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Editors: Sławomir Dębski, Łukasz Kulesa, Wojciech Lorenz

The Next Reform of Russia's Armed Forces: Is It a New Threat or Just for Appearances?

Anna Maria Dyner

The reform plan for Russian armed forces presented by the authorities hints that Russia is preparing for a long-term armed conflict with Ukraine. Although there are many indications that it will have problems implementing all the assumptions of the reform plan, its goal is clearly to rebuild and strengthen the army in a way that will challenge NATO. For Alliance members, this will require a plan for multi-stage support of Ukraine through the Ramstein format and others, but also NATO's further adaptation to the Russian threat.

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On 21 December 2022, during a meeting of the expanded collegium of the Russian Ministry of Defence, Vladimir Putin and his defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, announced a plan for significant reform of the armed forces. It consists of three key points: increasing the size of the army, changing the structure of the military districts (MDs), creating more than a dozen new divisions, and changing the command system introduced by the Serdyukov reform of 2009.

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The Russian authorities decided to significantly reform the military in response to the problems conducting operations in Ukraine. At the same time, they indicate NATO countries, especially the United States, as Russia's main opponent. This means that Russia will not only

strive to achieve the goals of the so-called "special military operation" in Ukraine but also to create serious security challenges for NATO countries.

State of the Russian Armed Forces before the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine

In 2009, the Russian authorities launched a wide-ranging reform of the armed forces, known by the name of its author, Anatoly Serdyukov, the defence minister at the time. It was introduced as a result of the lessons of the 2008 war with Georgia, which revealed weaknesses in the Russian army.¹ The most important goals of that reform were reducing the army from 1.35 million to about 1 million troops and professionalising the armed forces. This involved a change in command and organisational structures, including the creation of four large military districts, a transition from a division system to a brigade system to ensure greater flexibility in the use of available resources, increasing the level of combat readiness of individual units, and a thorough re-armament. At the same time, while Serdyukov's reform increased the role of contract soldiers, Russia did not end conscription, keeping as a goal to train a large number of reservists. Since then, the Russian authorities have consistently pointed to the positive changes taking place in the military. The increasing level of modernisation of particular types of armed forces,² and their combat capabilities, was regularly reported to the Kremlin. The official message also emphasised the care for the wellbeing of the soldiers and officers, pointing to rising salaries and the development of military housing. Every year, in one of the four MDs, significant military drills were conducted. In the largest of them—*Vostok 2018*—297,000 troops were involved along with about 36,000 vehicles, a thousand aircraft and helicopters, and 80 ships.³

These activities translated into an increase in positive assessments of the Russian military in society. Data from the state-owned Russian Public Opinion Research Centre (VCIOM) show that while in 2006 the Russian armed forces had a positive opinion of 32% of Russians surveyed, by 2015 it was already 82%, and in 2018, 87%.⁴ Public opinion polls also showed that the vast majority of respondents were in favour of creating a strong army, which corresponded to the increasingly intense propaganda showing the need for additional armament.

Internationally, the Russian armed forces were perceived as an increasingly professionalised military capable of engaging in a full-scale conflict. The regularly organised large-scale manoeuvres,

¹ K. Giles, "Assessing Russia's Reorganized and Rearmed Military," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/03/assessing-russia-s-reorganized-and-rearmed-military-pub-69853>.

² A.M. Dyer, "Assessment of the Russian Armed Forces State Armament Programme in 2011-2020," *PISM Report*, June 2021, <https://pism.pl/publikacje/assessment-of-the-russian-armed-forces-state-armament-programme-in-2011-2020>.

³ A.M. Dyer, "Vostok 2018 Exercises: The Largest Manoeuvres in Russian Federation History," *PISM Bulletin* No. 129/2018, https://pism.pl/publications/Vostok_2018_Exercises___The_Largest_Manoeuvres_in_Russian_Federation_History.

⁴ "Armiya i obshchestvo: monitoring," Russian Public Opinion Research Centre <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/armiya-i-obshhestvo-monitoring>.

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rearmament programme, and information about the production of modern types of armaments, such as hypersonic missiles and intercontinental missiles, lent credibility to these assessments. The perception of Russia's capabilities was also influenced by the relatively successful military intervention in Syria, although limited primarily to the aviation component.

