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### **The combat potential and the security strategy of Russia – towards rebuilding the position in the international arena**

Zbigniew Ścibiorek<sup>a</sup>, Marek Bodziany<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Faculty of Security Studies, The General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces, Wrocław

<sup>b</sup> Faculty of Security Studies, The General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces, Wrocław

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Zbigniew Ścibiorek  
Marek Bodziany

## The combat potential and the security strategy of Russia – towards rebuilding the position in the international arena

**Abstract:** The current state of coexistence in international arena is contested. Russian Federation (RF) cannot come to terms with the fact that following the dissolution of the USSR, it sustained substantial losses, especially with regards to its role globally. The team of Putin is striving to rebuild the power of their country. The Russian society, used to sacrifices for the homelands, offers its invaluable support. A lot of effort is put in the development of the armaments sector. As a result, the structure, command and mobilization the Armed Forces have substantially improved. The RF Armed Forces prepare for a possible armed conflict. Various types of exercise are conducted; frequently maneuvers take place in proximity to the borders of NATO member-states. This paper examines these developments and suggest possible ways of bypassing the emerging challenges.

**Keywords:** geopolitics, international security, Armed Forces of Russia, position of the state

### Introduction

The increase in Russia's activity in the international arena aimed at recreating its own power, which has been observed for several years, makes us reflect on the limits of its superpower ambitions in many cases built at the expense of other states. As can be clearly seen from observation supported by the analysis of subject literature and reports, a problem situation has emerged related to the increase in threat posed by Russia in connection with the reconstruction of its military potential and the more and more expansive policy in the region. Therefore, it revealed a whole range of rationales for undertaking an assessment of the scale of threat to the Central-Eastern European countries, based on existing data on the state of the Russian Armed Forces, increase in

expenditure on armament, as well as upon the analysis of the main assumptions of the National Security Strategy of Russia. The objective of this paper is to address the question: To what extent are Russia's superpower ambitions and the qualitative and quantitative growth of military potential a threat to states remaining within its natural sphere of influence? It is assumed that that Russia's superpower ambitions threaten the security of countries in the region, and the increase in expenditure on armament is a natural consequence of those aspirations.

Russia's expansive policy and the factual increase in expenditure on armament gave reason for formulating the above hypothesis. The Russian society's support for Putin's<sup>1</sup> imperial aspirations and the issue of Russia's rebirth are also significant, on grounds of to Aleksandr Dugin's bold views – the idea of Eurasianism. Not without significance is also building a security community of the RF, whose origins date back to the period after the collapse of the USSR, when a new state, full of apparent contradictions and asymmetry, was confronted with a whole range of unknown threats other than those known in the Cold War period<sup>2</sup>.

- 1 Cf. Radiozet, Sondaż Centrum Lewady 2015, 'Rosjanie mają nas za wrogów?' [Do Russians consider us enemies?], *Radiozet*, <http://wiadomosci.radiozet.pl/Swiat/Polska-nieprzyjazna-dla-Rosji-Sondaż-Centrum-Lewady> [2017-06-06]. An attempt was also made to study the Russians' opinions on the right of Russia to join former USSR republics in the case of persecution and the Russian minorities' rights violation. As many as 82% of respondents supported the potential accession, and only 6% negated this possibility. Cf. Levada, 'Postawa Rosjan do innych krajów' [The attitude of Russians towards other countries], *Levada*, <https://www.levada.ru/2012/06/14/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-drugim-stranam/> [2017-10-29].
- 2 Cf. A. Visvizi, 'Wspólnota Niepodległych Państw jako wspólnota bezpieczeństwa (security community): próba usystematyzowania problemu badawczego' [The Commonwealth of Independent States as a security community: toward a research framework], in: T. Kapuśniak (ed.), *WNP: frągmentacja, bezpieczeństwo, konflikty etniczne* [CIS: fragmentation, security, ethnic conflicts], Lublin: IEŚW, 2011, pp. 101-116. The author draws attention to the activity of Russia in building a regional security system, the manifestation of which are organizations such as: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), for more see: A. Visvizi, 'Pozycja Rosji w stosunkach międzynarodowych' [Russia's role in international relations], in: K. A. Kłosiński (ed.), *Russia: ambitions and opportunities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, Lublin: Catholic University of Lublin Press, 2010, pp. 287-307 and A. Visvizi and T. Kapuśniak, 'Federacja Rosyjska i WNP w szerszym kontekście regionalnym Azji: polityka zagraniczna, bezpieczeństwo, współpraca gospodarcza' [Russia and the CIS in the broader regional context of Asia: foreign policy, security, economic cooperation], in: T. Kapuśniak (ed.), *Federacja Rosyjska wobec obszaru Wspólnoty Niepodległych Państw* [Russian Federation and the CIS], Lublin & Warszawa: IEŚW/Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2011, pp. 17-36.

In the light of Aleksandr Dugin's views, the main task the Russian people face is the necessity to establish a great continental empire<sup>3</sup>. Although this issue is beyond the main considerations, it is reasonable to quote a few sentences describing the scale of threat to the former Eastern Bloc states. They read as follows: "There is no place for Poland in the Eurasian continent. [...] Russia in its geopolitical and sacral-geographical development takes no interest in the existence of an independent Polish state in any form. Nor is it interested in the existence of Ukraine. Not because we do not like the Poles or the Ukrainians, but because such are the sacred rights of geography and geopolitics"<sup>4</sup>. In further consideration, he raises the problem of Europe: "Take Russia to Europe then Europe will be Russian Europe, then Russia will end up with these 'friend' (Central Eastern European countries) once and for all"<sup>5</sup>. Today it is difficult to assess whether this is only propaganda carried out with the quiet consent of Putin. One thing is certain – the idea of Eurasianism is becoming a fact, as evidenced by the foreign policy of the RF towards countries of the region, as well as the implementation of the National Security Strategy assumptions, which the first part of the article is devoted to.

