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THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE IN 2014 AND THE RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE ON EUROPEAN SECURITY

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The end of the Cold War caused the creation of a new security architecture on the European continent. However, at present it should be said that the attempt to include the Russian Federation in cooperation with Western countries initiated since the 1990s has been unsuccessful, what is more Russia refused to join the western structures on neo-liberal principles. One can assume that the pragmatic cooperation of the Russian Federation under the rule of Boris Yeltsin with the USA and the countries of Western Europe was dictated by the impossibility of implementing its own vision of international relations, especially in terms of security. It resulted from the political and economic crisis after the collapse of the USSR – and thus the lack of tools to influence the international arena – as well as the secessionist movements in the Caucasus, including in Chechnya.

The undermining of the position of the Russian Federation as a world power by the United States in the international arena intensified the dissatisfaction of this state, and thus referred to the past and mythologized the concepts of the empire of the nineteenth-century tsarist Russia and the USSR, which were given positive traits. Many Russians today also feel the heirs of the great imperial tradition. Nostalgia for the empire causes voices in Russian political and scientific circles to state that this is the only right way for the development of modern Russia. The international identity of the Russian Federation has been shaped as imperial.

The implications of the activities of the Russian Federation on the Crimean Peninsula and in the east of Ukraine in March 2014 led to the destruction of the security system in Europe, which was shaped after the Cold War, which was undoubtedly a turning point and will have long-term consequences in the European security architecture. In addition, it has contributed to the change of relations between the Russian Federation and the United States and western European countries, which may pose a threat to European and global security as well as a possible new Cold War. The purpose of this article is to analyze the activity of the Russian Federation in terms of Russian security concepts relating to Europe. These activities are part of the security architecture that they want to impose on other countries Russian weight, considered as a «geopolitical game», which aims to consolidate its own influence. The central point of the publication is the thesis that the feeling of danger in the political elite of the Russian Federation by the events in Ukraine (the wave of major manifestations and protests overflowing in Ukraine since the country gained independence in 1991) was perceived as a threat to the geopolitical influences of this state. For this reason, for Russia, military operations in the Crimea and in the east of Ukraine were perceived as indispensable defensive actions in order to thwart the expansion of the influence of the United States and NATO on the Russian border. Currently, the conflict in Ukraine is undoubtedly one of the most important geopolitical challenges in terms of security in the 21st century in Europe. The conflict in Ukraine is undoubtedly a challenge for the Western countries and a test of unity. The strategy of the Russian Federation is to destroy the unity of actions of the NATO and European Union states. The new security architecture presented by the authorities of the Russian Federation with its superpower status and the

return to the «concert of powers» is unacceptable for European countries. However, Russian imperialism causes an increase in instability in Europe.

Key words: international relations; security policy; political concepts; world order; foreign and security policy of the Russian Federation.

Introduction

The collapse of the USSR and the end of «the Cold War» led to the creation of a new security architecture on the European continent. In international relations, Francis Fukuyama's notion of «The End of History» became popular, namely the view that democracy and capitalism had prevailed over communism [9, p. 59]. As a consequence, the American model of development and the neoliberal vision of the economy were promoted. The vision of the peaceful coexistence of free and democratic nations was promulgated, and the foundations of cooperation were to be international relations, the sources of which were the United Nations Charter and Paris Charter of New Europe, i.e. being based on independence, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of all nations, and avoidance of the use of force to settle international disputes [19, p. 4–5.] These activities were aimed at strategic cooperation on political matters and security issues, for mutual benefit and interest; and at Russia's acceptance of Western European norms and principles in the political and economic spheres [3, p. 5]. However, it should be admitted now that this attempt to involve the Russian Federation in cooperation with Western countries in the 1990s ultimately ended in failure. Furthermore, Russia refused to join Western structures that are based on neo-liberal principles [10, p. 254–255].

