

DOI 10.31558/2519-2949.2019.1.10

УДК 327.5:327.7

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RUSSIAN MILITARIZATION OF CRIMEA AS A THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The article analyzes the Russia's military buildup in the occupied Crimean and Sevastopol. It is proved that the Russian militarization led to a multifold increase in military forces and defense equipment on the peninsula, which is becoming a powerful military foothold. Russia has coastal missile defense systems that fully control the Black Sea, as well as layered air defense systems, by which Moscow closed the air zone over the peninsula, in Crimea. In addition to defense weapons, Russia increases the deployment of ships equipped with missiles with a range of up to 2,500 kilometers, threatening almost the whole of Europe, on the peninsula. Creating opportunities for the deployment of nuclear weapons on the peninsula radically changes the security situation in the Black Sea region and beyond.

Despite the growing threats to Europe due to the militarization of Crimea, the European Union continues to emphasize the need for cooperation with the Russian Federation.

The Russian annexation of Crimea drew the attention of NATO to the Black Sea and somehow changed its policy, which gradually moved to a strategy of deterrence against Russia. NATO increases the military presence in Eastern Europe and creates mobile super rapid deployment forces; it is planned to create Alliance naval, mechanized and aviation divisions, which are ready for deployment during thirty days. But in general, the NATO policy has a limited number of adequate responses in case of further Russian aggression, especially with regard to the states of the Black Sea region, which is not as high-priority as the Baltics.

The lack of an Alliance military strategy for the Black Sea region and difficulties in deploying the NATO fleet in the Black Sea due to the Montreux Convention remain the main problem.

Key words: *annexation, Crimea, the Russian Federation, security, threats, militarization, nuclear weapons, the EU, NATO.*

The urgency of the problem. The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation became a test for the world order and a special problem for the European Union. As stated in the EU Global Strategy 2016, it is precisely the Russia's violation of international law and the destabilization of Ukraine that challenged the EU security at its core [1]. On the other hand, Russian militarization along with the threat of using nuclear weapons, which the Russian President Volodymyr Putin has referred to in these recent times, is a serious threat for Europe. The occupied Crimea has a special role in the Russian Federation's plans, since the peninsula has already become a powerful Black Sea military base of Russia, from which it can threaten not only the Black Sea countries, but also the EU countries and states of the Middle East.

Researches related to the problem. The problem of Russian threats to Europe is reflected in the works of B.Frederick, A.Radin, M.Povlock, S.Watts, M.Priebe and others. But Western experts are more focused on threats from Russia to the Baltic countries, ignoring the Black Sea vector. The militarization of Crimea as a threat, first of all, to Ukraine is reflected in scientific researches of A.Klimenko, V.Badrak, M.Samus. But modern political science requires a comprehensive study of the threats associated with the militarization of Crimea and response strategies from the West.

The purpose of this article is to identify the main EU security threats related to the Russian militarization of Crimea and the ways to deal with these threats.

The statement of basic materials. After the annexation of Crimea, Russia quickly brings various military equipment and military personnel to the peninsula. So, in December 2014, the Chief of the Russian General Staff Valeriy Herasimov announced the creation of a self-sufficient military force [2] consisting of the naval base, army corps, aviation and air defense in Crimea.

Over the annexation period, the total number of Russian troops on the peninsula has increased almost threefold – from 12.5 ths. to 32 ths. people [3]. Russia is planning to increase its military forces in Crimea to 43 ths. people [4, p.15].

The number of military equipment in Crimea is growing even more rapidly. As of 2018, the number of aircrafts increased by 5 times (from 22 to 113), artillery systems – by 7.3 times (from 24 to 174), armored vehicles – by 7.4 times (from 92 to 680 units), tanks – by 40 times (from 0 to 40 units) [3; 4, p.8]. Russia is planning to increase the number of military aircrafts to 1,150 units and tanks to 100 units [4, p.8; p.15].

Missile anti-ship systems placed on the peninsula in 2014 has a special role. The Bal division, which is a mobile system to control territorial waters with missiles with a range of from 120 to 260 kilometers, was first transported to Crimea from the Caspian. Bastion coastal missile launcher that can strike both at ships and ground targets was brought to Sevastopol. It provides 600 km coastline protection, that is, it can be used far beyond the Black Sea.

In May-June 2014, Russia deployed layered air defense systems (AD), including S-400 systems (internal layer defense) and Pantsir-S1M (inner layer defense) near Feodosia. The first and second S-400 systems (Triumf) were deployed in Crimea in March 2017 and January 2018, respectively. As of January 2019, S-400 systems are placed in Sevastopol, Feodosia, Yevpatoria and Dzhankoi, fully closing the air zone over the peninsula.

