



CNA Russia Studies Program

## THIS WEEK'S ABSTRACTS

### 1. WESTERN SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Over the past two weeks, Western support for Ukraine has been the most frequent topic for discussion in Russian articles focused on Western military activities. Topics include a review of the impact of Lloyd Austin's visit to the region, reaction to Western statements on increased tension in the Donbas, and concern about direct NATO military support for Ukraine. The articles generally minimize the significance of Russian troop movements in the region and suggest that while Western armaments have not improved Ukrainian military capabilities, Ukraine joining NATO would pose an existential threat for Russia.

### 2. NATO MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN THE BLACK SEA

During this reporting period, Russian media extensively covered US and NATO military activities in the Black Sea region, with five articles related to this topic found in the search material. Much of the coverage centers on the arrival of USS *Mount Whitney* and USS *Porter* in the region. Most of the articles also share a common theme—namely, that this deployment is tied to the Western support for Ukraine described in the previous section. The arrival of the ships is described as part of a larger effort by the United States to increase pressure on Russia near its borders, which includes the increase in tensions in the Donbas.

### 3. RUSSIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATO

Several recent articles focus on the Russian-NATO relationship in light of the withdrawal of the Russian diplomatic mission to Brussels. Commentators largely reiterate the point that the relationship itself has

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grown colder since 2014, and that the latest round of expulsions over alleged espionage activities was described as a final straw. Although writers mostly repeat points about NATO's perceived aggressive actions against Russia and the relative uselessness of the mission as a diplomatic institution, notes of caution by regime critics about the potential for conflict escalation are also sounded.

#### **4. RUSSIAN ANALYSTS DISCUSS US NUCLEAR POSTURE REVIEW AND DETERRENCE**

Some of the Russian coverage focuses on deterrence issues, including the ongoing US Nuclear Posture Review process and the challenge of deterrence in hybrid warfare. An October 29 article in *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie* by Aleksandr Bartosh and Anatoliy Letyago discusses the challenge of deterrence in a "global hybrid war" and criticizes the US efforts to increase operational unpredictability as potentially having the ability to contribute to accidental or inadvertent escalation of a war.

#### **5. ON THE PROSPECT OF A EUROPEAN ARMY**

Two longer articles discuss the prospect of a European army separate from NATO—an idea that has been floated numerous times but lacks sufficient support. Specifically, the articles reference recent comments from EU high representative for foreign affairs Josep Borrell, who stated, "It's clear that the need for more European defence has never been as much as evident as today after the events in Afghanistan." The articles cite a number of additional reasons why the EU would seek an independent defense force, including the rise of China and an alleged shift of US focus to the AUKUS alliance.

#### **6. GERMANY'S DEFENSE MINISTER'S QUOTE ON NUCLEAR DETERRENCE AGAINST RUSSIA MAKES WAVES**

Several articles between October 25 and October 29 cover Russian defense minister Sergey Shoigu's response to a statement by Germany's defense minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer regarding the need to deter Russia, including with the use of nuclear weapons. The articles quote Shoigu lamenting Kramp-Karrenbauer's loss of historical memory of World War 2 and noting that "security in Europe can only be common, without infringing on Russian interests." Authors also speculate about Kramp-Karrenbauer's political ambitions and discuss the role of nuclear weapons in German domestic politics.

#### **7. TENSIONS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

A number of articles touch on ongoing events in East and Southeast Asia, especially with regard to the new AUKUS agreement as well as weapons testing and deployments on the part of the United States. Most authors underline the role of the United States as undermining regional stability—whether through AUKUS or declarations of support for Taiwan or new defense arrangements with Japan—and emphasize its activities as particularly designed to ratchet up tensions and increase the potential for conflict.

#### **8. TURKEY SEEKS F-16 PROCUREMENT**

Two articles address Turkey's ongoing bid to purchase F-16s from the United States. In 2019, Washington refused to sell F-35 jets to Turkey after Ankara purchased Russian S-400 missile defense systems, citing military-technical security concerns based on the integration of the two systems. Turkey hopes to redirect the \$1.4 billion it paid for the F-35s towards fourth-generation F-16s, which may not pose the same risk. The first article discusses the prospect of such a deal, given certain obstacles, including "deep concern" among members in the House of Representatives. The second article discusses the Turkish foreign minister's

remarks that Ankara could buy Russian Su-35 and Su-57 fighters if the deal does not work.

## **9. DEVELOPMENTS IN WEAPONS THAT COULD TARGET RUSSIA**

A variety of articles discuss developments of US weapons systems that could be used to target Russia. One article addresses developments with the F-35A "Lightning II" program, a fifth-generation fighter-bomber which will be deployed in NATO countries within a year. Three other articles discuss the US strategic bomber B-1 "Lancer" as well as the AGM-158C long-range antiship missiles (LRASM) they carry.

