



***** Euro-Atlantic Bulletin *****

***** Evro-atlantski Bilten *****

Publisher/Izdajatelj: EACS / EASS

Vol. 5 No. 5, 2024

Editor/Urednik: prof. dr. Iztok Prezelj

July 10, 2024

ISSN 2712-5270

<http://www.euroatlantic.org/bilten/>

Navigating a Resurgent Threat: Strategic Dynamics and Implications of Russian Expansionism

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Abstract:

This analysis explores the substantial shifts in international security driven by Russia's aggressive strategies, marking a critical turning point in global geopolitical dynamics. It explores NATO's strategic adaptations to the resurgence of conventional warfare in Europe, emphasising the alliance's pivot towards quicker decision-making and enhanced readiness in response to continuous Russian provocations. The study also assesses the evolution of Russian military tactics, particularly the integration of hybrid warfare strategies such as cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns, and economic coercion. The article further assesses the profound implications for European and global security, with particular focus on the economic and information dimensions of modern conflicts. It underscores the need for robust defence capabilities and economic resilience among Western democracies, advocating for substantial upgrades and modernisation of both military and civilian defence infrastructures. Additionally, it stresses the importance of effective public communication strategies to counter misinformation and foster public awareness and engagement. Ultimately, the study calls for urgent strategic preparedness and international collaboration to confront the evolving threats posed by

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Russian expansionism, ensuring that the global community can navigate these challenges and maintain stability in a volatile geopolitical landscape.²

Key words: Russian expansionism, NATO strategic adaptation, hybrid warfare, economic sanctions, information warfare, global security, military strategy, international cooperation

Introduction

In the current geopolitical landscape, marked by Russia's aggressive maneuvers and the resurgence of large-scale warfare in Europe, it is crucial to assess the evolving security dynamics. The war in Ukraine has unequivocally altered the security paradigm in Europe and globally, signaling a distressing resurgence of large-scale warfare that many believed was a relic of the past. After the end of the Cold War, many European nations enjoyed a relatively peaceful era, where the specter of all-out war seemed increasingly improbable. The war in Ukraine shattered this illusion, awakening the continent to a stark reality where traditional warfare has returned with alarming ferocity. The initial shock was profound, as nations found themselves grappling with the realization that three decades of peace on the Old Continent had abruptly ended. The brutal war returned with a vengeance—it not only revived conventional warfare but also exposed the prior inadequacies in defence postures and preparedness levels.

The stakes are high as nations and international alliances like NATO face a strategic challenge: how to respond effectively to a nation that reflects the singular vision of its leadership. The situation demands a thorough understanding of not only military strategies but also economic sanctions, propaganda influence, and the broader implications for international law and order.

This analysis delves into the strategic shifts and wide-reaching consequences stemming from Russia's expansionist actions. Grounded in insights from security conferences, extensive research and studies, it offers a comprehensive view of the threats and challenges posed by Russia under President Vladimir Putin's leadership. It aims to offer an in-depth exploration of these complex dynamics, examining strategic shifts within NATO, assessing the implications of economic sanctions, and considering the impact of state-controlled propaganda on global security. Intended to inform policymakers and strategists, this analysis provides insights that are academically rigorous and practically urgent. The challenges discussed will undoubtedly shape the international security landscape for years to come, emphasizing the need for informed and decisive actions.

1 NATO's Strategic Adaptation to the Resurgence of Conventional Warfare in Europe

In response to the resurgence of conventional warfare in Europe, NATO promptly adjusted its stance, adopting the new Strategic Concept 2022 to address the evolving security environment. The defence of the Euro-Atlantic

² Views and opinions of the author of this paper do not necessarily correspond to views of the Euro-Atlantic Council of Slovenia.



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Area with the »old-fashioned« military power, much the same as during the Cold War, has become a priority for NATO yet again. The Alliance, historically characterized by careful deliberation, has shifted towards faster decision-making to meet the demands of rapid response, which is critical in dealing with ongoing Russian provocations. This conflict's persistence poses long-term challenges, testing the alliance's unity and effectiveness against Russian aggression.

