

Some Thought's On William Burn's Essay

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FREE ANALYSIS, FLIER, AND
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1. In a recently published essay in the magazine, *Foreign Affairs*, William Burns made a series of remarks regarding the Ukraine war. In particular he notes the following in his closing statement. He writes: “Ukraine’s challenge is to puncture Putin’s arrogance and demonstrate the high cost for Russia of continued conflict, not just by making progress on the frontlines but also by launching deeper strikes behind them and making steady gains in the Black Sea.” [1]
2. It is important for American citizens to evaluate carefully the statements that its leaders make from time to time. There are a few things that arise in an evaluation of Burn’s essay. Burn’s comment about “Putin’s arrogance,” “the high cost for Russia of continued conflict,” or the “steady gains” on the Black Sea deserve consideration.
3. Burns states that a foreign policy goal in Ukraine and the Ukrainian war is to “puncture Putin’s arrogance.” While it is unclear what it means “to puncture Putin’s arrogance,” the Ukrainian feint in September 2022 deeply affected the Russian ruling elite. An immediate consequence became a reshuffled military hierarchy. It led automatically to a call for a ‘partial’ mobilization. In addition to the political consequences, both of which the Putin regime sought to avoid in the very designation of the “Special Military Operation,” the Ukrainian feint resulted in a devastating military setback that even the U.S. leadership or the U.S.-led NATO proxy force’s leadership still fail to understand today. It resulted in the loss of the Kharkov region.
4. The turning point for war on the eastern front from time memorial is the Kharkov region, as the Kharkov region separates Russia’s relationship with the area in the southern Donbas—rich in raw materials— from the road to Smolensk, the staging ground for a ground invasion on Moscow. Control over Kharkov thus enables progress in either direction, from Kharkov to Kiev or from Kharkov to Smolensk. Russia’s loss of the Kharkov region set the Russian military planners back from being able to advance eastward on the road to Kiev. Furthermore, Russia is now required to expend military resources in an effort to recover

- Ukraine's recovered territory. These have not resulted in an immediate Russian breakthrough.
5. The ensuing battles around Vuhledar [2a], Kupiyansk and Avdiivka [2b, 2c], and Synrivka [2d] are attempts to return Russia's lost control over the keystone critical to progress on the eastern front. While the battles in these areas have not culminated in the success that the Russian ruling elite may utilize to bolster its war effort throughout the country, there are reports of progress [2i, 2ii, 2iii, 2iv, 2v] throughout the lines in the Donetsk direction but these are far from a control over the Kharkov region. Nonetheless, the outcome for these battles weighs heavily on Russia's consciousness of the threat that the U.S.-led NATO proxy force presents to Russia's interests in Ukraine.
 6. It is unclear what is meant by "the high cost for Russia of continued conflict" but Russia's losses are not 315,000. The only truly verifiable Russian losses on the battlefield are those Evgeny Prigozhin accrued during the decisive battle at Bakhmut-Artemovsk. These are anywhere from 30,000 to 40,000. The remainder are a subject of speculation. Hence it is without any basis in fact that one can claim Russia's losses are anywhere near the threshold at 315,000. Where is the evidence for this figure?
 7. Does Burns mean an economic price? If so, a Hebrew commentator recently noted how the Russian economy has not suffered as a result of the Ukraine war (i.e., "המלחמה באוקראינה לא פגעה משמעותית בכלכלה הרוסית").[3]
 8. The International Sanctions Program, for instance, as introduced more than 11 times since the beginning of Russia's February 22nd, 2022 ground invasion into Ukraine, failed to achieve its own goals, let alone the overall aim of America's ISPs. Despite the ISP, the Russian economy continues to improve.
 9. There are signs, however, that aspects of the Russian economy are confronting challenges. These challenges, however, do not have a discernible origin. Reports released on the famous



Source: Institute for the Study of War with American Enterprise Institute's Critical Threats Project | Note: Areas are approximate.

