

Alternative Ukrainian Future Trajectories: Implications for Russia and the West

Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA)

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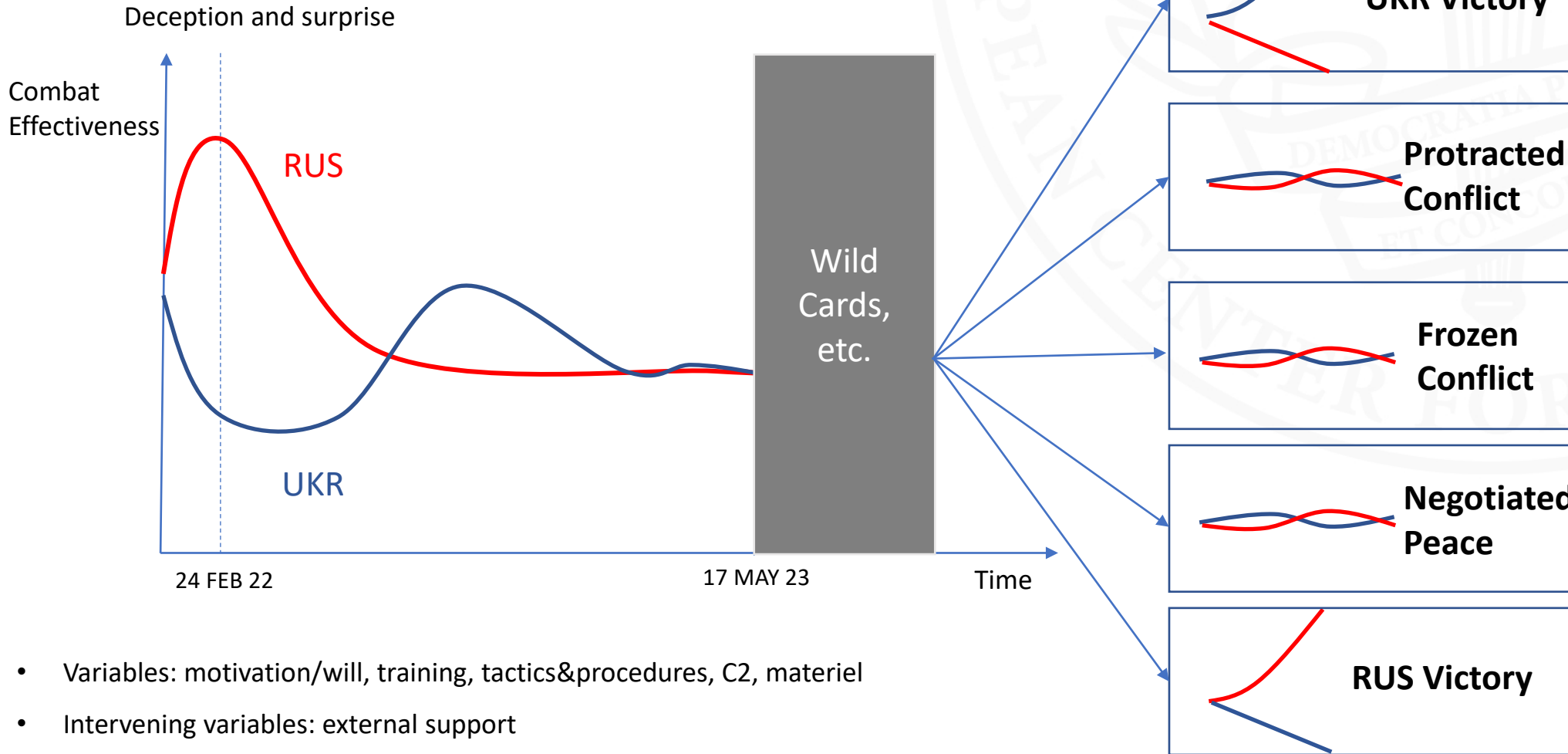
Project Design

- AUG 22 Tasking by SACEUR/EUCOM Combatant Commander
- SEP Develop initial ideas
- OCT 22 - JAN 23 4 virtual seminars
- FEB 1-week Workshop I (ICW PlgABw and BAKS) + virtual seminar
- MAR – APR 2 virtual seminars
- MAY 1-day Workshop II (ICW PlgABw and BAKS) + virtual seminar
- MAY Presentation of mid-term results to stakeholders
- JUN Virtual seminars
- JUL Virtual seminar
- SEP 2-day Workshop III - presentation of results



Scenario Overview

“When the war has ended...”