One of NATO's greatest strengths—its unity and the principle of collective defence—is also a critical aspect of its strategic posture. While the Alliance's decision-making process has often been viewed as potentially slow, especially in building consensus for less critical crisis response operations, it's important to note that NATO has mechanisms for rapid decision-making in cases where Article 5 is activated. This allows the Alliance to respond swiftly to significant threats. Nevertheless, the ongoing war in Ukraine has highlighted the ongoing need for NATO to continue refining these processes, particularly to enhance its operational readiness and the speed with which it transitions from decision to action. This adaptation is crucial in the face of persistent provocations by Russia, underscoring the necessity for a nimble and decisive NATO response mechanism.

The war in Ukraine has thrust NATO into a strategic quandary, particularly concerning its Eastern flank. This area, comprising countries that share direct borders with Russia and Ukraine and bearing the immediate brunt of Russian aggression, has been a focal point for reassessing the Alliance's strategies and unity. These nations are not only geographically closer to the war but also perceive a direct and immediate threat from Russian expansionism. This proximity has led to a heightened sense of urgency in strengthening defensive capabilities and ensuring that NATO's presence and support are both visible and effective. The reinforcement of the Eastern flank involves not just an increase in troop deployments but also enhancements in anti-missile defences, intelligence-sharing, and logistical support to deter further aggression.

Deterrence remains a cornerstone of NATO's strategy against Russian expansionism. However, the nature of deterrence has evolved; it is no longer solely about the readiness to retaliate but also about preventing aggression through a robust presence and a clear demonstration of capability and resolve. This involves a delicate balance of showing strength without escalating tensions to the point of open conflict, a task that has become more complicated with Russia's aggressive rhetoric and actions.

Moreover, NATO must also adapt to the realities of hybrid warfare, where the lines between conventional and unconventional tactics are blurred. Russian strategies have increasingly incorporated elements of cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns, and economic coercion. Responding effectively to these tactics requires NATO to be agile and technologically advanced, ensuring that its strategies are comprehensive and cover the full spectrum of potential threats.

The sustained nature of the conflict has also been testing NATO's operational readiness and the strategic endurance of its member states. The longer the war continues, the more it strains the alliance's resources and resolve, challenging its ability to maintain a united and effective front against Russian aggression. This situation is exacerbated by the unpredictable nature of Russian military strategy, which often extends operations beyond initial projections, thereby increasing the potential for broader regional instability.



As NATO continues to adapt to these new realities, incorporating strategies to counter cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns, it faces the challenge of maintaining long-term cohesion and readiness amidst a volatile global landscape. This involves not only addressing immediate threats but also planning for future scenarios that could strain the alliance's unity and resources. Strengthening the Eastern flank is not just about placing more troops on the ground; it's about fostering deeper integration, enhancing capabilities, and building resilience against a spectrum of threats, both military and non-military. To this end, the Eastern flank will undoubtedly play a critical role in shaping NATO's future trajectory and its ability to ensure peace and stability in the region.

2 The Evolution of Russian Military Strategy

The aggressive stance and military maneuvers of Russia under President Putin have marked a significant evolution in the nation's military strategy. This shift is rooted in historical precedents yet is distinctly shaped by the contemporary geopolitical landscape. Today's Russian way of warfighting in Ukraine can be traced back to significant military exercises, such as the joint military exercises with Belarus in 2013, known as Zapad 2013. Initially framed as peacekeeping drills, these exercises demonstrated the capability and readiness of Russian forces to project forces at scale over strategic distances and to conduct large-scale operations, setting the stage for the annexation of Crimea. Similarly, the Zapad 2021 exercise was utilized as a precursor for the 2022 attack on Ukraine. Both the annexation of Crimea and the attack on Ukraine were critical pivots in Russian military strategy, demonstrating a willingness to use substantial military force to achieve geopolitical objectives, marking a stark departure from post-Cold War norms.