DENISE LU, ZACH LEVITT AND GUILBERT GATES/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Russian brand of major vehicle manufacture, *Kamaz*, appear to indicate longstanding deficiencies for its newest models.[4a] The origin of these defects, however, appear to be indiscernible, even though the article mentions “the unstable quality of parts” (i.e., “нестабильное качество комплектующих”). The origin could be attributed, as the *Journal* notes, a result of “a lack of access to Western parts.”[4c] Russia, however, outpaced the

0.9% estimate Raiffeisenbank Russia cast over the “long-term potential growth of the economy,” indicating that the Russian economy is *far* from sluggish with nonmilitary sectors continuing to produce. [4c] On the other hand, Russia has begun to benefit from its control over the resources in the Donbas. Lughansk has already begun to export massive amounts of coal from the Donbas to Turkey. [4b]

10. On the whole, neither militarily nor economically has Russia been unwilling “to pay the high cost” for the continued conflict. Neither the ISP nor the losses Russia suffered at the battle of Bakhmut-Artemovsk have persuaded the Russian ruling elite to adopt a course of action any different from its current course in the war. Russian soldiers have died. Many more Ukrainian soldiers have died. Russia adapted its economy to the ISP, complying with rather than engaging directly in a struggle to retain its withdrawing Western based businesses. The businesses that left Russia caused a net loss totaling more than \$1 billion Euros. [5] To whom has the cost been more costly?
11. What of the “steady gains” on the Black Sea? It is largely a self-explanatory phrase. On the whole, the Black Sea depends entirely upon control of Crimea. Since 2014, Russia has continued to control Crimea. Without control over the Crimean peninsula, no “steady gains” are capable of achieving a strategic and decisive change in the state of the art on the Black and Azov seas. The battle of the *Vergeltungswaffen* [6] on the Black and Azov seas for control over the Grain Corridor has been and is so far inconsequential for Crimea, since Russia continues to retain control over Crimea. Furthermore, it does not appear as though the global container industry has been affected either way. In terms of commerce there does not appear to have been a gain. Restored Ukrainian control over the Grain Corridor has not resulted in an expansion of American trade routes. Has it actually helped the Ukraine economy? If so, why does the Ukraine still require additional sums of billion dollar aid? What is the “steady gain” the restored Grain Corridor provided?
12. Burn’s claims that a “relatively modest investment” entails “significant geopolitical returns.” The United States has been involved in the Ukraine since 2014 after Victoria Nuland’s successful *coup d’état* against the democratically elected pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovich. It has almost nothing to show for its efforts. What has the United States accomplished in Ukraine in the past decade? What “significant geopolitical returns” have the

