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Eastern Europe and the Means of Neutralising it by Russia in the Neo-Eurasian Geopolitical Doctrine from the 1990s to 2025*

Zarys treści: Artykuł poświęcony jest neoeurazjatyckiej doktrynie geopolitycznej Rosji, czyli ideologii uzasadniającej jej dążenie do odbudowy wpływów w Europie Wschodniej. Autor podkreśla, że Europa Wschodnia ma dla Rosji znaczenie kluczowe – strategiczne, historyczne i gospodarcze. Moskwa traktuje ten obszar jako swoją naturalną strefę wpływów i bufor bezpieczeństwa, co prowadzi do konfrontacji z Zachodem. Dążąc do odzyskania statusu globalnego mocarstwa, Rosja chce odtworzyć swoje „cywilizacyjne granice” i odzyskać kontrolę nad przestrzenią postsowiecką. W związku z tym autor przewiduje, że w najbliższych latach należy się liczyć z eskalacją rosyjskich działań w Europie Wschodniej – zarówno o charakterze niekinetycznym (propaganda, cyberataki, prowokacje), jak i z możliwością agresji militarnej.

Outline of content: The article examines Russia's neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine, an ideology that justifies Russia's desire to rebuild its influence in Eastern Europe. The author emphasises that Eastern Europe is of crucial importance to Russia – strategically, historically, and economically. Moscow treats the region as its natural sphere of influence and a security buffer, an attitude that leads to a confrontation with the West. Seeking to regain its status as a global power, Russia wants to recreate its 'civilisational frontiers' and regain control of the post-Soviet space. As a result, the author predicts Russian actions in Eastern Europe will escalate over the coming years. They include actions of a non-kinetic nature (propaganda, cyberattacks, provocations) as well as possible military aggression.

Słowa kluczowe: geopolityka, neoeurazjatyzm, Federacja Rosyjska, strategia, Dugin, służby specjalne

Keywords: geopolitics, Neo-Eurasianism, Russian Federation, strategy, Dugin, secret service

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Introduction

The break-up of the Soviet Union and its aftermath forced the Russian leadership elite to formulate new doctrines for an effective foreign policy that would make it possible to rebuild Russia's lost position in the system of international relations. Reflection on the geopolitical consequences of this event is still present in the minds of the Russian political class as well as a considerable part of Russian society. That is why the calls to rebuild the lost empire have become an important part of the concepts that shape the Russian Federation's foreign policy.¹

Russia's geographical location has influenced the way the Moscow leadership elites have viewed the world for centuries. From the sixteenth century onwards, they were forced to pursue policies in three main directions: western (from the Baltic to the Carpathians), southern (from the Danube to Persia), and eastern (from the Volga to the Altai). They sought to remain active in all these areas at the same time, which made it necessary to consolidate the state and centralise power. In addition, existence in wide open geographic spaces was associated with a constant sense of threat of external aggression, which implied a tendency to guarantee security through preventive and offensive actions.² This connection was pointed out by the British geographer Halford John Mackinder (1861–1947). On 25 January 1904, during his lecture at the Royal Geographical Society, he said that Russia replaced the Mongol Empire. Its pressure on Finland, Scandinavia, Poland, Turkey, Persia, India, and China replaced the past centrifugal raids of the steppe peoples. From a global perspective, Russia occupied a central strategic position, like Germany in Europe. It could be attacked and attack from all sides, except the north.³

It should be noted that Russia's contemporary foreign policy, too, is manifested in the country's intensified activity in the following geostrategic regions: from the Balkans, through the Black Sea basin (Transnistria, Crimea), then through the Caucasus, the Caspian basin, all of Central Asia, as far as Sakhalin and the Arctic. According to some Russian elites, the new border configuration that emerged from the collapse of the USSR is disadvantageous to Russia compared with previous eras. Consequently, the likelihood of Russia breaching the international order for geopolitical or geostrategic reasons is high. This is confirmed by the armed conflicts involving the Russian Federation from 1991 to 2022. Significantly, their determinants included geographic proximity to the territories now forming the

¹ M. Wojnowski, *Narzędzia rosyjskiego imperializmu. Studia nad genezą, ewolucją i rolą działań (środków) aktywnych w polityce zagranicznej Kremla w XX i XXI wieku* (Warszawa, 2024), pp. 245–246.

² *Ibid.*, p. 173.

³ H.J. Mackinder, 'The Geographical Pivot of History', *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904), pp. 435–436. Cf. P. Eberhardt, 'Koncepcja Heartlandu Halforda Mackindera', *Przegląd Geograficzny*, 83, no. 2 (2011), pp. 251–266.

post-Soviet space, especially those with a heterogeneous ethnic, social, and religious structure.⁴

That is why defining the interests of the state in relation to geographical space is a key factor necessary for understanding the political actions of the Russian Federation in the international sphere. Consequently, what has become particularly important in Russia since the early 1990s is geopolitics, which studies the links between external and internal policies of states as well as international relations on the one hand, and a system of political, military, and economic ties on the other, ties determined by the geographical location of a state and its regions, as well as other physical, economic, and geographical factors. Geopolitics is the science of how geospace influences the political goals and interests of a state.

The beginnings of Russian geopolitics go back to the nineteenth century, when it was called military geography. In the Soviet Union it was viewed as a reactionary, bourgeois science that was to justify the imperialist policy of capitalist powers. Nevertheless, studies by Western geopoliticians, whose concepts were referred to as military strategy at the time, were analysed primarily by members of the Soviet military and Soviet diplomats. The collapse of the USSR sparked a revival of geopolitics, which replaced communist ideology. In the 1990s, the huge interest in geopolitics led to the founding of a series of research institutions, social organisations, and think tanks. The number of publications on the subject has been growing ever since, with the authors of some of them being well-known politicians, members of the military, and officers of the Russian security apparatus.⁵

In Russia, geopolitics is understood primarily as a political practice followed in the international sphere, which means that the Russian elites' use of the geopolitical paradigm in analyses of the global space becomes the foundation of political actions. Thus, geopolitical studies and analyses focus on:

- (1) the historical process of planning and pursuing the Russian state's foreign policy, geared towards regaining its imperial status;
- (2) the mechanism behind the implementation of this policy, which is based on expansion, understood as expanding the country's borders or gaining spheres

⁴ Ibid., p. 173. Cf. И.Н. Тяпин, 'Отражение внешнеполитического положения России в отечественной геополитической мысли: история и современность', *Historia Provinciae – журнал региональной истории* 1, no. 3 (2017), pp. 6–23; В.И. Коваленко, *Современная российская политика: политические отношения, институты, процессы* (Москва, 2020), pp. 318–351, T.W. Grabowski, *Rosyjska siła. Siły Zbrojne i główne problemy polityki obronnej Federacji Rosyjskiej w latach 1991–2010* (Częstochowa, 2011), pp. 21–22; В.В. Кириллов, Ю.Н. Крючков, 'Влияние войны на развитие и международное значение России в мире', *Военная мысль*, 2 (2008), pp. 10–21.

⁵ Wojnowski, *Narzędzia rosyjskiego imperializmu*, pp. 174–175, Н.В. Каледин, Н.М. Михеева, *Политическая география и геополитика* (Москва, 2021), pp. 62–67; А.Б. Елацков, Н.В. Каледин, 'Историческое развитие отечественной политической географии и геополитики', in *Политическая география: Современная российская школа: Хрестоматия*, ed. И.Ю. Окунев, М.Н. Шестакова (Москва, 2022), pp. 43–57.

of influence. Expansion can be military, economic, ideological, cultural, informational, etc.⁶

This is confirmed by the opinion of the geopolitician and conflictologist Vladimir Riabtsev, who, citing studies by the analyst and political scientist Vadim Tsymburski (1957–2009), points out that:

[I]t is impossible to do without turning to geopolitics as the most important (especially today, when the old world order is collapsing) conceptual basis and algorithm of the Great Game on the world stage. More specifically, without saturating the practical steps of the new Russian leadership with geopolitical content, it will be impossible to play this Great Game. Addressing those who make the most important decisions in foreign and security policy, as well as those who help the policy-makers make these decisions and, at the same time, ensure their enforceability, Vadim Tsymburski explained that the starting point should be not so much scientific, but instrumental (purposeful-rational) and projective understanding of geopolitics, recognising and constantly consolidating its fundamental dependence on one's own political plan: the survival Russia, freed from the bonds of communism, in a complex and largely hostile world, and then its leap into the future, into a new technological order. If we were to use Tsymburski's language, we should speak of geopolitics as a type of activity involving the construction of a specific world order in the space around Russia. This means that the perception of the world in politics-filled images, as well as influencing this world by creating such images, which often do not overlap with the borders of existing states, must involve geographically imitating and enacting the political decision-making process. In other words, our decision-makers and their experts should understand one simple thing: geopolitics means creating images of a space in combination with a true geostrategy, that is, in fact, political creativity in the context of a given time and place. Vadim Leonidovich Tsymburski was a thousand times right in believing that without adopting a geopolitical way of thinking, and without looking strategically into the future, it would be difficult for the current ruling class to expect Russia to become the centre of concentration of power in northern Eurasia and to bring its integration project, the Eurasian Economic Union (in Tsymburski's times it was still the Eurasian Economic Community), to its logical conclusion.⁷

Over the past thirty years a new and extremely aggressive form of Russian expansionism has emerged and gained ground in the Russian Federation, a form that can be described as revolutionary imperialism. It is represented by such figures of political life as the late Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (1946–2022) and Aleksandr Dugin. In the 1990s revolutionary imperialism was viewed in Russia as a marginal phenomenon. Today, on the other hand, its followers play an important role in the political system created by Vladimir Putin. *They are present in both public*

⁶ Л.Г. Ивашов, *Геополитика Русской цивилизации* (Москва, 2015), pp. 111, 116.

⁷ Quoted after В. Рябцев, *Реабилитация геополитики в России: роль Вадима Цымбурского*, <https://politconservatism.ru/arhiv-publications/reabilitatsiya-geopolitiki-v-rossii-rol-vadima-tsymburskogo> (accessed: 26 June 2025). Cf. В.Л. Цымбурский, 'Геополитика как мировидение и род занятий', in *Поэтика геополитики*, vol. 1: *Статьи 1991–2000 гг.* (Москва, 2013), pp. 353–356.

debate and in the highest echelons of power. Instead of a restoration of the Russian Empire and/or the Soviet Union, they call for the creation of an entirely new form of Russian statehood. In their opinion, this statehood is to emerge from the destruction of the existing world order. In fact, they are advocates of a Third World War between Russia and the South (Zhirinovsky) or the West (Dugin). In modern Russia the entire discussion on defining the goals and methods of foreign policy is indirectly influenced by the radical geopolitical doctrines of Zhirinovsky, Dugin, and similar ideologues. Despite the fact that it is unwarranted to consider Dugin as Putin's most important ideologue or the main author of Russia's modern foreign policy doctrine, his radical anti-Americanism and imperialism, like Zhirinovsky's legacy, still fall within the mainstream of Russian foreign policy.⁸

Neo-Eurasianism as an ideology is based on three fundamental tenets:

- Owing to its unique historical and cultural development, Russia is not a state, and belongs to neither the Western nor the Eastern world, but constitutes a separate civilisation: Russia-Eurasia.
- Russians are the state-forming nation on which Eurasian civilisation is based.
- Russia-Eurasia rejects the hegemony of the West as well as its values.⁹

In the early 1990s, Aleksandr Dugin carried out a synthesis of this ideology with the geopolitical paradigm.¹⁰ The resulting concepts of Dugin and his milieu have

⁸ А. Умланд, 'Реставрационный и революционный империализм в политическом дискурсе России: сдвиг постсоветского идеологического спектра вправо и антизападный поворот Кремля', *Форум новейшей восточноевропейской истории и культуры*, 1–2 (2018), pp. 26–27; id., "'Евразийские" проекты Путина и Дугина – сходства и различия: об истоках и роли правоэкстремистского интеллектуализма в неоавторитарной России', *Форум новейшей восточноевропейской истории и культуры*, 2 (2012), pp. 401–407. For more on Dugin's contacts with representatives of the Russian leadership elites, presidential administration, special services, and armed forces, see M. Wojnowski, 'Aleksander Dugin a resorty siłowe Federacji Rosyjskiej. Przyczynek do badań nad wykorzystaniem geopolityki przez cywilne i wojskowe służby specjalne we współczesnej Rosji', *Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*, 10, no. 6 (2014), pp. 11–37; A. Höllwerth, *Das sakrale eurasische Imperium des Aleksandr Dugin. Eine Diskursanalyse zum postsowjetischen russischen Rechtsextremismus* (Stuttgart, 2007), pp. 193–196.