## **10. COMMENTARY ON US WEAPONS PROGRAMS**

Several Russian articles respond to recent developments in US weapons programs. These include the recent delivery of the first battery of the long-range hypersonic weapon (LRHW) missile system to the US Army, a DARPA project involving "Gremlin" drone swarms, upcoming hypersonic modifications to the three Zumwalt stealth destroyers, and the ongoing US W93 nuclear warhead program.

# 1. WESTERN SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Over the past two weeks, Western support for Ukraine has been the most frequent topic for discussion in Russian articles focused on Western military activities. Topics include a review of the impact of Lloyd Austin's visit to the region, reaction to Western statements on increased tension in the Donbas, and concern about direct NATO military support for Ukraine.

Writing in *Topwar.ru*, Yevgeny Fedorov summarizes Lloyd Austin's visit to the Black Sea region. He suggests that the US secretary of defense is not well versed on issues of international politics and is uncomfortable in interacting with media.<sup>1</sup> He believes that this is the reason that Austin did not even mention the imprisonment of Mikhail Saakashvili during his visit to Georgia, much less press the Georgian leadership to release him. He argues that this part of the trip amounted to little beyond empty statements about potential future agreements, suggesting that the United States is satisfied with the status quo in the region. Austin's Ukraine visit also largely reaffirmed the status quo, but in this case the status quo includes continuing supplies of weapons to the Ukrainian military. Fedorov argues that weapons such as grenade launchers and armor-piercing munitions will not improve Ukraine's ability to fight the Russian military but will help it attack "the peaceful inhabitants of the Donbas." He concludes by suggesting that the reason that the United States is unwilling to make greater investments in its Black Sea partners is that its primary geopolitical focus has shifted to Asia and competition with China, and Ukraine and Georgia are therefore distinctly secondary for Washington.

Vladimir Mukhin, also writing about the Austin visit to Ukraine, reaches a very different conclusion in a *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* article.<sup>2</sup> He suggests that Secretary Austin's promises that the United States would support Ukraine in its fight against Russia were taken by Kyiv as a directive to act, resulting in a military buildup in the Donbas and the start of implementation of a territorial defense plan for Ukraine. He also highlights recent calls by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Laura Cooper for European states to remove limitations on the transfer of lethal weapons to Ukraine. He suggests that while Russia will inevitably react to Ukrainian military activities, there is as of yet no evidence of a Russian military buildup on Ukraine's borders, despite claims to the contrary in the Western press.

Other articles also minimize the significance of Russian troop movements near Ukraine's borders. A short article in *Novye Izvestiya* quotes General Milley as stating that the United States does not consider current Russian troop movements aggressive.<sup>3</sup> It also notes that while Kyiv initially stated that its intelligence had not noted any suspicious troop movements, Ukrainian politicians quickly changed their minds and started speaking about the need to prepare for an escalation in the Donbas conflict. It concludes by quoting Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova describing Western reports about potential Russian military escalation as a fresh fake news campaign on the part of US media.

An analytic article in *Izvestiya* similarly suggests that there is little to the reports of the concentration of Russian forces.<sup>4</sup> It notes that the 144<sup>th</sup> Division in Yelnya was established some time ago and is located closer to Belarus than to Ukraine. It suggests that the recent articles in the Western press on this topic are part of a continuing effort to establish an image of Russia as an aggressive state in order to justify US troop presence in Europe and NATO's concentration of forces on Russia's borders, with the Ukraine conflict serving as a convenient theme for this effort.

The article goes on to discuss Ukraine's acquisition of Turkish Bayraktar UAVs and the possibility that these platforms could affect the military balance in the Donbas. It cites a Russian military analyst who is concerned

that American policy-makers believe that the combination of Turkish UAVs and calls by US officials for more European military assistance to Ukraine may signal a change to a more confrontational posture and more active support for Ukraine on the part of NATO and the United States. The possibility of a Karabakh scenario is mentioned in this context. The use of Turkish UAVs is also briefly analyzed in a Topwar.ru article, which is otherwise focused on specific details of the Donbas fighting.<sup>5</sup> It suggests that Kyiv is trying to create tensions between Moscow and Ankara, and has succeeded in this effort to some extent.

A number of articles discuss the impact of NATO member states providing arms to Ukraine. An article in *Russia in Global Affairs* outlines the extent of Ukraine's foreign arms purchases since 2014 and suggests that these weapon deals have done little for Ukrainian military capabilities but have increased Ukraine's dependence on the United States and NATO.<sup>6</sup> Topwar.ru takes a similar line in a discussion of the capabilities of various Western armaments that NATO states are providing, or soon could provide, to Ukraine. It suggests that while weapons such as Bayraktar UAVs and Javelin missiles are highly effective against poorly equipped forces such as the Armenian military in Karabakh or fighters in the Donbas, they would have little impact on the Russian military.<sup>7</sup> An article in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* notes that Ukraine recently took part in a meeting of the NATO North Atlantic Council Supreme Advisory Committee on Armaments.<sup>8</sup> It also describes the extent of US and British military assistance to Ukraine, suggesting that the UK in particular is aiming to become a key military-strategic partner for Ukraine.

