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Military Implications of the Russian Federation's Politics of Expansion

Militarne implikacje ekspansyjnej polityki Federacji Rosyjskiej

• Abstrakt •

Osiągnięty stan współistnienia, nie tylko w odniesieniu do Europy, nie jest akceptowany przez wszystkie państwa. Rosja nie może pogodzić się z tym, że po rozpadzie ZSRR sporo utraciła, zwłaszcza w wymiarze globalnym. W tej sytuacji ekipa W. Putina usilnie dąży do odbudowy potęgi kraju. W podejmowanych działaniach aktywnie uczestniczy społeczeństwo rosyjskie, od wieków przyzwyczajone do wyrzeczeń na rzecz swojej ojczyzny. Wiele wysiłku wkłada się w rozwój sektora zbrojeniowego. Doskonałone są struktury i dowodzenie, a także kondycja mobilizacyjna poszczególnych rodzajów sił zbrojnych. Armia rosyjska jest modernizowana, a odsetek nowoczesnego sprzętu nieustannie się powiększa. Wojska FR sposobią się do ewentualnego konfliktu zbrojnego. Przeprowadzane są różnego rodzaju ćwiczenia, z czego do rzadkości nie należą przypadki, że rejon manewrów znajdują się w bliskim sąsiedztwie granic państw NATO. Trzeba jednak mieć nadzieję, że poczyny przywódców Rosji pozostaną w sferze ma-

• Abstract •

The achieved status of coexistence has not been accepted by all states. Russia cannot accept the fact that it has sustained substantial losses, especially in the global dimension, after the collapse of the USSR. Vladimir Putin's team has been striving to rebuild the power of their country. Russian society, which is accustomed to sacrifices for its homeland, is actively involved in the activities undertaken. Much effort is put into the development of the armaments sector. The structures, command and mobilization condition of the Armed Forces are improved. The Russian Armed Forces is modernized and the percentage of modern equipment is constantly increasing. The Armed Forces of the RF are preparing for any possible armed conflict. Various types of exercise are being performed and frequently maneuvers are carried out in close proximity to the borders of NATO member states. However, it must be hoped that Russia's leadership remains in the sphere of 'dreams of power', though the analysis of question

rzeń, a analiza pojawiających się na Wschodzie znaków zapytania powinna być podstawą do wysnucia określonych wniosków.

Słowa kluczowe: geopolityka; bezpieczeństwo; siły zbrojne; mocarstwowość Rosji

marks emerging in the East should be a kind of basis for conclusions.

Keywords: geopolitics; security; armed forces; power status of Russia

Introduction

The perception of phenomena and processes depends on numerous factors. The situation is similar when it comes to the issues related to international security, evaluation and prospects of the security realities of Europe and Poland against contemporary threats. However, nor can the fact be ignored that plenty of present cases have their origins in the past century, a continuation of what has been achieved in the past. In its entirety, this extends to issues related to coexistence, understood primarily as the state of international relations, particularly significant in the situation of dividing the world or regions into different ideological, social and political systems. Such understanding of this state may serve as the basis for reflection, or perhaps evaluation, of relations between states and their groups.

The article covers the multi-faceted issues related to what is occurring in the Russian Federation, mainly after the year 1990. Two main research problems dealt with have a common denominator, which is to verify the research hypothesis concerning the possible implications of policies, especially military ones, aimed at restoring the former Russian power.

The above reflections in their wholeness address recent events in the Russian Federation. The restructuring of the system of security institutions in this superpower takes on a rather special dimension; it entails in a number of changes not only in this country, but also in the region, especially in countries that once were part of the former Soviet Union. This should not come as a surprise to anyone since in the past, Russia, the Soviet Union, and now the Russian Federation has always aspired to play a key role in the international arena. Today, it is disappointed by the Western world's attitude to its country. Repeatedly it felt humiliated and ignored. As a result, the Russian political elites began to think in the categories of strategic self-reliance – according to their beliefs about their superpower status.

A significant number of analyzes have been carried out and many articles have been written on the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, its doctrinal assumptions and two strategic documents: open national security strategy and secret doctrine (plan) of defense until 2020. The same applies to the strategic plans and objectives of the Russian Federation as well as the possible use of its military po-

tential. The above issues are often discussed at various meetings of representatives of various circles.