⁹ А.Г. Дугин, *Программа политической партии 'Евразия'. Материалы Учредительного съезда* (Москва 2002), pp. 5–6, id., 'Евразийство как незападная эпистема российских гуманитарных наук: интервью с Александром Гельевичем Дугиным, доктором политических наук, доктором социологических наук, профессором, лидером Международного Евразийского движения. Интервью провела М.А. Баранник', *Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения*, 22, no. 2 (2022), pp. 144–145; Ч.Н. Вэй, 'Евразийство: глобальные вызовы и новый миропорядок в политической философии А.Г. Дугина', *Мировая политика*, 2 (2021), pp. 71–80.

¹⁰ Geopolitical paradigm is a method or model of a simple and internally coherent analysis of processes, events, tendencies, and trends in international relations with regard to geographical and spatial categories, carried out by synthesising interdisciplinary knowledge. A characteristic feature of the geopolitical approach is the belief that the essence of understanding international processes lies in analysing the interests and power of states (centres of power). In this context,

shaped the views of a significant part of the Russian elite on the goals of Russia's foreign policy. In an interview for the Polish journal *Frona* in 2001, Dugin said:

Today, almost the entire political science elite in Russia has been intellectually impregnated by me. Words like geopolitics, Eurasianism, mondialism, anti-Americanism, geoeconomics, the new right or the third way have been introduced into the public discourse by me. The very language of our elite, both on the left and on the right, has been slowly permeated by my ideas.¹¹

Moreover, Dugin has created ideological continuity, facilitating the consolidation of Russian elites and society around the model of foreign and security policy promoted by the secret services. A significant part of the modern Russian elite, which was formed in the USSR, found itself in an ideological vacuum after its collapse. Neo-Eurasianism and other strands of geopolitics have replaced Marxism-Leninism, successfully filling this vacuum.¹²

The neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine formulated by Dugin and similar ideologies is an expression of the imperial nostalgia of part of the Russian leadership. Under the auspices of Russian strategists, politicians, and military commanders, the doctrine has become the basis of a viable programme to create a Russian empire that will surpass the Soviet Union.¹³

Purpose and scope of the study

The purpose of this study is to present:

- (1) The tenets of the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine concerning the creation in Eastern Europe¹⁴ of a Russian sphere of influence, as well as the

the key reference points will be the pursuit of power (might) by states, as well as violence and war as inherent elements of the international system, see J. Macała, 'Czym jest geopolityka? Spory wokół jej definicji', in *Geopolityka. Elementy teorii, wybrane metody i badania*, ed. Z. Lach, J. Wendt (Częstochowa, 2010), p. 16.

¹¹ 'Czy Putin jest awatarem? Rozmowa z Aleksandrem Duginem', *Frona*, 23/24 (2001), p. 163.

¹² Е. Мороз, 'Евразийские метаморфозы: от русской эмиграции к российской элите', *Форум новейшей восточноевропейской истории и культуры*, 1 (2010), p. 43.

¹³ Wojnowski, *Narzędzia rosyjskiego imperializmu*, p. 171.

¹⁴ In this article, countries located between Germany and the Russian Federation will be described as Eastern Europe. The use of the term has been justified by Witold Wilczyński in the following manner: "Tinged with subjectivity as they are, geographical ideas thus have a significant impact on both everyday life and international relations. That is why geographical names are not some unimportant elements, making it easier to identify places and to move among them. It is a process of shaping images of geographical reality in public consciousness; on these visions depend both the modes of economic activity and international relations in peacetime and the strategies employed in wartime [...] Even today, in political debate, Poland and the countries of our part of Europe are referred to as Eastern Europe. This is done by, for example, the leaders and representatives of great powers, both the United States of America and the Russian Federation.

means and methods used by the Kremlin to pursue this goal. A geopolitical doctrine is a set of principles and views describing how the geographical location, natural resources, and other factors influence a state's foreign policy, national security, and ambitions, including its ability to project power in order to acquire, maintain or expand territorial gains or spheres of influence. According to this doctrine, the geography of a country is of fundamental significance to its policies and strategy.¹⁵

- (2) The degree to which the tenets of the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine are used in Russian strategic planning documents, the perception of the doctrine among officials of the central state apparatus from the secret services and the army, and in expert think tanks that constitute the intellectual base of the Kremlin.
- (3) The prognosis regarding scenarios based on the tenets of this doctrine in Russian foreign policy towards Eastern European countries, especially those that are part of the so-called eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance.¹⁶
- (4) Recommendations on preventing and combating Russian actions against the security of Eastern European countries.

An analysis of the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine and its partial implementation in practice can serve as the basis for a research hypothesis, which the author seeks to test in this study. *Eastern Europe is of strategic, historical, and economic importance to Russia. It is an area viewed by Russia as a sphere of its influence and security, which leads to a confrontation with the West.* The significance of the region to Russia is well encapsulated by Halford Mackinder's doctrine: "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland,

Examples include their statements in connection with the beginning of the construction of the base that is part of the anti-missile shield in Redzikowo. That the US president calls Poland an Eastern European country is not surprising. This is how geography is taught in the US, and this is how Poland is classified there in scholarly publications and the media. Worthy of note, on the other hand, is the fact that the Russian president did not hesitate to include Poland in Eastern Europe either. This means that Putin no longer considers Russia to be a European power, but a region that is on a par with Europe and one that is the core of a separate geopolitical bloc (Eurasia). This is a sign that all concepts, such as Central Europe and Mitteleuropa, brought to life for ad hoc utilitarian or ideological purposes, are giving way to geopolitical determinants that change over the long term and, therefore, are relatively permanent, determinants that reflect the actual state of affairs. Accordingly, in Europe, which constitutes a civilisational unity, we have a group of states forming its core, that is what has traditionally been called the West, and the countries of the East, markedly different from this core, which are referred to today in Poland as Intermarium", W.J. Wilczyński, 'Nazewnictwo geopolityczne wschodniej części Europy', *Przegląd Geopolityczny*, 18 (2016), pp. 42, 47.

¹⁵ T. Klin, 'Geopolityka: spór definicyjny we współczesnej Polsce', *Geopolityka*, 1 (2008), pp. 12–15.

¹⁶ The so-called 'eastern flank' of NATO is currently made up of the following countries: Sweden, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey, see A. Lanoszka, J. Sirotová, M. Zaborowski, *Will the Eastern Flank be Battle Ready? Deterrence by 2030. GLOBSEC Future Security and Defence Council* (Bratislava, 2023), p. 4.

commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island commands the world”.¹⁷ Consequently, any assessments of the security environment recommending that Eastern European countries establish cooperation with Russia (like those presented in the ‘Theses on the policy of the Republic of Poland towards Russia and Ukraine’ of 4 March 2008, formulated in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the ‘White Paper on the National Security of the Republic of Poland’ of 2013) should be considered erroneous. Russia was not and is not interested in stabilising the region, as the authors of these documents suggest, but in its political and even military neutralisation.¹⁸

Due to obvious restrictions, imposed by the Russian state archives, security and diplomatic agencies, and the armed forces, on access to documents, the present study is based on open sources, the importance of which in analytical work has been growing steadily. For example, in March 2022 Ukraine’s Minister of Defence Hanna Maliar said that 80 per cent of intelligence information came from open sources. This is facilitated by the development of tools used to store, transmit, and process digital information. The article draws on Russian strategic planning documents (the concepts of the Russian Federation’s foreign policy), publications by Russian geopoliticians and experts associated with the academic base of the power ministries, as well as periodicals published by various ministries. However, when using open sources, especially Russian sources, we need to bear in mind that there are many limitations when it comes to their interpretation. They stem from the covert nature of some actions or planned disinformation operations conducted by the entities that produced these sources. As a result, the use of, for example, official documents, specialist ministerial periodicals as well as other sources of fragmentary information may lead to erroneous conclusions and assessments. In this context we should pay particular attention to the fact that in the strategic planning documents and studies commissioned by ministries, Russian offensive actions against the West are always presented as reactive and defensive measures. This is to justify Russia’s right to use force and have a sphere of influence, and to shift the responsibility for destabilising the international relations system to the United States and its allies.¹⁹ The associated risks can be mitigated by using geopolitical, historical, and comparative perspectives in research into Russia’s modern foreign policy. Knowing the history of Russia’s foreign policy, its strategic objectives as

¹⁷ H.J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (London, 1919), p. 194.

¹⁸ *Biała księga bezpieczeństwa narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (Warszawa, 2013), p. 162. Cf. S. Cenckiewicz, M. Rachoń, *Zgoda. Służby Tuska w objęciach Putina* (Warszawa, 2024), pp. 26–40.

¹⁹ For more on the subject, see I. Varzhanskyi, ‘Reflexive Control as a Risk Factor for Using OSINT: Insights from the Russia–Ukraine Conflict’, *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 37, no. 2 (2024), pp. 419–449. Cf. L. Dryblak, ‘Rola i znaczenie rosyjskich dokumentów doktrynalnych, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem doktryn bezpieczeństwa informacyjnego z 2000 i 2016 roku’, *Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe*, 45, no. 2 (2024), pp. 29–60.

well as the methods of operation of the entities planning and implementing them we can – at least in part – define today's directions of this policy as well as the means and methods used to carry out specific ventures.²⁰

The neo-Eurasian project of a Russian sphere of influence in Eastern Europe

The starting point for examining the reconstruction of the Russian sphere of influence in Eastern Europe is Aleksandr Dugin's book *The Foundations of Geopolitics. The Geopolitical Future of Russia*. It should be noted that the book, impressive in its form and content, was written in collaboration with generals from the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Russian Federation's Armed Forces. In 1992, Aleksandr Dugin, thanks to the patronage of Aleksandr Prokhanov, editor-in-chief of the *Zavtra* weekly and war correspondent, was appointed lecturer at the Department of Strategy at the Military Academy of the General Staff of Russia's Armed Forces. At that time the academy was headed by Colonel General Igor Rodionov,²¹ who got to know Prokhanov during the war in Afghanistan.

²⁰ K. Kraj, *Rosyjska wspólnota organów bezpieczeństwa* (Kraków–Wrocław, 2017), p. 127.

²¹ Igor Nikolaevich Rodionov (born 1 Dec. 1936 in the village of Kurakino, Penza Oblast, died 19 Dec. 2014 in Moscow) was a Soviet and Russian military officer and politician, Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation (1996–1997), deputy of the State Duma (1999–2007), and army general. From 1948 he lived with his family in Mukachevo, where he attended a music school, which he did not finish, as the school was closed down for ideological reasons. From 1954 to 1955, he attended the Second Ulyanovsk Armoured School. After graduating he became an assistant platoon commander and then a non-commissioned officer in a training company. He served in the Soviet forces in Germany, where from December 1957 until February 1958 he headed a tank platoon. In 1964, he was transferred to the Moscow Military District, where he commanded a tank company from December 1964 to May 1967. Member of the CPSU from 1956 to August 1991. A tank battalion commander from 1967, in June 1970, he graduated from the Marshal R. Malinowski Military Academy of Armoured Forces and became deputy regimental commander and, soon after that, regimental commander. From 1975, he served as commander of the 24th Iron Mechanised Division in the Carpathian Military District. From 1978 to 1980, he studied at the K. Voroshilov Military Academy of the General Staff of the USSR Armed Forces, from which he graduated with honours. From 1980 to 1983, commander of the 28th Army Corps of the Central Army Group stationed in Czechoslovakia. From 1983 to 1985, commander of the 5th Army of the Far Eastern Military District; from 1985 to 1986, commander of the 40th Army of the Turkestan Military District (Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces in Afghanistan). From July 1986 to March 1988, he served as First Deputy Commander of the Moscow Military District. From April 1988 to August 1989, he commanded the troops of the Transcaucasian Military District. He was a military commander in Tbilisi, where he commanded the Red Army troops that pacified a Georgian independence demonstration on 9 April 1989. During clashes near the Government Palace, Rodionov's soldiers used military camp shovels and poison gas to disperse the demonstrators. Twenty-one people, including women and children, died. In 1989–1992, Rodionov served as head of the K. Voroshilov Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR, and in 1992–1996 of the Military Academy of the General