In order to answer the question contained in the main research problem, the analysis covered the content of the "National Security Strategy of Russia". These issues are addressed in the first chapter of the article, which forms the basis for the assessment of Russia's policy towards states in the region. The second chapter, which analyzes another document "Doctrine of Defense of the RF for the years 2016-2020", continues with the above issues. The analysis of both documents made it possible to identify threats posed to the region by the RF, resulting from the increasingly more pronounced tendencies to recreate its former sphere of influence. The third chapter presents a general analysis of the size and quality of its military potential, reconstruction and

3 P. Eberhardt, 'Koncepcje geopolityczne Aleksandra Dugina' [The geopolitical concepts of Aleksandr Dugin], *Przegląd Geograficzny*, 2010, 82, 2, pp. 221-224.

4 A. Dugin, 'Na eurazjatyckim kontynencie dla Polski miejsca nie ma' [There is no place for Poland on the Eurasian continent], <http://jagiellonia.org/zlote-mysli-kremlowskiego-szamana/> [2017-10-25]. More aspects in: A. Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, London: ARKTOS, 2012 and A. Shekhovtsov, 'Aleksandr Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism: The New Right à la Russe', *Religion Compass*, vol. 3, issue 4, 2009, pp. 697-716.

5 A. Dugin, 'Na eurazjatyckim...'

construction of new military structures and the scale of the increase in expenditure on armament. Not only were SIPRI and Military Balance reports used for the analysis, but also press articles on the condition of the Russian Armed Forces. The fourth chapter is an attempt to assess the current situation in relation to the assumptions of the policy of the RF in confrontation with the policy of the United States.

## **1. The main assumptions of the National Security Strategy of Russia**

The starting point for considering the military potential of Russia is an analysis of the assumptions of the current version of the National Security Strategy. Its primary trend is clearly anti-Western, identifying the USA and its allies as the major threat. Russia recognizes the creation and consolidation of a unipolar power system in international relations formed by the United States in cooperation with some Western states as one of the most substantial external threats to its security. In the face of such a situation, the Kremlin considers NATO and the European Union as extremely inefficient institutions that are not able to provide security in Europe, and the refugee crisis is the proof of that. Russia is not satisfied with its status in the world but appreciates the progress it has made in recent years and wishes to follow this path of strategy. The United States is the main challenge and, for this reason, Moscow seeks to counter its influence, at the same time, however, allowing cooperation in solving certain problems.

The Strategy recognizes the increasing complexity of the global environment resulting from rapid and profound changes. Russia's national priority is to consolidate its position as one of the world's leading powers. Meanwhile, it strives to strengthen the state defense by protecting the constitutional system, sovereignty and territorial integrity, enhancing national consensus, increasing the quality of life, preserving and developing culture, and improving competitiveness as well. Russia wants to secure itself through, among other things, ensuring food self-sufficiency. The Kremlin is worried that the West wants to limit the role played by Russia in global relations. According to Russian experts, the process of forming this new world order is accompanied by rising global and regional instability. Conflicts arise from uneven global development and growing disparities between

prosperity in different countries, resource struggles, market access and control over trade routes. “The fight for international influence encompasses a whole range of political, financial, economic and information instruments. The potential of the services is more actively used” – as the Russian document reads<sup>6</sup>. As life proves that words are turned into deeds, the records become facts. The Russian Strategy pays special attention to the threat posed by the North Atlantic Alliance, thereby obliging the state authorities to counteract this threat by ensuring the social unity and the development of defense capabilities. The document describes the “building up” of the forces of some NATO countries as “violating international norms”, “intensifying the Alliance’s military activity”, “bringing its military infrastructure up to the Russia’s borders”, “further expansion”, i.e. the absorption of new members and the construction of the anti-missile defense system. Russia, as set out in the Strategy, is concerned about NATO’s pursuit of global goals. A NATO- (and EU-) based regional security system operating on the European continent has been identified as trapped in terms of block thinking that does not correspond to contemporary realities and is therefore doomed to fail in the not too distant future.

As the United States has its Monroe doctrine as well as Russia believes that it has its vital interests in “near abroad” and does not intend to resign. These are interests determined by values such as totality, certainty, identity and sovereignty<sup>7</sup>. The document defines the NATO’s efforts to “intensify warfare and bring military infrastructure closer to Russia’s borders” as “unacceptable”<sup>8</sup>. This point of view and the assessment of what is happening in Europe frequently constitute a reference point for developing concepts of maneuvers of the Armed Forces of RF, often with the participation of other states, e.g. Belarus.

6 A. Stelmach, ‘Nowa rosyjska strategia bezpieczeństwa posiada antyzachodni charakter. Priorytetem Daleki Wschód’ [The new Russian security strategy has anti-Western character. The priority is the Far East], <http://www.pch24.pl/nowa-rosyjska-strategia-bezpieczenstwa-posiada-antyzachodni-charakter--priorytetem-daleki-wschod,40383,i.html#ixzz4xBhwXpcN> [2016-08-13].

7 S. Bielen, ‘Strategiczne cele polityki rosyjskiej’, *Mysł Polska*, <http://www.mysl-polska.pl/585> [2016-08-12].

8 More: S. Dimitrakopoulou and A. Liaropoulos, ‘Russia’s National Security Strategy to 2020: A Great Power in the Making?’, *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, vol. 4 (1), Winter 2010, pp. 35-42.

The revised document puts more emphasis on external threats than internal problems, which is a significant difference compared to the documents drawn up from the year 1997<sup>9</sup>.