Finally, two articles assess the possibility that Ukraine could join NATO and the potential impact of such a move. Topwar.ru suggests that despite warm rhetoric and signs of increased cooperation, Kyiv has little perspective on becoming a NATO member in the short or medium term, because of the alliance's ban on incorporating new members with territorial, ethnic, or political disputes.<sup>9</sup> There are too many disagreements among NATO member states about how to deal with Ukraine. The author suggests that NATO gives false hope to Ukraine through steps such as inviting it to the NAC Armaments Committee meeting or expelling Russian diplomats from Brussels in order to keep it as a partner. Meanwhile, Kyiv has nothing to offer the alliance as a member. The only thing NATO would get from admitting Ukraine would be a strong and decisive reaction from Moscow.

The article then contradicts its argument that NATO would not get anything from Ukrainian membership by highlighting the increased threat to Russia that would come from such a move, which it calls "an existential threat to Russia." In this context, it discusses the placement of American intelligence equipment that could scan all of European Russia and "would seriously negate the Russian military's defensive and offensive capabilities." Short- and medium-range missile systems would reduce Russian response time and would tempt NATO to conduct a preventive decapitating strike on Moscow. As a result of this threat, Moscow would have no choice but to respond to "certain circumstances" with a preventive strike of its own. In an article in *Gazeta.ru*, Mikhail Khodarenok presents a similar perspective on the potential threat of NATO membership, noting that in addition to missile and intelligence systems, NATO could establish naval bases throughout southern Ukraine and would also use Ukrainian airfields to deploy its air forces, including fifth-generation fighters, throughout Ukraine.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, NATO would constrain Ukrainian aggression, which might provide some benefit for Russia.

## 2. NATO MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN THE BLACK SEA

During this reporting period, Russian media extensively covered US and NATO military activities in the Black Sea region, with five articles related to this topic found in the search material. Much of the coverage centers on the arrival of USS *Mount Whitney* and USS *Porter* in the region. Most of the articles also share a common

theme—namely, that this deployment is tied to the Western support for Ukraine described in the previous section.

An article in *Gazeta.ru* quotes Russian defense minister Shoigu saying that the ships have arrived in the region in order to test the defenses of Russia's southern border, adding that the Russian military was prepared to counter any provocations on the part of these ships.<sup>11</sup> "When a ship of a non-regional power enters the Black Sea, when we understand that it has long-range high-precision weapons on board..., we watch it, we accompany it and we understand that at any time, at any moment, any provocations are possible, as it was not so long ago with a British ship, and, of course, we must not allow such things." The article also quotes Russian Duma deputy Mikhail Sheremet, advising the US military not to repeat HMS *Defender's* violation of Russian territorial waters as a way of showing support for Ukraine. "It is absolutely unsafe to misbehave at our borders. Do not wave torches near powder kegs."

President Putin indicated that Russian military forces would observe the American ships through both binoculars and scopes, adding that the appearance of NATO ships in either the Baltic or Black Sea, especially those armed with guided missile weapons, would require improvements in Russia's aerospace defense systems. Finally, the Russian Black Sea Fleet announced that in response to the arrival of the US ships in the Black Sea, it would conduct exercises in the region. On November 3, Russian aircraft and Bal and Bastion coastal missile defense systems conducted strikes against sea targets, while submarines launched missile strikes against a detachment of simulated enemy ships.

The other articles that discuss the Black Sea are more analytic in nature, focused on what the increase in US naval presence in the region means for Russian security. *Izvestiya* suggests that the arrival of the ships is part of a larger effort by the United States to increase pressure on Russia near its borders, highlighting the simultaneous increase in the intensity of P-8 and RC-135V reconnaissance flights in the Barents Sea and recent NATO air force exercises near Crimea.<sup>12</sup> The author suggests that these activities are a response to the recent increase in tensions in the Donbas. He quotes former Russian deputy foreign minister Sergey Ordzhonikidze, who suggests that this is a signal to Russia that Ukrainian provocations in the Donbas have Western support, while also acclimating Russia to more frequent NATO naval shows of force in the Black Sea. Ordzhonikidze further notes that NATO's goal is to force Russia to keep its military in a state of high readiness, in order to exhaust the Russian military psychologically and financially.