In subsequent years, Russian military strategy has increasingly embraced asymmetry and adaptability. By learning from both successes and setbacks in various regional conflicts, Russia has refined its tactics to exploit weaknesses in conventional Western military responses. This adaptability was particularly evident in the early stages of the conflict in Ukraine, beginning in 2014, when hybrid warfare tactics blurred the lines between military and non-military means, complicating the international community's response.

The driving force behind Russia's foreign policy strategy is deeply intertwined with its imperial ambitions. The doctrine of »Russkij mir« or »Russian World«, posits that Russia has the right and duty to protect Russian-speaking populations and interests outside its borders, often using this as a pretext for military interventions. Russia not only uses this policy to justify aggressive actions in neighbouring regions but also signals a broader intent to reassert Russian influence on the global stage.

Recent activities suggest that Russia is continuously testing the resolve and capabilities of NATO and its allies. By probing defences and exploiting hesitations, Russia assesses the strength and cohesion of Western alliances. Such tactics are not merely operational but are strategic, aimed at undermining Western unity and deterring collective action against Russian advances.

Despite these advancements, Russia has historically faced significant challenges in sustaining long-term, large-scale warfare, excelling instead at short-term military operations. This aligns with its initial goal to swiftly take over Kyiv within a matter of days. The transition from rapid tactical successes to prolonged engagements



imposes heavy demands on military logistics and economic support systems. The ongoing war in Ukraine exemplifies this challenge, as Mr Putin's early plans for a quick victory have evolved into a protracted and costly military engagement, testing the limits of Russian military endurance and strategic planning. However, Russia has demonstrated considerable resilience in sustaining its war effort, partly due to its enhanced war economy. The effectiveness of economic sanctions has been questioned as Russia continues to adapt, mitigating their impacts. This resilience poses significant challenges for NATO, necessitating effective strategies to counteract both Russia's economic and military initiatives.

The evolution—or, more accurately, the reversion to long-established practices of the former Soviet Union—of Russian military strategy presents a complex challenge to Europe and the international community. Understanding this evolution is crucial for developing effective counterstrategies that address not only the immediate threats but also the broader implications of Russia's return to an assertive, imperial-driven foreign policy. This understanding will shape the strategic choices of NATO and its allies as they seek to maintain stability and deter further aggression in an increasingly tense global environment.

3 Economic Warfare and Impacts of Sanctions

The conflict in Ukraine has illuminated the complexities and challenges of leveraging economic sanctions as a tool of international policy against a resilient adversary like Russia. Sanctions were swiftly imposed by the West with the aim of crippling Russia's economy, thereby limiting its ability to sustain its military operations. These measures targeted key sectors including finance, energy, and defence, and were intended to create significant economic disincentives for Russia's aggressive actions. Initially, these sanctions seemed to be an effective measure, creating immediate disruptions in the Russian economy, and causing significant financial instability. However, Russia's short-term response to these sanctions has been notably robust. The nation has demonstrated a considerable capacity to adapt, mitigating the impacts through various strategies. These include pivoting to alternative markets, localizing production to reduce dependence on imports, and bolstering domestic industries critical to its war effort. Furthermore, Russia has increased its economic engagement with non-Western countries, seeking to undermine the sanctions' effectiveness by diversifying its economic partnerships and creating new trade corridors.

The persistence of the conflict and Russia's apparent resilience might seem to underscore the limitations of economic sanctions as a standalone tool for securing peace. However, this perspective, often propagated by Russia and echoed by some sectors of Western media, particularly those with a left-leaning bias, does not fully capture the effectiveness of these measures. Contrary to claims that sanctions are ineffective, they have indeed been having a substantial impact, particularly over the long term. The economic pressure exerted by these measures has been gradually eroding Russia's economic stability, reducing it to a mid-sized economy despite its vast size, and rendering it incapable of competing long-term with developed Western democracies. This situation mirrors the late stages of the Soviet Union, which was ultimately unable to economically sustain an arms race with the West, as demonstrated by the Strategic Defence Initiatives and Ronald Reagan's anti-communist rhetoric in the 80s, coupled with negotiations with the Soviet regime. Thus, while sanctions do



exert considerable financial pressure, their strategic impact on Russia's economic capabilities is significant and contributes to a broader strategy of containment and pressure.