- Variables: motivation/will, training, tactics&procedures, C2, materiel
- Intervening variables: external support

Pathways,
Assumptions,
Implications,
Considerations

Protracted Conflict

Characteristics

- Conflict continues
 - Combat operations with limited wins and manageable losses
 - Attritional stalemate;
 - Continued suffering of civilians
- **RF** and **UKR** ability and will to fight and **West** support maintained

Assumes:

1. Western support: sufficient for UKR defense but not victory;
2. Weak external UKR security guarantees vs strong belief UKR territorial integrity non-negotiable;
3. UKR not capitulate; War Putinism as management tool.



Protracted Conflict

Pathways and Implications

- **Long-term pathways:**

- UKR/RF “Victory” scenarios
- “Frozen Conflict” scenario
- “Negotiated Peace” scenario

- **Implications:**

- Further militarization of **RF/UKR** state and society
- Increased **UKR** dependence on **NATO/EU** but cohesion issues
- RF needs resources – unlikely disrupt energy infrastructure?



RF Victory

Characteristics

- **RF** claims victory as
 - Maintain territorial control of occupied territories
 - UKR military capitulation
 - Ongoing hybrid ops in rump UKR
- **UKR** unsustainable losses, military culmination
- **Western** fatigue, support for UKR diminished

Assumes:

1. RF has offensive ability and/or will to use tactical nuclear strike?
2. UKR surrenders/capitulate – war not existential;
3. Victory declarative - loser does not decide when war over.

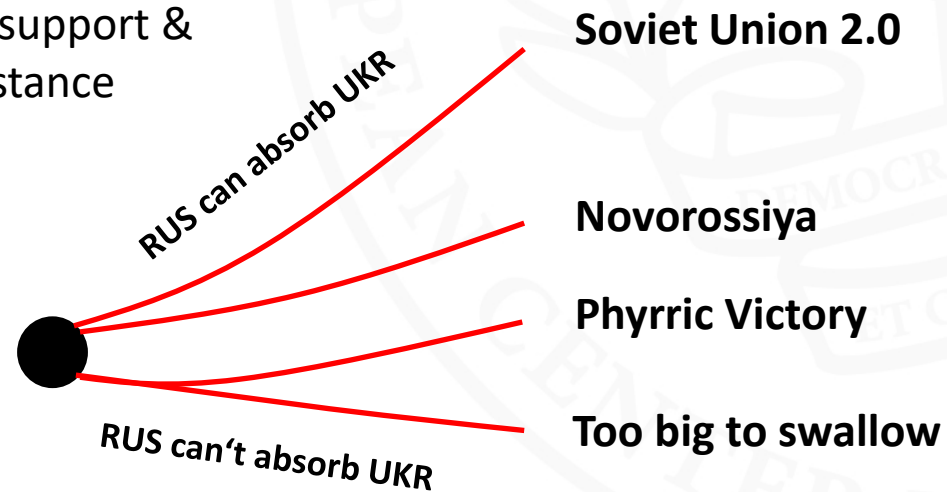


RF Victory

Pathways and Implications

- **Pathways**

External support &
UKR resistance



- **Implications**

- **UKR** rump state imposed neutrality, foreign assistance dependent
- **RF** has reestablished its great power position in Europe
- **West** destabilized/delegitimised



UKR Victory

Characteristics

- **UKR** battlefield dynamics/break through:
 - “De-occupy” 4 regions/Crimea - liberation not reoccupation
 - Restore state authority
 - Resilience to RF ongoing hybrid operations
- **RF** unable/unwilling continue fighting – culmination/capitulation;
- Western support for UKR sustained

Assumes:

1. UKR “theory of sustainable victory” – force structure with credible mix of capabilities to deter Russia;
2. RF regime change **not** lead to war end - scapegoat Putin/Shoigu ...
3. RF narrative shift: continue hybrid, stand-off missile attacks and reconstitute, regroup to Central front and Global South ...