The West, especially the United States, is generally portrayed as a follower of the archaic view of the world, as evidenced by the repetition of Cold-War stereotypes and the pursuit of global hegemony. With such an approach, Europe is perceived not as an independent player, but as the area of rivalry between the USA and Russia. It is the United States that is the player that Moscow must take account of. According to the Russia's Strategy, Washington is the only major player behind almost all external threats to Russia. Article 12 states that Russia is becoming stronger in the context of new threats to national security that are complex and interrelated. This is a clear sign that the RF is transmitting an international signal of its power.

The United States and its allies, who have been trying to maintain their domination on global issues, carry out countermoves in response to the RF endeavor to pursue its policy. Their policy of containment of Russia takes on a form of pressure by means of political, economic, military and information measures. This position stems from the fact that the United States and its allies are perceived as those who strive to maintain dominance in world affairs. Moscow believes that terrorism and extremism threaten to the international security system, and the situation is further exacerbated by NATO's "unfriendly" attitude towards Russia, the continuation of the Alliance's expansions, as well as the activity of foreign military forces near the Russia's border.

The palette of threats contained in the Russian Strategy is interesting. The United States and NATO are considered as the main, but not the only, threats. The document contains their wide range, both general and specific, for the various security segments of the RF. The most essential ones are as follows: global instability, proliferation of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction, information warfare, corruption, diversion and numerous cross-border threats. Russia fears of anti-missile shield elements, the possibility of a "global impact", "strategic non-atomic precision weapons" as well as the

9 The first security strategy of the Russian Federation was introduced in 1997, when post-Soviet Russia attempted to join the western world.

militarization of space. Western efforts in favor of the creation of hot spots in Eurasia that constitute a challenge to Russia's national interests, overthrowing legal regimes, provoking internal instability and foreign conflicts are also pointed out. The Russians accuse Western countries of trying to overthrow the "right" political regimes, creating instability and new hot spots, and the fact that the Islamic state is the result of "the policy of dual standards applied by some states in the fight against terrorism". These "some states" use information and communication technologies to achieve their political goals by manipulating the public opinion and by counterfeiting history<sup>10</sup>. After all, the aggression to Ukraine and the annexation of the Crimea have their political implications. In the spring of 2014, Russian soldiers acting as aggressors crossed the borders of the European state for the first time after the Cold War.

## **2. The Doctrine of Defense of the RF for the years 2016-2020**

Only a few hours after the adoption of the National Security Strategy, the Doctrine of Defense (often referred to as the Defense Plan) of the RF for the years 2016-2020, widely perceived as the Kremlin's secret war declaration, came into force. This is a more detailed doctrinal document, but it is confidential. Its publicly acknowledged theses recognize NATO enlargement as a threat to security, and accuse the USA and allies of seeking domination on the international scene at the expense of Russia pursuing its independent policy.

The new Defense Plan replaced a similar document in force from 2013. It was all the more evident due to the fact that early in 2014 major changes in Russia's security situation, such as the annexation of the Crimea, the War in Donbas, the crisis in relations with the West and the involvement of Moscow in the Syrian War, occurred.

The defensive nature of the Doctrine was preserved, and the attachment of Russia to the use of military force only after the possibility of the use of nonviolent means has been exhausted was emphasized. This doctrine presupposes that the Russian Armed Forces are to support

10 Stelmach, op. cit.



the economic and political interests of the RF. Russia's nuclear weapons are instrumental in the implementation of the Defense Doctrine. The Russian Defense Doctrine aims to rebuild its position on the international stage by, inter alia, emphasizing more clearly its military presence in military bases. This kind of activity corresponds to the disappointment of Russia with the Western world's relation toward it<sup>11</sup>.

The new and at the same time binding Doctrine emphasizes the agitation and propaganda among the young generation in order to promote patriotism and to prepare young Russians for military service. This thread is developed in point 27 of the RF Military Policy, which contains the provision addressed to all institutions and citizens: "preparation for territorial defense and civil defense". In turn, point 34 of the document contains a clause that should be seen in terms of kind of obligation not only for military commanders: "training soldiers who are highly professional and devoted to Homeland, increasing the prestige of military service". The quoted words correspond to the phrase "Practice your eye and hands in the Homeland defense", which in Putin's Russia regains favor. The mayor of the capital, Sergei Sobyenin, approved the plan of the "Ready for Work and Defense" (GTO) system implementation in Moscow, which is to fully revive Russia until 2018.

Those provisions focus not only on the perception of Russia's defense as a superior value, which cannot be alien to young people. They also clearly highlight that all citizens are responsible for the defense of their homeland, and defense preparations are to be firmly rooted in local communities. The above-mentioned facts suffice to conclude that a specific process of militarization of society is systematically implemented. Such arrangements refer to what was used in the past and brought concrete effects, for instance during the Second World War.

### **3. Towards rebuilding the military potential**

Under the leadership of Putin, the Armed Forces of the RF have undergone significant evolution. In the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the degradation of the military potential, initiated after the collapse

11 M. Kaszuba and M. Minkina, *Imperialna gra Rosji* [Russia's imperial game], Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYT, 2016, p. 164.

of the USSR, was stopped. Starting in 2004, its modernization commenced. This process continues until now. The modernization of the Armed Forces has been the priority of Putin's team reform program, and has become one of the main points of reference for the Russians<sup>12</sup>. The military potential remained one of the most important constituents of Russia's power. It is also a sort of the delivery of the promises made by Putin before re-taking his post as President.