In 2021, the number of Russian armed forces was estimated at 900,000 soldiers, of which 280,000 were serving in the Ground Forces, 150,000 in the Navy, 165,000 in the Aerospace Forces, 50,000 in the Strategic Missile Forces, 45,000 in the Airborne Forces, 1,000 in the Special Operations Forces, and 29,000 in the Railway Forces. The Russian Land Forces were reported to have 2,927 main battle tanks, 5,180 infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) and 4,894 artillery systems. The Aerospace Forces had 1,172 combat aircraft, 399 attack helicopters, and 333 transport helicopters.⁵

Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine

Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022 with 140,000 troops, about 35,000 National Guard soldiers and officers, and the so-called separatist people's republics forces, estimated at 35,000. In total, these troops were estimated to have been equipped with 1,200 tanks, 2,900 IFVs and armoured personnel carriers (APCs), 1,600 artillery pieces, 330 aircraft, 240 helicopters, and ships of the Black Sea Fleet, reinforced by landing units of other naval operational units.⁶

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The full-scale invasion of Ukraine verified the real combat capabilities of the Russian army.⁷ The military actions though revealed weaknesses in the training of officers, non-commissioned officers, and rank-and-file soldiers. They also showed the scale of corruption, hidden for years, that resulted in faulty equipment and ill-equipped soldiers being sent to the front. Also, the way the

operation was planned showed that the Russians underestimated the enemy, assuming that they would quickly achieve their goals and take full control of Ukraine.⁸

Further problems came to light during the partial mobilisation announced in September 2022. Specifically, the military lacked basic elements of modern equipment for soldiers, problems with their accommodation and proper training, and significant differences between the amount of declared equipment stocks and actual stock levels. It also turned out that military commissariats relied on outdated data and some of them, wanting to implement the designated plan as soon as possible, drafted people into the army who were legally not subject to conscription.

Despite its many failures, Russia did not stop trying to implement at least some of its original assumptions, including taking full control of the Ukrainian oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk, which it recognised as independent in February 2022 and where the fiercest fighting is currently taking place. Russia is also striving to increase control over other annexed⁹ territories of Ukraine, such as parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts.

The degree of intensity of military operations is evidenced by, among others, statistics on the losses suffered by Russia. According to data from independent experts on equipment losses in the past year (from 24 February 2022 to 22 February 2023), the Russians may have lost at least 1,762 tanks,

⁵ "Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia," *The Military Balance 2022*, pp. 192-201.

⁶ M. Cielma, *Nowa Technika Wojskowa*, No. 3/2022, p. 8.

⁷ M. Ozawa (ed.), "War changes everything: Russia after Ukraine," NATO Defense College-Rome, <https://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=1798>.

⁸ A.M. Dyrner, "Ukraina walczy, świat patrzy," *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* No. 3/2022, pp. 40-49.

⁹ A. Legucka, M. Piechowska, "Russia Conducts Pseudo-Referendums in Ukraine," *PISM Spotlight* No. 124/2022, <https://www.pism.pl/publications/russia-conducts-pseudo-referendums-in-ukraine>.

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2,096 IFVs, 297 APCs, 788 other armoured fighting vehicles, 72 aircraft, 78 helicopters, and 12 ships.¹⁰ The official Ukrainian figures on Russian losses are much higher and include 3,334 tanks, 299 aircraft, 287 helicopters, and 18 ships. These data also indicate human losses amounting to more than 145,000 soldiers (killed or wounded). In turn, in a communiqué from 17 February, the UK Ministry of Defence estimated that about 175,000-200,000 Russian soldiers and mercenaries from private military companies had been wounded or injured and between 40,000 and 60,000 killed.¹¹

Goal: Increase the Size of the Armed Forces and Change the MD Structures

Given the scale of Russia's problems with military operations in Ukraine, the authorities decided to launch a comprehensive reform like after the war in Georgia in 2008. Taking into account announcements to date, the Russians consider some of the main problems in conducting full-scale land operations of a long-term nature to be an insufficient number of soldiers, improperly structured units, especially the Land Forces (including a lack of artillery units), the diversification of command structures in various MDs, and too few troops for rapid reaction forces.