Axiological and National Sources of Russian Superpower

The analysis of Russia's contemporary aspirations for the reconstruction of the former superpower status in the international arena remains in relationship with observable process of restoration of the European and Asian zones of influence of the Cold War period. While the beginnings of Vladimir Putin's presidency might have raised many doubts about the realism of these aspirations, today it is necessary to define this process not only as a political fact, but as a real threat to global security. The observation of the phenomenon leads to deep reflection on the etiology of these aspirations and, which is important from the point of view of analysis, on their borders as well. It also draws attention to the Russian nation, created on grounds of the diffusion of extremely different components of cultures of ethnic groups that have been leading struggle against one another for dominance on its territory since the beginning of the formation of statehood. Many historical sources point to, although not explicitly and clearly, the Russia's tendency to expand with its distant and turbulent state history.

Russia's true multi-ethnicity became significant, first due to Tsar Peter I and then to Tsarina Catherine who extended its territory to Asian areas thereby imposing a socio-political order on the conquered Russian people and cramming simple and at the same tough rules of social life into the minds of conquered nations. Defining the order with the term "Ruthenian" (not "Russian") fully reflects the character of multi-ethnic Russia. It was then that the first frameworks of the present-day national identity of the Russians began to appear – connected with the power and superpower policy of the state. It had a forced character and it was difficult to attribute it the function of creating collective solidarity and national identity. It was created under the effect of force and fear, over time becoming a habit, a state where there is no return, and in many cases a *sine qua non* for the existence and survival of smaller nations. Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Ivan Ilyin who have expressed their view of the existence of the Russian identity based on "another cultural code" and Russia's special mission based on "combining and uniting civilization", were among the first ones to create the ideology of "correct Russian diversity" (Putin, 2012). The latter issue is particularly controversial, as it is increasingly seen in the narrative of Vladimir Putin, who – in Dostoyevsky's words of "universal benevolence" – draws attention to the cultural and social im-

perialism of the Russians against other peoples, especially those who have allowed themselves sovereignty (Putin, 2012).

Furthermore, the analysis of Russia's great-patriotic values leads to reflections on the foundations of its durability over time as well as the "bizarre" resilience to the influence of the West. The Russians themselves used to describe the phenomenon of the willingness to survive in the so-called "unity", which consists of three main historical values, namely: Orthodoxy, autocracy¹, and nationality (Jaśkiewicz, 1979). The triangulation of these three elements gave the tone to the state's functioning in the sphere of politics, economy, culture and religion, as well as social life for almost half a millennium. Such qualities as "collective fortitude and the love for freedom and sovereignty" and at the same time taking pride in the fact of being "Tsar's men" – "nation-winner" remained in the background (de Lazari, 2016, p. 191).

The scale of negation of Western values is reflected in Ivan Kireevsky's words that read: "The way of the West is false, it is shameful to imitate it. The Russians should be Russians, follow the Russian path, the way of Faith, humility, inner life (...) they must completely free themselves from the West, both from its principles and from its direction, way of life, language, clothes, habits and customs (...) from everything that carries the mark of its spirit, that flows in even the slightest possible extent from its direction" (Kiriejewski, 1961, pp. 134–137). However, the above-quoted words cover a hint of hypocrisy, since both in the past and in the present day – in contrast to the collective ideology – units of society, i.e., the Russians, showed and are still prone to fascination with Western values, especially with instrumental (materialistic) ones. In this way, they create a caricatured model of modern Russian culture, in which the culture of pomp and prosperity runs counter to the culture of poverty.

Contrary to popular propaganda of the idea of common values and the slogan "Russian missionary thought" (more in: de Lazari, 2009, pp. 45–55), the greatness of the USSR proved to be a fiction. The state burst at "ethnic seams" and the nations have turned away from the "façade Homeland" to sovereignty. Moreover, the Soviet identity with its whole spectrum of peculiarities disappeared and there was a period of turbulent changes, which nearly buried the patriotic and imperial ideas of "new Russia". The Perestroika period and the subsequent years of the new Russian order clearly exposed all dysfunctions of the state, both internally and

¹ Autocracy – a concept closely linked to the reign of Tsar Ivan III of Russia, who liberated Russia from the Mongol rule. Originally it meant sovereignty, however, during the reign of Tsar Peter I in the 18th century it became synonymous with absolute power.

internationally. Probably the internal erosion of fundamental values caused that taking the office by Vladimir Putin in March 2000 was followed by a new era in the history of Russia – the era of the reconstruction of lost image and the power of Russia.