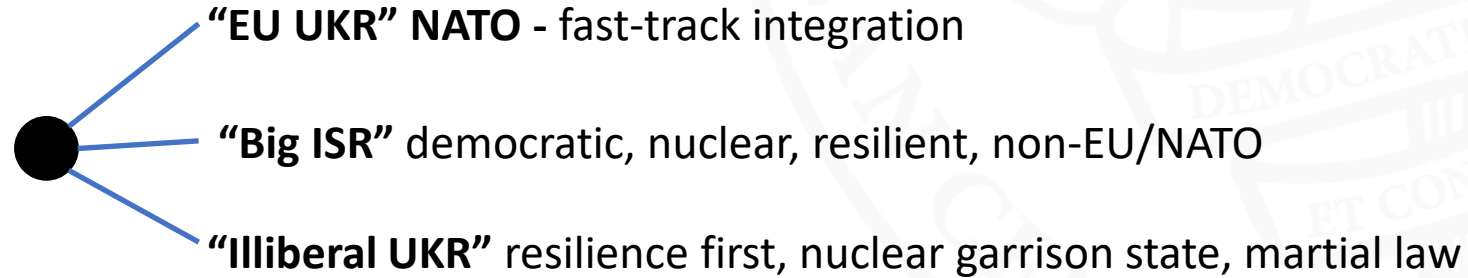


UKR Victory

Pathways and Implications

- **Pathways**

Security guarantees &
UKR domestic developments



- **Implications**

- **UKR** agency restored, UKR-POL-LTU-ROU greater weight?
- **RF** political collapse unlikely, regime change possible, increasing dependence on CHN very probable; 3rd Chechen war almost inevitable
- **West** - Liberal Order strengthened – authoritarian axis weakened



Frozen Conflict

Characteristics

- Attritional stalemate: high intensity conflict exhausted;
- Parties resort to irregular means of warfare and local de-facto ceasefires;
- RF and UKR “time out” to rebuild/reconstitute conventional combat capabilities.

Assumes:

1. Western support: too little too late; RF cannot win; UKR cannot lose;
2. RF quantity vs UKR quality equilibrium;
3. UKR domestic backing for war maintained despite increasing costs (blood & treasure)

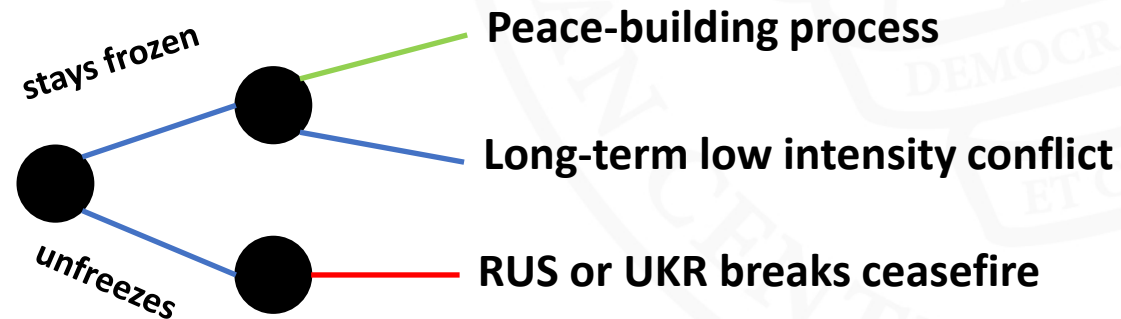


Frozen Conflict

Pathways and Implications

- **Pathways**

Reconstitution & escalation



- **Implications**

- **UKR:** NATO/EU accession diminished, relations deteriorate,
- **RF:** reconstitutes conventional combat capabilities;
- **West:** long-term support for UKR, but identity crisis



Negotiated Peace

Characteristics

- Benefits of negotiated peace outweigh costs of war - “mutually hurting stalemate” - declining domestic support for war in RF and UKR;
- International initiatives for peaceful settlement - CHN pressure on RF; US pressure on UKR;
- “Enlarge the pie” – territory, security guarantees, justice, reparations, architecture ...