The use of economic warfare also raises ethical considerations, especially regarding the impact on civilian populations who often become the unintended victims of economic sanctions. While the ethical implications of imposing measures that lead to widespread economic suffering are complex, it's important to recognize that the intent of economic sanctions is indeed to pressure governments by creating discontent among the populace. However, in authoritarian states, the effects of sanctions work differently and more long-term because dissatisfied citizens cannot change their government through elections.

In conclusion, while economic sanctions remain a valuable tool in the international security arsenal, their implications do not have an immediate effect in the context of Russia's ongoing aggression but a longer one, which is even more important. Understanding these implications is crucial for developing more effective short-term strategies that not only pressure adversarial states but also minimize collateral damage and contribute to long-term stability.

4 Psychological and Information Warfare

In the contemporary theatre of armed conflicts, psychological and information aspects of hybrid warfare have emerged as critical components, particularly in the context of Russia's military and geopolitical strategies.

Russia's control over its domestic media landscape and its relentless efforts to influence foreign public opinion are central pillars of its psychological warfare strategy. The state's tight grip ensures that the narrative surrounding the conflict, both domestically and internationally, is heavily curated to favor Russian interests. This propaganda is not merely about bolstering domestic support for the war but also aims to destabilize and demoralize opponents, sow discord within enemy populations, and manipulate international opinion.

The narrative crafted by Russian media portrays the West and NATO as aggressors, framing Russia's military actions as defensive and justified. This narrative is also tailored to exploit existing societal divisions in target countries, amplifying political and social discontent. By disseminating disinformation and fostering confusion, Russia attempts to weaken the resolve of its adversaries and undermine the credibility of international institutions.

The psychological impact of this warfare is profound, influencing public opinion and affecting the morale of both civilian populations and military personnel. In Russia, the state-controlled media's portrayal of the conflict fosters a sense of righteousness and unity against perceived external threats, thereby bolstering national support for government policies. Conversely, in targeted nations, Russian disinformation campaigns aim to incite fear, uncertainty, and distrust towards governments, international alliances, and the established world order based on the rule of law and multilateralism. These campaigns effectively exploit social media and other channels to target specific substrata of societies—including sympathetic academia, journalists, some NGOs, and various groups dissatisfied with the »Western way of life«—and have influenced public opinion within



Ukraine, across the EU, among NATO allies, and more broadly. However, this phenomenon is nothing new but rather a more refined way of influencing sympathetic public opinion abroad, a method previously used by the foreign arm of the KGB during the Soviet Union era.

Addressing the challenges posed by Russian information warfare requires robust countermeasures. These include strengthening media literacy among the public, enhancing the capabilities of institutions to detect and counteract misinformation, and promoting transparent and timely communication from governments and international bodies to counteract Russian narratives. Additionally, international cooperation is essential in tracking and mitigating the influence of Russian media operations across borders.

Looking ahead, the role of technology in information warfare is set to increase, with advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning likely to create more sophisticated methods of creating and spreading disinformation. The international community must anticipate these changes and prepare accordingly. This involves not only defensive measures but also proactive strategies that promote truth and resilience among populations vulnerable to psychological manipulation.

5 Innovative Defence Strategies and Military Support

The dynamic nature of modern warfare necessitates continuous innovation in both tactics and technology. For NATO and its allies, this requires maintaining robust classical military power while effectively coordinating across multiple domains of modern warfare, including anti-hybrid warfare measures and tools. Innovations in defence technology are crucial for maintaining a strategic edge, particularly in areas such as drone warfare, electronic warfare, and cyber defence systems. Additionally, the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning into these systems is essential for enhancing their effectiveness and responsiveness.