Currently, there are marine and coast guard brigades, coast guided missile and intelligence brigades, surface to air-missile and artillery regiments, radiation, chemical and biological defense and engineer regiments as well as two assault battalions deployed in Crimea.

The air component of the Russian occupation forces in Crimea is represented by bomber, assault, fighter and military air corps units, air defense systems and Russia's Black Sea fleet air forces (Russia's Black Sea fleet).

Russia pays particular attention to the modernization of the Black Sea fleet based in Crimea. In 2015-2018, the Russia's Black Sea fleet deployed in Sevastopol consisted of three frigates («Admiral Grygorovych», «Admiral Essen» and «Admiral Makarov»), two small missile-equipped ships («Vyshniy Volochok» and «Orehovo-Zuyevo») and six submarines, two of which are now at the Russia's base in Syria in the Mediterranean Sea. All of them are equipped with Kalibr missiles with a range of up to 2,500 km and a nuclear armed option. According to the Russia's Black Sea Fleet Commander-in-Chief Vice-Admiral Oleksandr Moiseyev, the fleet will include another 12 ships (6 combatant vessels and 6 auxiliary vessels) in 2019 [5].

The deployment of nuclear weapons in Crimea poses a special risk for Europe. According to Ukrainian intelligence reports, Iskander systems have been already deployed on the peninsula. Russia is planning to deploy Tu-22M3 bomber regiments, which also can carry nuclear weapons, here as well. Their range capability goes far beyond the Black Sea – 5 thousand kilometers [4, p.14].

The Kremlin explained its actions by the deployment of the American missile defense system, which, according to Russian analysts, was directed just against Russia and not against Iran as is argued by the White House, in Romania.

The Russian official circles neither confirm nor deny the information on nuclear weapons deployed on the peninsula. But the Head of the Department of Non-Proliferation and Arms Control at the Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mikhail Ulyanov said that Russia had every right to deploy nuclear weapons in Crimea. "Russia, of course, have the right to deploy nuclear weapons anywhere within its territory, including on the Crimean Peninsula, if necessary," he emphasized [6]. In 2015, a territorial body of the 12th Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Russia's Ministry of Defense dealing with nuclear weapons was established on the peninsula.

Active militarization of the Crimean Peninsula is accompanied by military training exercises, the number of which is constantly increasing. During 2018, more than 20 different military exercises involving war ships, aviation and air defense systems were conducted. In January 2019 alone, military training involving 10 naval vessels and air defense systems (Pantsyr-S), artillery training and missile-firing exercises by using Bal systems as well as joint training of a small missile-equipped ship and a bomber aircraft Su-24M were conducted in Crimea.

But the world community paid attention to the militarization of Crimea only in the face of direct Russian aggression against Ukrainian gunboats near the Kerch Strait at the end of 2018. After shooting attacks on Ukrainian boats and capturing Ukrainian sailors, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a relevant Resolution condemning Russia's actions and its increased military presence on the occupied peninsula [7].

Thus, after the annexation of Crimea, the Russian military threat to the EU has increased significantly. But the EU Security Strategy 2016 stressed the need for continued cooperation with Russia, despite

its aggressive policy in the region. It does not determine the level of threats from the Russian Federation. «Maintaining relations with Russia remains one of the strategic objectives. We don't recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of Eastern Ukraine. But the EU and Russia depend on each other. Therefore, we will interact to discuss disagreements and cooperate in cases where our interests overlap», the document says [1]. This ambiguity allows Russia to feel superior, and this only increases its aggressive intentions.

A PESCO initiative (Permanent Structured Cooperation), as part of which it is proposed to expand the cooperation of European countries in the defense sector, is among the main means, by which the EU tries to solve the problems of its security after the annexation of Crimea.

The Russian annexation of Crimea and aggression against Ukraine led to the restructuring of the NATO defense policy in Europe. At the Alliance's summit of 2014 in Wales, an Action Plan aimed at improving the NATO combat effectiveness by increasing military forces in Eastern Europe and creating a super rapid deployment group of up to 5 thousand soldiers was adopted. In 2015, the Alliance started reformatting its organizational structure, creating new small headquarters in the eastern countries [8].

At the summit of 2016 in Warsaw, Russia was recognized as a country, whose aggressive actions «are a source of instability in the region and a main challenge for the Alliance, which is damaging the Euro-Atlantic security system» [9]. This leads to the creation of new High-Readiness Joint Force, ready for military actions within a few days, as well as the deployment of 8 multinational NATO Force Integration units.

The militarization of Crimea along with the peninsula annexation, destabilization in Eastern Ukraine and deployment of modern Russian dual-purpose missiles in Kaliningrad was for the first time considered as a threat to NATO in the Brussels Summit Declaration (July 2018) [10]. NATO responded with an agreement to create a military group consisting of 30 naval vessels, 30 mechanized battalions and 30 air squadrons, which should be deployed during 30 days, by 2020.