Aleksandr Dugin taught geopolitics under the supervision of Colonel General Nikolai Klokotov, chair of the Department of Strategy,²² who became a scientific consultant of Dugin's book.²³ Another expert involved in the preparation of the publication was Colonel General Leonid Ivashov.²⁴ While working on the book, Dugin used the teaching aids, notes, and comments of his students. This was the origin of material recommended for officer cadets in the 1993/1994 academic year. The textbook was published in 1997 as *The Foundations of Geopolitics. The Geopolitical Future of Russia*²⁵ and became hugely popular among the Russian leadership elites. In 1998 Dugin was appointed security advisor to Gennady Seleznirov, chairman of the State Duma and one of the leading Russian politicians of the day (in June 2001 Seleznirov was named one of the ten most influential figures in Russia by a group of experts from the periodical *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*). In March 1999 Seleznirov called for Dugin's geopolitical doctrine to be included in the mandatory curriculum in schools. In 2001, during the founding congress of the new All-Russian Political Social Movement 'Eurasia', Dugin confirmed that he was the author of the *The Foundations of Geopolitics. The Geopolitical Future of Russia*, which by that time had been adopted as a textbook in many Russian educational institutions. During the meeting Colonel General Klokotov pointed out that classes in the theory of geopolitics had been held at the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Russian Federation's Armed Forces since the early 1990s. He stressed that in the future geopolitics would be a powerful ideological foundation for educating new officers in the Russian Federation's armed forces.²⁶ According to the

Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. From 17 July 1996 to 23 May 1997, he was Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation; on 5 Oct. 1996, he was made army general, and on 11 Dec. 1996, as he reached the appropriate age, he was retired. On 19 Dec. 1999, he was elected to the State Duma of the third term as a deputy of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation; he was a member of the State Duma Committee on Veterans' Affairs. After leaving the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, he was elected chairman of the People's Patriotic Party of Russia on 23 February 2002. On 7 Dec. 2003, he won a seat in the State Duma for the fourth term, and from 2006, he was an activist of the Just Russia party. He died on 19 Dec. 2014 after a long illness. He was buried on 22 Dec. 2014 at the Federal Military Cemetery; see Н.И. Рыжков, *Трагедия великой страны* (Москва, 2007), pp. 99, 105, А.В. Тютин, И.С. Шишкин, *Пензенская персоналия. Славу Пензы умножившие*, vol. 2 (Пенза, 2012), pp. 142–143; 'Большая советская энциклопедия. Родионов Игорь Николаевич', <https://bigenc.ru/c/rodiонов-igor-nikolaevich-3b78da> (accessed 18 June 2025).

²² There are no detailed data in open sources.

²³ C. Clover, *Black Wind, White Snow: Russia's New Nationalism* (New Haven – London, 2022), p. 201. A scientific consultant is a person who helps the author to verify the accuracy and correctness of the information contained in the author's book, especially in disciplines where the author is not an expert.

²⁴ J. Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* (Lanham, 2012), p. 70.

²⁵ Clover, *Black Wind, White Snow*, pp. 204–205.

²⁶ Д.Б. Данлоп, "«Неоевразийский» учебник Александра Дугина и противоречивый отклик Дмитрия Тренина", *Форум новейшей восточноевропейской истории и культуры*, 1 (2010), p. 84.

newspaper *Argumenty i fakty*, the Dugin-led Centre for Eurasian Geopolitical Initiatives is a “second Ministry of Foreign Affairs”; on the other hand a special cell is said to have been set up in the CIA to analyse Dugin’s activities and his ideas.²⁷

The neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine assumes that the US and its allies are pursuing an ‘anaconda strategy’ (a term borrowed by Dugin from the American General Winfield Scott and Nazi geopolitician Karl Haushofer, who used it to describe the US and UK policy of isolating Germany) against Russia in order to exert relentless pressure on the Eurasian periphery. The term ‘anaconda strategy’ refers to the way a constrictor snake kills its victim and provides for a slow, gradual weakening of the opponent by a naval blockade and taking control of important transport routes.²⁸ According to Dugin, the tenets of the ‘anaconda strategy’ underlie the so-called Paul Wolfowitz Doctrine of 1992, according to which Washington’s main strategic objective is to prevent the emergence within the territory of the former Soviet Union of an independent entity capable of conducting a global policy. Under this doctrine, Russia’s role in international relations must be limited by the United States to the status of at most a regional power. Regional powers are characterised by the fact that their geopolitical importance is higher than that of other states in the region, but lower than that of superpowers or empires. In other words, a regional power has no direct impact on global geopolitical processes and yields to the interests of more powerful actors.²⁹ Thus, the political goals of the United States and its allies are at odds with the fundamental task set by Dugin for the Russian state. According to Dugin, the historical mission of the Russian people is to reject the status of a regional power and create a great continental Eurasian empire, which is to be more powerful than the Soviet Union and which is to replace the Russian Federation.³⁰ The strategic borders of this empire in the East, West, North, and South should extend to the oceans.³¹

In order to counter the West’s allegedly anti-Russian strategy, Dugin calls for the creation of a system of alliances thanks which Russia will be able to neutralise the power of the United States and its allies. This system should be built by Russia on the basis of the ‘common enemy principle’, which provides for the rejection and destruction of Atlanticism, that is, the global supremacy of the United States and the democratic-liberal values it promotes.³² One of the prerequisites for achieving this goal is to create a Russian sphere of influence in Central and

²⁷ E. Lobkowicz, ‘Rasputin Putina’, *Fronde*, 23/24 (2001), p. 147.

²⁸ А.Г. Дугин, *Основы геополитики: геополитическое будущее России* (Москва, 1997), pp. 103, 108; J.M. Dostal, ‘Auf der Suche nach dem Dreh- und Angelpunkt der Geschichte: Die Eurasien-Debatte der Zeitschrift für Geopolitik (1924–1932)’, *Zeitschrift der Koreanisch-Deutschen Gesellschaft für Sozialwissenschaften*, 12 (2016), p. 48.

²⁹ Дугин, *Основы геополитики*, pp. 199–201.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 196–198, 211–213.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 216.

South America.³³ In addition, Dugin suggests that in the early stages of the struggle against US hegemony, Russia may offer its energy resources to potential partners in the East and West as compensation for the deterioration of their relations with Washington.³⁴ Moreover, the Russian intelligence services and their allies should become involved in “provoking all kinds of instability and separatism within the borders of the United States”.³⁵ In this way, a destabilisation of the United States and its close ally, the United Kingdom, will prompt these countries to withdraw from the peripheries of Africa and Eurasia, which will lead to the collapse of Atlanticism.³⁶

According to Dugin, the system of alliances that Russia must create to neutralise the global hegemony of the United States should be based on three strategic axes. These are:

- Moscow–Berlin axis.
- Moscow–Tokyo axis.
- Moscow–Tehran axis.³⁷

Given the subject matter of this study, special attention should be paid to an analysis of the causes and consequences of the Russo-German alliance (Moscow–Berlin axis). This is because, according to Dugin, the emergence of this alliance will lead to the creation of a Russian sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and then to permanent subordination of the region to the Russian Federation. This is the first step on the road to depriving the United States of control over entire Europe and then to its ‘Finlandisation’. This is the main strategic objective of Russian foreign policy in this part of the world. From a military point of view, Europe without the United States will not be a serious threat to Russia. The Russian Federation’s economic cooperation with a ‘neutral Europe’ will make it possible to solve most of Russia’s problems with access to modern technology; in return, Russia will offer the West its energy resources and a strategic military partnership. This will make Europe dependent on Russia in energy-related and political terms and will open the way for it to revise the current order in the region. As Dugin points out, US geopoliticians are well aware of the threat posed by Russia’s alliance with Europe (especially Germany and France) to US interests. Washington is trying to prevent it in every way possible. The most effective method is to create a ‘cordon sanitaire’, that is a bloc of states hostile to both Germany and Russia, politically dependent on the US and the UK. In Dugin’s opinion, the role of such a ‘cordon sanitaire’ has traditionally been played by Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine (especially Western Ukraine), Hungary, Romania, Czechia, and Slovakia.

³³ Ibid., p. 248.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 276.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 248.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 259.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 220.

The concept of 'cordon sanitaire' was formulated by Mackinder and was very successfully implemented before the Second World War. As Dugin argues, the United Kingdom and then the United States tried all possible means to incite the nations of Eastern Europe against Germany and Russia. To achieve that, the maritime superpowers used the idea of the independence of the Eastern European states, understood as their liberation from German and Russian influence. In addition, the superpowers sought to strengthen anti-Russian sentiment in Germany and anti-German sentiment in Russia in order to draw Germany and Russia into a local conflict over the division of spheres of influence in Poland, Romania, Serbia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic States, Western Ukraine, etc. The Atlanticists achieved their goal – a conflict broke out between the two continental powers, Russia and Germany, resulting in a strategic victory for the maritime powers. The United States owe their status of a superpower to the two world wars, which bled Europe dry, weakening Germany and Russia (the main opponents of Atlanticism). Consequently, only a neutralisation of the 'cordon sanitaire' can make it possible for the space between Dublin and Vladivostok to be transformed into a zone of Eurasian cooperation, collaboration, and strategic partnership.³⁸

As Dugin points out, today the 'cordon sanitaire' consists of small, embittered, historically irresponsible states with maniacal claims characterised by a servile dependence on the West. In addition, according to Dugin, the states making up the 'cordon sanitaire' are marked by cultural, ethnic, and religious divisions, which prevent these countries from becoming integrated with the Eurasian empire or the Atlantic bloc. Through the 'cordon sanitaire' runs a meridional, ethno-religious demarcation line, separating the countries of Latin civilisation from the countries cultivating the cultural legacy of Byzantium.³⁹

According to Dugin, a model example of such a state is Poland, a view justified by the Russian geopolitician the following manner:

From my Eurasian point of view the archetype of Poland's sacred geography is profoundly dualistic: on the one hand, a pre-Christian, pagan, magical, heterodox tradition the roots of which remain Slavic; on the other – Catholicism of Germanic-Roman origin. There is a conflict between the two [...] Poland's situation is a liminal situation. The country cannot be united religiously with the Eastern world and ethnically with the Western world. Geopolitically, Poland remains part of the cordon sanitaire dividing the Eurasian continent in two, a state of affairs that is very convenient for the anti-traditional Anglo-Saxon forces. Poland cannot fully realise its Eurasian-Slavic essence, because it is hindered by Catholicism, nor its Western European identity, because it is hindered by its own Slavic nature, that is its language, customs, archetypes, climate of places, etc. As a result of this duality, this liminality of its situation, Poland always falls prey to a third force like mondialism or Atlanticism today. This location between Russia and Germany means that there will always be a problem of Poland being partitioned between the East and the West. This is

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 368–371.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 370–371.

the result of this sacred-geographical and geopolitical duality [...] We are not interested in simply preserving our own state or nation. We are interested in absorbing – by means of pressure we exert – as many categories that complement us as possible. We are not interested in colonising, like the English, but in establishing our own strategic geopolitical borders even without any special Russification, although there should be some degree of Russification. In its geopolitical as well as sacred and geographical development Russia is not interested in the existence of an independent Polish state in any form. Nor is it interested in the existence of Ukraine. Not because we don't like Poles or Ukrainians, but because these are the laws of sacred geography and geopolitics. Poland must choose: either a Slavic or a Catholic identity. I understand that it is hard to separate one from the other, but this is inevitable. If Poland insists on preserving its identity, it will set everyone against it and will once again become a conflict zone.⁴⁰

This part of Europe, which lies between the Rhine in the west and Belarus and Ukraine in the east, is described by Dugin as Central Europe. The name refers to the concept of *Mitteleuropa*, formulated by Friedrich Naumann (1860–1919) and understood as a sphere of German influence in the area between the Baltic, Black, and Adriatic Seas. The region includes the states that formed the 'cordon sanitaire' following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, as well as Germany, Prussia, and part of Poland and Western Ukraine.⁴¹ According to Dugin, the consolidating force in Central Europe is Germany, which seeks to subordinate the region to its own political and economic goals. Dugin stresses that *the unification of Central Europe under German leadership will benefit Russia only if a strong Russo-German alliance is formed. Central Europe does not have a sufficient political, economic, and military potential to achieve real independence from the United States*. Moreover, the democratic-liberal values imposed by the United States have undermined the identity of European nations. Only Russia will be able to ensure political and economic independence for Central Europe. The role of guarantor for the region should be played solely by Moscow. A prerequisite for this scenario, which is favourable to Russia, becoming reality should be the dominance in Germany of Russophile tendencies, understood as an ideology based on the ideas of politicians and intellectuals like Arthur Wilhelm Ernst Victor Moeller van den Bruck (1876–1925), Ernst Niekisch (1889–1967), Karl Haushofer (1869–1946), and Heinrich Freiherr Jordis von Lohausen (1907–2022). Dugin stresses that in order to achieve regional power status in Europe, Germany must abandon its attempts to create a racially homogeneous nation-state.⁴²

According to Dugin, the rise of the Berlin-Moscow axis, the objective of which is to create a sphere of influence for the Eurasian empire, will result in the loss of independence for the Eastern European states located between Russia and

⁴⁰ 'Czekam na Iwana Groźnego. Rozmowa z Aleksandrem Duginem', *Frona*, 11–12 (1998), pp. 132–133.

