

Review of: "Russian Military Renaissance: An Unnecessary War"

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To me, both the purpose and the main message of this article remain unclear. At best, I can assume that the author tries to convince his reader that Putin is irrational and will use nuclear weapons unless he gets what he wants (i.e. restoration of the Soviet Union and his influence sphere in the Eastern Europe). This is one of the messages of Russian propaganda. In general, the article is filled with Russian propaganda messages. Moreover, it makes assumptions and statements that are doubtful, to say the least.

First, the author states that Russia invaded Ukraine in response to NATO inclusion of Eastern European countries and the Baltic states. He amplifies this message in several places in the paper, e.g. "firm U.S. conviction that the latter [Ukraine] should become a NATO Member State" (in fact, US never expressed this "firm conviction" insisting on political and institutional reforms in Ukraine before the NATO membership can be considered), "and leaving the West to establish military bases on Ukrainian soil" (again, the West never wanted to establish any military bases in Ukraine), "The tightening of Russian control over Eastern Europe led to the consolidation of NATO, which, in turn, triggered the accession of Finland and Sweden to the Alliance" (again false, Finland and Sweden rushed to the Alliance AFTER February 24th 2022, fearing Russian invasion, this was NOT a response to non-existent Russian control over Eastern Europe).

Second, the author's implicit assumption throughout the text (sometimes also written explicitly) is that there are only US, Russia and China, while European states, especially Eastern European ones, don't have any say in the global politics. This assumption is easily refuted by the fact that Ukraine stands to the Russian aggression (which no one thought it would). Other Eastern European states today are finally heard too. This is clearly an expression of Russian imperialism - to assume that "smaller" nations such as Ukraine can be disregarded altogether.

Third, there are a few dubious statements about China. (1) "China does not take a side in the conflict, and my assumption is that it will abstain from any action unless provoked by the West." This is not true. Xi definitely knew beforehand that Putin would attack Ukraine and (implicitly) approved it. Moreover, China helps Russia to evade Western sanctions and plans to supply weapons to Russia. This is clearly not neutrality. (2) "In a world order in transition, the major rising power – China, overshadows both the United States and Russia. To assume that Beijing will take the world's leadership in four or five decades is to state a reality." To say that China "overshadows" the US is clearly an exaggeration - simply because China depends on US (and EU) technologies and markets more than the US depends on Chinese production facilities. And telling that something 40-50 years from now is a "reality" is ridiculous from the scientific point of view - simply because the future is NOT a reality until it becomes the present.

Next, the author introduces into his text quite a few manipulations which, however, are easily recognizable to anyone familiar with Russian propaganda. For example, there are no “Russia-backed separatists” in Ukraine. There are (and there have been since 2014) Russian troops, Russian secret service agents and Ukrainian collaborators.

As another example, the author constantly says “Ukrainian war” although it is Russian aggression against Ukraine, and not some random war happening in Ukraine. In a similar spirit, the author is afraid to call things what they are: he refers to a number of Western articles who struggle to define *denazification* (some suggesting that it is a change of government) although I doubt that the author is not familiar with the article “What should Russia do with Ukraine?” by Timofei Sergeitsev. This article clearly explains that denazification means genocide - and this is what Russia is implementing in Ukraine. In a similar spirit, the author invents the term “Duginism” to describe Russia's official ideology, although this ideology is clearly fascism (see, for example, Timothy Snyder piece on this:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/19/opinion/russia-fascism-ukraine-putin.html>).

Generally, the article is rather vague - my feeling is that it is hiding a few main messages - about “mighty China” and “crazy Putin” within many pages of empty words. As the brightest example, consider the following sentence: “The Russian military capabilities permitted Putin to act effectively in Eastern Ukraine simply because he knew that his actions would primarily affect the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk, which Russia is willing to recognize.” What does “recognize” mean here? Now four Ukrainian regions - Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya oblast and Crimean Autonomous Republic are formally annexed by Russia. Although of course no other country recognizes that and chances that Ukraine will liberate all of its territory are rather high. What is meant by “act effectively”? Is it turning of some parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts into criminal enclaves ruled by gangsters and FSB?

To summarize, this article is not worth reading and publication, we have more than enough Russian propaganda in our information space even without this piece.