Assumes:

1. Sufficient UKR/RF trust, principles of reciprocity and deterrence: demilitarized zones, 3rd party guarantees, peacekeeping, dispute resolution joint commissions, justice ...
2. UKR attitude shift/psychology – unthinkable becomes thinkable (Berlin 1944 vs 8 May 1945);
3. US-RF negotiation track - Great Power compact – China brokered RF-UKR settlement; US engage RF re “post-Putin” (?) Euro-Atlantic Yalta-Potsdam II ...



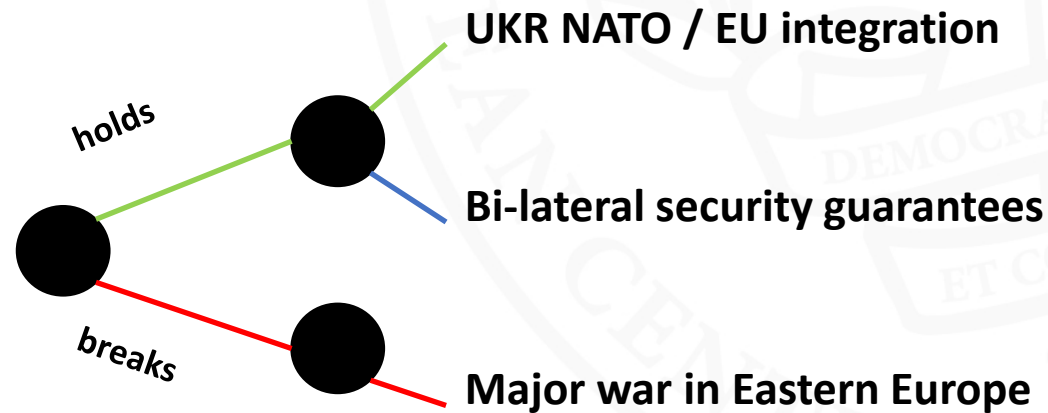
Negotiated Peace

Pathways and Implications

- **Pathways**

Security guarantees & concessions

Negotiated stalemate

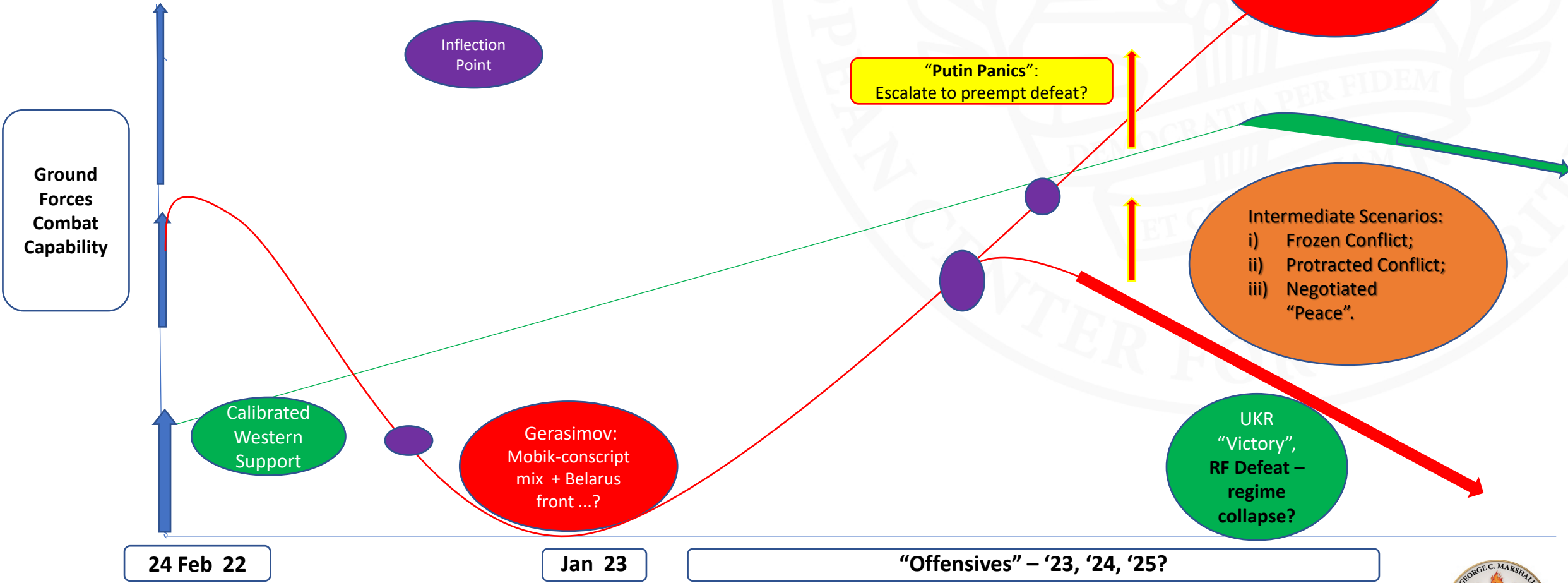


- **Implications**

- **UKR** – partially restores statehood
- **RF** – re-integration into new Euro-Atlantic security architecture
- **West** – high political investment to ensure a new security architecture, concessions to RF



“Victory/Defeat” and “Intermediate Pathways”



Scenario-specific Considerations

- **RF Victory** – even minimalist definition, least likely and most destabilizing;
- **UKR Victory** – predicated military breakthroughs, RF military defeat but most stable in longer term with security guarantees;
- **Intermediate Scenarios** – inter-enabling, run in parallel, all beneficial for RF – differences around extent and how:
 - **Protracted Conflict** most likely, Western material **and** psychological support critical but reduces over time - misunderstandings and risks increase;