This period was characterized by convulsive and repeatedly chaotic search for the direction of foreign policy, and, what is more, required the establishment of an idea able to link this multi-ethnic state into a coherent and supportive unity capable of sacrifices and believing in the sense of rebuilding the Russian superpower. Moreover, the ideological errors of the previous system had to be avoided. To be able to succeed, a man was needed – a charismatic leader skilled enough to gather “a multination” around himself, able to create a common “Russian idea”. On December 30, 1999, Vladimir Putin presented his program in a paper titled “Russia at the Turn of the Century”. In the chapter entitled *Opportunities for a Decent Future* he proposed the main pillars of the “Russian idea”, which included values such as patriotism, superpower, state-building and social solidarity. In his speech, the greatest emphasis was placed on the “organic combination of universal values with indigenous Russian values, which withstood the test of time” (de Lazari, 2016, p. 190). The new Russian idea also found its place in the meetings of the Valdai International Discussion Club, where the influence of market laws on the formation of national ideas was denied and the legitimacy of drawing from foreign experiences for its construction was denied. The emphasis was placed on self-determination as well as spiritual and ideological sovereignty as an inseparable part of the Russian national character. The issue of erosion of traditional values of the West, including moral principles and traditional national, cultural, religious and even gender identity (*Spotkanie...*, 2018) was further discussed. An important theme of the “Russian idea” program was the creation of a state with a single national character, bringing together, regardless of cultural diversity, all nations and ethnic groups forming the Russian Federation, as well as collectivism and social solidarity.

In the foundations of the new “Russian idea” there is also an old conflict with the West. The “soft” resonance of everything Western is revealed in the slogan “we are not Europe”, which clearly indicates the return of ancient values centered around the cultural peculiarities of Russia and their superiority over the West. This is undoubtedly a paradox since the slogans rejecting the West do not fit the fascination with European materialism, especially among the ruling and economic elites focused on building their “own empires” and wealth. According to one of the Russian journalists Maxim Shevchenko, “(...) there is a war between Russia and the West for a human and their future (...) we are one of the last anchor of

human and humanity” (Shevchenko, 2013). Shevchenko’s words show the worst and conflict-generating national traits: ethnocentrism, national chauvinism and national megalomania, hidden under hypocrisy of the Russian policy towards weaker nations and pointing the finger at the same characteristics of the United States. The projection of its own aspirations towards the United States shows Russia’s propensity for not only open but also hidden expansion. The scale of hypocrisy also reveals the Shevchenko’s “humanity”, which has various features, seemingly typical of the Russians national character. However, the authors leave this without comment.

Hypocrisy and cognitive dualism are also revealed in the slogan “Russia is not Europe”, constituting the main theme of the document *Basics of the State Cultural Policy* published on April 4, 2014 by the Russian Ministry of Culture. The document addresses the ideas of protecting the uniform cultural code, renouncing the ideology of multiculturalism, the right of every nation to preserve its ethnographic identity, and the prohibition on imposing foreign values on the Russian society. They represent the main pillars of creating a new identity of the Russians, which is a combination of tradition and modernity, although not Western but Russian.

Equally important are the provisions of the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation on cultural and national identity. Points 76–82 emphasize the “historically shaped system of common moral-spiritual and cultural-historical values, as well as the inherent cultures of the multiethnic nation of the Russian Federation, which are an integral part of Russian culture” (*Russian National Security Strategy... , 2015*). They are neither new nor special, however the provisions of point 78 of the document referring to the superiority of spiritual values over materialism, such as humanity, justice, the protection of human life and even human rights and freedoms raise a lot of controversy. It is difficult to find those traits in Russia’s internal and foreign policy, both in history and in modern times, and the stereotype of the Russians in the world fully reflects their national characteristics.