The Western defence industry plays a pivotal role in supporting Ukraine and countering Russian military advancements. As the war has been highlighting the need for rapid production and deployment of military equipment, Western nations must find ways to rejuvenate their defence industrial complex and enhance its production scale. This expansion is essential to support the defence needs of NATO allies in the event of protracted large-scale warfare.

Re-equipping Western militaries and maintaining a steady supply of military support to Ukraine involves not only increasing production but also ensuring that it is cost-effective. This in turn also means that the enhancement of defence capabilities against Russia requires not just national efforts but international collaboration. Joint procurement initiatives can lead to cost savings and ensure interoperability among different nations' armed forces.

In addition to technological advancements, strategic considerations under the NATO treaty, specifically Articles 3, 4, and 5, play a critical role in shaping defence responses. Article 3 emphasizes the need for individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack, which supports the deployment of advanced defence systems within member states. Article 4 allows for consultation among allies when territorial integrity, political independence, or security is threatened, a consideration given the missiles crossing into the airspace of any



NATO member state. Lastly, the invocation of Article 5, which concerns collective defence if an attack occurs, remains a significant consideration, reinforcing the need for robust and immediate defence capabilities to deter or respond to potential threats.

The ongoing war underscores the critical need to rebuild the defence industrial capacity of NATO allies to sustain a large-scale military conflict over prolonged periods. By leveraging new technologies, enhancing production capabilities, and fostering international cooperation, NATO and its allies can strengthen their defensive posture and also provide essential support to Ukraine, thereby contributing to regional stability and deterring further escalation of the conflict.

6 Legal and Moral Challenges in Modern Warfare

In the context of contemporary conflicts, legal and moral challenges are increasingly prominent, complicating the international response and shaping the ethical landscape of warfare. The foundation of modern international conflict management is grounded in a complex web of treaties, conventions, and international agreements designed to regulate state behavior both in peacetime and during wartime. Key among these is the United Nations Charter, which governs the use of force between states. Russia's invasion of Ukraine presents a clear challenge to these legal norms, particularly regarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, raising questions about the effectiveness and enforceability of international law.

The international community's response to breaches of law highlights the difficulties in enforcing these standards. While there are mechanisms for addressing such violations, including sanctions and international tribunals, their effectiveness often depends on the geopolitical will and the unity of major powers, which can be inconsistent. Moreover, the Security Council, often paralyzed by the vetoes of permanent members, including Russia, struggles to act decisively in situations where its members are directly involved, thus undermining the UN's role in maintaining international peace and security.

The evolution of warfare technologies presents additional moral challenges. The deployment of autonomous weapons raises questions about accountability and the ethical implications of delegating life-or-death decisions to machines. Similarly, cyber warfare and information operations that target civilian infrastructures and manipulate public opinion test the boundaries of traditional warfare, creating ethical dilemmas about the extent of civilian involvement in conflict.

A core tenet of both legal and moral frameworks in warfare is the protection of civilians and non-combatants. The conflict in Ukraine, characterized by heavy shelling of residential areas, targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure, and the use of banned weapons, highlights the grim reality of modern warfare where civilian casualties are high. The international community faces the moral imperative to respond not only to the immediate humanitarian needs but also to address the broader injustices inflicted upon civilians, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable.

Modern conflicts often operate within the 'grey zones' of international law—actions that hover on the brink of what is legally acceptable without overtly crossing it. These include hybrid warfare tactics such as the



deployment of little green men in Crimea, the ambiguous use of force in proxy wars, and the increasing involvement of non-state actors and third countries. The latter, through international volunteers, private military companies, and indirect support via arms and funding, have become integral to these dynamics, further complicating the management and interpretation of grey-zone activities. Together, these elements challenge traditional interpretations of aggression and defence, necessitating new legal perspectives and ethical considerations to address these ambiguities effectively.

The legal and moral challenges presented by modern warfare thus demand a re-evaluation and adaption of existing laws and moral philosophies. As warfare continues to evolve, so too must the frameworks that govern it, ensuring they are robust enough to address new technologies and tactics, including reforms in international bodies like the United Nations, to prevent powerful member states from paralyzing decision-making processes. The international community must strengthen its resolve and its instruments to ensure that legality and morality do not become casualties of war.