Vladimir Mukhin, writing in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, also ties the US naval activity in the Black Sea to the situation in the Donbas. He suggests that it is part of the increase in Western military presence in Southeast Europe, including the EU proposal to create a Southeast multinational military corps, outlined in its report entitled "Waves of ambition: Russia's military build-up in Crimea and the Black Sea." He suggests that this presence is part of a Western plan to establish a permanent naval operational group in the Black Sea, including a unified intelligence system and a headquarters in Bulgaria. Until the latter is established, he suggests, USS *Mount Whitney* will coordinate military activities in the region.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, an article in *Topwar.ru* suggests that the arrival of the US ships is a demonstration that NATO has possibilities in the region, and a reminder that Turkey has "returned" to NATO and controls travel into and out of the Black Sea through the Bosphorus. The article includes a lengthy discussion of the Montreux Convention and its role in regulating passage through the Bosphorus.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. RUSSIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATO

Several recent articles have focused on the Russia-NATO relationship in light of the withdrawal of the Russian diplomatic mission to Brussels. Commentators largely reiterate the point that the relationship itself has grown colder since 2014, and describe the latest round of expulsions over alleged espionage activities as a final straw. Although writers have mostly repeated points about NATO's perceived aggressive actions against Russia and the relative uselessness of the mission as a diplomatic institution, notes of caution about the potential for conflict escalation also were sounded.

In a short piece for *Saint-Petersburgskie Vedomosti*, Alexander Kazargin writes, "Experts believe that NATO continues its destructive course in relations with the Russian Federation in order to justify the purpose of its existence, and the decision of the Russian side has become a logical response to the actions of the alliance."<sup>15</sup> Interviewing several Russian scholars and think-tank experts, the author emphasizes both the malign role that NATO plays in regional foreign policy, as well as the presumed small impact of the withdrawal decision given alternative points of contact through other, existing bilateral ties.

In *Republic*, Alexander Golts, a journalist and researcher, suggests an alternative framing of the NATO mission, which he characterizes as an action that could genuinely increase the risk of conflict.<sup>16</sup> He notes that the immediate fallout from the withdrawal included the announcement of a new NATO strategic concept aligned against Russia as well as harsh words from the German defense minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer that led to a similarly harsh response from Russian defense minister Sergei Shoigu. Golts details the aggressive NATO readiness and drill plans, as well as general ratcheting up of military tensions, arguing that eliminating a liaison mission at such a time was foolish. He concludes that new measures that can bolster mutual confidence and trust are needed, such as clear expectations on how many NATO troops may be deployed to new member states and a revised Vienna Document.

Finally, Timofey Bordachev, the program director for the Valdai Club, writes in *Profil'* about how the Russian mission to NATO has long been a superfluous institution whose goal of permanently bringing the two sides to mutual cooperation was an illusion.<sup>17</sup> The piece underlines the point that the existence of the mission was largely a leftover from more hopeful days in the 1990s, and that the recent action simply reflects diplomatic reality and ends a period of maintaining useless institutional facades. He notes, "For several years now, relations between Russia and NATO countries have been teetering on the brink of an armed conflict, and no concrete situation has proven the need to preserve embassies and liaison missions. Contacts between the military, where necessary, in order to avoid accidental collisions, are carried out at the interstate level."

### 4. RUSSIAN ANALYSTS DISCUSS US NUCLEAR POSTURE REVIEW AND DETERRENCE

A November 3 article in *Argumenty Nedeli* discusses the US Nuclear Posture Review Process and, more specifically, the Biden administration's considerations of "sole purpose" and "no first use" policies (which the article mistakenly conflates).<sup>18</sup> The article argues that, while not having a first-strike policy would be a good thing for "global stability," the United States has "spawned a great number of allies in Europe and Asia who are unable to calmly live without the false sense of security under the American 'nuclear umbrella.'" In addition to allies, it notes that hawks in the United State also oppose the policy change and are pressuring the Biden administration to continue with the status quo.

In an October 29 article in *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, Aleksandr Bartosh and Anatoliy Letyago focus on the challenge of deterrence in a “global hybrid war” due to a significant level of uncertainty and unpredictability.<sup>19</sup> The authors begin by praising efforts to reduce these factors—for example, noting the statement of US chief of the General Staff Mark Milley about the need to increase military-to-military engagement with Russia after Milley’s meeting with Russia’s chief of the General Staff Valeriy Gerasimov, even despite what they say are hostile US and NATO policies “aimed at undermining international stability” by provoking “uncertainty and distrust” in relations with Russia and China. They note that uncertainty and unpredictability is the point of hybrid warfare and, because there is no cogent theory of hybrid warfare, it is challenging to work out a strategy to counter it. This, in turn, makes national and international security unstable and “any small push can trigger an avalanche.” The article then goes on to discuss the use of military force for deterrence and notes that the US approach of Dynamic Force Employment is intended to increase the level of operational uncertainty and thus buttress extended deterrence.