⁴¹ Дугин, *Основы геополитики*, p. 220.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 222–224, 425–426.

Germany. As has already been mentioned, in Dugin's view, the policy pursued in the region, first by Britain and later by the United States, was based on Mackinder's thesis concerning the need to create a 'cordon sanitaire', that is, a buffer zone as a hotbed of potential conflict preventing a Russo-German alliance. The creation of the Moscow-Berlin axis provides for, first and foremost, the breaking of the 'cordon sanitaire' in Eastern Europe as well as active struggle against supporters of Russophobia in Germany and advocates of an anti-German policy in Russia. That is why Russia and Germany should jointly resolve all disputes and severely suppress any local initiatives taken by Eastern European countries to revise the Russo-German plans. The main objective that Russia and Germany must achieve is to categorically eliminate the illusions of the Central European states about their potential independence from their more powerful neighbours. It is necessary to create a direct border between Russia and Central Europe (Germany). The Russian-Ukrainian, Russian-Baltic, Russian-Romanian, Russian-Polish, etc. relations should be considered not as bilateral, but as trilateral relations involving Germany. Similarly, relations between Germany and the Central European countries should be trilateral in nature, with mandatory involvement of the Russian side.⁴³

As a way to neutralise the 'cordon sanitaire', Dugin proposes a *de facto* new partition of the Eastern European states through the creation of several federations bringing together regions characterised by a uniform geopolitical orientation, that is, the ability to integrate religiously, culturally, ethnically, and economically with the Eurasian empire or the continental European bloc under German control. Taking into account the religious criterion (predominance of Catholicism and Protestant denominations), the Dugin lists the following countries as being in Germany's sphere of influence: Poland (excluding the Białystok region), Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Western Ukraine, that is the one dominated by Greek Catholicism and nationalism. He sees the rest of Ukraine as being integrated with the Russian Federation. On the other hand, the remaining countries of South-Eastern Europe, where Orthodoxy predominates – Serbia, Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Greece, and the largely Muslim Albania – should, in Dugin's view, be included in the Russian sphere of influence, which would extend to the Ionian Sea. This border between the Russian and German spheres of influence refers in many sections to the demarcation line defined in late September 1939 as part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 224–226.

⁴⁴ A. Бовдунов, *Великая Восточная Европа: геополитика, геософия, третий традиционализм* (Москва, 2022), pp. 234–236; P. Eberhardt, 'Konsepce geopolityczne Aleksandra Dugina', *Przegląd Geograficzny*, 82, no. 2 (2010), p. 230. Cf. M. Wojnowski, 'Terroryzm w służbie geopolityki. Konflikt rosyjsko-ukraiński jako przykład realizacji doktryny geopolitycznej Aleksandra Dugina i koncepcji "wojny buntowniczej" Jewgienija Messnera', *Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*, 11 (2014), pp. 63–64.

The first condition for the implementation of the tenets of the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine relating to Eastern Europe is the inclusion of the Ukrainian state in the Russian sphere of influence. Dugin stresses that this is a priority of Russian foreign policy in the region, which requires immediate 'retaliatory' (meaning: offensive) action. The Russian geopolitician further argues that no unique civilisation ever emerged on Ukrainian territory. Referring to geography, Dugin points out that the Dniester and the Dnieper, the two largest rivers flowing through Ukraine, have effectively limited the state's integration capabilities over centuries. He stresses that Ukraine's huge territory is inhabited by various 'ethnoses',⁴⁵ which have opposing aspirations. Both ethnic Great Ruthenians and Little Ruthenians, close to them in civilisational terms, are Russia-oriented, while the culturally different 'Western Ukrainian ethnos' becomes part of the Western European cultural area. That is why in its current form Ukraine is a source of instability for Eastern Europe and a hot-bed of potential armed conflict between the West (the US and NATO) and Russia. For this reason the existence of a sovereign Ukraine is a threat to Russian interests and a serious blow to its security, which for Dugin means an invasion within the territory of the Russian Federation. It is, therefore, necessary to 'federalise' Ukraine, that is, to divide it into four zones characterised by geopolitical cohesion.⁴⁶

Obtaining control over Western Ukraine is essential in order to further decompose the 'cordon sanitaire'. It is to involve the disintegration of Poland and Lithuania. According to Dugin, these countries constitute the main lever of Atlantic geopolitics aimed at countering Russian efforts to integrate Eurasia. Dugin points out that there is a precedent in history for a significant political independence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which aspired to be a civilisation, an aspiration that posed a threat to Russian statehood. This is why the problem of Poland and Lithuania has no positive solution: either the Polish-Lithuanian space will exist as an independent entity (in which case it will become an obstacle to Russian-German cooperation) or it will be fragmented and crushed in the bud, and its parts will be absorbed by two political-military blocs (Eurasian and Atlantic). In 1997 Dugin said that an independent Polish state with a national identity based on Catholicism would be a source of tension in relations with Germany and Russia. Therefore, in his opinion, the Russian Federation, in order to weaken Poland and Lithuania, must exploit all political forces focused on destroying Catholicism, such as supporters of secular social democracy, neo-pagans, Protestants, Orthodox, ethnic and national minorities. Moreover, it should inspire and exploit tensions in Polish-Lithuanian, Polish-Ukrainian, etc. relations.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ From Russian *этнос* – here in the sense of community, human collective.

⁴⁶ Дугин, *Основы геополитики*, pp. 377–383.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 372–373; *id.*, *Ноомахия. Войны ума. Восточная Европа. Славянский Логос: балканская Навь и сарматский стиль* (Москва, 2018), pp. 580–586. Cf. D. Kostianowska, 'Polska w tekstach Aleksandra Dugina i jego zwolenników', *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny*, 4 (2001), pp. 159–170; A. Jafe, 'Poland's Place in Eurasia Theoretical Treatments of the "Polish Question" in Classical and Neo-Eurasianism', *Journal of Eurasian Affairs*, 5, no. 1 (2018), pp. 58–70.

Table 1. Ukraine's territorial disintegration scenario – 1997

Region of the Ukraine state	Geopolitical significance for the Russian Federation
Eastern Ukraine	The region situated on the right bank of the Dnieper, from Chernihiv to the Sea of Azov, has been linked to Russia in political, religious, and ethnic terms for centuries. That is why Dugin does not rule out a broad autonomy for it, although he does not specify its scope. In the long run Dugin proposes that the region should be incorporated into the Russian Federation.
Crimean Peninsula	It should be under Russia's strategic control. Given the complex ethnic makeup of this part of Ukraine, it should be granted autonomy that takes into account the interests of all Great Ruthenians, Little Ruthenians, and Crimean Tatars living there.
Central Ukraine	The area from Chernihiv to Odessa (including Kyiv). For Dugin, Central Ukraine is culturally close to Eastern Ukraine, which is why it should be part of the Russian sphere of influence.
Western Ukraine	Volhynia, Galicia, Transcarpathia, as well as the eastern part of Bessarabia. This part of Ukraine has a decisive influence on the political situation across Ukraine, serving as a base for anti-Russian and pro-Western forces. That is why Russia's goal should be not so much to annex it, but to maintain strategic control over it by establishing a 'Western Ukrainian Federation', the integrity of which can be regulated as needed. Russia's border should be as far west as possible (the western edge of Central Europe). The cultural-religious border, on the other hand, should run between Central Ukraine and Western Ukraine. This will make it possible to protect Orthodox Russia from the influence of Catholicism and the Uniate Church.

Source: Author's own research based on A.Г. Дугин, *Основы геополитики. Геополитическое будущее России* (Москва, 1997), pp. 376–383, Cf. M. Wojnowski, "Terroryzm w służbie geopolityki. Konflikt rosyjsko-ukraiński jako przykład realizacji doktryny geopolitycznej Aleksandra Dugina i koncepcji "wojny buntowniczej" Jewgienija Messnera", *Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*, 11, no. 6 (2014), pp. 65–66.

In addition to neutralising the 'cordon sanitaire', the creation of the Moscow-Berlin axis will also make it possible to resolve other important issues facing both Russia and Germany. Thanks to this alliance Russia will be given direct access to advanced technologies and investments in industry, and will gain a share in the economic growth guaranteed by Europe. Germany, on the other hand, as an equal partner, will in return receive political support from Russia, support that *will enable it to become liberated from US domination and independent of Third World energy reserves controlled by the US* (this is the basis for the United States' energy blackmail of Europe). *The Moscow-Berlin axis, Dugin argues, will lay the foundations for the future prosperity of Great Russia and Great Germany.* Bringing about a Russian-German alliance requires a careful cleansing of the cultural-historical perspective of mutual relations of the dark chapters in the history of the Russo-German wars, which were resulted the successful subversive activities of the Atlantic lobby in Germany and Russia rather than being an expression of these

countries' political will. In the longer term, consideration should be given to returning the Königsberg region (East Prussia) to Germany in order to destroy the last territorial symbol of the terrible fratricidal war. To prevent this from being perceived by Russians as yet another defeat, Europe should offer Russia compensation in the form of alternative territorial annexations or other opportunities to expand its sphere of influence, especially at the expense of the states seeking to join the Baltic-Black Sea federation. The issues relating to the restitution of East Prussia should be inextricably linked to Russia's territorial and strategic expansion, and Germany, in addition to maintaining Russian military bases in the Königsberg region, should contribute to the strengthening of Russia's strategic positions in the north-west.⁴⁸

The means and methods of implementing the tenets of the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine

If Russia embarks on the path of building a multipolar world, it will have an opportunity to extend its sphere of influence to all countries. From a geopolitical point of view, the Eurasian civilisation, with the Russian people at its core, is something more than contemporary Russia within its current borders. *To ensure its security, Russia needs to take military control (sic!) of areas in the south and west, as well as the Arctic Ocean zone. Consequently, Russia's direct interests extend to the entire planet, all continents, seas, and oceans. Hence the need to develop a global geopolitical strategy for Russia, a strategy describing precisely where these interests lie in relation to each country and each region.*⁴⁹ In 2010 Aleksandr Dugin, together with Vladimir Dobrenkov, the then Dean of the Sociology Faculty of the Moscow State University, published a study on the development of Russian strategy in the Commonwealth of Independent States and other former Soviet Bloc countries (the so-called near abroad) as well as Western European countries and the United States (the so-called far abroad). The study contains analyses and recommendations on both short-term and long-term goals of Russia's foreign policy as well as the methods and means of achieving them.⁵⁰

Short-term goals

According to Dobrenkov and Dugin, in order to achieve a global power status, Russia should first of all preserve its territorial integrity and national identity based

⁴⁸ Дугин, *Основы геополитики*, pp. 226–229.

⁴⁹ А.Г. Дугин, 'Геополитическое будущее России: многополярность и основные стратегические перспективы в XXI в.', *Вестник Московского университета. Серия 18. Социология и политология*, 2 (2011), p. 84.

⁵⁰ В.И. Добренков, А.Г. Дугин, 'К внешнеполитической стратегии России в XXI в.', *Вестник Московского университета. Серия 18. Социология и политология*, 3 (2010), pp. 5–23.

on historical memory and traditional values. This means rejecting globalist, dogmatic liberal ideology and developing cooperation between the Russian state and traditional religious denominations. Internal consolidation will enable Russia to take effective action on the international stage.⁵¹ This includes:

1. Strengthening Russian influence in the CIS countries by creating pro-Russian political forces and movements. To this end, it is necessary not only to exert political, diplomatic, and economic pressure on these states, but also to actively support those political and social forces and movements that are Russia-oriented or at least advocate a neutral status for their countries. It is, therefore, necessary to creatively adapt the experience of network warfare organisations and structures that are used by the West for its own purposes, and to turn these weapons against those who invented them. Under no circumstances can Russia allow Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Armenia to join NATO. If the political leadership of any of these or other CIS countries takes the irreversible step towards joining NATO, Russia will not guarantee their territorial integrity. Given the influence that Russia exerts over a large part of the population in these countries, this will inevitably lead to their destabilisation and disintegration. This will prevent them from joining NATO, and will open the possibility of their further rapprochement and even full integration with the Russian Federation.⁵²
2. Russia should intensify its economic projects in the CIS countries by taking control over large, private businesses in such a way that they create their investment programmes with Russia's geopolitical interests in mind.
3. Creating channels and platforms for social interaction between the societies of the Russian Federation and the CIS countries in the sphere of education, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and exchange of research personnel, facilitating the movement of economic migrants and strengthening their legal protection.
4. Building of an information influence model targeting the societies of countries of the near and far abroad. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to create special television and radio channels, satellite television, use the Internet, and the latest communication technologies. The Russian Federation should also bring its media holdings to the CIS markets. As a result, Russia will be seen as an attractive centre of economic, political, and cultural life.
5. Implementing active measures aimed at involving the CIS countries in the military-political partnership process: expanding the CSTO, organising joint military exercises and arms supplies, and integrating defence efforts with an appropriate division of labour in research and development. These countries should also be made dependent on Russian arms specialists.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵² Ibid., p. 17.