It can be assumed that the pragmatic cooperation of the Russian Federation with the USA and the countries of Western Europe under the presidency of Boris Yeltsin was dictated by the impossibility of the Russian Federation implementing its own vision of international relations, especially in terms of security. This was due to the political and economic crisis which ensued after the collapse of the USSR, and thus the lack of tools for influencing the international arena, as well as the independence movements in the Caucasus, including in Chechnya [9, p. 63–64].

The United States undermined the position of the Russian Federation as a world power in the international arena and thus further intensified the dissatisfaction of this state. The Russian Federation responded by invoking past glories and mythologizing the imperial greatness of nineteenth-century tsarist Russia and the USSR, which were attributed with positive traits. Many Russians today still feel themselves to be the heirs of a great imperial tradition. Nostalgia for empire leads representatives of Russian political and academic circles to express the view that a return to empire is the only way for modern Russia to develop. The international identity of the Russian Federation has been given an imperial shape [6, p. 37–50].

The activities of the Russian Federation on the Crimean Peninsula and in Eastern Ukraine in March 2014 led to the destruction of the security system established in Europe after the Cold War. This was undoubtedly a turning point which will have long-term ramifications for the European security architecture. In addition, it contributed to the change of relations between the Russian Federation and the United

States and Western Europe, which may pose a threat to European and global security and result in a new Cold War [1, p. 699].

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the activities of the Russian Federation in terms of Russian security concepts relating to Europe. These activities are consistent with the security architecture that the Russian Federation seeks to impose on other countries, as part of a «geopolitical game», the aim of which is to consolidate its own influence. The main thesis of this paper is that the events in Ukraine (the wave of major demonstrations and protests which had been breaking out in Ukraine since the country gained its independence in 1991) caused the political elite of the Russian Federation to experience a feeling of danger and perceive Ukrainian independence as a threat to Russia's geopolitical influences. For this reason the military operations in the Crimea and in Eastern Ukraine were perceived by Russia as defensive actions which were necessary for countering the growing influence of the United States and NATO on the Russian border. At present, the conflict in Ukraine is undoubtedly one of the most important geopolitical challenges when it comes to security in the Europe of the 21st century [19].

The Russian Federation's perspective on security after 1991

After the collapse of the USSR, the Russian Federation had to completely redefine its international position and vision of security architecture. In the 1990s, Russia had neither the strength nor the means to pursue its own political ideas regarding security. This was mainly due to internal problems, particularly economic and social crisis. Thus the initiative in terms of security in Europe was taken by the OSCE, the EU and NATO. The «Partnership for Peace»¹ program, which was also addressed to the Post-Soviet states, met with opposition from the Russian authorities. In an effort to involve the Russian Federation in cooperation in the field of security, a NATO-Russia Council was created in 2002. However, this cooperation was not successful because of Russia's opposition to NATO's expansion to the East. Cooperation within the framework of the Council was suspended on the initiative of NATO after the 2008 Russo-Georgian war. The point of rivalry between NATO and Russia concerned NATO's vision, which disseminated the liberal approach to European security and was thus incompatible with the Russian vision and raised concerns about the marginalization of the Russian Federation's world position [9, p. 63–64].

The critical points in the consciousness of the Russian Federation's political elite were the «open door policy» which permitted the expansion of the EU and NATO to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that had previously belonged to the Warsaw Pact and the Comecon. In Russia, these activities were perceived as hostile, especially by the Russian military, who believed that NATO's approach to the Russian

¹ «Partnership for Peace» was a program that was adopted during the NATO summit in Brussels on January 10, 1994, as an instrument for modelling the mechanisms of cooperation between NATO and partner countries in the (broadly understood) field of defense, security and stability. All the European countries that were interested in cooperation with the North Atlantic Alliance were invited to cooperate, but participation in the program is not synonymous with NATO security guarantees resulting from Art. 5 of the Washington Treaty and did not create formal arguments for admission to NATO.

borders constituted a great geopolitical threat. The «Partnership for Peace» program implemented by NATO with the Post-Soviet states – although it did actually not guarantee membership in this organization – was perceived by Russian strategists as an attempt to surround the borders of Russia, especially since the program also included the countries of Central Asia.

Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, expressed dissatisfaction with the expansion of NATO during the summit of the Munich Security Conference, which took place on 10-11 February 2007. In his speech, Putin described the eastward expansion of NATO as aggressive, unilateral action aimed at extending US influence and the deployment of military units near the border with Russia [21]. This speech, due to its clearly anti-Western character, was referred to as Russia's return to cold-war rhetoric and the rejection of the post-Cold War order of European security. The Russian Federation sees the expansion of NATO as a threat to its strategic security [19].

The next factor that influenced the course of Russia's actions in Europe was the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The authorities of the Russian Federation opposed the NATO intervention in the region, arguing that these unilateral actions threatened the stability of the region and could become a precedent for analogous NATO actions, including in the post-Soviet sphere. For Russia, the guarantee of its security and superpower status in international relations, despite economic difficulties, was its nuclear arsenal. Only in this area could Russia compete with the United States. This stance was also confirmed in strategic documents from the 1990s relating to security [14, p. 78–79].

The oft-emphasized, special role of the Russian Federation's nuclear potential, alongside its permanent membership in the UN Security Council, are taken to be signs of Russia's superpower status. Its possession of a nuclear arsenal equivalent to that of the US is seen to be the most important factor for Russia being able to secure its own sovereignty and strategic independence, which is expressed in the Russian Federation's war doctrine of 2014: «The Russian Federation reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction against it and (or) its allies, as well as in the event of aggression against the Russian Federation with the use of conventional weapons when the very existence of the state is threatened» [23]. However, although nuclear weapons are a guarantee of state sovereignty, they are not effective in deterring NATO from expanding to other countries or in maintaining Russian influence in the Post-Soviet states. Therefore the modernization of conventional armed forces is now a priority in the Russian Federation's security policy. However, this requires significant financial resources² [18, p. 102–105].

² After the Russo-Georgian conflict in 2008, deficiencies in the training and coordination of the Russian army became apparent. In response, the Kremlin authorities decided to thoroughly reform their Armed Forces. The reform was officially announced on October 14, 2008 by the then Minister of National Defense of the Russian Federation – A. Serdyukov. It was to be implemented during 2009–2020. This reform was to be the largest ever since the establishment of the Red Army in 1918, beginning with the training of soldiers and ending with the

Another factor which influenced the activities of the Russian Federation was the negative perception of American and European efforts to promote democracy in the Post-Soviet states. These efforts were seen as being part of an attempt of the West to gain a wider sphere of influence. Vladimir Putin accused Western countries of inspiring and financing the so-called «Colour revolutions», such as the «Rose Revolution» in Georgia in 2003, the «Orange Revolution» in Ukraine in 2004, revolutions in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and 2010, and «Euromaidan» in Ukraine in 2014, in order to increase its geopolitical sphere of influence. This is evident in, among other things, Russia listing among the main external military threats (in second place after NATO) «attempts to destabilize the situation in particular states and regions, and to undermine the strategic stability» [20]. This description reflects the conviction of the Russian elites that the «Colour revolutions» in this region were inspired by the West.

Medvedev's plan

At the Munich Security Conference on June 5, 2008, the then President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, argued that the current architecture of European security was inadequate to the current challenges and threats, and then presented his vision of European security [16, p. 87]. The idea was for a summit to take place, at which all European countries would develop and sign a new treaty on European security. The OSCE was to have the main role in shaping security in Europe, and the area of the new security architecture was to cover the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok, based on the principles of the United Nations Charter [22, p. 134]. The proposal presented by Dmitry Medvedev would have involved establishing bilateral relations between states, which is of particularly importance for Russia. The main objective in the foreign and security policy of the Russian Federation is to weaken transatlantic relations between the US and their Western allies, thereby strengthening their own position by broadening the scope of its political actions. These actions, according to the Russian strategy, are to lead to the “Finlandization” of Europe [19]. The principle guiding the Russian Federation in international relations is that of the «zero-sum game», and refusing to agree to the liberal security architecture, based on cooperation, transparency and the respect for the rights of other nations. Instead, the authorities of the Russian Federation focus their efforts on building spheres of influence and a balance of power. Paradoxically, the argument for the creation of a new security architecture which was invoked by Dmitry Medvedev was the war in Georgia – he pointed out that NATO was not able to counteract the conflict [12, p. 162–163].