It is worrying that the social support for the Kremlin’s imperial aspirations is growing in Russia. It created a new type of the Russian society, which the international opinion called *homo sovieticus*. Such an image of the Russians was influenced by the social support of the annexation of the Crimea, the war in Donbas, as well as the military intervention in Syria. In addition, the *homo sovieticus* slogan is related to hatred for other peoples, mainly – according to the poll carried by the Yury Levada Analytical Center – the USA, Ukraine, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, the United Kingdom, Georgia, and France (Levada Center Poll, 2012). An attempt was also made to study the Russians’ opinions on the right of Russia to join former USSR republics in the case of persecution and

the Russian minorities' rights violation. As many as 82% of respondents supported the potential accession, and only 6% negated this possibility (Levada Center Poll, 2012). The attitude of the Russians towards other nations is undoubtedly greatly influenced by authorities shaping the public opinion through the media. The post-truth and propaganda that create the ideas of Russia's mission as guardian of its citizens in every corner of the world have become almost a religion and a mission to fulfill. The figure of Vladimir Putin – the god of the nation, who is taken at his words by all citizens, and they believe because, apart from the reconstruction of Russia's power, he has radically changed the standard of living of the people – remains in the background of the analysis. There is nothing strange about it, but it is worth pointing out to a certain fact. In May 2017, support for the Policy fell sharply (to a level of 47%) in the face of the situation in Syria and a decrease in sanctions-related living standards. In August, the support surprisingly rose to 83% (*Putin „zgarzył wszystko”...*, 2017). The Russians' support for Putin does not seem so obvious, as indicated by the may poll. The statistical data are probably part of a political game aimed at building a positive image of Russia and its leader.

It is worth emphasizing that the shaping of the Russians' identity and the reconstruction of the traditional axionormative order is in line with the theory of Eurasianism ascribing to Russia the role of an empire whose mission is to unite the post-Soviet states into an integral whole. The dangerous doctrine and as it is now claimed – the ideology of expansion – has been implemented through Aleksandr Dugin's bold concepts. In the light of his views, the main task the Russian people face is the necessity to establish a great continental empire (Eberhardt, 2010, p. 223). With these words, he says about the Western neighbors: "There is no place for Poland in the Eurasian continent. (...) Russia in its geopolitical and sacral-geographical development takes no interest in the existence of an independent Polish state in any form. Nor is there any interest in the existence of Ukraine. Not because we do not like the Poles or the Ukrainians, but because such are the laws of sacred geography and geopolitics" (*Aleksandr Dugin: Na eurazjatyckim...*, 2014). In further consideration, he raises the problem of Europe: "Take Russia to Europe then Europe will be Russian Europe, then Russia will settle with these 'friends' (Central Eastern European countries) once and for all" (*Aleksandr Dugin: Na eurazjatyckim...*, 2014). Euroasianism in the new form or neo-Euroasianism seems to work. Moreover, it is shrouded in the fog of mysteries and hypocrisy of the Kremlin building the "Russian idea" based on doctrinal identity, the mission of unifying nations remaining in the natural sphere of Russia's influence, and the destruction of the West and satellite states by the methods of destabilization, providing finance to the opposition and surveillance.

Attempts to Assess the Current Situation

Contemporary times can be judged differently. The perception of phenomena and processes depends on many factors. That is still the case, as regards issues related to international security, evaluation and prospects of Poland's security in the face of contemporary threats. However, the goals and plans of the global elite once known make it easier to understand the logic of the processes taking place in today's world; more accurate diagnosis of actual goals, often set out to implement in the long term, is possible.

On November 30, 2016, President Vladimir Putin signed the new Foreign Policy Concept. Russia announced its aspirations for pursuing active international security policy. One of its instruments is to seek cooperation with the administration of the new US President. Relations with the European Union are to be reduced to economic cooperation, while greater emphasis is to be placed on the development of political and economic relations with the Asian countries.