According to military analysts, the Russian militarization of Crimea is conducted based on a «prevention of access» strategy, by using which Russia tries to deprive foreign forces of mobility in the Black Sea region due to the deployment of the weapon system. [11].

The NATO actions in the region are limited to the deployment of a multinational brigade in Romania and the creation of a Black Sea functional centre at the NATO Naval Command dealing with regional security issues.

The Alliance considers having the permanent presence of naval vessels in the Black Sea and conducting military training exercises an important aspect. The largest number of NATO ship activities in the Black Sea was recorded against the background of the Russian annexation of Crimea and initiation of military actions in the Donbass – 31 visits in 2014. But this number is a quarter lower than in 1995-99. During 2015-17, the number of NATO ship visits ranged from 14 to 21 [12, p. 81].

In 2018, NATO ships stayed in the Black Sea for 30 days that is more than a year earlier, which allowed the Vice Admiral Clive Johnston, Commander of the NATO Naval Command, to say about a significant increase in their presence in the region [13].

Since 2017, the number of air reconnaissance missions and remotely piloted aircrafts over the Black Sea and off the coast of occupied Crimea has increased, which allowed to better understand the scale of militarization in Crimea. But all these actions have not had any significant impact on the situation in the region.

NATO and EU measures taken to counteract Russia in the Black Sea region are limited, because NATO continues to consider the Baltics a main area at risk. «There are countries, which consider the Baltic Sea a more important region, and if something happens there, we will face a real problem, and I agree with that: it will be impossible either to get in this sea or leave it», Johnston stressed. [13].

NATO actions in the Black Sea are significantly limited by the Montreux Convention, which determines a certain tonnage and period of stay for naval ships not belonging to Black Sea states. This problem could be resolved by rotating naval vessels or by increasing the combat effectiveness of the NATO Black Sea member states' fleet. But among NATO's member states, only Romania, which proposed to create an Alliance's inter-allied flotilla in the Black Sea, demonstrates a tendency towards active counteraction to Russia in the region. However, this proposal was not supported because of Bulgaria's opposition, where Russia has its levers of influence.

Conclusions: In the five years since the annexation of Crimea, Russia has increased its military capabilities in the Black Sea significantly, having transformed the peninsula into a powerful military foothold with the possibility of using nuclear weapons that threaten Europe.

But today's EU and NATO security policies are rather cautious and do not respond to the existing level of threat. Since 2016, the Alliance has gradually introduced the strategy of deterrence against Russia, but it is related more to the Baltic region, which, according to Western analysts, is the most vulnerable.

A certain low prioritization of the Black Sea region for the West along with international legal restrictions (Montreux Convention) provides the space for further strengthening the Russian positions in the Black Sea.

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Горюнова Є. О. Російська мілітаризація Криму як загроза безпеці Європейського Союзу

У статті проаналізовано зростання військового потенціалу Росії в окупованому її Криму та Севастополі. Доведено, що російська мілітаризація призвела до багатократного збільшення кількості військових та техніки на півострові, який перетворюється на потужний військовий плацдарм. Росія дислокує в Криму протиракетні берегові системи, які повністю контролюють Чорне море, а також ешелоновані системи протиповітряної оборони, якими Москва повністю закрила небо над півостровом. Разом із обороною зброєю Росія нарощує присутність на півострові кораблів-носіїв ракет “Калібр” із дальністю польотів до 2500 кілометрів, що створює загрозу майже для всієї Європи. Створення можливостей для розміщення ядерної зброї на півострові радикально змінює безпекову ситуацію не тільки в Чорноморському регіоні, але й поза його межами.

Російська анексія Криму привернула увагу НАТО до Чорного моря та певним чином змінила політику Альянсу, який поступово переходить до стратегії стримування Росії. На тлі російської агресії східноєвропейські держави погодилися на розміщення американських систем протиракетної оборони. У межах НАТО проводиться збільшення військового контингенту у Східній Європі, створюються мобільні групи надшвидкого реагування та військово-морські, механізовані та авіаційні дивізії Альянсу. Але в цілому політика блоку має обмежену кількість адекватних відповідей у разі подальшої агресії Росії, особливо щодо держав Чорноморського регіону, які, за виключенням Туреччини, не мають потужного флоту. Головною проблемою залишається відсутність військової стратегії Альянсу щодо регіону та складнощі із базуванням флоту НАТО в Чорному морі через обмеження тонажів та часу перебування згідно Конвенції Монтре.

Ключові слова: анексія, Крим, Російська Федерація, безпека, загрози, мілітаризація, ядерна зброя, ЄС, НАТО.