The new security architecture proposed by Dmitry Medvedev was to replace institutions such as NATO, because the authorities in the Kremlin believe that they will not manage the security challenges in the 21st century, since not all countries belong to these organizations [5]. The new European security architecture was to have a form similar to the format of the conference at which the Helsinki Accords were signed in 1975. According to Dmitry Medvedev, the creation of a new security system

modernization of equipment and training of command staff. The pace at which the changes were introduced – the implementation of which began in 2009 – is proof that this has been treated as a priority.

would facilitate a more effective response to challenges and threats in the sphere of security. This notion was also presented in September 2008 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, at the UN forum [7]. The security initiative promoted by Dmitry Medvedev was aimed at transforming the security system in such a way that it would be more in line with Russia's interests and thus Russia would have a greater influence on its shape. The goal of the Russian Federation's international policy is to play a significant role in international relations in a multilateral world³ [2], and with its own sphere of influence [13, p. 5–26].

A draft European security treaty [15] was created for Dmitry Medvedev's proposal, referring to the construction of a new security architecture [15], and was published on the official website of the Kremlin. However, there are no statements on threats associated with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms control or terrorism, only vague statements on security and crisis management [25, p. 2–3].

The general draft treaty focuses on the non-use of force against other states and peaceful coexistence between them, referring to the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Accords, and giving the UN Security Council a privileged position on international security. The first two articles refer to cooperation between states and international organizations, and not supporting aggressive activities and other activities that affect the security of any party to the Treaty. The third article stipulates that each party to the Treaty may require another signatory state to obtain information about activities that may affect its security in order to ensure transparency and mutual trust. Further treaty articles include mechanisms to prevent conflicts. If a state considers that there has been a breach of its security and a breach of the Treaty, then it may request consultations and for a conference with the other States Parties to be arranged. In addition, each state has the right to self-defence, pursuant to Art. 51 of the United Nations Charter, which the Depositary must be informed of. The latter, however, must immediately convene the Extraordinary Conference of the Parties for the selection of necessary collective measures to be decided on. However, it is made clear that the Treaty can not be interpreted as infringing the fundamental responsibility of the UN Security Council for maintaining international peace and security. In addition, the draft states that all countries in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space from Vancouver to Vladivostok will be able to join, as well as international organizations such as: the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States [15].

The consequences of the annexation of Crimea and the war in East Ukraine

³ The main challenges and objectives in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation are primarily concerned with the creation of international relations in accordance with the principle of multilateralism. This goal is implemented, inter alia, through cooperation in the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). This is an organization that brings together emerging powers in the world that oppose the unilateral policy of the United States. The purpose of these countries is, inter alia, to create a new monetary system, increasing the role of developing countries in world monetary institutions, and reforming the UN.

The foreign and security policies of the Kremlin authorities consistently implement Russia's main strategic goals, following a realist agenda, such as an increase in military and economic capabilities as well as enhancing its prestige and recognition among Western countries [11, p. 33–34]. Russia's pursuit of its own normative and political goals is being realized at the expense of Ukraine's sovereignty. In addition, the Russian Federation is willing to accept the high price and the consequences of its actions. It strives to anarchize the international environment and undermine the liberal vision of the international order cultivated by the US and Western European countries. The Russian authorities aim to rebuild international relations on the model of the 19th century «concert of powers», with zones of influence. In this conception, stability in Europe is to be ensured through the strongest states having «zones of responsibility», with Russia at the forefront. This goal is being implemented in opposition to European integration within the European Union, whose political, ideological and economic unity the authorities in Moscow want to destroy. In addition, the Russian Federation seeks to limit the influence of the United States in Europe and to isolate and minimize the importance of the United Kingdom in mainland Europe, as it considers the UK to be the executor of US interests [12, p. 156–157].