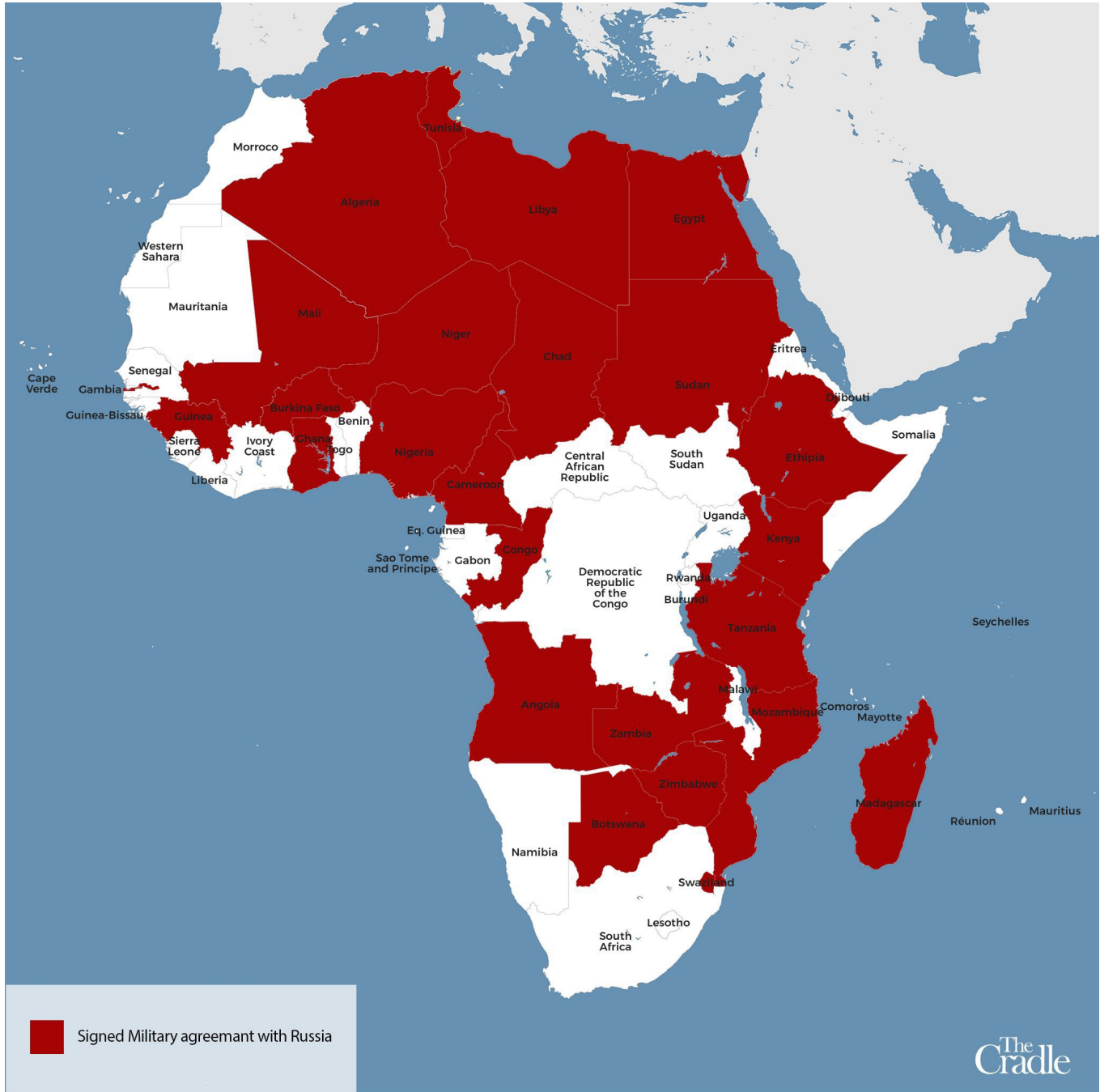


United States accrued? The uneven and desperate conversions of Georgia, Armenia[12] or Azerbaijan[11], undoubtedly unexpected maneuvers on the *Grand Chessboard*, have not resulted in a checkmate on Russian power in the Black Sea, let alone the Caucasus. It has only “[underscored] Moscow’s warning power over events in the region,” as the *Journal* notes.

13. These returns recall statements that Mitt Romney and Lindsey Graham made to the effect that attacking Russia, a geopolitical competitor, is the best investment one can make. Has Romney’s and Graham’s

argument really been fleshed out? It does not appear as though it has. Burn’s essay does not appear to contribute much to Romney’s and Graham’s argument.

14. The decision to lean on the “U.S. defense budget” from the \$31.8 trillion, non-gold standard, dollar Federal debt for a continued war in the Ukraine calls into question the underlying challenges the United States continues to face around the world. The challenges that the United States continue to face around the world have as little to do with Ukraine as Ukraine has to do with currency,



trade routes, or military contracts.

15. Although the “preservation of Western aid to Ukraine” continues to result in domestic military contracts, these

contracts are a black hole. Few, if any, new governments appear to be interested in American military equipment. If so, the contracts do not appear to be enumerating with a strength



identical to or exceeding that of Russia.