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Shoigu announced an increase in armed forces personnel to 1.5 million (an increase of 500,000), of which 695,000 are to have the status of contract soldiers (up from around 400,000 at present). The age range for compulsory military service is also to be changed from 18-27 to 21-30, which will

increase the pool of people eligible for conscription. In addition, rank-and-file soldiers will be able to sign contracts on the first day of service, and not after three months, as before. This means that those who decide to sign a contract can be sent to the area of fighting in Ukraine immediately after being drafted into the army.

According to the presented plan, the territorial structure of the MDs in the western part of Russia will change. The Moscow and Leningrad MDs are to be re-constituted. In practice, this may mean the dismantling of the Western MD, which was created from a merger of these structures in 2010, although the split has not been clearly announced. Their territorial shape also has not been defined, and therefore it is not known to which MD the Kaliningrad Oblast will belong (until the Serdyukov reform, it was a separate structure, first functioning as the Kaliningrad Defensive Area, and in the years 1998-2010 as the Kaliningrad Special Region). It is also unclear what the organisation of large exercises conducted jointly with Belarus, such as *Union Shield* and *Zapad*, will look like, as well as the functioning of the Regional Group of Forces of Belarus and Russia, although it will probably include troops from both the Moscow and Leningrad MDs. However, the break-up of the Western MD is aimed at strengthening the western part of Russia in response to Finland and Sweden seeking to join NATO, and probably focusing more on defending the two large cities that are key to the functioning of the state—Moscow and Saint Petersburg.

The increase in the size of the armed forces will entail more equipment, demanding the state significantly increase expenditure on armaments and production. Russia's overt defence spending in 2023 is planned at RUB 5 trillion (\$70.7 billion), an increase of almost 6% or the equivalent of RUB 303 billion (\$4.28 billion).¹² However, this is only part of Russia's planned spending on armaments, as the rest is hidden in other parts of the budget and some is classified. In November 2022, Minister Shoigu announced that the state's defence financing on orders in 2023 would increase by almost one

¹⁰ "Attack On Europe: Documenting Russian Equipment Losses During The 2022 Russian Invasion Of Ukraine," ORYX, <https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/02/attack-on-europe-documenting-equipment.html>.

¹¹ Ministry of Defence, "Latest Defence Intelligence update on the situation in Ukraine—17 February 2023," <https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1626472945089486848>.

¹² Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, "Osnovnyye napravleniya byudzhethnoy, nalogovoy i tamozhenno-tarifnoy politiki na 2023 god i na planovyy period 2024 i 2025 godov," https://minfin.gov.ru/ru/document?id_4=300570.

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and a half times, which would make it possible to cover 97% of the equipment needs of the Russian army.¹³ However, taking into account that Russia may have lost even 56% of its tanks, 32% of its IFVs, almost 6% of its combat aircraft and over 10% of its helicopters since the start of its invasion of Ukraine, even such a large increase in spending may prove too small to fully restore the potential Russia had before 24 February 2022.

In the longer term, rising armament production may be increasingly difficult to implement due to the significant burden on the state budget and the systemic problems of the armaments industry. Although it is clear from announcements by the Russian government that the economy is to function in wartime mode, and the arms industry will be a priority, this sector still will face problems related to production capacity and the acquisition of modern technologies necessary for the modern battlefield. Some of them, like semiconductors, Russia buys from China. Other technologies, such as optoelectronics, Russia can get from allied countries, such as Belarus, although these are not solutions with parameters equal to Western countries. The Russians, however, have a problem with, for example, the production of thermoelectric modules, included on the sanctions lists, and the acquisition of machining tools that allow for precision cutting of metal elements, which is important, among others, in the production of heavy equipment. There is also visible stagnation in the design and production of aircraft, primarily fighters and attack helicopters.

At the same time, Russia is focusing on the production of types of armament with technologies it already has, such as T-90M tanks and the BMP-3 IFV, as well as repairs and modernisation of T-72 tanks to the B3M standard, and T-62 tanks to the M standard,¹⁴ along with the BMP-1 and BMP-2. However, Western sanctions will significantly slow down or prevent some production. Hence, Russia is taking steps to circumvent them or acquire technologies, especially those related to modern electronics, through third countries, such as China, Kazakhstan, or Armenia.