The establishment of close military cooperation will bring the CIS countries closer to Russia in the defence sphere and will make it possible to create a Russian 'security zone'.

6. Seeking common interests and a common ground with those countries and political-military blocs that are interested in diversifying the centres of power on the global scale, but are not prepared to openly confront the United States. These include countries like China, Brazil, India, Turkey, Israel, as well as some countries in the European Union.⁵³

Long-term goals

Dobrenkov and Dugin point out that the successful achievement of short-term goals will consolidate Russia's status as a regional power for a while, but this in itself will not guarantee Russia's participation in the shaping of the world's global architecture. Even if Russia succeeds in all these tasks, this will not cause the United States to abandon its strategy of building a unipolar world. In an environment where Russia will operate only within a narrow sphere of influence and will seek support from tactical allies, a consistent implementation of the plans to build a unipolar world by the US and its allies in the West and East could result in Russia being surrounded by those countries and regional powers that are under the direct influence of the US and NATO. Moreover, if the Russian Federation acts in the political and economic sphere in accordance with the rules formulated in the West, this will only serve to strengthen the interests of Western countries by the dissemination and universalisation of their values in Russia. Therefore, in the long run, Russia must inevitably take up the challenge of fighting for its active involvement in global processes. This means in practice the creation of a multipolar world, the overturning of US claims to global hegemony, and the remodelling of the entire world architecture of international politics according to new patterns and models.⁵⁴ That is why Dugin and Dobrenkov recommend that, in the long term, the Russian Federation take the following measures:

1. Establish institutions of a multipolar world by, *inter alia*, transforming the United Nations into a platform for coordinating the foreign policy positions of all states and nations, regardless of their membership in specific political and military blocs, taking into account their military and economic potential (in such a situation the United States would either accept majority pressure and abandon its role as the 'big brother' or leave the UN to create a League of Democracies, as advocated by the US presidential candidate John S. McCain in 2008).

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 15–17.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

2. Build a system of alliances within the framework of regional and inter-regional cooperation as well as political and economic cooperation with other countries on the basis of shared territorial, cultural, religious, and other characteristics. Such alliances have led to the formation of the Eurasian Economic Union, BRICS (now BRICS+), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, etc.
3. Intensify globalisation processes at the regional level, by inspiring integration of nation-states into military and political blocs on the basis of their cultural, civilisational, religious, and other similarities, as well as on the basis of economic and strategic expediency. Nation-states cannot be actors in a multipolar world because their scale is insufficient for the purpose. Only multi-state unions like the European Union, for example, meet the requirements of a fully-fledged pole in a multipolar order, an alternative to the current order.
4. Initiate and coordinate initiatives and ventures focused on creating a multipolar model of international relations simultaneously at the level of intergovernmental contacts, political opposition, public, cultural, and religious organisations, as well as scientific, intellectual, and educational cooperation. Supporters of multipolarity can be found even in the United States and other NATO member states, especially among those politicians who are sensibly aware of the difficulties and dangers of the unipolar world structure that the Americans and their allies have been building.
5. Expand Russia's sphere of direct influence into Eastern Europe and especially into Orthodox countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, and Greece).⁵⁵

Reception of the tenets of the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine in the Russian security milieu and political practice

The fundamental tenets of the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine are reflected in strategic planning documents like the 'Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation', which was approved by a decree of President Vladimir Putin on 28 June 2000, and in its subsequent versions of 2008, 2013, 2016, and 2023. The 2000 concept assumes that the top priority in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, as the 'largest Eurasian state', is to shape a multipolar world in which Russia would act as one of independent centres of power. The main threat to the achievement of this objective is the unipolar model of international security, in which the United States is the sole centre of power and decision-making. In this sense a multipolar world means the coexistence of several empires built

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 9, 20–21.

on the basis of local civilisations, completely sovereign, above all vis-à-vis the US, and vis-à-vis each other.⁵⁶ In the current 'Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation', approved by a decree of President Vladimir Putin on 31 March 2023, Russia is described as a "self-contained civilisation-state" and a "huge Eurasian and Euro-Pacific power" that has "united the Russian people and other nations making up the cultural and civilisational community of the Russian World". Under this concept, the Russian Federation's position in the world is determined by its resources, its status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a member of leading international organisations and associations, one of the two largest nuclear powers, and the successor to the Soviet Union. Russia functions as "one of the sovereign centres of world's development and is fulfilling its historic mission to maintain the global balance of power and build a multipolar international system" by pursuing an independent and multi-vector foreign policy focused on championing its interests.⁵⁷

According to Nikolai Grachev, professor at the Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law, Volgograd Academy of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, the official recognition of Russia as a civilisation-state in the 'Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation' is a declaration of a political course towards building a global empire. In his view, the term 'civilisation-state' is synonymous with the term 'empire'. Consequently, the main direction of constitutional reform of the Russian state at this historical stage is its legal legitimacy as the new Russian Empire.⁵⁸ As Grachev points out, modern Russia, seeking to

⁵⁶ И.Н. Бурганова, 'Сравнительный анализ Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации в редакции 2000 г. и 2013 г. в оценке вызовов национальной и международной безопасности', *Международный научно-исследовательский журнал*, 4, no. 7 (2016), pp. 90–92; А.К. Бобров, *Внешняя политика России. Концептуальные основы* (Москва, 2025), pp. 28–31.

⁵⁷ Указ об утверждении Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации. Владимир Путин подписал Указ "Об утверждении Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации", 31 марта 2023 года, [online] <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70811> (accessed: 15 July 2025); М. Неймарк, 'Рубежный разворот: новая концепция внешней политики России', *Современная Европа*, 5 (2023), pp. 13–14.

⁵⁸ Н.И. Грачев, 'Государство-цивилизация как политическая форма существования многополярного мира', *Правовая парадигма*, 23 (2024), pp. 6–9; id., 'Эволюция российской Конституции и государство-цивилизация как концептуальная парадигма нового Основного Закона России', *Правовая парадигма*, 22, no. 4 (2023), pp. 51–64. According to Grachev, national jurisprudence thus faces the following urgent tasks: (1) to free the notion of empire from negative connotations, recognising that it is just one of the complex forms of the state system, which has its own characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages; (2) to develop the concept and identify the political and legal characteristics of an empire, including in relation to the contemporary conditions of the era of scientific and technological revolution, globalisation and/or glocalisation; (3) to conduct historical and legal research, explaining the objective and historical nature of the formation of empires as a natural pathway for the emergence and development of great powers; (4) to seek scientific recognition the imperial nature of Russian statehood, with an explanation of the reasons for the genetic identity of the imperial form of the state system of Russian civilisation; (5) to explain the distinctive features of the various forms and modifications of the

regain the status of an empire (global power), pursues a policy the aim of which is to restore its civilisational borders and to gradually regain its influence in the post-Soviet space. In this regard, several international organisations have been established on the Russian Federation's initiative to develop integration processes in Central Eurasia. They are: the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Union State of Russia and Belarus, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, and the Eurasian Economic Union. Since 2008, Russia has *de facto* held a protectorate over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, a state of affairs that gives it strategic access to Transcaucasia. In 2014, Russia regained Crimea, and in September 2022, annexed the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic, as well as the Zaporizhia and Kherson regions of the 'former Ukraine'.⁵⁹

The partial compatibility of the assumptions of the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine with Russian foreign policy since Vladimir Putin's rise to presidency has been confirmed by the opinions and analyses of Russian geopoliticians, strategists, and analysts who make up the Kremlin's intellectual base. By way of example, it is worth citing the analysis of Igor Panarin (in the KGB from 1976 and from 1991 in the Federal Agency of Government Communications and Information), whose studies underpin the Russian Federation's information security doctrine and justify the need for information warfare against the West.⁶⁰ In 2006, Panarin described the agreement on the construction of a gas pipeline (Nordstream 1) on the bottom of the Baltic Sea, directly connecting Russia and Germany, as an important step towards the implementation of the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine described by Dugin:

A serious blow has been dealt to a loyal and devoted satellite of the New British Empire in Europe – Poland. We are talking about the so-called Putin-Schroeder Pact, which laid the foundations for the construction of the Vyborg-Greifswald pipeline [...]. The essence of the project is to organise a direct gas supply corridor from its main producer (Russia) to its largest market (Western Europe). And not only to Germany, but also to other countries. The resources of alternative gas producers in the region (Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom) are close to depletion [...]. Moreover, the possibility of connecting several new countries to the grid opens up huge opportunities for Russia to expand its energy presence in Western Europe. It will connect the Russian exporter directly to the German consumer, bypassing the Eastern European transit countries. These countries are now united under the auspices of the New British Empire in a 'sanitary anti-Russian

Russian state in the successive stages of its historical development (Muscovy, Russian Empire, Soviet Union, Russian Federation) and identify their common features and attributes, with an explanation of the reasons for their preservation and reproduction under different conditions; (6) to identify the real state of and prospects for the development of the modern Russian state from the point of view of the latest developments in philosophy, sociology, social psychology, political science, historical science, cultural studies, ethnology, and ethnosociology, as well as geopolitics; see *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁹ Грачев, 'Государство-цивилизация как политическая форма', p. 12.

⁶⁰ M. van Herpen, *Putinism: The Slow Rise of a Radical Right Regime in Russia* (London, 2013), pp. 82–83.

zone'. Today attempts to create a 'Commonwealth' (Poland, the Baltic States, Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) are doomed to failure. The gas pipeline breaks these countries from the suffocating ring of Anaconda and the pieces can no longer be put together into some kind of structural whole. The unification of the 'sanitary zone' poses a threat not only to Russia, but also to the countries of Central Europe – even more so. Therefore, the objective, consolidated interest of Germany and Russia is to nip the new, gigantic Commonwealth in the bud. The construction of the gas pipeline is the first but most important step towards such a development.⁶¹

An analogous view on German and Russian policy in Eastern Europe is also shared by Sergei Markov, an advisor to Vladimir Putin, who on 5 November 2007 *blamed Poland and other Eastern European countries for the failure of the anti-American project of Europe as a federal superpower pushed by the leaders of France and Germany*. His justification was as follows:

The main reason for this crisis is, of course, the policy of the US satellites, especially Poland. These states are obstructing the EU's internal integration, the creation of a unified internal and defence policy. Poland wants the Union's defence policy to be pursued exclusively through NATO. In this way it hinders the EU from developing its relations with Russia. That is why it is not possible to talk about evolution. Poland, the Baltic States, and other US satellites are deliberately hampering the development of the EU [...]. According to analysts, both Russian and German, Poland is nothing but a problem for Europe. This is about a whole set of psychological complexes and myths. Poland has no rational foreign policy, it only seeks to obstruct. This is the reason why anti-Polish sentiment is rising. It can already be seen not only in Germany, but throughout the EU.⁶²

⁶¹ И.Н. Панарин, *Информационная война и геополитика* (Москва, 2006), pp. 331–332. On 8 Sept. 2005 in Berlin Chancellor Schröder and President Putin signed an agreement on the construction of a gas pipeline (Nordstream 1) on the bottom of the Baltic Sea, directly connecting Russia and Germany. The agreement led to the formation of a consortium comprising the German companies E.O.N AG, BASF AG, and Russia's Gazprom. In the new company, NEGPC (North European Gas Pipeline Company, later Nord Stream AG, based in Zug, Switzerland), Gazprom held 51 per cent of the shares, while Wintershall (a BASF subsidiary) and E.O.N Ruhrgas (a subsidiary of E.O.N) each held 24.5 per cent. President Putin allowed for the possibility of other countries being included in the project. Preliminary interest was expressed by, among others, Gaz de France, N.V. Nederlandse Gasunie, and British Petroleum. The total cost of the investment was estimated to exceed 5.5 billion euros (Putin, 2006). This gigantic investment, bypassing the Baltic States and Poland, caused fractures and divisions among the EU countries. The opponents of the project were mainly Poland and Lithuania, the other Baltic States, Czechia and Slovakia, and initially – for environmental reasons – Sweden. In Germany itself the intentions of the chancellor and his consent to an investment much more expensive than a traditional pipeline running through the territory of Belarus and Poland were not yet understood; B. Koszel, "Serdeczne partnerstwo". Budowa pogłębionej współpracy niemiecko-rosyjskiej w okresie rządów koalicji SPD-Bündnis 90/Die Grünen w latach 1998–2005', *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych*, 16, no. 4 (2024), p. 136.