16. The most significant development in the foreign policy of the United States is not the National Security Agency's ability to shut down a sign at a railway station in Angola.[7], [9] It is that the United States has facilitated the growth of a trade route critical to the extraction of raw materials from the Congo in a new Africa strategy that arose from the the *coup d'états* in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger that erupted after the fall of Bakhmut-Artemovsk. Putting to an end French[8], English, Canadian, or German influence, these *coup d'états* pushed American interests on the continent to the coast at which point the U.S. rebounded with a coastal strategy along the Gulf of Guinea, including Benin, Togo, and the Côte d'Ivoire, the

world's largest cocoa producer. [10] Burn's essay indicates that the United States has not rebounded with a new strategy for Russia after the failed Ukrainian "Summer" counteroffensive.

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[1] - ["Spycraft and Statecraft Transforming the CIA for an Age of Competition," *Foreign Policy*, January 30th, 2024]

[2a] - ["Russian Forces, Repeating Strategic Errors, Lose Epic Tank Battle," *New York Times*, March 2nd, 2023"]

[2b] - ["Russian Attacks Yield Little but Casualties in Wide Arc of Ukraine's East," *New York Times*, March 14th, 2023.]

[2c] - ["Kyiv Seeking to Evacuate a Town It Controls," *New York Times*, March 13th, 2023"]

[2d] - ["Well-Laid Defenses Bolster Ukraine in War," *Wall Street Journal*, January 30th, 2024]

[2i] - [МО: бронегруппа ЗВО сорвала ротацию подразделения ВСУ на Купянском направлении, *РИА Новости*, 12.15.23]

[2ii] - [“Генерал Кривонос заявил, что у ВСУ серьезные проблемы на Купянском направлении,” *Газета.Ru*, 12.23.23]

[2iii] - [“Бойцы группировки «Запад» уничтожили группу пехоты ВСУ под Купянском,” *RT на русском*, 1.2.24]

[2iv] - [“«Запад» отразили на Купянском направлении атаку ВСУ,” *РИА Новости*, 1.29.24]

[2v] - [“Шойгу: ВС России в январе уничтожили более трех тысяч единиц техники ВСУ,” *РИА Новости*, 2.1.24]

[3] - [משקר: הסבירות למלחמה עולמית] 12.31.2023, *הולכת, מקור הראשון*, 12.31.2023]

[4a] - [КАМАЗ назвал болезнью роста «увеличение дефектности» премиум-грузовика К5, *РБК*, 1.26.24]

[4b] - [“Глава Луганской таможни: Уголь из ЛНР идет на экспорт в Турцию,” *Южная Службы Новостей*, 01.24.24]

[4c] - [Russia Grapples With Sluggish Economy, *WSJ*, August 18th, 2023]

[5] - [شركات اوروية تخسر ١٠٠ مليار، ويرو بسبب إنسحابها من روسيا، الميادين، ٠٤.٠٧.٢٠٢٢]

[6] - [The term *Vergeltunswagffen* comes from the book *Weapons of Mass Destruction*, pg. 32.]

[7] - [“U.S. Derails China’s Influence in Africa,” *WSJ*, January 22nd, 2024]

[8] - [How France Fumbled Its Ties to Africa, *WSJ*, January 10th, 2024]

[9] - [Results of the Republic Tender, A5, *WSJ*, January 25th, 2024]

[10] - [U.S. Takes Aim at African Insurgencies, *WSJ*, January 25th, 2024]

[11] - [Armenian Separatists Capitulate, *WSJ*, September 21st, 2023]

[12] - [28 декабря глава МИД РФ Сергей Лавров заявил, что Армения меняет надежный союз с Россией на туманные обещания, поддаваясь на уговоры Запада, *Известия*, 02.01.2024]