The rise of Russia's military power may be seen in various aspects. It is not only a strong accent of its military might, but also a response to the expectations of society, which has been aware of its strong, unquestionable position on the international arena for centuries. The story of this nation proves that it is to be perceived as one of the most important players on the world arena. To achieve this goal, they are ready to bear certain sacrifices. Already at the end of 2012, the Ministry of Defense of the RF pledged to commit 23 trillion rubles (approximately EUR 650 billion) to the modernization of the Armed Forces by the year 2020. According to the assurances, in addition to missiles and tanks, 100 warships, 8 submarines, more than 600 aircrafts most of them being the fifth generation of multi-purpose aircrafts and one thousand helicopters will be delivered. Moreover, the Russian Armed Forces are to receive 28 S-400 missile regiments and 10 Iskander<sup>13</sup> missile brigades, anti-aircraft defense systems, communications and electronic battlefield identification. One fifth of the investment will be spent on the navy. According to Putin, the consequences of those years when the army and navy were seriously underfunded must be finally overcome. Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov confirmed the scale of the planned expenditure at the presidential commission on modernization and technological innovations. According to the Polish Press Agency (PAP, the politician also stated that about 2.5-3 trillion rubles would be allocated to other power structures.

12 A. Wilk, 'Czy Rosja jest potęża militarną?' [Is Russia a military power?], [http://www.wiecz.pl/czasopismo/s,czasopismo\\_szczegoly,id,583,art,16184](http://www.wiecz.pl/czasopismo/s,czasopismo_szczegoly,id,583,art,16184) [2016-08-10].

13 Iskander (NATO: SS-26 Stone) – the land-based short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) on a mobile TEL platform. Iskander is designed to impact important land targets located in the operational and tactical zone of enemy troops (firefighters, airplanes and helicopters at airports, communication junctions, command posts, etc.) as well as civilian infrastructure facilities.

States worldwide are raising their expenditures on weapons. The authors of the report of the Stockholm Peace Research Institute SIPRI reached such conclusions. Diplomatic efforts seem to lose significance. In 2016, \$ 1.6 trillion was spent on armaments, which is 0.4% more than in 2015. At the same time, a tendency to increase spending for this purpose is observed both in Europe and in the world. Even Russia raised it, after it had been supposed to cut due to the economic crisis. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) publishes annual data on expenditures. According to analysts, the world is spending \$ 1.686 trillion on the military, that is 2.2 % of global GDP<sup>14</sup>.

The Russians came back to the third position after one-year absence. This was due to a drastic drop in spending (30%) in Saudi Arabia. Russia spent \$ 69.2 billion on its Armed Forces, which means an increase by 5.9%. According to SIPRI, everything predicted a drop of 12% by the end of that year, however the government decided to pay off \$ 11 billion of its debts to state armaments companies. As one of the Report authors states, Russia's military spending represents only 27% of what all NATO, apart from the USA and Canada, allocate to this purpose. Having the spending of the United States and Canada added, it turns out that Russia spends 10% less than NATO<sup>15</sup>.

In 2015, Russia spent the record high amount of 3.274 trillion rubles, which was an increase of 30% in nominal terms, in real – 10%, compared to the previous year. This represents 4.3% of GDP and 20.5% of budget expenditure. More than half of the recorded sum (1.8 trillion rubles) was allocated to the purchase and modernization of armament and military equipment. Despite such significant amounts, in 2016 the military sector spending increased by 5.9% compared to 2015<sup>16</sup>.

Global Firepower ranks Russia as a leader. Despite its nearly three times lower military budget than China's, the country has enormous military potential. The Russian Armed Forces have over 15.000 tanks

14 SIPRI Yearbook 2017, Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, 2017, Stockholm; and TVN24, 'Rosja wraca na podium, Polska wydaje najwięcej w regionie. Nikt nie pobije Amerykanów' [Russia is back on the podium, Poland spends the most in the region. No one will beat the Americans], *TVN24*, <http://www.tvn24.pl> [2017-10-09].

15 SIPRI Yearbook 2017, Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, 2017, Stockholm.

16 *Ibid.*

and 3,500 military aircrafts<sup>17</sup>. The state remains a nuclear, oil and gas power. Russia is still trying to be a key player on the geopolitical map of the world. This has been proven, among other things, through its actions in Ukraine and in Syria. However, it cannot be ignored that its relative strength decreases with every decade.

## 4. Levels of the Armed Forces modernization

● According to statistics, Russia has been preparing its Armed Forces at an unprecedented pace. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, there are about 850 thousand soldiers, of whom the vast majority are professional soldiers. This represents more than one-fifth of all North Atlantic Alliance troops. In addition, there are nearly 3 million reservists, and the Russian mobilization reserve is up to twenty million conscripts<sup>18</sup>. Human resources have been Russia's main military attribute for years. The Russians could win numerous wars thanks to great armies that generals devoted without hesitation on the battlefields. As "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" indicated on October 5, 2017, at least 340 thousand people serving in the National Guard and not less than 250 thousand ones in the subordinate structures of the Federal Security Service (FSB) should be added to the number of military personnel of the Ministry of Defense. The newspaper also listed the militarized structures of other ministries, including the Ministry of Emergency Situations. It was concluded that the overall number of Russian military formations, excluding the Ministry of Interior and the Special Services, is estimated to be around 3 million<sup>19</sup>.

Russian generals leave no means untried and threaten with nuclear weapons. The former Chief of the N. Makarov's General Staff warned in the interview for the radio "Echo of Moscow" that Russia would

17 When considering the combat potential of the RF, thousands of pieces of equipment withdrawn from combat units, but remaining at the disposal of the Armed Forces, mainly for millions of reserve troops, can be omitted.

18 J. Bodakowski, 'Modernizacja rosyjskiej armii' [Modernization of the Russian army], *Prawo.pl*, 5.01.2017, <http://prawo.pl/43908-modernizacja-rosyjskiej-armii/> [2017-10-10].