The states of the post-Soviet area: Belarus (forming Federal State with Russia), Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were indicated Russia's most important partners in the new Concept. The new Concept no longer contains a declaration on the need to develop relationships with Ukraine, which does not mean that Russia will give up active policy aimed at depriving Ukraine of prospects of rapprochement with the West and isolating it in international politics. The strong increase in Moscow's activity towards the Middle East was underlined. This evolution, apart from the aforementioned fears, is also the result of testing the international community for Russia's assertive behavior (Kaszuba & Minkina, 2016, p. 10).

Asia, especially China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Mongolia, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia, will be a key area of Russian political activity. It was emphasized that Russia still attaches great importance to contacts within the BRICS², the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Russia-India-China (RIC) platform. In the new Concept, particular importance has been attached to the issues of the Middle East and regulating conflicts in the region (including Syria).

The new Concept stresses more strongly than in 2013 the need for international coalitions to fight terrorism, and recognizes terrorist organizations, i.e., mainly the Islamic State, as one of the most important threats. Undoubtedly, the purpose of such document is to create the impression that Russia's involvement in Syria has

² The name of the group of developing countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China and – since 2011 – South Africa. The name is derived from the first letters of the names of these countries.

anti-terrorist character and that Russia is open to cooperate with the United States in this regard. In practice, however, the Russian intention is only to strengthen the negotiating position and to prevent the international community from shifting leadership in Syria and other Middle Eastern states. This means that Russia will continue to engage in the Middle East, especially in Syria.

As in earlier documents of this type, Russia declares the necessity of cooperation with the United States, especially in the field of arms and nuclear potential control and in resolving conflicts in the world. However, in the new Concept there are no longer references to the necessity of internationalization of the Treaty on the complete liquidation of medium- and intermediate-range missiles (INF), which may mean that Russia will refrain from fulfilling its provisions.

Relatively little attention was given in the document to the cooperation with NATO. It was emphasized that it could only take place when based on the principles of partnership, although according to another conceptual document – the military doctrine, NATO is still seen as the main potential opponent.

Compared to the document published in 2013, the Arctic has grown in importance in foreign policy. This is in line with the assumptions of military and maritime doctrines concerning the increase of Russian military presence there. It was emphasized that the Arctic, due to its military importance and natural resources, could become an area of sharp international rivalry (*Biuletyn PISM*, 2017).

The armed forces are an important element of Russian foreign policy as well. The specific role played by the army in Russia is largely a result of the history of the country. For many years, especially in the Russia's modern history, the army was one of the basic attributes of state power, both in foreign and in internal policy. In the Soviet era, events such as the revolt of the sailors on the battleship Potemkin passed into legend. The position of the army in the Russian society increased after the Second World War, called the Great Patriotic War by the Russians – the veterans of the war to this day have been surrounded by the highest respect. May 9th is the Russian Army's Day – the day when the World War II ended in Europe has always been celebrated solemnly and it is also a great opportunity to demonstrate the latest military achievements to the Russian public and to the world.

The fact that the present Russian authorities do not accept the order established after 1989, along with the norms, rules and agreements signed by the last Soviet leaders, is a sort of reference point for the above-accented reflections. First and foremost, the Russian Federation has intensified its activities at all possible levels. As regards the military issues, it has improved professionalism, readiness and effectiveness of the military personnel and the entire armed forces. While once the Russian armed forces used to spend years or months to prepare for a military

confrontation, they now are able to respond quickly and strike without warning and need to change their permanent dislocations. The airborne troops and special forces, which are constantly evolving as they take part in almost every maneuver, which is particularly compulsory when the land force component is involved, are to play an important role in military and strategic plans.

The provisions of national defense strategy and defense doctrine (plan) are important for practical, far-reaching operation. The content of this first document and what is known about the second one indicates that Russia, declaring a sense of threat from the United States and its allies, focuses on increasing its influence and prestige as well as cementing the national unity in the face of what it perceives as a growing external threat. Formally speaking, the authors of the present paper omit the issues concerning the non-acceptance of political *status quo*, although some references to the strategic goals of the Russian Federation can be found in the background while considering the provisions of these documents. This is confirmed by the fact that Russia is not satisfied with its current position in the world but appreciates the progress it has made in recent years and wishes to follow this path, and by the fact that these documents identify the United States and its allies, highlighting the role of NATO as the main threat.