⁶² 'Polska tylko przeszkadza', <https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/wydarzenia/artykuly/201184,polska-tylko-przeszkadza.html> (accessed: 31 May 2024).

The objective of Russian policy towards Eastern European countries, especially Poland, is viewed in similar terms by experts linked to the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation, as is reflected in the analysis of Dmitri Bunevich and Veronika Krasheninnikova:

We see that relations between Russia and Poland will remain a complicated political knot in Eastern Europe over the next few years. Above all, groups united by the ideology of Atlanticism – the belief that the United States with its military and political structures should dominate Europe – seek to generate hostility. An independent European Union that has established a constructive partnership with Moscow is the Atlanticists' worst dream. They are, therefore, using Poland and its dream of the Intermarium as a weapon against European unity and the normalisation of relations between the EU and Russia [...]. Poland's Western European partners should use a wide range of mechanisms to influence and steer Warsaw's policy in a constructive direction. France has historically had a special relationship with Poland and Germany is its most important economic partner. In the interest of a stable Europe, Berlin and Paris can and must use all means at their disposal to make Warsaw sane again. For Poland, despite its fervent assertions of its national identity, knows how to adapt its policies to the external context of the West as a whole. Only then can the difficult road to a long-term normalisation of relations between Russia and Poland begin. Only by putting aside the chimera of the Intermarium can Poland become a responsible and constructive member of Great Europe.⁶³

A successful outcome of these processes over the next few years should be the main imperative of Russian foreign policy in this part of the world. Without integration with Belarus and Ukraine, the Russian Federation cannot become a strategic, political, and demographic superpower. Like Aleksandr Dugin, Krasheninnikova and Bunevich believe that the subjugation of Ukraine will be a prelude to the disintegration of the other countries on the Baltic-Black Sea bridge, including Poland.⁶⁴

The doctrine has been implemented in a practical form in the Russian-Ukrainian war launched in 2014 as well as in the operations carried out below the threshold of armed conflict against other Eastern European countries, including Poland (for example, the joint special border operation of the Belarusian and Russian services on the Polish-Belarusian border).

What is the Russian vision of order in Eastern Europe? On 17 December 2021 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation published a communiqué announcing that two draft security guarantee agreements (between Russia and the US, and between Russia and NATO member states) had been submitted to the American side during a meeting in Moscow with a delegation led by Karen Donfried, the US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs.

⁶³ В. Крашенинникова, Д.С. Буневич, *Польша в борьбе за Восточную Европу, 1920–2020* (Москва, 2020), pp. 14–15.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 382–383.

The drafts include Russian demands for restrictions on US and NATO military presence and activity in the post-Soviet area (including, especially, Ukraine) and Central Europe. The Russian demands are based on the above-mentioned geopolitical doctrines. They are:

- non-aggression and refraining from actions that Russia considers harmful to its security;
- stopping the expansion of NATO, especially to the east;
- not establishing bases and not conducting military operations on the territory of Ukraine and other post-Soviet states that are not members of the Alliance;
- not deploying medium- and intermediate-range missiles outside NATO and in areas from which it is possible to strike targets located on Russian territory;
- not deploying nuclear weapons outside the territory of the states possessing them and dismantling the infrastructure that makes this possible;
- not deploying troops and not conducting military operations in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states;
- withdrawing allied troops deployed on the territories of the new NATO member states after May 1997 (following the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act);
- designating a buffer zone around the borders of Russia and its Collective Security Treaty Organisation allies, where exercises and other military activity at the level of brigade or higher will not be permitted;
- preventing the flights of heavy bombers and the passage of warships in areas from which they could strike targets on Russian territory (especially in the Baltic and Black Seas);
- having combat aircraft and warships of NATO countries maintain a specific distance from analogous Russian units, if they approach each other.⁶⁵

The consequence of a hypothetical acquiescence to the Russian demands listed in the documents would be a fundamental revision of the current European security order in favour of Russia, and to the detriment of NATO member and partner states (especially the Alliance's eastern flank states, including Poland and Ukraine). In particular, this would legally formalise the Russian sphere of influence in the post-Soviet area (with a temporary exclusion of the Baltic States) as well as establish a security buffer zone in Eastern Europe and demilitarise it.⁶⁶ In addition, this would also be an important step towards pushing US influence out of Europe and thus gradually isolating it.

⁶⁵ M. Menkiszak, 'Rosyjski szantaż wobec Zachodu', in *Rok wojny w analizach Ośrodka Studiów Wschodnich*, ed. A. Eberhardt, T. Iwański, W. Konończuk (Warszawa, 2023), pp. 19–22.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Forecast of scenarios of the Russian Federation's action against the 'cordon sanitaire' after 24 February 2022

As a result of the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war on 24 February 2022, Russia's relations with the West deteriorated and, consequently, its foreign policy objectives were partially modified. Studies and analyses produced by the Kremlin's experts indicate that the main objectives of Russia's 'special military operation' in Ukraine after 24 February 2022 are about implementing some of the tenets of the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine, especially towards Eastern Europe. As Ruslan Grebnev (who has served as secretary of the Department of International Relations and Interstate Cooperation, Academy of Military Sciences of the Russian Federation, since 2021) points out, Russia's key geopolitical interests associated with the concepts of multipolarity, Eurasianism, and the Russian world are primarily about building political, military, economic, and cultural influence in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Secondly, Russia's prospects of becoming a pole of the emerging polycentric world in the 'Russia + Central Asia + Eastern Europe' format depend on the Russian Federation establishing good international relations with new centres of geopolitical influence. In the context of the theory of multipolarity, the avowed aims of the special military operation in Ukraine contribute to the strengthening of complex influences and control in the region, correlated with the Russian Federation's geopolitical interests of in Eastern Europe, and, consequently, to the formation of the Russian world as a pole in a polycentric global political system. The turn to the East, which is a partial adjustment of Russia's foreign policy strategy, is to organise international cooperation in Asia that is beneficial to Russia, cooperation primarily with China, India, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Iran.⁶⁷

Continued Russian expansion in Ukraine

In April 2024 Sergei Karaganov pointed out in the *Russia in Global Politics* periodical that the goal of Russian policy towards Ukraine was the 'liberation' and annexation of the entire south, east, and possibly also Transnistria. On the other hand, the western territory of Ukraine was to be the subject of future negotiations. In the west, the optimal solution for Russia would be to create a demilitarised buffer state where those Ukrainians refusing to accept Russian citizenship would be resettled. The area would be separated from the rest of Ukrainian territory by a system of barriers and barbed wire fences in order to avoid provocation and

⁶⁷ Р. Гребнев, 'Стратегические направления внешней политики России в многополярном мире: геополитический подход', *Социально-гуманитарные знания*, 3 (2023), p. 124.

illegal migration.⁶⁸ It should be stressed that Sergei Karaganov is a Russian political scientist, advisor to Presidents B. Yeltsin and V. Putin, who heads the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, a security think tank founded by Vitaly Shlykov, a GRU colonel.⁶⁹ In the context of Karaganov's forecast, it is important to note that, as has been revealed by the Institute for the Study of War,⁷⁰ the plans of the Russian military command for 2026 include the capture of the area of Ukraine on the eastern (left) bank of the Dnieper (Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, and Poltava Oblasts, and then half of Kyiv and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts as well as the unoccupied part of Zaporizhzhia). The Russian forces also intend to seize parts of southern Ukraine west of the Dnieper, including most of Odessa and Mykolaiv Oblasts. The objective is to cut off Ukraine's access to the Black Sea. This means capturing eight major cities: Zaporizhzhia, Odessa, Mykolaiv, Dnipro, Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, and Poltava. The population of these cities is estimated at 5.6 million. Russia has not captured the capital of the Kherson Oblast since March 2022, when Russian forces seized the city of Kherson and then lost it eight months later. This plan would require the Russian military to advance more than 300 kilometres towards Kyiv over the next 18 months. It should be emphasised that the plans for Russia's military campaign in 2025 and 2026 are in line with the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine and with Russia's long-standing strategic objectives. Kremlin officials have repeatedly called for Russia to create a buffer zone along the northern border with Ukraine to defend Russian cities in the Bryansk, Kursk, and Belgorod Oblasts. To justify territorial ambitions in the east and south of Ukraine, the Russian leadership also refers to the geopolitical concept of Novorossiia. The term is used to describe the whole of the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine. In the past Russian officials referred to Kharkiv and Odesa as 'Russian' cities. The Chairman of the Defence Committee of the Russian Federation's State Duma, Andrei Kartapolov, told the Kremlin's TASS news agency on 31 May 2025 that Ukraine risked losing Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Odesa, Dnipro, and Sumy and Mykolaiv, if it refused a 'peace' agreement in the near future. On 25 May 2025, the Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council, Dmitri Medvedev, called for the seizure of most of Ukrainian territory and the creation of a buffer zone in the Volhynia and Lviv Oblasts along the border with Poland. Medvedev's statements are part of the Kremlin's long-term strategy of using statements by high-ranking Russian officials in the information space, statements that are based on expert-backed narratives built on the tenets of geopolitical doctrines (the so-called 'images of the world');

⁶⁸ С.А. Караганов, 'Век войн? Статья вторая. Что делать', *Россия в глобальной политике*, 22, no. 2 (2024), pp. 37–52.

⁶⁹ Р. Калинин, 'Шильонский узник военной разведки', <https://pircenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/HIS-Shlykov.pdf> (accessed: 15 July 2025).

⁷⁰ 'Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment', Institute for the Study of War, 6 June 2025, <https://understandingwar.org/background/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-6-2025> (accessed: 7 July 2025).

this is used to justify Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its long-term occupation of its territory. Analysts at the Institute for the Study of War estimate that President Vladimir Putin is highly unlikely to stop at seizing half of Ukraine's territory in the long term. This is suggested by, *inter alia*, the appointment on 15 May 2025 of Colonel General Andrei Mordvichov, who until then had been formally the commander of the Central Military District and the commander of Army Group 'Centre', as Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces of the Russian Federation. This appointment is a signal that the Russian leadership is preparing for large-scale operations to conquer new territories (Kharkiv, Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, and Odessa). In an interview of 8 September 2023 for the Russian television channel *Rossia-1*, General Mordvichov, suggested that Ukraine is only an intermediate stage in Moscow's broader strategy to create a 'new order' across Eastern Europe.⁷¹ However, at the moment, the armed forces of the Russian Federation,

⁷¹ И. Валькова, 'Турецкий гамбит Путина и рокировка генералов: Андрей Мордвичёв — "Генерал Прорыв" выходит на новый уровень', <https://pronedra.ru/tureczkij-gambit-putina-i-rokirovka-generalov-andrej-mordvichyov-general-proryv-vyhodit-na-novyy-uroven-777978.html> (accessed: 15 July 2025). In an interview for the Russian television channel *Rossia-1*, Lieutenant General Mordvichov suggested that Ukraine was "only an intermediate stage" in a long conflict. "The war will last a long time", said Mordvichov, "there is no need to talk about specific dates... If we are talking about Eastern Europe, then, of course, it will take more time", he added. Asked by the interviewer if Ukraine was only an intermediate step, the general replied: "Yes, absolutely. This is just the beginning". The Russian propaganda apparatus presented Mordvichov's assertion as a statement that action needed to be taken to defend Russia's interests. This was justified as follows. Russia is not preparing an invasion of the West, and Russian society is not militarised. It is the Western countries that have long been preparing to provoke Russia into action. For this reason, a large-scale conflict between Russia and NATO is only a matter of time. The West needs Ukraine only as a training ground on which Russia will deplete its forces and resources. At the moment, NATO is actively preparing for an attack on Russia, spending billions on military needs, which is presented as a necessary expenditure for the purpose of defence against "Russian aggression". The Russian propaganda apparatus pointed to Poland as an example of this alleged practice: "Next year, Warsaw will spend 137 billion zlotys (about 30.6 billion dollars) on defence, or more than four per cent of its gross domestic product, President Duda said on Tuesday, as quoted by the PAP agency. This is a significant increase on the four per cent already planned for this year and well above the two per cent agreed by NATO partners". As Russian propagandists argue, the expansion of the conflict to which Mordvichov refers is not about Russia's aggression, but about necessary actions in defence of its own interests. "After all, everyone can see perfectly well how these same Poles have their eye on Western Ukraine. The increase in the contingent of troops in the eastern NATO countries is not a cause for optimism either. Our country responds to this as to a provocation and an attempt to expand the conflict, because Moscow has never posed a threat to Poland and the Baltic states, and has not made territorial claims against them (unlike them). Western analysts themselves acknowledge that this conflict will continue for a long time. As a result, the British press has published a report that the Ukrainian crisis is expected to last until 2033 (that is, another ten years). They have clearly compared costs and revenues for the coming decade. Of course, they have also taken into account the estimated costs of a possible military confrontation with Russia. That is why Mordvichov can only be praised for his honesty and presentation of the facts. It is only in Russia that facts are talked about without evasions by means of doublespeak and outright lies", 'Промежуточный

due to heavy losses in personnel and equipment, do not have the capacity to conduct large-scale offensive operations to achieve the planned territorial gains. Today, a prerequisite for Russia's victory is depriving Ukraine of Western support.