Strengthening the Army's Potential

The Russian defence minister announced the creation of three new motorised divisions, including in the Ukrainian regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, as well as an army corps in Karelia. The corps is to be formed of three mechanised divisions of the Land Forces and two airborne divisions. The creation of the Leningrad MD is a response to the decision of Sweden and Finland to join NATO. It means Russia is increasing its ability to conduct operations that interfere with the Alliance in this region and present a threat of force against the future members.

Minister Shoigu also announced the transformation of seven mechanised brigades from the Western, Central, and Eastern MDs and the Northern Fleet MD into divisions. This, together with the announcement of the creation of five artillery divisions, shows the importance that the Russians attach to the expansion of the Land Forces. This is connected with announcements about increasing the size of the army because mechanised or artillery formations are relatively easy to train.

The announcements included the creation of two additional airborne divisions, while five divisions are to be created in the Navy from existing marine infantry brigades. This, in turn, indicates that the Russians strive to expand their special operations forces, partly following the example of the U.S.

Further, Russia plans the formation of three new air division commands, eight bomber regiments, a fighter regiment, and six army aviation brigades in the Aerospace Forces. According to the announcement, each combined arms army is to have a mixed air force division with, among others,

¹³ "Finansirovaniye gosoboronzakaza RF v 2023 godu budet uvelicheno pochni v 1,5 raza," <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/874796>.

¹⁴ "Czołg dla masochistów. T-62 na Ukrainie," *Defence24*, <https://defence24.pl/sily-zbrojne/czolg-dla-masochistow-t-62-na-ukrainie-skaner>.

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80-100 helicopters. Thus, Russia wants to increase the use of aviation on the battlefield as support for activities carried out by other formations.

In total, 10 wholly new divisions are to be created and a further 12 will be re-formed from existing brigades. The emphasis is on artillery, aviation (including army aviation, which is part of the Land Forces, not the Air and Space Forces), and airborne troops. Shoigu, however, did not announce the creation of any tank divisions (Russia currently has two tank divisions and two tank brigades). This means that in the Russian concept and contrary to the experience from the war in Ukraine, which shows the importance of armoured and mechanised units with artillery support in the conduct of main military operations, the land forces are to assume control of territory previously taken over by the special forces (although this failed in February 2022 in Ukraine). Moreover, Russia wants to increase the capabilities of its army to conduct long-term military operations with the use of large land units.

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Most of the proposals mean an almost complete departure from the main provisions of the recent reform of the Russian armed forces. The announcement of the return to the divisional system in the Eastern and Central MDs means unification of the command systems, as occurred earlier in the Western and Southern MDs.

In his speech on 21 December 2022, Putin announced the reorganisation of civil and territorial defence and the modernisation of the Russian armed forces, specifically in equipment and reconnaissance, command, and communication systems. Putin also stressed several times (incorrectly) that the combat potential of almost all NATO countries is being used against Russia and that it must oppose this through the proposed changes.

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The announcement of the reform measures indicates that Russia is preparing not only for long-term conflict, which will require ongoing replenishment of its losses, but also for the post-war period and the time it takes to restore its capabilities. It is also part of a political signal, directed mainly towards NATO, that Russia will not reduce its capabilities targeting the Alliance, but will increase them.

The proposed changes are also intended to maintain positive public opinion of the Russian armed forces. In 2022, despite war losses, partial mobilisation and economic difficulties, it has not changed significantly. In a survey conducted by the independent Levada Centre in November 2022, 83% of those surveyed had a positive opinion of service in the army,¹⁵ while in a poll conducted in August 2022, 77% of respondents said they trust the Russian Army.¹⁶

Actions for 2023

Defence Minister Shoigu announced that in 2023, the Russian armed forces are to focus on conducting the so-called “special military operation” in Ukraine and the fulfilment of its objectives, as well as operations in Nagorno-Karabakh and Syria, and responding to the “increasing threat from NATO”.

The priority for the Russian armed forces is to continue modernising its nuclear forces and introducing modern equipment, including the latest Sarmat missile (NATO: Satan II), which indicates

¹⁵ “Rossiyskaya armiya,” The Levada Centre, <https://www.levada.ru/2022/12/09/rossijskaya-armiya-4>.

¹⁶ “Doveriye obshchestvennym institutam,” The Levada Centre, <https://www.levada.ru/2022/09/20/doverie-obshchestvennym-institutam-2/>.