When it comes to the conflict in Ukraine, the authorities of the Russian Federation formulate arguments accusing Western states and the US of a coup against the legally elected president – Viktor Yanukovich. The Russian authorities view the actions in Ukraine to have been aimed at undermining Russia's superpower status and interfering in its sphere of influence. Russia frames the conflict in the wider context of military, political and economic rivalry between itself and the United States [1, p. 706].

The military operations of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, being in line with the strategy of the decision-makers in the Kremlin, are aimed at stopping the expansion of the West in this country. Russia, implementing the concept of established facts, *de facto* forces other countries to accept the new reality and defend their interests at any price. Undoubtedly, the Russian authorities took a risk by annexing Crimea and inspiring military activity in Donbas, thereby exposing themselves to sanctions and the associated economic recession. However, the strategic goal of preventing Ukraine from integrating with Western structures has been successfully implemented, since Ukraine does not control part of its territory, so the possibility of integration with the EU and NATO has been blocked [8].

For Western countries, the aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine is a fundamental political challenge, putting the unity of the Western world to the test and checking whether or not the West is able to defend its liberal principles in international relations. In addition, this conflict has shown to what extent countries that are members of NATO are ready to deepen their cooperation. The EU, the US and other countries (including Canada, Switzerland and Australia) have imposed economic sanctions on the Russian Federation. They also created a list of government officials and businessmen who were banned from entering the US and the EU. However, in

some European countries, there is increasing pressure to ease sanctions and establish dialogue with the Russian Federation [24].

Russia's goal is also to investigate how far it can go, in terms of security policy, and not suffer the consequences of a determined NATO response. Some NATO members (including Germany) are evidently reluctant to react more firmly to the policies of the Russian Federation and oppose a more strongly confrontational course (including the permanent military presence of NATO troops in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which would be a violation of the NATO-Russia agreement from 1997). However, at the NATO Summit in Newport, and later at the summit in Warsaw, it was decided to deploy battlegroups in Romania, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia on a rotational basis.

With regard to Ukraine itself, the loss of control over Crimea and the war in the east of the country pose huge challenges. First, it leads to the deterioration of internal security, and thus – notwithstanding the declarations of the current government in Ukraine – no opportunities in the medium term for integration with NATO and the EU. A NATO document only stipulates that: «Priority is given to support for comprehensive reform in the security and defence sector, which is vital for Ukraine's democratic development and for strengthening its ability to defend itself» [17]. And that: «In response to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, NATO has reinforced its support for capability development and capacity building in Ukraine» [17]. Also, NATO's assistance to Ukraine is only declarative and very general, referring only to joint consultations and training [1].

The policy of the European Union is even less consistent in terms of security. All attempts to cooperate with the Russian Federation ended in failure, such as the «Strategic Partnership» or the «Partnership for Modernization». In addition, the EU institutions do not participate in the so-called Normandy format. The only mission within the Common Security and Defense Policy is the European Union Advisory Mission for the reform of the civil security sector in Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine). This mission was created in December 2018, with its main task being to support, train and advise state institutions in the reform of the civil sector responsible for security and justice (including the police, courts, prosecutors, etc.). The mission is supposed to improve the work of the security services, combat corruption and promote the rule of law [4]. In addition, the European Union countries imposed economic sanctions on the Russian Federation in connection with the annexation of Crimea and aggression in the east of Ukraine.

Conclusion

When it comes to key foreign policy objectives in the Russian Federation, the decision-making process is restricted to Russia's narrow political and financial elite. Despite the negative socio-political consequences of this state of affairs for the general public, it allows the immediate adoption and implementation of political decisions, which results in greater freedom of action, and thus surprises other countries in international relations. The actions of the Russian Federation in foreign policy in the post-Soviet area implements the Russian model of the political system. The Russian Federation aims to create a multipolar world order with a «concert of powers» similar