According to the Russians, the development of NATO forces to respond, as further military capability building undermines global security. The Kremlin defines these actions solely as defense ones, but it is commonly known that it is just a cover for their aggressive character. How to interpret facts related to the development or modernization of strategic missile forces and (or) airborne formation? These are the most appropriately trained formations that are in constant readiness to implement specific plans. The best-trained soldiers in the Russian army serve in the airborne troops and special forces. The special role of paratroopers results, among others, from the fact that it was in Russia that the concept of using a parachute was born as a tool of struggle, and more precisely a means of transport of soldiers to the battlefield. Airborne troops are involved in most of the armed conflicts in which the Russian Federation is involved (Visvizi, 2010).

Western observers are surprised by the new military insolence and adventurism of Russia, which have not come out of nowhere: the current Russian strategy is the culmination of systematic military reforms, insufficiently appreciated by the EU and the USA. The statements that the West has underestimated the importance of Russia's military reforms are not isolated. Western analysts, mainly American ones, focused exclusively on the third phase of reform, i.e., the introduction of new equipment, failing fully to recognize the issues related to training and the condition of mobilization of the armed forces. After Vladimir Putin had announced the

remilitarization plans in 2012, it was understood that the Russian transformations were systemic and integrated into the strategic goals of the Russian Federation.

The analysis of the process that takes place in the east allows assessing the current strengths and limitations of the Russian army, and understanding how the Russian leaders intend to use their military power and what the Western response should be. There are also several conclusions for individual states, not just for the military sector. They stem from the analysis of the Russian national security strategy or defense doctrine (plan). These strategic documents are incorporated into the systemic activities of the Russian government, and their exemplifications are very common.

Strategic Documents

The practice of actions taken by the leaders of Russia proves that the documents of strategic importance are drawn up according to the needs – an existing situation in the global dimension. For years, the national defense strategy and the defense doctrine have been the most important documents, not only in relation to military matters.

The previous national security strategy was developed in 2009 and according to D. Medvedev's declaration it was to be in force by 2020. It was approved by the Presidential Decree No. 683 as of 31 December 2015. Under the law, this document must be public and available to a wide audience. The 40-page strategy consists of six chapters: (I) General Provisions; (II) Russia in the modern world; (III) National interests and strategic national priorities; (IV) Ensuring national security; (V) Organizational, normative-legal and information bases for implementation of the current Strategy; (VI) Basic indicators of the state of national security. The fourth chapter is the most extensive and consists of the following subchapters: defense of the country; state and social security; improving the Russian citizens' living conditions; economic growth; science, technology and education; health-care; culture; ecology of living systems and rational use of the environment; strategic stability and equal strategic partnership (Czerniewicz, 2015).

The analysis of the content of the current edition, which does not contain any final fixed date, leads to the conclusion that most of the provisions of the Strategy are nothing new, thus this is hardly surprising. In fact, large majority of the statements repeat the old position of Russia; it is a continuation of what constituted the main axis of military interest in strategic terms. However, there are also some new elements and some that have crystallized in recent years though they had been signaled before.

The 2009 Strategy included a reference to the USA and NATO, and in this respect the continuation is seen, however the new version is much more critical and uses the language of open confrontation. It states more markedly than the previous one that the increase in activity is unacceptable. It is noticeable that “threat” is more often defined as a risk of conflict than a fear of such an opportunity (Czerniewicz, 2015). Understandably, the Strategy links a large proportion of national security to internal problems. Unity, development and investment, the latter especially in the military sector for which the proverbial green light was lit, are considered a solution.

This corresponds to one more question. While the previous document mentioned the development of democracy, civil society and economy, the new version refers to strengthening the defense, ensuring the inviolability of the “constitutional order”, independence and territorial integrity. It exudes the superiority of the interests of the state over the interests of an individual. It also indicates the Russian society the possibility of sacrifices for the development of military potential. This is quite evident when comparing the Strategy with other doctrinal documents and in the context of public statements made by members of the state authority, especially President Putin.