19 In terms of numbers, the Russia's Armed Forces have been brought closer to the Soviet Union's – as "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" wrote on 5.10.2017, commenting on the growth in the number of the military personnel. Furthermore, the daily notes that account must be taken of the total number of power formations in Russia.

use its nuclear capabilities. He also said that Russia took its strategic potential seriously and was working on its modernization. According to Makarov, nuclear weapons are the most important element of Russia's security. His successor, V. Gerasimov, publicly stated that the RF Armed Forces must prepare themselves for "a large-scale war". Putin supported the strength of that statement when declaring that more than 40 new missiles would expand the Russian nuclear arsenal by 2015. This raised Washington's fears since this was interpreted as the beginning of a new Cold War. In December 2016 Gen. V. Gerasimov said that in 2017 the Russia's Armed Forces would pay particular attention to maintaining strategic nuclear forces in order to deter aggression against Russia and its allies. He also announced that Russia would give special emphasis to the comprehensive safeguarding of its national interests in the Arctic.

Structures and commanding troops are being improved. Russian leaders return to forming major troop units, permanent staffs (commands) of higher level – the corps or the army. Crimea and the Kaliningrad Oblast are regions where the forces or operations are expected to increase, which would require the coordination of multiple units, such as mechanized and coastal defense ones. Recently two corps headquarters have been formed – the 22<sup>nd</sup> Corps in Crimea (initially designated as 32<sup>nd</sup>) and the 11<sup>th</sup> Corps in the Kaliningrad Oblast, which is a tangible evidence of the progressive militarization in the immediate neighborhood to Poland and NATO. It is also worth mentioning that the existence of a command (staff) allows for the orchestration of the personnel as well as working out procedures and operational plans in the military training grounds and in the course of command-post exercise. The world learnt how important this was when the Russians entered the territory of Georgia in 2008.

The Armed Forces need state-of-the-art weapons to be strong. For many analysts, the new missile modernization program is the answer to the US anti-missile shield<sup>20</sup>. The main addressee of a saber, or rather a huge saber, rattling is traditionally the United States. The great, un-

20 "Komsomolskaya Pravda" wrote that on July 4, 2012 in Sochi, during a regular NATO-Russia meeting, the Russian ambassador was to inform Western partners that Russia was also to commence construction of its anti-missile shield.

fulfilled dream of Russian generals is, as someone said, “immerse the caterpillars of Russian tanks in the Potomac”.

An apparent or real threat of the confrontation between Russia and the US is expressed by the words of the Russian ambassador to NATO – Dmitry Rogozin, who said: “We will defend our airspace regardless of whether the Americans or other NATO members will be building shields or not. These two issues have nothing in common”<sup>21</sup>. However, the Russians do not lose hope of unifying the European and the Russian missile defense systems. Not only the military people but also Ministers of Foreign Affairs discuss the matter. Rogozin claimed, however, that possible NATO-Russia cooperation in this area could take place if the basic condition was met: the Russian “red button” must be exclusively in Russian hands. Moreover, V. Putin draws attention to the necessity of building the power of Russia and an advantage over the West. His words clearly point to the need to increase spending on armaments: “Nothing is free which the Russian leaders are well aware of. Huge sums of money are required for the development of the Armed Forces. In fact, the expenses we incur are ‘payments of bills’ for those years where the Armed Forces and Navy were chronically under-funded [...] and other states flexed their ‘military muscles’”. And he proves that being strong is a guarantee of security for Russia. It can boast a fairly significant “achievement” in one area – the amount (and degree of modernity) of nuclear weapons possessed<sup>22</sup>. This does not mean that other sectors of military development are ignored, as evidenced by the increasing pace of modernization of the Armed Forces. Various new scientific and research works were carried out due to the need to replace military foreign equipment, the supplies of which had been stopped by sanctions imposed on Russia for the annexation

- 21 Dimitrij Olegowicz Rogozin – Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Defense and Space Industry. In the period from January 2008 to December 2011, he was the permanent representative of Russia to NATO. An outspoken opponent of the West, famous for many – like the quoted – controversial statements on Twitter.
- 22 More in: Defence 24, ‘Rosyjska armia rośnie w siłę. Szojgu składa raport Putinowi’ [The Russian Armed Forces are growing in strength. Shoigu reports to Putin], *Defence 24*, <https://www.defence24.pl/rosyjska-armia-rosnie-w-sile-szojgu-sklada-raport-putinowi> [2018-08-02]. Currently, the Strategic Missile Forces (SWR) have about 300 missiles of five types, only two of which are considered modern, the remaining three are to be withdrawn from service within the next eight years.

of the Crimea. A special “import substitution” program was created in view of this purpose.

Thus, in 2016, the level of modern equipment and armaments in the Armed Forces increased from 47 to 51% (by the year 2020 the expected rate is 70%). Priorities are to modernize the atomic triad, execute unannounced combat readiness tests, improve strategic mobility and expand anti-aircraft defense. All this is in line with the spirit of the National Security Strategy and indicates that the armed confrontation with the United States and NATO is at the center of the secret defense plan. No longer fighting regional problems or fighting “colorful revolutions”, but a possible conflict matching this, which it was preparing to throughout the Cold War period.

The announcement of the establishment of five Strategic Missile Missiles Regiments armed with modern missiles capable of delivering nuclear arsenal, the planned modernization of nine strategic bombers carrying nuclear weapons as well as the development of aerospace forces (space-based warfare measures) can be considered as an element of responding to the US threat. Furthermore, on May 9, 2017, the Russian RS-24 Jars<sup>23</sup> intercontinental ballistic missile and the S-400 fourth-generation ground-to-air missile system were presented.