The authors posit that in the wake of “military failures in Afghanistan and Iraq,” the US is once again seeking ways to strengthen deterrence and thus increase uncertainty even more. NATO, in turn, is “imitating US actions” and is trying to contribute to uncertainty, expelling representatives of Russia’s mission to NATO. “The line of the Alliance toward Russia is more and more aggressive, and the organization itself is more closed,” they posit. Further, they write,

It is known that with the concept of “diplomacy” is associated with the art of negotiating in order to prevent or settle international conflicts, search for compromises and mutually acceptable solutions, and also expanding and deepening international cooperation. The collapse of relations with Russia provoked by the United States and NATO create[s] a stalemate on the most important stage of development of the international situation, which is becoming more unstable and unpredictable.

The authors further argue that current NATO military exercises and potential efforts to expand nuclear sharing threaten to contribute to inadvertent or accidental escalation. In particular, they note that the Steadfast Noon 2021 exercise was highly provocative in what they argue was a scenario of a nuclear war against Russia and Belarus. They then go on to discuss elements of a RAND Corporation study on operational unpredictability that suggests several approaches: use of nontraditional deployment schemes; demonstration of new, including previously covert, capabilities; and disinformation of the adversary on US warfighting ability. Bartosh and Letyago then seek and find some of these approaches in US efforts to deter Russia and China, and posit again that these could provoke conflict escalation. They argue,

It should be noted that such tactics of using US and NATO armed forces with the creation of a high degree of uncertainty of plans and their possible directions of their employment are widely used on the western border of Russia, in the Baltic States, the Arctic, in Ukraine and the Black Sea, in the republics of Central Asia and Transcaucasia. Thus, the United States seeks to solve several problems: first, to diffuse Russian efforts, to provoke it into additional costs to ensure a response, and, second, to create additional sources of uncertainty within the framework of strategic deterrence of Russia.

## 5. ON THE PROSPECT OF A EUROPEAN ARMY

Two longer articles discuss the prospect of a European army separate from NATO—an idea that has been floated numerous times but lacks sufficient support. Specifically, the articles reference recent comments from EU high representative for foreign affairs Josep Borrell, who stated, “It’s clear that the need for more



European defence has never been as evident as [it is] today after the events in Afghanistan.” According to the *Guardian*, Borrell claims that a force of around 5,000 would be sufficient to meet European security needs.<sup>20</sup> In 2007, the EU commissioned two battle groups of 1,500 troops each, which are filled on a rotating basis by member states, but have never been deployed due to disputes over funding.

The first piece, published in *Voенно-promyshlennyi kurier*, argues that “Washington's diligently inflated bubble of Euro-Atlantic solidarity has recently received several punctures,” including the US’s “flight” from Afghanistan and lack of European coordination ahead of the AUKUS submarine sale announcement.<sup>21</sup> It cites various additional reasons why the EU might be interested in organizing such a force, including “the weakening of the United States, COVID-19, the strengthening of Russia, the rise of China,” and other cases where the “United States finally cools off to Euro-Atlantic obligations and guarantees.”

The second piece, published in *Topwar.ru*, dismisses Borrell’s recent comments, and argues in a somewhat disparaging tone that the prospect for an autonomous European defense force remains limited.<sup>22</sup> It states, “Every year, in spring and autumn, Europeans remember that they are people too, that they live in countries with a rich history of victories in many wars. They think that once upon a time their ancestors were warriors who were not afraid of anyone. Every year Europeans, especially Germans and French, talk about the need to create some kind of European army. And every year, with the onset of cold weather or heat, conversations stop.”

## 6. GERMAN DEFENSE MINISTER’S QUOTE ON NUCLEAR DETERRENCE AGAINST RUSSIA MAKES WAVES

In a rare discussion of foreign officials’ statements, the October 25 issue of *Krasnaya Zvezda* carries a response from Russia’s minister of defense Sergey Shoigu to a statement made by German defense minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer regarding the need to deter Russia, including with the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>23</sup> In an October 21, 2021, interview with a German radio station ahead of the NATO Defense Ministers summit, Kramp-Karrenbauer reportedly stated, “We must make it very clear to Russia that we are ready to use such means as well so that it would have a timely deterrent effect and it would not occur to anyone to attack, for example, the Baltic regions or NATO partners in the Black Sea. This is the main idea of NATO, this alliance, and it will be adapted to the current behavior of Russia.” *Krasnaya Zvezda* quotes Shoigu as responding as follows:

Against the background of calls for military deterrence of Russia, NATO is consistently pulling forces to our borders. How this had previously ended for Germany and for Europe, the German Minister of Defense must know well. Security in Europe can only be common, without infringing on Russia's interests. But today it is NATO that is not ready for an equal dialogue on this issue. Moreover, the implementation of NATO's “deterrence” plan in Afghanistan ended in a catastrophe, which is now being dealt with by the whole world.