 - **Frozen Conflict** in some areas (local ceasefires) and
 - **Negotiation** while fighting/punch to negotiate/dictate to improve bargaining position vis-à-vis UKR/West and rally domestic support – hard to calculate.



Time is Not Neutral – General Trends

- **Euro-Atlantic West:**

- Power shift to East within NATO (POL, Baltics as a new center of gravity);
- TUR focal hedging actor (facilitator, more assertive regional middle power);
- US pressure on European allies to take primary responsibility for Eastern Flank defense (US priority focus in Asia-Pacific).

- **Russia:**

- RF conventional capability reconstruction timeline critical;
- Belarus nuclearization and creeping annexation;
- “Wild Card”: RF nuclear submarine catastrophe probability (“Kursk II”) much higher – blame and escalation risks.



Discussion



RUSSIA' IMPERIAL STRATEGIC CULTURE AND PUTIN'S OPERATIONAL CODE: Explaining Change and Continuity in Russian Foreign and Security policy

STRUCTURAL FACTORS

Enduring National Interest/Ends

Imperial Strategic Culture



Shared thinking of how Russian geographical, economic and technological factors create vulnerabilities and enduring threats



Imperial Political Culture



NATIONAL INTERESTS

Regime Narrative/Interpretation

Great Power Foreign and Security "rising from its knees" Policy



Blurring-
"Putinism"

- Past-Present;
- War-Peace;
- Internal-External;
- Military-Non-Military;
- Regime-State;
- Licit-Illicit.