Scenarios for Russian aggression against Poland, Czechia, Romania, and the Baltic States

On 19 August 2022, within the framework of the 'ARMY-2022' International Military-Technical Forum, a conference on armed conflicts of the future was held in Kubinka, organised by the Centre for Military-Strategic Studies of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, in collaboration with the Academy of Military Sciences.⁷² The conference was attended by representatives of the federal executive authorities, the armed forces command, universities, and research organisations of the Russian Ministry of Defence. The conference participants were presented with an expert forecast about the further course of the Russian-Ukrainian war and its consequences. Its author was Professor Alexei Podberiozkin, Director of the Centre for Military and Political Research, Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the VKO Almaz-Antey Corporation. The Centre's tasks include producing forecasts, assessments, and analytical reports, creating and analysing databases, preparing draft documents, as well as organising and conducting events (situational analyses, roundtables, international conferences, and meetings).⁷³ In a study entitled 'The development of the strategic situation after February 2022 and Russia's policy', Podberiozkin points out that Russia's ruling elite will face four scenarios of armed confrontation if the special military operation in Ukraine continues and intensifies. These are:

- 1) a regional armed conflict in the Ukrainian theatre of war involving Romania, Poland, and Czechia, with active assistance of other NATO member states;
- 2) a direct military conflict with all European NATO members and their allies in a broad coalition, including the United States and Japan;
- 3) limited use of tactical nuclear weapons and strategic nuclear weapons in Europe;
- 4) use of strategic nuclear weapons in Europe, Asia, and the United States.⁷⁴

этап: Заявление генерала Мордвичева взорвало Запад', <https://rusonline.org/ukraine/promezhutochnyy-etap-zayavlenie-general-mordvicheva-vzorvalo-zapad> (accessed: 15 July 2025).

⁷² 'Круглый стол "Военные конфликты будущего"', *Вестник Академии военных наук*, no. 3 (2022), pp. 60–62.

⁷³ В.И. Мизин, 'Открытие Центра военно-политических исследований в МГИМО', *Вестник МГИМО-Университета*, no. 6 (2012), p. 332.

⁷⁴ А.И. Подберёзкин, 'Развитие стратегической обстановки после февраля 2022 года и политика России', *Вестник Академии военных наук*, no. 3 (2022), pp. 92–93; А.И. Подберёзкин, *Современная стратегия национальной безопасности России* (Москва, 2023), pp. 318–319.

This means that in order to prepare for such developments, it is necessary to formulate new strategies: military and national. Russia's ruling elite must pursue both a military strategy (increasing the intensity and scale of military operations aimed at ousting the Ukrainian Armed Forces and taking retaliatory steps) and a national strategy (operations in the economic and even civilisational sphere). The effectiveness of these strategies will depend largely on the extent to which Russia's ruling elite is capable of consolidating around Vladimir Putin and mobilising in the face of growing difficulties – a falling GDP, rising prices, pressure from the West, etc.⁷⁵

Depending on these factors, the Russian Federation's ruling elite could implement one of four scenarios. These are:

- Capitulation scenario. This is a purely theoretical option, which assumes that part of Russia's ruling elite will choose a strategy of *de facto* capitulating to the West, in an analogy with the choice made in the late 1980s and early 1990s by M. Gorbachev, E. Shevardnadze, A. Yakovlev, and B. Yeltsin. Should this scenario materialise, there should be no illusions about the ostensible sovereignty that Russia will retain, if its elites comply with the West's conditions. Then the 'norms and rules' imposed by the West will inevitably lead to the degradation of sovereignty, deformation of the system of national values, and ultimately to the collapse of the state and the annihilation of the nation. This resembles the situation faced by the Soviet leadership in the second half of the 1930s, when it had to assess the likelihood of aggression by the Third Reich and its allies against the USSR. As Pavel Sudoplatov, one of the leaders of Soviet intelligence at the time, revealed, despite having a powerful sabotage and intelligence apparatus with more than three hundred valuable personal sources of information, the Soviet leadership was unsure of Hitler's real intentions. First of all, this stemmed from a lack of conviction on the part of the military-political leadership of the Third Reich that aggression against the USSR was expedient. Secondly, the Soviet leadership supported Stalin and Molotov's political line, which provided for not only a neutrality pact but also the possibility of an agreement with Hitler. According to Podberiozkin, modern Russian decision-making elites, who are unsure about the West's real intentions, are in a similar situation. On the one hand, it is clear that the intensification of a special military operation in the Ukrainian theatre of war will lead to a military confrontation with the West, which poses a threat to the Russian Federation in several strategic directions. This trend rules out the possibility of compromise and an agreement. On the other hand, Russia has nuclear weapons and effective missile and air defence systems. As a result, a retaliatory attack against the Russian Federation is risky for a potential aggressor. This enables Russia to pursue an offensive policy towards the West.

⁷⁵ Подберёзкин, *Развитие стратегической обстановки*, p. 92.

- Scenario of a strategic pause in the relations with the West. Russia's ruling elite, owing to the danger of a further escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, might opt for de-escalation – a compromise that will stabilise the existing balance of power and the Russian Federation's position in the world. Escalation is feared mainly by Western countries, above all by the United States, for Washington's strategy of hybrid warfare is based on renouncing uncontrolled escalation and use of weapons of mass destruction. De-escalation could become a compromise not only with regard to Ukraine, but also with regard to other countries. Examples of such a compromise include the establishment of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic or the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Yet such compromises do not solve anything. With time, a truce will become disadvantageous to Russia, because confrontation with the West in the information sphere, in cyberspace, and in the economy will continue. In these areas, NATO has an advantage over Russia. As a result, a truce with the West will lead to a complete capitulation of the Russian Federation or will make the conditions of military confrontation unfavourable to Moscow. The scenario of a strategic pause in the relations with the West is beneficial for Russia only if an active anti-US coalition is formed and some countries adopt a conformist position based on the belief that a confrontation with Russia would be harmful. What may contribute to the adoption of such an attitude by some countries is the US-China dispute over Taiwan; the damage caused by sanctions; the continued rise in energy, fertiliser, and commodity prices; the difficulties in food exports from Russia and Ukraine; as well as other negative aspects of a continued confrontation with Russia. Admittedly, the 'pause' strategy always finds supporters in the camp of conformists who do not want to take risks, and who are in the majority among the Russian ruling elite.
- Coup d'état. It is impossible to rule out an option, carefully planned in the West, that would culminate in a coup d'état in which Vladimir Putin and some members of his entourage are removed from power and subjected to ostentatious repressions. In this case, there will emerge on the political scene a 'circle' of oppositionists like M. Khodorkovsky, A. Chubais, and others who are being prepared in various Western countries to instigate 'velvet revolutions' such as those in Czechia, Hungary, East Germany, and elsewhere. There will be a drastic transformation of Russia into a typical country with limited sovereignty and deprived of its armed forces, primarily of nuclear weapons. This will bring about a degradation of the state and the nation. Unfortunately, this is not only the most desirable option for the West, but also, as Russian history shows, a very likely one.
- Strategy of intensifying confrontation with the West. If this option is chosen, the Russian Federation's foreign policy must be focused on creating an anti-Western bloc and becoming its leader. This strategy requires

nationwide mobilisation and the subordination of domestic policy to foreign policy objectives. The strategy of intensifying confrontation with the West involves not only retaliatory measures by Russia, but also independent ventures in those areas where the greatest influence on Western interests can be obtained. The measures taken by the Russian Federation could be as follows:

- weakening the energy potential of the EU and NATO by restricting exports of hydrocarbons, coal, and other energy resources;
- restricting the supply of agricultural products and exports of fertilisers;
- restricting the export of metals, gases, and other raw materials to ‘unfriendly countries’;
- selling renewable sources for roubles;
- supporting or even inspiring the creation of forces that are in confrontation with the West, including armed confrontation, both in NATO and EU countries (exploiting social, religious, or racial conflicts) and around the world.

According to Podberiozkin, intensifying confrontation with the West is the most likely and most promising option for Russia’s national strategy, at least until 2035. This strategy will be manifested in the choice of a specific version of active measures, as can be seen in the special military operation in Ukraine as well as in the nationwide mobilisation in domestic and foreign policy.⁷⁶

Poland has become the central point of reference for Russian plans to intensify its confrontation with the West. This is suggested by, for example, an analysis entitled *Contemporary Trends in International Relations and Their Impact, and the Russian Federation’s National Security*. It was compiled in the first quarter of 2024 at the Military Institute of National Defence Management, Military Academy of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, and its editor was General Vladimir Zarudnitsky (in 2011–2014 head of the Main Operational Directorate of the Ministry of Defence, then Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces). As we can read in the study:

- As a growing military centre in Central and Eastern Europe, Poland seeks to rise to a leading position in Europe and to become the United States’ closest ally in matters of redistribution of military and economic influence on the continent.
- What is becoming a new large-scale military threat to Russia is the modernisation and expansion of the Polish armed forces. Their number is set to rise to 300,000 soldiers; state-of-the-art weapons (tanks, artillery, aircraft, anti-tank weapons, etc.) are purchased in large quantities. In the four existing divisions obsolete weapons will be replaced and two new divisions will be created. If these plans are implemented, Russia and its ally Belarus will face a military-political situation very similar to that of the inter-war period,

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 93–95.

between 1918 and 1939. Significantly, at that time Poland was considered to be the main enemy of the USSR in the West.

- Together with the Baltic States, Poland, as a member of NATO and an ally of the United States, is a threat and a bridgehead for provocations (Russian: *платцдармом провокаций*) targeting Russia and Belarus.⁷⁷

An analysis of the actions taken by the Russian Federation against the West, including Poland, in at least the first quarter of 2024, suggests that the scenario being followed is the one described in Podberiozkin's forecast as "intensifying confrontation with the West" in the context of preparing the conditions for a possible military confrontation in the longer term. The following measures, consistent with the recommendations for implementing this scenario, should be highlighted:

- In his address to the Federal Assembly on 21 February 2023, President Vladimir Putin announced the suspension of Russia's participation in the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, signed on 8 April 2010 in Prague. This gives Russia a legal basis to use force against NATO and EU member states. On 21 October 2023, the president signed Decree No. 111, under which "in view of the profound changes taking place in international relations" the measures for the implementation of the Russian Federation's foreign policy, which were approved in 2012 and which included 'cooperation' with the West, were cancelled.⁷⁸
- In March 2024, Vladimir Putin expressed his support for the creation of a BRICS grain exchange. Sanctions have forced the Kremlin to look for new ways to cover Russia's war expenses and strengthen domestic grain producers. Moscow employs several tactical approaches to food, particularly grain, to increase geopolitical pressure. For example, it seeks to undermine Ukraine's role as a key global grain supplier. The Kremlin has two main strategies to limit Kyiv's exports: occupying Ukraine and spreading disinformation. The occupied regions of Ukraine are among the most fertile in the country. The Russian forces and puppet regimes are terrorising the local population, making it difficult for people to harvest crops. If Russia manages to hold on to these territories, it could take control of up to 30 per cent of the global grain production. At the same time, Russia is actively using disinformation to generate tensions within the EU in order to prevent Ukrainian grain from entering the EU market. Russian propagandists are openly calling for a deepening split between the Hungarian, Polish, and Slovakian agricultural industries on the one hand and Ukrainian

⁷⁷ *Современные тенденции международных отношений и их влияние на национальную безопасность Российской Федерации в XXI веке*, ed. В.Б. Зарудницкий (Москва, 2024), pp. 37, 57, 329, 426.