Moscow clearly showed Scandinavian countries, also neutral Sweden and Finland, that the Far North is a priority area for the Kremlin. This was confirmed by the request to extend the Russian economic zone in the Arctic. Following these efforts, the development of military infrastructure in the Arctic intensified. On December 1, 2014, the Fifth Joint Strategic Command was created on the basis of the North Fleet and the newly formed Arctic units (including specially equipped mechanized brigades). Completion of the formation of the Arctic grouping is scheduled for 2018. Russia intends to build 13 military aerodromes, 10 radiolocation stations and one ground aerial military field in the Arctic. With respect to this part of the world, this move does not practically have a counterpart in other armies.

23 As “The Diplomat” magazine reported, quoting the US government sources, during the recent launch of the RS-24 Jars intercontinental ballistic missile on September 20, 2017, the Russians tested an experimental configuration of three exercise heads with independent post-boost vehicles (IPBV), which was to maximize survival and accuracy.



## 5. The development of the Navy

The authorities of the RF do not forget about the Navy. The Kremlin forcefully invests in new vessels and focuses on their quality. At the end of 2015, the US Navy Intelligence report warned of Russia's extending and increasingly aggressive maritime forces. There were justifiable grounds for this, as in 2014, among others, the fourth corvette of the 2380 Project and two nuclear submarines, including the third one – the ballistic missile launching unit of the 955 Boriej II Project, were entered into service. According to Admiral Viktor Chirkov's assurances, in 2015 the Russian Navy received more than 50 different class vessels<sup>24</sup>. The new technologically advanced Russian Navy, increasingly better armed with the Kalibr weapon family<sup>25</sup>, is supposed to have greater capabilities to defend the RF against the approach from the seaward and a significant impact on adjoining marine areas. This will provide Russia with a flexible platform to demonstrate offensive capabilities, intimidating neighbors or demonstrating strength in the region. The Russian Navy consists of 352 units, with only one aircraft carrier. What is more, the Russians have 55 submarines<sup>26</sup>, including those delivering nuclear weapons. The phenomenon is titanium vessels belonging to three Russian families of 705, 941 and 945 Projects. The 945 Project "Barracuda" and "Condor" vessels, which constitute the "titanium" pride of the Navy of the RF, are the most modern ones<sup>27</sup>. The real face of this kind of Armed Forces could be seen on July 30, 2017 during the solemn parade of the Russian Navy, which was observed by President Putin. Then he stated that the Navy did not only deal with traditional tasks, but also reacted to new challenges, making a significant contribution to the fight against terrorism and piracy.

24 Sputniknews, 'Marynarka Wojenna Rosji w 2015 roku otrzyma ponad 50 okrętów różnej klasy' [The Russian Navy will receive more than 50 of various types in 2015], *Sputniknews*, <http://pl.sputniknews.com/swiat/20150601/454130.html> [2016-08-14].

25 The maneuvering naval missiles, whose latest versions have a range of over 2000 km.

26 The modernized submarine *Dmitriy Donskoy* is considered the largest such vessel in the world.

27 Onet.pl, 'Tylko Rosjanie stworzyli tytanowe okręty podwodne. Amerykanie do dziś nie zaryzykowali tego kroku' [Only Russians built titanium submarines. The Americans have not risked this step to this day], *Technowinki*, 7.04.2017, <http://technowinki.onet.pl/marynarka/tylko-rosjanie-stworzyli-tytanowe-okrety-podwodne-amerykanie-do-dzis-nie-zaryzykowali/xm1w5f> [2017-10-19].



Russian Navy Commander Admiral Vladimir Korolev said that in 2016 it reached the level of the USSR fleet in terms of the number of days spent on submarine cruises. As he explained, it is now over 3.000.

Today, the Russian fleet of strategic nuclear submarines consists of six Delta IV and three Delta III vessels, armed with long-range nuclear weapons – about 100 missiles and more than 400 warheads. Of the four Fleets only two have atomic weapons: the North (about 80%) and the Pacific (about 20%). They are rather obsolete and will soon become history. The new vessels of the 955 Project will first replace the Delta III units, whose withdrawal is planned for 2019-2025. Delta IV should remain in service until the end of the decade of the 1920s. The problems with Bulava ballistic missiles and, perhaps first of all the several-year perspective of the use of Delta IV prompted the Russians to develop another modification of the SS-N-23 missile. The Liner, as it is the missile in question, was considered a new type of SLBM until 2012, only then the Russians clarified that it is a further modification of the Sineva, which transferred to 12 heads and deception measures. The operational status of the rocket remains unclear, as it seems that until now is the Sineva constitute the armament of all Delta IV.

## 6. The combat potential of the Air Force

6. Strategic aviation remains the weakest link in the Russian triad<sup>28</sup>, but in its case the modernization process is not neglected: the currently used machines are successively modernized, while the introduction of their successors is planned to commence at the beginning (but more realistic is the second half) of the next decade. The project code-named PAK DA assumes the development of an aircraft in the configuration of the so-called flying wings, i.e. similar to the American B-2A, which obviously helps to reduce the machine's detectability. The currently being developed Kh-101 / Kh-102 maneuver missiles (nuclear and conventional versions respectively) are basic weapons of the new type<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> The breakdown according to the criterion of nuclear, air, land transport means.

<sup>29</sup> R. Ciastoń, 'Siły Strategiczne Federacji Rosyjskiej' [Strategic Forces of the Russian Federation], *FAE Policy Paper*, no. 9/2014, p. 4.

Only in 2014, 142 new and modernized aircrafts and 135 helicopters entered service, with slightly lower numbers of them in 2015 – 126 aircrafts and 88 helicopters (mostly combat Ka-52 and multi-purpose, thoroughly modernized Mi-8). In addition, the Russian Armed Forces received many other types of arms and military equipment, including new systems for electronic warfare and communications, as well as support and security equipment<sup>30</sup>. Data for the last two years are divergent nonetheless they indicate that the 2014 figures were exceeded.

