two new aid packages. The first is worth 500 million dollars, which in particular includes missiles for the HIMARS system and anti-tank missile complexes JAVELIN. The second package of military aid to Ukraine is worth 2 billion dollars. This aid package includes, inter alia: additional ammunition for the High Mobility Artillery Missile Systems (HIMARS); additional 155 mm caliber artillery shells; ammunition for reactive systems with laser guidance; CyberLux K8 UAS; Switchblade 600 UAS; Altius-600 UAS; • Jump 20 UAS; means of detecting UAVs and electronic warfare; demining equipment; Secure communication support equipment; Funding for training, maintenance and support.

*Source: Mil.ua.*

Ukraine is still waiting for the decision of the USA or partner countries regarding the **provision of modern aircraft**. A tank coalition was formed in February, but there is still no air coalition. According to Ben Hodges, Joe Biden is currently rejecting the possibility of transferring F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine because he is receiving bad advice from the National Security Council and the Pentagon. "They think very traditionally and linearly. They, as before, do not concentrate on what is most important. And the most important thing is Ukraine's victory in the war. The most important thing is to liberate Crimea," Hodges emphasized. There are groups in the United States of America advocating the provision of modern aircraft to Ukraine. In particular, on February 17, it became known that five congressmen from both parties called on the US president to give Ukraine F-16 fighter jets. The letter was signed by Congressman Jared Golden, Jason Crowe and Chrissy Houlahan from the Democratic Party, and Tony Gonzalez and Mike Gallagher from the Republican Party. Thus, discussions regarding the provision of modern fighter jets to Ukraine are in progress. At the current stage, the Ukrainian leadership is trying to agree, if not on the transfer, then on the training of military personnel in order to use modern aviation as soon as the partners have the political will to take such a step. Taking into account the dynamics of the supply of weapons to Ukraine, a decision on the transfer of aircraft can probably be made this year. However, the sooner this happens, the sooner Ukraine's victory will come and with fewer casualties on the battlefield.

#### ■ *Russia: internal and external challenges*

*(V. Putin's new policy statements on the anniversary of the large-scale invasion of Ukraine: what should we expect?)*

On February 21, Russian President Vladimir Putin delivered his annual message to the Federal Assembly. The speech of the President of Russia has traditionally been full of anti-Western rhetoric and a fictional interpretation of events aimed at justifying armed aggression.

During the address, it was announced that Russia would suspend the New START treaty, which should be perceived as another manifestation of Kremlin nuclear blackmail. After the

election of Joe Biden, the first talks between the newly elected US president and the head of the Kremlin in Geneva in the summer of 2021 were specifically related to issues of strategic stability and, in particular, about the implementation of the New START treaty. Thus, an attempt is made to demonstrate the importance of the Russian Federation for global security. At the same time, Putin, by suspending participation in the treaty, satisfies the request of the patriotic part of the population. Russia is once again demonstrating its destructive role, since although the aggressor country probably does not have the resources for a new nuclear arms race, withdrawing from the treaty is a blow to the non-proliferation regime.

Speaking about the occupied territories of Ukraine, the head of the Kremlin once again announced the "will of the residents" of these territories. ***Russian rhetoric demonstrates a lack of readiness to return the territories of Ukraine, which contrasts sharply with the peace initiatives offered to Ukraine and Russia by some international partners.***

Vladimir Putin continues to rely on the **Russian deep nation**, whose loyalty he wins through powerful propaganda and increased social benefits. This time, the Russian president has again announced a number of social programs, in particular for Russian military personnel participating in the aggression against Ukraine. A number of infrastructure programs were announced: "It was decided to extend the Moscow-Kazan high-speed highway to Irkutsk, and later to the border with Mongolia and China... We will develop the North-South corridor, modernize the Trans-Siberian Railway and BAM, develop the Northern Corridor." Considering Russia's economic losses due to the restrictive measures introduced as a result of the Russian full-scale invasion, the implementation of these initiatives is unlikely. In addition, the president of Russia promised to continue the implementation of "all national projects", to ensure the regions' access to the appropriate funds and to raise wages for the country's population. Thus, Putin is trying to demonstrate that the war and sanctions have not affected Russia. The Russian leadership seeks to ensure the support of the population in the conditions of war by maintaining the image of stability, in exchange for a consensus on the continuation of aggression against Ukraine. **Putin is preparing the Russian population for a long war of attrition.**