7 Global Repercussions of the War

The implications of the ongoing war in Ukraine reach well beyond its borders, impacting geopolitical dynamics, global economies, and international relations on a worldwide scale. The conflict has triggered a significant realignment of global alliances and security strategies. In particular, NATO has experienced a resurgence of vigour and unity in response to Russian aggression. This unity is essential not only for the defence of its member states but also for conveying a strong message of deterrence to potential aggressors. Russian aggression has also prompted traditionally militarily non-aligned countries such as Finland and Sweden to reassess their positions, resulting in their accession to NATO and the enhancement of their military capabilities.

Economically, the war has disrupted global supply chains, particularly in the energy and agricultural sectors, where Ukraine and Russia play significant roles. The resulting spikes in oil, gas, and agricultural product prices have compelled many countries to reassess their dependencies in energy, industry, and food supplies. This reassessment has accelerated moves toward more resilient national supply chains, including a shift to renewable energy sources and a reduction in reliance on Russia. These adjustments affect not only energy policies but also the broader economic stability of regions heavily dependent on energy imports and global, uninterrupted supply chains that rely on free trade.

Ukraine, often referred to as the »breadbasket of Europe«, has long been a cornerstone of global food security. The ongoing war has jeopardised this status, disrupting grain exports and leading to rising food prices worldwide. However, this view overlooks critical dynamics within the global grain markets. Russia, the world's largest wheat exporter, has strategically flooded the global market by exporting significant quantities of grain, often for free, to countries in Africa and Asia. This has driven down global wheat prices, significantly undermining the European agricultural sector.

The economic fallout from these lower prices has triggered widespread protests among farmers across the European Union and aims to destabilize EU member states. By leveraging its record grain production and



exports, Russia not only places economic pressure on European farmers, who cannot compete with the low prices but also bolsters its geopolitical stance by positioning itself as a benevolent supplier to Africa and Asia. Amidst this turmoil, European nations find themselves entangled in disputes over grain imports, diverting focus from potentially supporting Ukraine's efforts to export its agricultural products, which could help mitigate Russian dominance in the global grain market and reinforce the stability of regional food supplies.

As previously discussed, the extensive use of information warfare tactics by Russia also plays a significant role in the broader implications of the war in Ukraine. These tactics, involving the spread of misinformation and state-controlled narratives, have profound effects on global information integrity and public opinion and challenge democratic societies to counteract these influences effectively without compromising free speech. This battle for hearts and minds, primarily waged through digital platforms, highlights the ongoing necessity for international cooperation in cybersecurity and media literacy initiatives, underscoring their importance not only in direct response but also as part of the broader geopolitical consequences of the conflict.

The war in Ukraine is not just a regional issue but a global crisis with far-reaching implications. It challenges existing international frameworks, tests global resilience in economic and security aspects, and reshapes geopolitical landscapes. It is reshaping geopolitical alliances, market dynamics, and information flows worldwide. As nations strengthen ties and reassess dependencies in critical sectors, the need for robust global strategies intensifies. The situation demands increased cooperation to ensure resilience against both economic and informational disruptions, highlighting the intertwined nature of modern global challenges.

8 Conclusions

In today's complex geopolitical environment, characterized by Russia's assertive policies and its aggression on Ukraine, the international community faces critical challenges that threaten not only regional stability but also the established principles of international law and order. The response to this crisis will set precedents for future international interactions and conflicts, in particular regarding the actions of autocratic regimes.

Strategic adaptation is essential. As we have observed, the nature of warfare and international politics is rapidly evolving. The means and tools that were effective yesterday may not be sufficient tomorrow. What remains unchanged is the need for credible deterrence and defence of Western democracies and our way of life. To this end, NATO and its allies would be well advised to continuously develop their military defence capabilities, strengthen economic resilience, and enhance diplomatic strategies to respond effectively to emerging threats and changing conditions.