⁷⁸ Гребнев, 'Стратегические направления внешней политики России', p. 124.

agriculture on the other. As a result, despite various sanctions, restrictions, and trade disruptions, the amount of Russian grain sold to the European Union in 2023 increased tenfold, reaching 180,000 tonnes, making Russia the fourth-largest grain exporter in the world. In addition, Moscow sees grain as a key element in strengthening its partnership with Beijing. In the first quarter of 2024, Russia became one of the leading grain suppliers to China, with record revenues of 125 million dollars, a 1.7-fold increase in comparison with the previous year. Demand for food imports in China is high, and a steady supply of Russian agricultural products remains essential to the Chinese economy. Grain trade is starting to become a fundamental pillar of the Chinese-Russian partnership. Grain is one of the few commodities in the export of which China does not have an advantage over Russia. In this way, the Russian Federation obtains funds to prepare for its confrontation with the West.⁷⁹

- Militarisation of the Russian state and society. The American Institute for the Study of War (ISW), analysing Russian industrial and economic indicators, stresses that the Russian Federation may be preparing for a confrontation with NATO. According to Aleksandr Dugin, it is necessary to militarise not only the defensive-industrial complex, but also the entire state and society.⁸⁰
- Transition from the so-called active measures (disinformation, propaganda, inspiration, etc.) to the so-called acute active measures (subversion, sabotage) also known as 'petty warfare'. It is a set of various active measures of auxiliary or improvised nature carried out with the purpose of causing maximum damage to the enemy's potential wherever possible. The basic forms of 'petty warfare' are guerrilla warfare and sabotage. The Soviet military theorist M. Drobov distinguished two forms of guerrilla warfare: military and insurgent. On the other hand, sabotage, in his view, comprises operations carried out in peacetime and wartime, covertly and by small groups specially trained for the purpose. The main objective of sabotage, which should be comprehensive in nature, is primarily to affect the psyche of the enemy, to weaken the enemy's will to fight, and destroy its morale. The Soviet theorist distinguished the following forms of sabotage:
 - sabotage of economic nature – attacks on transport, enterprises, undermining the public finance system;
 - sabotage of political nature – propaganda operations (including special propaganda), all kinds of intrigues targeted at government structures as well as organisations with any influence on society;

⁷⁹ S. Sukhankin, 'Grain Becoming Russia's Tacit Weapon in Confrontation With the West', <https://jamestown.org/program/grain-becoming-russias-tacit-weapon-in-confrontation-with-the-west/> (accessed: 15 July 2025).

⁸⁰ А. Дугин, 'России нужна тотальная милитаризация', <https://izborsk-club.ru/25427> (accessed: 15 July 2025).

- sabotage of military nature – sabotaging military equipment, blowing up depots, arsenals, and fortifications, destroying communication hubs, etc.;
- sabotage of a terrorist nature – eliminating the civilian or military leaders of a country by killing or poisoning them.

According to Drobov, guerrilla and sabotage operations should be conducted in a coordinated and comprehensive manner not so much across the entire front-line space, but inside the enemy country, taking into consideration time and place. A valuable addition to his reflections came in the form of a book by Konstantin K. Zvonariiev, published by the Fourth Directorate of the General Staff of the Red Army in 1929, which focused on clandestine human intelligence. In the first volume of his work Zvonariiev classified the so-called active intelligence (sabotage) as part of human intelligence. The publication provided the theoretical basis for the Soviet school of sabotage, which was put into practice during the Great Patriotic War.⁸¹ An intensification of such activities has been observed in both Europe and Poland since 2023. The following acts of sabotage should be noted as examples:⁸²

- On 17 April 2024, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office in Germany arrested a German and a Russian national on the basis of arrest warrants issued by the investigating judge of the Federal Court of Justice on 9 and 11 April 2024. Dieter S. and Alexander J. were arrested in Bayreuth by officers of the Federal Criminal Police Office. Moreover, the two men's homes and workplaces were searched with the help of the Bavarian State Criminal Office. The arrest warrant of 9 April 2024 shows that the two men are suspected of cooperating with foreign secret services (Article 99(1) and (2) of StGB, with regard to Dieter S., also in connection with Article 1(1)(4) of the NTSG). Dieter S. has also been charged with participating in a conspiracy to cause an explosion and arson (Article 30(2) in conjunction with Article 308(1), Article 306(1) of the StGB), and with operating as a saboteur (Article 87(1)(1) and (2), and 872(1) of the StGB). Dieter S., a former volunteer of the Donetsk People's Republic militia, was in contact with a person linked to the Russian secret services. From October 2023, he exchanged views with that individual on possible sabotage operations to be carried out within the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany. In particular, these operations were to undermine Germany's military support for Ukraine. The accused declared to his interlocutor that he was prepared to carry out attacks by means of explosives and arson, especially on military and industrial facilities in Germany. To prepare for the task, Dieter S. collected information about potential attack

⁸¹ J.E. Barnes, 'Russia Steps Up a Covert Sabotage Campaign Aimed at Europe', <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/26/us/politics/russia-sabotage-campaign-ukraine.html> (accessed: 15 July 2025).

⁸² M. Wojnowski, 'Mit "wojny hybrydowej". Konflikt na terenie państwa ukraińskiego w świetle rosyjskiej myśli wojskowej XIX–XXI wieku', *Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*, special issue: *Wojna hybrydowa* (2015), pp. 23–24.

targets, including US military facilities. Alexander J. assisted him from March 2024 at the latest. Dieter S. carried out on-site reconnaissance of some of the targeted objects, taking photographs of and filming military transports and goods. He passed on the information he had gathered to his interlocutor.⁸³

- On 17 April 2024, officers of the Polish Internal Security Agency (ABW), acting on the instructions of the Mazovian Branch of the Department for Organised Crime and Corruption of the National Prosecutor's Office in Warsaw, detained a person suspected of reporting willingness to cooperate with Russian secret services. Paweł K., a Polish national, was arrested by ABW officers in the Lublin Province in connection with an investigation concerning a report of willingness to work for foreign intelligence against the Republic of Poland, which is an offence under Article 130(3) of the Criminal Code. With the suspect in custody, the officers carried out a search of his residence, where evidence was secured, as was illegal ammunition. The findings of the investigation show that Paweł K. reported his willingness to work for the Russian GRU. His tasks were to include gathering information about the Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport. This was to help the Russian secret services plan an attempt on the life of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. On 18 April 2024, the District Court for the City of Warsaw applied a preventive measure against the suspect in the form of detention on remand. The investigation of the Internal Security Agency in this case, supervised by the National Prosecutor's Office, is being conducted in cooperation with Ukrainian bodies – the SBU and the Prosecutor's Office.⁸⁴
- On 26 April 2024, the British media revealed that five British citizens, inspired by Russian secret services, had been accused of planning an arson attack on a facility belonging to Ukrainians. Court documents show that one of the suspects, Dylan Earl from Leicestershire in central England, was linked to the Wagner Group. He is accused of acting on behalf of the Russian secret services. In addition, he is accused of engaging in fraudulent activities, surveillance, and reconnaissance of targets, and of attempting to recruit individuals to assist Russian intelligence services conducting operations in the United Kingdom. It took sixty firefighters more than four hours to extinguish the fire, which occurred on 20 March 2024 at the Staffa Road industrial estate.⁸⁵

⁸³ Based on 'Festnahmen u. a. wegen geheimdienstlicher Agententätigkeit und Mitgliedschaft in der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung "Volksrepublik Donezk (VRD)"', <https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2024/Pressemitteilung-vom-18-04-2024.html> (accessed: 15 July 2025).

⁸⁴ 'Komunikat', ABW, <https://www.abw.gov.pl/pl/informacje/2474,Komunikat.html/> (accessed: 15 July 2025).

⁸⁵ C. Munro, 'British man accused of plotting arson attacks in London on behalf of Russia', <https://metro.co.uk/2024/04/26/russian-spy-20-accused-planning-arson-attack-london-business-20724462/> (accessed: 15 July 2025).

- On 27 May 2024, in Warsaw, Pruszków, and Pomorskie Province, officers of the Internal Security Agency detained a Polish national and two Belarusian nationals on suspicion of committing arson attacks on facilities in various parts of the country. These were arrests in an investigation into the activities of an organised criminal group charged with carrying out acts of sabotage, particularly arson, on behalf of the Russian secret services. In January 2024, the ABW detained a Ukrainian national who was preparing arson attacks on buildings in Wrocław. During the proceedings, objects that could be used to commit further acts of this type of sabotage were found and secured. The prosecutor's office charged the detainees under Article 258(1) and 130(7) of the Criminal Code, that is with participating in an international organised criminal group and with committing acts of sabotage or crimes of terrorist nature, acting within the framework of foreign intelligence.⁸⁶
- On 12 May 2024, the Marywilka 44 shopping centre in Warsaw was set on fire. In the course of the investigation, evidence was obtained, making it possible to establish that the fire had been the result of arson perpetrated by members of an organised criminal group acting on behalf of the Russian Federation's intelligence services. The group's aim was to carry out arson attacks on large facilities in European Union member states. The group was also responsible for the arson attack on the IKEA shop in Vilnius on 9 May 2024. The evidence gathered made it possible to establish that the above group included Ukrainian nationals, Daniil B. and Oleksander V. As part of this activity, on 11 May 2024 Daniil B. was ordered by Oleksander V., who resides in the Russian Federation, to go to the vicinity of the Marywilka 44 shopping centre in Warsaw and record the fire and the actions of the fire-fighting and rescue services. The order issued indicated a specific time on the night of 12 May 2024 at which the fire would break out. Oleksander V. ordered Daniil B. to send him the recorded footage to document the task and to publish it on Russian propaganda websites. Daniil B. carried out the assigned task to the full.
- The Mazovian Branch of the Department for Organised Crime and Corruption of the National Public Prosecutor's Office is also conducting an investigation into acts of sabotage committed on behalf of foreign intelligence, including an arson attack on an IKEA shop in Vilnius. The fire at the IKEA shop in Vilnius occurred on 9 May 2024. In this respect, it has been established that, from 20 April 2024, Daniil B., acting under the instructions of Oleksandr V. and Serhiy C., carried out reconnaissance of large shops on Lithuanian territory to determine the possibility of leaving incendiary devices in them. He communicated his findings to Oleksandr V.

⁸⁶ 'Komunikat', ABW, <https://www.abw.gov.pl/pl/informacje/2501,Komunikat.html> (accessed: 15 July 2025).

On 8 May 2024, Daniil B., together with Oleksandr H., following the instructions and orders of Oleksandr V. and Serhiy C., constructed incendiary devices, making it possible to start a fire remotely. Daniil B. then left the devices, along with a flammable liquid, at the IKEA store in Vilnius. On the night of 8–9 May 2024, the devices caused a fire at the shop. In this case, too, Danil B. was instructed by Oleksandr V. and Serhiy C. to go to the vicinity of the shop at night and record the fire and the actions of the emergency services.⁸⁷

- Increasing the intensity of forced migration engineering at the Polish-Belarusian border, which is taking place at present as well.

* * *

Modern Russia, seeking to regain the status of an empire (global superpower), pursues a policy aimed at restoring its civilisational borders and gradually regaining its influence in the post-Soviet space. Eastern Europe is of strategic, historical, and economic importance to Russia. It is an area Russia views as within its sphere of influence and security, leading to a confrontation with the West. Moreover, without control over Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation cannot continue its policy of becoming a global superpower. Over the next few years, we should be thinking about scenarios that escalate Russia's operations in Eastern Europe through kinetic and non-kinetic measures below the threshold of open armed conflict, and the high likelihood of military aggression.

Abstract

The task of the author of this study is to present the tenets of the neo-Eurasian geopolitical doctrine concerning the creation in Eastern Europe of a Russian sphere of influence, the degree to which these tenets are used in Russian strategic planning documents; the perception of the doctrine among officials of the central state apparatus from the secret services and the army, and in expert centres that constitute the intellectual base of the Kremlin; the prognosis regarding scenarios based on the tenets of this doctrine in Russian foreign policy towards Eastern European countries, especially those that are part of the so-called eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance; and to formulate recommendations on preventing and combating Russian actions against the security of Eastern European countries. Eastern Europe is of strategic, historical, and economic importance to Russia. It is an area that Russia views as within its sphere of influence and security, which has led to a confrontation with the West. Modern Russia, seeking to regain the status of an empire (global superpower), pursues a policy aimed at restoring its civilisational borders and gradually regaining its influence in the post-Soviet space. Eastern Europe is of strategic, historical, and economic importance to Russia. It is an area that Russia views as within its sphere of influence and security, a stance that leads to confrontation with the West. Moreover, without having control over Eastern Europe the Russian

⁸⁷ 'Zarzuty w związku z pożarem hali przy ul. Marywilskiej 44', <https://www.gov.pl/web/prokuratura-krajowa/zarzuty-m44> (accessed: 15 July 2025).

Federation cannot continue its policy focused on becoming a global superpower. Over the next few years, we should be thinking of scenarios providing for an escalation of Russia's operations in Eastern Europe in the form of kinetic and non-kinetic operations below the threshold of an open armed conflict, and of the likelihood of military aggression.

Translated by Anna Kijak

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