On October 25, Interfax reports that the Russian MOD gave a protest note to the German military attaché in Moscow.<sup>24</sup>

On October 29, an article by Vladimir Ivanov and Dmitry Litovnik in *Nezavisimoye Voенnoe Obozrenie* further discusses the controversy, noting, “Berlin, apparently, intends to use American weapons, since it does not have its own.”<sup>25</sup> The authors suggest that this discussion of nuclear use against Russia is a continuity of recent trends in German rhetoric. In 2017, “for the first time since 1941, Germany, through the mouth of its then-Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen posited the possibility of resolving the ‘Russia question’

through military force,” they note. Ivanov and Litovnik then go on to argue that Kramp-Karrenbauer is a “new generation of Germans that ignore history because of national humiliation” and that believe that the “root of all troubles is in the East.” They suggest that her statements have not been received well even domestically in Germany, quoting the head of the Social Democrats, Rolf Mützenich, who described Kramp-Karrenbauer’s remark about nuclear deterrence as “careless” and “no different than the baseless threats that the Russian side makes.” The authors then further speculate that Kramp-Karrenbauer is angling for the job of NATO secretary general at a time they describe as perilous for the alliance, which they maintain feels threatened by AUKUS. They then go on to extensively quote Shoigu as follows:

If we talk specifically about Germany, then before saying such words, we need to look back on history. And after all that Germany has done in our country, I think there is no need to speak out on this issue for another two hundred years. I will not speak more harshly and rudely, I think you understand me. As for talking from a position of strength: again, go back to history. If you don’t read it yourself, ask your grandfathers what it’s like to talk to Russia from a position of strength. They can probably tell you.

The article concludes with a bravado discussion of the destructive capability of the lower-yield nuclear capabilities of the B61-12 stationed in Germany versus that of Russian strategic nuclear forces.

Another October 29 article, by Oleg Nikiforov in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, focuses on nuclear weapons, among other issues, in German domestic politics.<sup>26</sup> The article discusses how the withdrawal of nuclear weapons, Nordstream 2, taxes, and renewable energy issues have become sticking points in the formation of a German governing coalition. The members of the would-be coalition are currently debating whether the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from German territory, as favored by Alliance 90/The Greens, would be detrimental to European security. The article notes that nuclear weapons, “recently invoked to Russia” by Germany’s minister of defense, have been on German territory since the 1950s and are intended for nuclear deterrence as well as warfighting. The authors point out that “any diminution of the fact that almost 80 years later German pilots are still looking at Russia through the bombsight cannot not worry Moscow.”

## 7. TENSIONS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

A number of articles have touched on ongoing events in East and Southeast Asia, especially with regard to the new AUKUS agreement as well as weapons testing and deployments on the part of the United States. Most authors underline the role of the United States as undermining regional stability—whether through AUKUS or declarations of support for Taiwan or new defense arrangements with Japan—and emphasize its activities as particularly designed to ratchet up tensions and increase the potential for conflict.

These arguments span a variety of recent developments in China and in the East Asian maritime domain, and also cover concerns about the formation of new alliances in the region. One piece in *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie* focuses on upcoming testing of the Kalibr and Onyx missiles on a Project 855 nuclear submarine in Kamchatka, as well as joint naval exercises by Russian and Chinese warships in the Sea of Japan.<sup>27</sup> This is framed as a bare-minimum necessary reaction to the growth in American security structures in the region, their potential for intervention in regional issues, and new, aggressive thinking on the part of Japan vis-à-vis China and North Korea. In the same issue of the magazine, the military historian Sergei Kozlov writes that with the new AUKUS alliance structure, the United States now held a “foothold the size of a continent” and that Australia was chosen as it “is the best suited to the role of a springboard for containing the powerful development of China and gaining dominance in the oceans.”<sup>28</sup> Reviewing the strategic reasons and implications of the new security arrangement, Kozlov concludes that in the end it is

primarily meant to balance China and grow into a larger security framework inclusive of Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines.

Concerns about balance of seapower are also found in an article in Topwar.ru by Kirill Ryabov, which discusses the “MPX 2021” naval exercises between the US, UK, Australia, and Japan on October 15-18. Ryabov frames the exercise as a “warning to China,” and notes the unusual distribution of ships involved, which included three aircraft carriers with full flight decks. Ryabov considers this a notable escalation in the seriousness of the exercises, characterizing them as “a full-fledged international aircraft carrier group with broad capabilities” and notes that “a significant part of its aviation equipment was made up of fighters of the latest models.”<sup>29</sup> The increased naval presence in the Pacific is also highlighted by another Topwar.ru article, by Roman Skomorokhov, who cites a recent report from the Federation of American Scientists using ONI data on the relative fleet sizes of the US and China. Skomorokhov highlights the massive increase in ships relative to Russia’s Pacific Fleet, which he laments as “not being capable of playing on the same board with modern players.”<sup>30</sup>