## **7. Confrontation or a “new” strategy of intimidation?**

There are numerous signs that Russia has seen the largest military expansion program since the end of the Cold War. The achievement of the outlined objectives is accompanied by the increase in military spending, which has become an undisputed priority of Russia’s financial policy. The growth in Russian military activity and military expenditures takes place along with steadily intensifying and fulfilling social demands information campaign that states that Russia must defend itself against the aggression of the West.

Putin made a very eloquent comment about the military sector of the RF. He announced the strengthening of the position of Russia on the global supply market of arms and military equipment. According to the President’s assessment, the Russia’s “strong second place” in the world market allowed for maintaining the last year’s level of exports worth \$ 15 billion, and the state of armament proved its capabilities, exceptional reliability and effectiveness during the operation in Syria.

The times of political relaxation have definitely passed. A quarter of a century after the end of the Cold War, the arms trade has once again increased markedly in the world. According to the recent report by the Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) published on February 20, 2017, arms exports reached the highest level in the last five years since 1990. In the years 2012-2016, the global arms transfer increased by 8.4% compared to the years 2007-2011. According to SIPRI, the reason is primarily the growing demand for weapons in the Middle East and Asia.

30 Wilk, op. cit.

The Russian production, which is supplied to 52 countries around the world, is in constant demand. Previous-year contracts totaled \$ 9.5 billion. Putin informed at the meeting of the Foreign Military and Technical Cooperation Committee that the domestic defense industry's export order portfolio was at the level of \$ 50 billion<sup>31</sup>. Russia is flooding world markets with its arms, which constitutes a problem and a threat to many countries, including the United States.

Russia learned lessons from armed conflicts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and concluded that they had been rooted in deep social conflicts. Following such the perception of possible war fires, Russia relies on paramilitary and military forces. In the RF, the Ministry of Interior has at disposal approximately 170,000 people in trained and high-readiness paramilitary units designed to handle internal riots, acts of terrorism and cases of violations of borders<sup>32</sup>. The services were mobilized in April 2014, when the Russian Armed Forces were preparing to attack Ukraine. Then they fully showed their true face. In many cases, it turned out that they were partners of the operational troops.

Diplomacy is one of Russia's strengths. In the opinion of many experts, it is the most professional and effective diplomacy in the world. No less effective is the Russian intelligence, which – as every such service – traditionally utilizes the entire catalog of measures. Despite the Soviet Union disintegration and the rise of Russia, the continuity of diplomacy and special services has been preserved, and the old methods of information war were adapted to the digital revolution and brought into line with the Kremlin's current needs<sup>33</sup>.

In the context of the above-mentioned facts, the statements made by the RF politicians concerning the further actions – plans for the future – are very reflective. In 2015, in the interview with the editor of "Plus Minus" magazine, Andrey Illarionov, a former adviser to Putin, said that the decision to further invade the West had been already taken in Russia. In his opinion, the attack on the Baltic States and Po-

31 The USA (33% of world exports) and Russia (23% market share of global arms shipment) are the largest exporters of arms. Both countries have dominated the world market. China (6.2% of the global share), France (6%) and Germany (5.6 %) are ranked next.

32 'The Military Balance 2015', The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London: Routledge, 2015, p. 197.

33 Z. Ścibiorek, 'Militarne znaki zapytania na wschodzie' [Military question marks in the East], *Belona*, no. 1/2017 (688), p. 30.

land is inevitable and it is only a matter of time<sup>34</sup>. Plenty of evidence can be cited that Russia is preparing to attack the West. Not so long ago a dozen thousand soldiers, hundreds of tanks, dozens of planes and helicopters took part in the maneuvers in Belarus.

Officially, only 12.5 thousand Russian and Belarusian soldiers participated in the maneuvers *Zapad-2017* in June. The West maintains that the real number of soldiers involved in these dangerous exercises was much greater, according to German and Ukrainian sources, over a hundred thousand were deployed behind the Bug and upon the Nemunas. During the maneuvers, soldiers, mainly airborne troops, commandos from the 76<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division in Pskov, practiced repulsion of attacks performed by diversionary groups that had assaulted Belarus to remove Aleksandr Lukashenko from power.

The scenario assumed that the Russian-Belarusian alliance, the so-called "North" would fight against the Veynshoria army, i.e. "West". This region (invented by the military) covered the region of Belarus and was supported by Vesbarna and Lubiena (also invented for the purposes of maneuvers), whose location was within Poland, Lithuania and Latvia territories<sup>35</sup>. It is noteworthy that the soldiers practiced in six military training fields in Belarus and three in the northwest of Russia, including in the Kaliningrad Oblast and the Baltic Sea, which showed the aforementioned states ("West") in the situation of being surrounded from several sides. Lithuanian Defense Minister Karoblis noted that bombers were used during exercises, "real bombing was conducted near the Lithuanian border" and the landing was carried out at the borders of Latvia and Estonia. Various modernized machines, which are slowly becoming part of the RF aviation equipment, including units deployed to the Western Military District, were involved in the *Zapad-2017* maneuvers.

34 wPolityce.pl, 'Były doradca Putina nie pozostawia złudzeń: Atak Rosji na kraje bałtyckie i Polskę jest nieuchronny. Nastąpi w ciągu dwóch lat...' [Former adviser of Putin leaves no illusions: Russia's attack on Baltic States and Poland is inevitable. It will happen within two years...], (Interview with a former adviser of V. Putin – Andrey Illarionov), wPolityce.pl, <https://wpolityce.pl/swiat/229227-byly-doradca-putina-nie-pozostawia-zludzen-atak-rosji-na-kraje-baltyckie-i-polske-jest-nieuchronny-nastapi-w-ciagu-dwoch-lat> [2017-11-02].