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that Russia, regardless of the war in Ukraine, cares about deterrence in relation to NATO, which it sees as the main adversary. The strategic forces are also to be supplemented with three Tu-160M long-range bombers, which will be used for operations in Ukraine, including regular attacks on critical infrastructure there. The potential of the Navy, which will receive five submarines and 12 surface ships, may be significantly strengthened. Shoigu also announced an increase in the production of the Kinzhal and Zircon hypersonic missiles. These missiles will be important both in the event of a prolonged war in Ukraine where they will be used to destroy elements of that country's critical infrastructure but also they significantly strengthen Russia's potential in a possible war with NATO.

In its modernisation plans, Russia is also focusing on the Aerospace Forces, pointing out that aviation and air defence should play a greater role in military operations to enable coordinated operations of all types of armed forces. The armaments industry is to increase the production of unmanned aerial vehicles to be used in a wider range of actions on the battlefield in Ukraine (including reconnaissance and attacks on military targets). Shoigu also announced the construction of three new repair factories for military equipment.

In 2023, Russia plans to change how its military commissariats function, as they have been repeatedly criticised. The changes include plans to digitise the data, establish wider cooperation with local and regional authorities and industry, and update the civil and territorial defence organisation system. Russia also plans to increase the number of contract soldiers to 521,000 by the end of 2023.

The exercises *Union Shield* and *Zapad*, carried out jointly with Belarus, have been announced for 2023. In the official rhetoric, they are supposed to be a response to the growing threat to the Union State, but also to the areas of western Russia, supposedly generated by NATO and in part because of the planned accession of Finland and Sweden to the Alliance. Shoigu also stressed that the Russian armed forces intend to develop cooperation with countries in Africa, Asia, South America, and the Middle East, which corresponds to the actions of Russian diplomacy in these countries aimed at the U.S. and NATO.

Therefore, while the goals set for 2023 partly fit into already announced changes, they are also an element of the implementation of earlier plans. However, the primary task will be to maintain the Russian army's ability to wage war in Ukraine while trying to strengthen western Russia, bordering NATO countries.

The Challenges and Possible Impacts of the Reforms Inside Russia

The scale of the proposed reforms will require long-term political, financial, and social efforts from Russia, as well as consistency in the implementation of all its assumptions. Failure to implement at least some of them will reduce the potential of the whole, as was the case with the Serdyukov reform. However, the degree of difficulty in achieving the goals will be greater than after 2008 because Russia is involved in the full-scale armed conflict in Ukraine and is bearing both social costs, including deaths and injuries of a significant number of its soldiers, and financial costs, both those related to the conduct of the war itself and the effects of Western sanctions because of it.

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From Russia's point of view, the greatest challenge will be to increase the total personnel of the armed forces to 1.5 million. This may mean the need to extend the basic military service to one and a half or even two years. Involvement in the war also means that in Russia, conscription will cover much larger groups of people than before (250,000-260,000 conscripts are drafted annually). It also is expected that the criteria for recruitment to the service will be relaxed or the category of persons obliged to serve expanded.

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It will also be problematic for Russia to quickly train a sufficient number of officers and non-commissioned officers for such a large army. Such expanded armed forces will require additional financial outlays for soldiers' salaries and care (e.g. housing). In order to train an army increasing by half, it will be necessary to quickly expand the infrastructure, including training grounds, provide equipment and qualified trainers, which Russia does not have enough of. As well, there will be outlays for equipment for soldiers (the cost for one conscript is estimated at \$80,000¹⁷) and a significant increase in armaments production, which will not happen without the construction of additional industrial infrastructure and acquiring qualified engineers. Given Russia's problems already in this area, no rapid changes should be expected. Despite the announcements dating back to 2009 and the Serdyukov reform, Russia has also failed to modernise its military education sufficiently to guarantee an increase in the number of officers.

Without adequate support and ensuring enough military equipment, it will be difficult to quickly transform the brigades into well-functioning and fully completed divisions and create new tactical units at this level. Most likely, the new divisions will not be fully completed. This indicates that they will achieve full combat readiness only after mobilisation, supplemented by reservists. At the same time, the pace of their formation and decisions about which tactical units will be emphasised will be a clear signal of how Russia prepares for war.