Counter-Intelligence State: "Besieged Fortress" Politics



Agency: OPERATIONAL CODE

Putin's "Means" to Achieve Goals

Philosophical Beliefs
(how Putin sees the world)



Putin's tactical and strategic decision making
(threat perception, COAs, risk calculus)



Instrumental Beliefs
(best means to address the world / threats as Putin knows it)



Quick defensive-reactive feedback loop

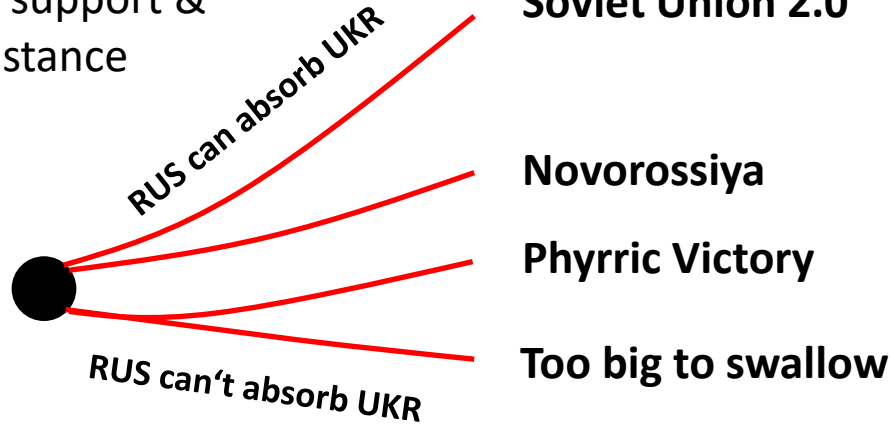
RUSSIAN STRATEGIC BEHAVIOUR

Slow feedback loop

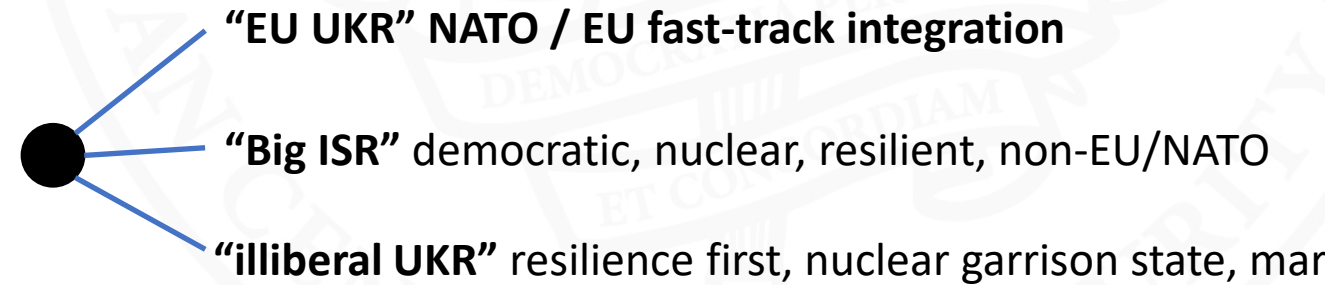


Pathways

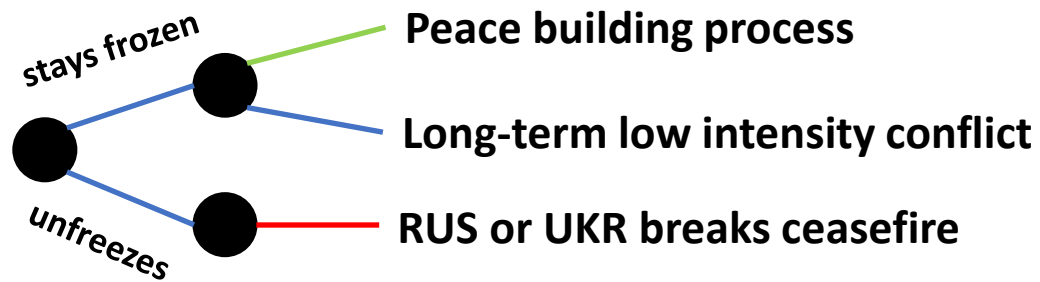
external support & UKR resistance



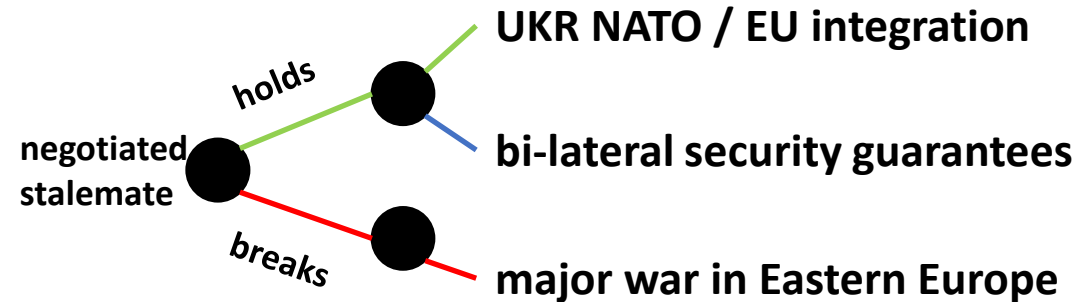
Security guarantees & UKR domestic developments