35 M. Kurowicki, 'W czwartek ruszyły rosyjsko-białoruskie manewry wojskowe Zapad 2017' [The Russian-Belarusian military maneuvers Zapad 2017 began on Thursday], <http://www.polskatimes.pl/fakty/swiat/a/manewry-zapad-2017-w-czwartek-ruszyly-rosyjskobialoruskie-manewry-wojskowe-zapad-2017,12480859/> [2017-10-11].

The selection of the area of Russian maneuvers was not accidental. As a rule, they are close to the Polish borders as the NATO frontline state. For propaganda reasons, it was presented as aimed at counteracting a possible attack from the West (i.e. NATO), however, the outlined operational and strategic background of the exercises demonstrated something completely opposite. In general, it assumed that after the aggressor's troops were halted, the offensive moved rapidly, always accompanied by deep impacts on objects far from the line of the front.

Moreover, how to interpret the exercises of more than 2.5 thousand Russian paratroopers and Special Forces soldiers carried out in the Pskov region not so long ago? For several days the Russians practiced landing in the border area with Estonia and Latvia, i.e. NATO Member States. The exercises of airborne troops of Russia and Belarus conducted on the training ground near Brest, near the Polish border, in 2013 may be commented in a similar way.

The military activities of the Armed Forces of the RF may be assessed differently. Analysts wonder why exercise scenarios adopt assumptions that proved effective in the Crimea. Aid is envisaged for national minorities – pro-Russian minorities, especially with regard to the former republics, not only the Baltic ones. They are practically in every state that gained independence after the collapse of the former Soviet Union. For example, it can be said that 26% of Latvian citizens are Russians. In turn, in Lithuania the Russians amount to almost 200 thousand.

It should be noted that every year several thousand (3-4 thousand) of military exercises at all levels are realized. The exercises carried out in the far east of Russia (code-named *East-2014*) in September 2014, participated by a record number of 155 thousand soldiers of all formations, about 8 thousand items of armament and military equipment, 632 aircrafts and combat helicopters and 84 vessels and support units, are meaningful and provoke certain reflections. Similar observations can be made regarding other maneuvers, which, despite the previously declared area of their conduct, spread quite rapidly throughout the territory of Russia. One example of this was the *Center-2015* maneuvers that involved 100 thousand soldiers and was carried out in 20 military training fields in different parts of the RF.

Russia's military efforts are rooted in a multilateral offensive in order to crush, subvert and subdue the hostile society. Such actions are

more ruthless and effective than the Western “holistic approach” to conflicts and crises, providing for coordinated civil and military efforts. Considering Russia’s military issues should not be limited to the capabilities of the Armed Forces themselves, but should also include other factors such as paramilitary organizations, weaponry of the Armed Forces, the education level of command staff, morale of military units, logistical base, mobility of military units, military intelligence and counter-intelligence as well as armament industry (military-industrial complex).

## Conclusions

The slow, but steady, militarization of the Russian state, not only in the military and economic (the concept of modernization of the entire Russian industry basing on the reconstruction of the armaments industry, which is to become an “engine” for the development of the economy, realized independently of the reform of the Russian Armed Forces), but also social (developing the Russian society’s patriotic attitudes based on imperial resentments and shaping social sentiments in opposition to the West as a real, immediate threat to Russia) and political dimensions (the state administration component) raises questions about its long-term consequences<sup>36</sup>.

Undoubtedly, Russia intends to escalate the existing tensions in world affairs; the leaders of this country believe that this is the best way to carry out other tasks in order to achieve the established strategic objectives and those resulting from the assumptions of Moscow’s policy. Current situation and its immediate prospects is the primary fuel for the propaganda trumpet of Russian leaders. This creates a specific real threat to a number of states, especially those that once remained under the rule of the Soviet Union and were in the structures of the Warsaw Pact. Russia’s constantly modernized military capabilities and the continued high operational readiness of military forces, mainly strategic missile troops, aviation, navy and airborne troops, evidence the scale of such a threat to sovereignty, e.g. of the Baltic States and Poland or the so-called south underbelly of Russia.

36 Wilk, *op. cit.*

This threat also arises from the desire to regain a dominant position in the world. However, NATO and Moscow's fear of the United States hampers the achievement of these goals.

There is much evidence that Putin is rebuilding an empire that is supposed to be powerful; a superpower, which is strengthening its global position and constantly increases its spheres of influence. Russia as a sovereign and active participant in international reality strongly emphasizes that it has its own national interests.

Is the security of Poland, its neighbors who are members of NATO and those who show a tendency to cooperate with the West in danger? Is Russian expansionism a natural condition "cut" in history by episodes of relative peace? If so, should we be afraid of Russia which is inclined to react to the international situation? It is difficult to expect answers to these questions today. However, the fact is that the previous political order in Europe and its immediate surroundings has changed, and there is a struggle for hegemony in the Eurasian area.

A real test will come with time. Then it will turn out which of the forecasts will prove to be real. There is a vision of real peace and it should be strived for. The fact that the Republic of Poland treats its borders as inviolable and does not have any territorial claims against its neighbors is crucial. It respects the sovereignty of other states and renounces the use of force, including threatening to use it, in relations with other states. Poland intends to cooperate closely with neighboring countries. As a member of the defense and economic community, we have the basis for believing that questions emerging in the East will not have a negative impact on what is and will be in our country. However, we must not forget about our Polish and civic obligations towards our homeland. Our defensive and combat capabilities must be constantly maintained at the level that is adequate to the potential threat. Defense of the independence and sovereignty of the state must be a priority for the whole society, not just the Armed Forces. Therefore, it is important to have trained military personnel who will be an essential part of the state defense system. Civil defense of society, which has centuries-old traditions in Russia, is not without significance. The perception of the issues of security or danger by the people of this state should be something natural.



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