A short piece in *Zavtra* by Yury Tavrovsky zooms in on undiplomatic comments made recently by President Biden about “supporting Taiwan in the event of a Chinese attack,” and notes the potential for nuclear proliferation to the island in light of its earlier attempts in the 1970s.<sup>31</sup> Tavrovsky also expands the argument in longer form in a piece for *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, which makes more of the rapprochement and cooperation between Russia and China in a cautious light, warning that the “development of the strategic partnership between Moscow and Beijing is undoubtedly becoming a serious obstacle to the transition of the cold wars against our countries to the hot phase. The specter of a nuclear conflict in the Taiwan Strait must not materialize.”<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, a long opinion piece by Vladimir Zyryanov in Topwar.ru also focuses on Taiwan, reviewing the history of US-Taiwanese relations and emphasizing that support should be understood as an aspect of American imperialism, not democracy promotion.<sup>33</sup> Zyryanov suggests that in “the face of tremendous social tensions and growing struggles in the American working class, the ruling stratum could resort to war as a means of directing social tensions ‘outward’ against an external enemy, and at the same time reverse its historical decline and restore the regional and global hegemony that it received after World War II.”

Finally, a long article in Topwar.ru by Andrey Voskresensky presents a vision of US efforts to undermine China’s rise by way of slow economic strangulation.<sup>34</sup> In a wide-ranging piece, Voskresensky argues that the “fall of China” is the fate of the coming decade, due to a cunning economic containment strategy by the United States—including use of the Arab Spring as a means to undermine Chinese international investments as well as Chinese failures to control the microchip industry—and the internal problems of China’s unbalanced internal economy. The author distinctly views tensions over Taiwan to be China’s effort to get itself out of a systemic economic and resource-shortage spiral and throw off US containment efforts.

## 8. TURKEY SEEKS F-16 PROCUREMENT

Two Russian articles address Turkey’s ongoing bid to purchase 40 F-16s from the United States. In 2019, Washington refused to sell F-35 jets to Turkey after Ankara purchased Russian S-400 missile defense systems, citing military-technical security concerns based on the integration of the two systems. Turkey hopes to redirect the \$1.4 billion it paid for the F-35s towards fourth-generation F-16s, which may not pose the same risk.

The first article, published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, discusses recent comments from Erdogan following a

summit with President Biden in Rome.<sup>35</sup> Erdogan characterized the meeting as “very positive” and noted that while the US Congress would still need to approve the deal, Biden had said he would “do his best.” However, the article highlights the domestic obstacles the US would have to overcome, including concerns from some US experts that even fourth-generation fighters might pose information-security risks if operated in proximity to Russian systems.

The second article, published in Gazeta.ru, addresses Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu’s recent remark that Ankara could buy Su-35 and Su-57 fighters from Russia if the US refuses to sell the F-16.<sup>36</sup> According to the article, Cavusoglu added that “Turkey has never been defenseless. We have alternatives. If the United States does not want to solve these problems or Congress blocks it, other options will come into play.” Military analyst Viktor Litovkin writes that while Moscow would be happy to sell Turkey these aircraft, there is, as of yet, no serious indication that Turkey is actually considering this. Litovkin writes, “For this, it would be necessary to prepare local airfields, ground control systems, and simulators. Moreover, pilots must also understand Russian. We do not teach in English, let alone Turkish. The main issue is Turkey’s readiness to tie itself to the country whose military equipment it imports.”

## 9. DEVELOPMENTS IN WEAPONS THAT COULD TARGET RUSSIA

A variety of Russian articles discuss developments of US weapons systems that could be used to target Russia. One article discusses developments in the F-35A Lightning II program, a fifth-generation fighter-bomber which will be deployed in NATO countries within a year.<sup>37</sup> The article notes that this aircraft most closely rivals the Russian fighter Su-57. It reports a successful test on October 5, in which two F-35As defeated test targets by deploying dummy B61-12 nuclear bombs. According to the F-35 Joint Program Board, this test was the final stage for the aircraft to obtain nuclear certification. According to Commander of the US European Command and NATO Supreme Commander in Europe Tod Wolters, the alliance will deploy 450 F-35A fighters at 12 national air bases. These aircraft will also be deployed in the Netherlands (2022), Denmark (2023), Italy (2022), Norway (2022), Belgium (2025-2027), and Poland (2026). “The closest to the Russian border will be Polish fighters,” which will receive 32 F-35As.