to the Westphalian system, with Russia's position as a world power guaranteed. It is associated with the view that cooperation with Western countries is impossible, indeed the relationship is characterized by conflict and confrontation, based on the «zero-sum game» principle, because the authorities in Russia reject the Western liberal-democratic paradigm of global order. This approach to international relations will continue in Russia as long as the current political regime endures [3, p. 10–11]. The informal Normandy format, created in 2014 by representatives of Germany, France, Ukraine and the Russian Federation, aimed to end the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, but has yet to bring about any significant progress in the implementation of the Minsk Agreement. In addition, the war in Donbas has become a «frozen» conflict – one of many in the post-Soviet area, by means of which Russia pursues its particular interests [1, p. 716]. The conflict in Ukraine is undoubtedly a challenge and test of unity for Western countries. The strategy of the Russian Federation is to destroy united action by NATO members and European Union states. The new security architecture presented by the authorities of the Russian Federation with its superpower status and the return to the «concert of powers» is unacceptable for European countries. However, Russian imperialism is leading to an increase in instability in Europe.

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КРИЗА В УКРАЇНІ 2014 РОКУ ТА РОСІЙСЬКІ ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ У ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКІЙ БЕЗПЕЦІ

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Кінець холодної війни спричинив створення нової архітектури безпеки на європейському континенті. Проте в даний час слід сказати, що спроба включити Російську Федерацію у співпрацю із західними країнами, започаткована з 1990-х років, виявилася невдалою, тим більше Росія відмовилася приєднатися до західних структур за неоліберальними принципами. Можна припустити, що прагматична співпраця Російської Федерації під владою Б. Єльцина з США та країнами Західної Європи була продиктована неможливістю реалізації власного бачення міжнародних відносин, особливо з точки зору безпеки. Це стало наслідком політичної та економічної кризи після розпаду СРСР, і, отже, відсутності інструментів впливу на міжнародну арену, а також сепаратистських рухів на Кавказі, у тому числі в Чечні.

Підірив позиції Російської Федерації як світової держави Сполученими Штатами на міжнародній арені посилює невдоволення цієї держави. Багато росіян сьогодні відчувають себе спадкоємцями великої імперської традиції. Ностальгія за імперією призводить до того, що голоси в російських політичних і наукових колах заявляють, що це єдиний правильний шлях для розвитку сучасної Росії. Міжнародна ідентичність Російської Федерації формувалася як імперська.

Наслідки діяльності Російської Федерації на Кримському півострові та на сході України в березні 2014 року призвели до руйнування системи безпеки в Європі, яка сформувалася після завершення холодної війни, що, безперечно, стало переломним моментом і матиме довготривалі наслідки для системи європейської безпеки. Крім того, це сприяло зміні відносин між Російською Федерацією та США і західноєвропейськими країнами, що може становити загрозу для

європейської та глобальної безпеки, а також можлива нова холодна війна. Мета цієї статті – проаналізувати діяльність Російської Федерації з точки зору російських концепцій безпеки, що стосуються Європи. Ці заходи є частиною системи безпеки, яку вони хочуть нав'язати іншим країнам, що розглядають в Росії як «геополітичну гру» з метою закріплення власного впливу. Центральною точкою публікації є теза про те, що відчуття небезпеки в політичній еліті Російської Федерації подіями в Україні (хвиля великих проявів і протестів, переповнених в Україні після здобуття незалежності 1991 року) сприймалася як загрози геополітичним впливам цієї держави. Саме тому для Росії військові операції в Криму і на сході України сприймалися як оборонні дії, щоб перешкодити розширенню впливу США і НАТО на російський кордон. Наразі конфлікт в Україні, безперечно, є одним з найважливіших геополітичних викликів з точки зору безпеки XXI століття в Європі. Конфлікт в Україні, безперечно, є викликом для західних країн. Стратегія Російської Федерації – знищити єдність дій держав НАТО і Європейського Союзу. Нова система безпеки, представлена владою Російської Федерації з її статусом наддержави і поверненням до «концерту сил», є неприйнятною для європейських країн. Однак російський імперіалізм викликає зростання нестабільності в Європі.

Ключові слова: міжнародні відносини; політика безпеки; політичні концепції; світовий порядок; зовнішня та безпекова політика Російської Федерації.