Moreover, the legal and moral frameworks that underpin international relations must be reinforced. In an era where the lines between war and peace are increasingly blurred by hybrid warfare and cyber-attacks, it is imperative that international laws adapt to these changes to provide clear and enforceable standards that protect civilian populations and maintain global stability. The war in Ukraine has underscored the need for stronger global governance, emphasizing the importance of reforming international institutions to ensure they can effectively address and deter aggression. This includes not only security-related organizations like NATO but also economic and judicial bodies, which play crucial roles in upholding international order.



Finally, the global implications of the war demand a cohesive and strategic international response. This involves not just military support or economic sanctions but a comprehensive strategy that addresses the humanitarian, economic, and political dimensions of the conflict. Supporting Ukraine is not only about countering Russian aggression; it is about affirming a commitment to sovereignty, democratic governance, and international law.

To summarize, while the challenges ahead are daunting, they are not insurmountable. The stakes are high, and the outcomes of this war will undoubtedly shape the international order for years to come. It is a pivotal moment that calls for leadership, courage, and clarity from all nations committed to peace and justice. With coordinated action, resilience, and a commitment to the principles of international law, the global community can hope to navigate these turbulent times.

9 Recommendations

9.1 Enhancing Response and Readiness

1. **Strengthening Defence Capabilities:** After decades of neglect, Western democracies should rebuild their military and civilian defence capabilities to become better suited for collectively managing potential scenarios of protracted large-scale warfare effectively.
2. **Reinforce the Security of EU and NATO Eastern Flank Nations:** Increase the military forces and capabilities of NATO allies forward-deployed to NATO's Eastern Flank. This would boost the presence and readiness of combat-ready forces there and dissuade Russia from potential aggression.
3. **Strengthening Resilience and Reducing Dependencies:** Enhance the resilience of Western countries at large, including their civilian defence capabilities and industrial and supply infrastructure to be able to sustain them in the event of protracted warfare. Additionally, it is crucial to reduce dependence on critical raw materials and sub-components sourced from nations that disregard international law principles, thereby enhancing overall resilience.
4. **Fostering Public Engagement and Awareness:** Initiate a robust strategic communication campaign aimed at the domestic public to increase readiness and awareness regarding the potential dangers of war. Governments should actively engage with their citizens to foster a deeper understanding of international security issues and emphasize the importance of maintaining a strong, united stance against aggression.

9.2 Addressing Economic and Information Warfare

1. **Reassess and Strengthen Sanctions:** Acknowledging some of the limitations of sanctions, it is crucial to refine economic strategies to more effectively target aggressors. This includes coordinating with global partners to close loopholes and minimize unintended economic impacts on other nations.
2. **Counter Information Warfare:** Develop a comprehensive strategy to combat state-sponsored propaganda and misinformation. This involves investing in digital literacy programs and robust fact-checking networks to bolster the resilience of public discourse.



9.3 Legal and Humanitarian Aspects

1. Support International Legal Reforms: Advocate for reforms in international law to better address the challenges of modern warfare, such as hybrid tactics and the use of proxy fighters. This includes supporting efforts to hold aggressors accountable through international courts.
2. Enhance Humanitarian Assistance: Increase support for civilians affected by armed conflicts, focusing on long-term recovery and stability.

9.4 Fostering Global Cooperation

1. Broaden International Alliances: Expand diplomatic efforts beyond traditional allies to include global partners concerned with aggressive territorial expansions and violations of international norms. This broadened alliance can serve as a powerful deterrent against aggressors.
2. Prepare for the Long-Term Implications: Acknowledge that the outcome of conflicts like the one in Ukraine will have long-lasting impacts on European and global security. The outcome of the war in Ukraine will shape the 21st century. Western democracies must collectively prepare for these outcomes by continuously adapting and updating their strategic plans.

These recommendations aim to solidify defence postures, enhance international law, and ensure that global stability is maintained through proactive and unified international efforts. As the geopolitical landscape continues to evolve, the international community must remain vigilant and adaptable to safeguard peace and security.



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