Three articles discuss the US strategic bomber B-1 Lancer, as well as the AGM-158C long-range antiship missiles (LRASM) it carries. On October 28, a Forbes article stated, “A pair of B-1s could shoot 48 LRASMs at Russia’s Baltic Fleet. Enough, perhaps, to sink the entire fleet in a single pass and eliminate the major threat to U.S. and allied ships in the region.”<sup>38</sup> One Russian article in Topwar.ru argues that while 48 missiles would not be sufficient for this task, “repelling such an attack will be very difficult and requires a sufficient amount of technical means.”<sup>39</sup> Specifically, the long range of these missiles will allow B-1s and the B-21 successors to launch outside of the range of Russian air defense systems. A second article references the advanced technologies implemented in the targeting system which reduce the dependence on surveillance and reconnaissance equipment, data transmission lines, and GPS.<sup>40</sup> “Translated from military-technical, this means: machines have an artificial intelligence system that allows them to accurately recognize the target, its capabilities and attack with maximum efficiency. Until recently, it was believed that only Russian anti-ship missiles possessed these qualities.” A third article notes that while the LRASMs are stealthier than other types of missiles, they are still subsonic, and their unit cost (\$3 million each) may persuade the US to seek a cheaper alternative.<sup>41</sup>

## 10. COMMENTARY ON US WEAPONS PROGRAMS

Several Russian articles respond to recent developments in US weapons programs.

A *Krasnaya Zvezda* article addresses the US Army's recent announcement that the first battery of the long-range hypersonic weapon (LRHW) missile system was delivered to the 5th Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment, 17th Field Artillery Brigade, stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. The system consists of a battery operations center, four transporter-erector-launchers, and modified trucks and trailers. The system will be put on experimental combat duty in FY 2023.<sup>42</sup>

A *Gazeta.ru* article discusses a DARPA project that would involve launching a swarm of X-61A "Gremlin" drones from a C-130 Hercules aircraft for reconnaissance and combat missions.<sup>43</sup> According to open sources, the drones would reportedly carry electronic warfare systems and small warheads, and work "in cooperation with each other." Russian military expert Alexei Leonkov argues that the United States "is trying to come up with a system that would overwhelm Russian air defense systems....Then, tactical bomber aviation will be sent to this area to destroy the detected air defense systems."

A *Topwar.ru* article addresses upcoming reconfigurations to the Zumwalt class of stealth destroyers, which consists of only three ships.<sup>44</sup> The modification will replace the Advanced Gun Turret system optimized for coastline-shooting in order to make space for Conventional Prompt Strike (CPS) hypersonic missiles. According to *Naval News*, these modifications will be complete by FY 2025.<sup>45</sup>

## ADDITIONAL MATERIALS OF POTENTIAL INTEREST

The November issue of the monthly periodical *Zarubezhnoe Voennoe Obozrenie* has several articles on Western military issues, including on the views of NATO commanders on the use of force in military conflicts, prospects for the development of US nuclear forces, and how the US military conducts information operations. The full text of all articles in the issue may be found at <https://zvo.ric.mil.ru/upload/site230/J8XM2sDFqj.pdf>

## LIST OF SOURCES

- *Argumenty Nedeli*, a popular Moscow newspaper primarily focused on social and political issues.
- *Gazeta.ru*, a pro-government publication currently owned by the Rambler Media Group.
- Interfax, an independent Russian news agency. It was founded in 1989 as the first nongovernment-owned and -operated source of news in the Soviet Union and has remained independently owned since that time.
- *Izvestiia*, one of Russia's oldest and most respected newspapers, noted for its quality military coverage.
- *Kommersant*, a privately owned political and business daily known for quality reporting.
- *Krasnaya Zvezda*, official publication of the Russian Ministry of Defense.
- *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, a yellow press publication.
- *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, a privately owned political and business daily known for quality reporting.
- *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, a weekly military affairs supplement to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, a privately owned political and business daily known for quality reporting.
- *Novye Izvestiia*, an online-only publication that until 2016 was oppositional toward the Russian government but is now classified as patriotic in orientation.
- *Profil*, a weekly business and analytical journal.
- *Republic* (formerly *Slon*), a private Russian-language online magazine covering business, domestic politics, economy, and culture.
- *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, official daily of the government of Russia, the only one to publish texts of new laws, etc.
- *Russia in Global Affairs*, a bilingual bimonthly journal publishing political science and international relations analysis, published by the non-profit Moscow-based Foreign Policy Research Foundation.
- *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, billed as the oldest newspaper in Russia, from the 1700s; primarily covers city/regional issues in St. Petersburg.
- Topwar.ru, a website focused on providing quality coverage for military developments in Russia and worldwide.
- *Voенно-Promyshlennyi Kur'er*, a publication informing on developments in the military-industrial complex (funded by the defense industry).

- *Zarubezhnoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, a monthly journal on foreign military capabilities, published by the Russian Ministry of Defense.
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## ENDNOTES

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