The Russian Strategy is also the response to a review of the new US security strategy, which was published on February 6, 2015. After the analysis it was concluded that the American document was actually “anti-Russian” with its repeated references to “Russian aggression”. The Russian authorities recognized the provisions of the American doctrine as the promotion of Washington’s “global hegemony” and “colorful revolutions”. It was therefore concluded that the new Russian strategy should be based on the principle of “reciprocity”, but it could not be a copy of the US national security strategy. It is worth mentioning that in the American document, terrorism, cyberattacks, Russian influence and the Ebola virus were listed among major threats. The focus was on threats from the Islamic state, while ceasing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan was deemed as the main task in the 2010 Strategy. Another important change in this document involved the verification of the approach to Russia. The 2010 provisions concerned enhancing ties with Russia, yet in 2015 – exerting the financial pressure on the country to force Russia to cease against Ukraine. Russian aggression in Ukraine clearly shows that European security and international rules and standards for territorial aggression cannot be regarded as guarantees.

The fact that unipolarity is unacceptable not only by Russia is of key importance for provisions contained in individual chapters of the Russian Federation’s Strategy and in a number of other military documents. Russia has no intention

of completely abandoning the position held by the former Soviet Union. In addition, it sees the specific implications arising from the dynamic development of other states and the consequences of devaluing its global position. The rise of the administrative, economic and military power of their far-eastern neighbor, China, does not suit Russia. In analyzing the situation in Asia, it sees India and Pakistan, especially these countries' ambitions to take a lead in that region of the world. These and other circumstances are used as a pretext, and at the same time justification, of actions undertaken, which in many cases take place at the expense of the Russian society's sacrifices.

Vladimir Putin, still as future Head of Russia, commented on the situation in his country in quite a specific manner. It is worth recalling Putin's words of 2005 as the then president of Russia: "The collapse of the USSR was not only the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century, but also a true drama for the Russians" (*Putin: Rozpad ZSRR...*, 2016). Such words made a significant contribution to continuing the Soviet policy, basing its authority on Soviet special services derived from the USSR, whose most important goal was to regain its former importance by exporting destabilization and armaments destructive for the country. The quoted statement corresponds to V. Putin's words, who said at the conference of the All-Russian National Front on December 5, 2013: "It is not Russia that is between the East and the West. In fact, it is the East and the West that are located on the left and right of Russia" (*Zachód utracił supremację*, 2009).

Conclusions

Essential results of scientific exploration allow for the following conclusions. The emergence of "unipolarity" is questioned not only by Russia, but also by numerous pretenders to co-decide the fate of the world. This situation allows Russia to conclude that it has allies in its actions. This fact is skillfully used, especially during various "games" on our old continent.

The objective Russia sets itself is to become one of the most important players on the global scale. Further strengthening of Russia's military capabilities and increasing engagement in existing regional conflicts should be expected. At the same time, Russia will seek agreement, primarily on security matters, with the administration of the new President of the United States. The Russian authorities will continue to attribute a significant importance to foreign policy for shaping the image of the state as an international power in Russian society.

The armed forces of the Russian Federation are an effective weapon of political and, during a possible war, also military pressure, which is constantly remembered by Russian leaders. The military modernization of Russia and its reappearance on the eastern borders of Europe as a state of expansionist and revisionist character give rise to serious consequences for our continent. It was not the case in the 1990s or in the beginning of the 21st century, but the situation facing Europe today is not a repetition of the Cold War. Although there is still a systemic and ideological conflict between the democratic West and the republic of Russia, the country has neither the will nor the ability to compete with the West on a global scale. Even if Russia is not capable of shaping world politics, it can destroy it. Its expansionist intentions threaten the existence of some eastern EU Member States and this threat seems to be a much more serious challenge for Europe than for any other area in the world.

Russia has implemented far-reaching military reforms to create more professional and ready-to-fight forces, based on knowledge of unconventional war tactics such as diversion and propaganda; the armed forces, which in a short time can be deployed abroad. The West misinterpreted reforms in the armed forces of the Russian Federation and, as a result, underestimated their strategic capabilities.

Threats against enemies, especially NATO, have their social and international dimensions. They are aimed at intimidating the West as well as raising the level of chauvinism among the national public opinion already manipulated by propaganda. Secessionism supported by external military forces is a source of serious threats to international peace. Against the background of the Ukrainian crisis, the failure of the existing system of peaceful resolution of international disputes is clearly visible.

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