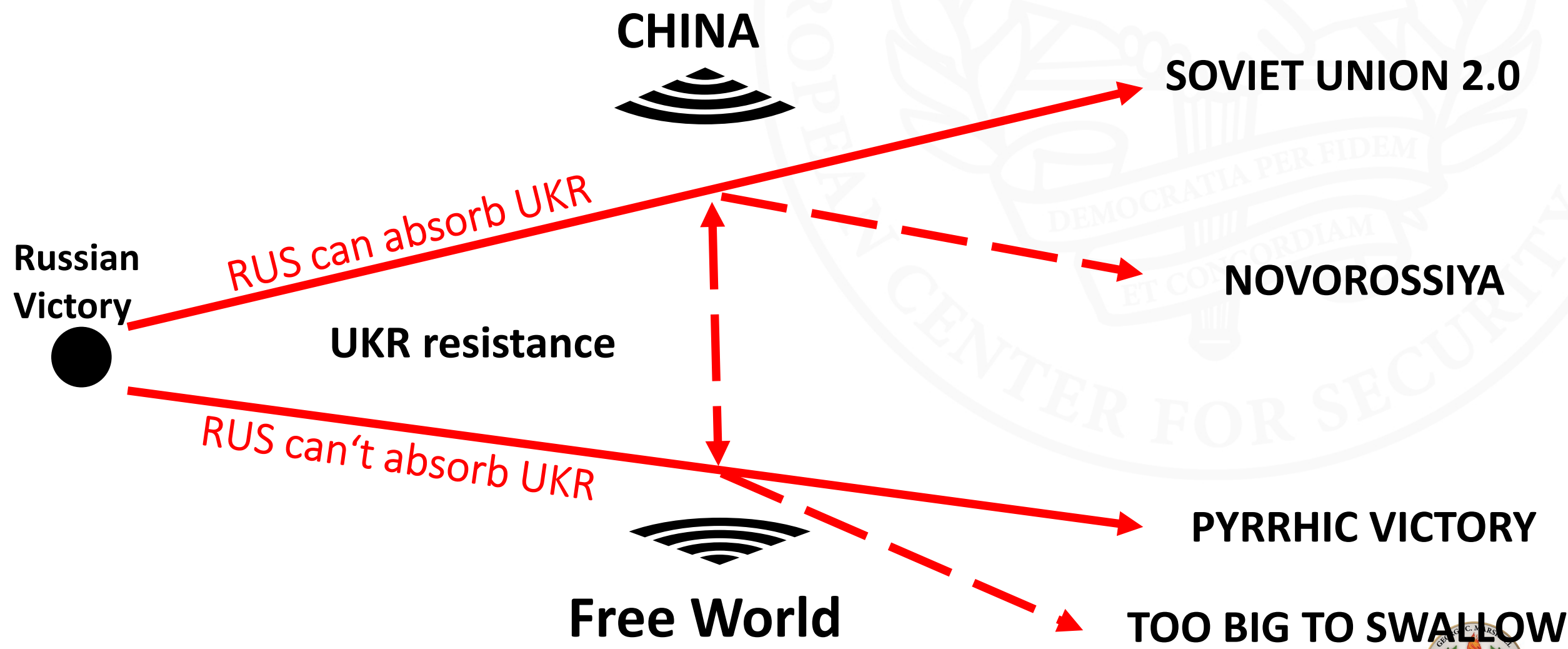


reconstitution & escalation

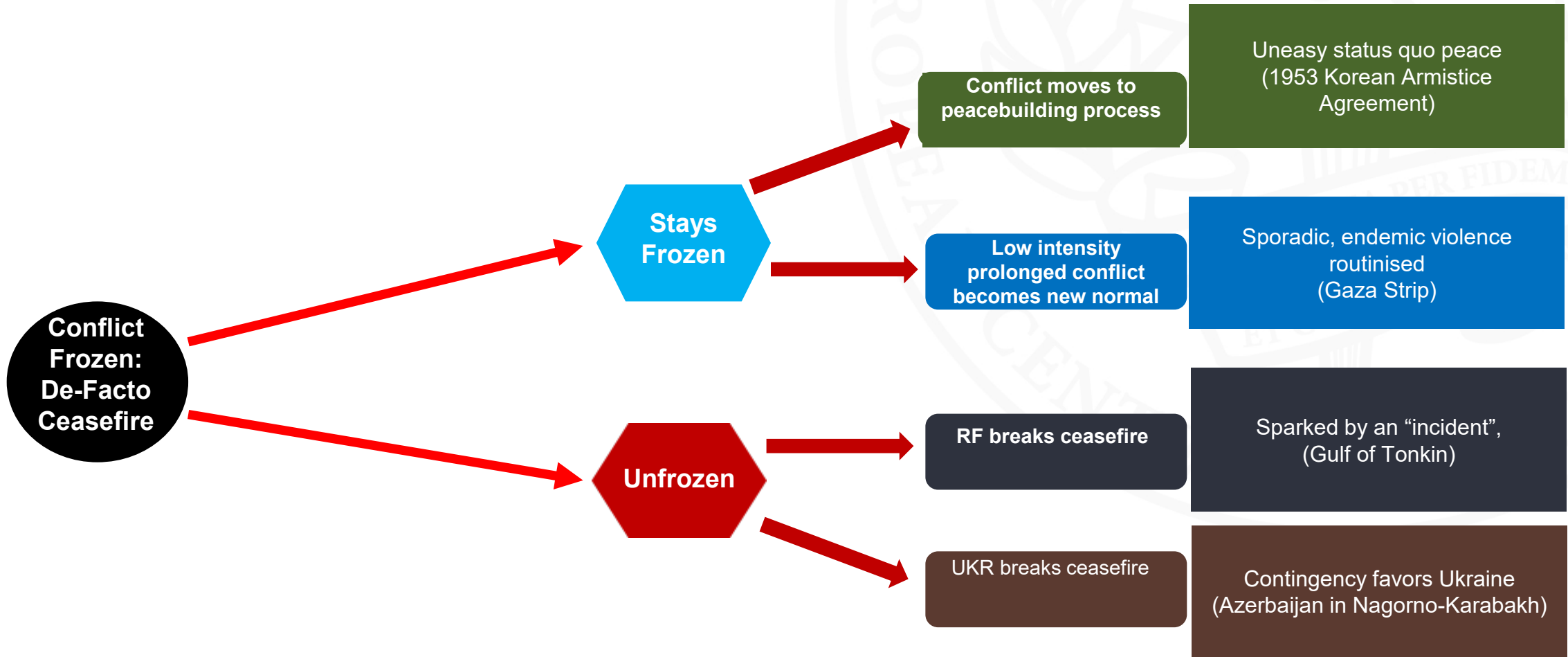


Security guarantees & concessions





“Frozen Conflict” Pathway



“Negotiated Peace”: Korean or Arab- Israeli Pathways