The announcement that the Russian defence industry will be the priority means cuts in other sectors of the economy and social spending, especially if, as a result of international sanctions, the revenues in the Russian budget from the sale of hydrocarbons significantly decrease. This, together with the increasing conscription and the number of dead and wounded, will place a strain on Russian society in the long term. If the Russian authorities are unable to compensate their citizens for the deteriorating living conditions, they will most likely increase the scale of repression to prevent protests. As a consequence, Russia's authoritarian tendencies will only intensify.

Conclusions and Perspectives

The announced changes, together with other actions taken by the Russian authorities, including the priority of the development of the arms industry, demonstrate that Russia is preparing for a long-term conflict in Ukraine. At the same time, the plans for further development of the strategic forces and the plan to create new military divisions and districts in the west of the country indicate that Russia is expanding its defence capabilities against what it considers hostile NATO actions.

The reform shows that the Russian authorities are drawing conclusions from the mistakes that have hampered their military operations in Ukraine. It also means further progressive and long-term militarisation of society. However, the full implementation of the changes will take at least several years, assuming that Russia does not continue to suffer severe losses in Ukraine. High losses will have a negative impact not only on the ability to increase the size of the army but also on the training of contracted troops, recruits, and conscripts.

With a high degree of determination, Russia will be able to implement the reform proposed by Minister Shoigu, but it will require significant financial outlays, which will mean a reduction in expenditures in other areas, including social spending. One obstacle to the implementation of such an ambitious plan will be the lack of suitably qualified staff in the officer corps and non-commissioned officer ranks and well-trained privates. Another problem may be the lack of appropriate infrastructure and facilities for the creation and expansion of such a large number of new military units in a short time.

¹⁷ "Voyennaya reforma v Rossii: gde brat' soldat i den'gi na nikh?", *Deutsche Welle*, <https://www.dw.com/ru/voennaa-reforma-v-rossii-gde-brat-novyh-soldat-i-dengi-na-nih/a-64491347>.

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Maintaining a high level of spending on the armed forces will also mean an increase in their importance among state institutions. The financial stability guaranteed by the service is also supposed to be a factor encouraging Russians to join the army, regardless of the losses that the Russian army suffers in Ukraine. This will entail further militarisation of Russian society.

The proposed reform shows that the Russian authorities are thinking about strengthening military structures in the future for needs that go beyond the so-called “special military operation”. Thus, a change in Russia’s foreign and security policy in its current form should not be expected, and the most important paradigm of Russian policy remains unchanged and will be based on military power. This will mean the continuation of Russia’s aggressive policy towards countries it considers to be its sphere of influence, but also towards NATO.

Despite the wide catalogue of announced changes, many issues have been omitted, such as the reform of military education or institutions responsible for intelligence and preparation of military operations. The war in Ukraine has shown that the earlier reforms did not increase the independence of commanders at all levels, especially at the brigade level, and the current plans do not take this into account either. The announcements also do not indicate that Russia plans to build up its logistic capabilities or expand its rear facilities, which will reduce its ability to conduct a long-term land operation of a significant scale, such as the war in Ukraine. There is also no proposal to increase the number of tank units, which play an important role in Ukraine.

If the reform is successfully implemented, Russia will primarily increase the capabilities of the Land Forces (with an air component assigned to them) and special operations forces. This means that the Russian armed forces may be better prepared for prolonged military action against an adversary such

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as Ukraine. However, the Russians will still struggle to wage a high-intensity conventional war against a well-trained and equipped adversary like NATO. Thus, taking into account statements that the Alliance remains Russia’s most important adversary, some of the proposed elements of the reform are suboptimal, and some are more tactical than strategic. At the same time, the Russian authorities’ intentions show how important it is for other states to help Ukraine end this war on

favourable terms. For NATO countries, this means the need to plan long-term military support for that country, including increasing armaments production so as not to weaken the Alliance’s own potential by helping Ukraine. Strengthening the Russian armed forces will also mean the necessity of further adaptation of the Alliance to the Russian threat, the continuation of increasing the defence potential of the countries of the Eastern Flank, and the organisation of large-scale military exercises. It also is necessary to carefully follow and analyse the implementation of the reform in Russia, which will make it possible to identify its weak points and accurately assess the Russian capabilities.