EVOLUTION OF RUSSIAN STRATEGIES AND THEIR APPLICATION – A GAME CHANGER OF THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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Résumé

Russian military aggression against Ukraine in 2014 took place in the situation of autocratic decision-making, to be more precise, this military and political decision was made by one person, the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. All procedures and documents legitimizing this decision were adopted post factum in retrospect. Those Russian strategic documents that were in force at the moment of occupying Ukrainian territories did not allow for possible violations of territorial integrity of neighbouring states in order to resolve the problems of the state's own security. However, after the illegal annexation of Crimea, followed by negative international reaction to this act of aggression Russian strategic documents were reconsidered. So, for example, among other things influence aspects of Russian security institutes in order to eliminate the threats posed to the Russian state on the sovereign territory of foreign states were included into them or made actual.

They were shaped the discourses of "besieged fortress" and "national traitors" ("fifth column"), with their main mission to create and maintain in the public conscience the emotional atmosphere of foreign threat and no-alternative necessity to reach a total mobilization of civil and political loyalty in order to survive "in the hostile world".

The main steps taken to strengthen the security of the Russian state included reinforced counteractions to the threats to the ruling regime coming from Russian society (more control over social and public sphere), forming the National Guards service as an institute of increased level of loyalty to the President of the Russian Federation, growing military contingent (the Southern Military District) at the borders with Ukraine and hosting large-scale military manoeuvres in the Russian regions neighbouring NATO member states. Basic changes in its foreign and security policies did not take place, as both foreign and security policies of the Russian state are mostly aimed at, first and foremost, maintaining the stability and security of the ruling regime.

1. The revision of strategic documents after 2014

At the moment of Russian military aggression against Ukraine, Russian domestic and foreign policies had the entire set of strategic documents (in Russian regulatory practice they are called the documents of strategic planning): Military Doctrine (Kremlin 2010), The Russian Federation National Security Strategy to 2020 (Russian newspaper 2009), Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2013) as well as Russian Federation Marine Doctrine to 2020 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2001) and the Russian Strategy on Development of the Arctic Zone and the Provision of National Security to 2020 (Russian Government 2013) etc.

During the period of its most recent history Russian basic strategic documents, including both the Military Doctrine and the National Security Strategy, were rewritten several times. Other documents of a strategic nature were also reviewed or amended by special decrees following the influence of foreign policy factors. For example, the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation was adopted and reviewed in 1993, 2000, 2010 and 2014. Redefining the doctrine reflected domestic regime and political changes as well as the liberal and democratic erosion taking place in the Russian Federation. The Military Doctrine of 1993 (following the Soviet Military Doctrine of 1987) stated that Russia did not have probable adversaries and declared an obligation to use its armed forces only for self-defence. Nuclear weapons were not seen as an instrument of military operations, but more as an element of military and political balance; NATO, in its turn, was not only far from being mentioned in the text of the document, but it was also not present as an underlying danger or threat. In the conditions of the "soft" military doctrine of 1993 President Boris Yeltsin attempted to build "post-Soviet consensus of the near abroad" and signed the Budapest Memorandum and the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation with Ukraine. In the following editions of Russia's Military Doctrine, a revision of the threat discourse took place as foreign threats and dangers were more specifically defined as well as the threats to the military security of the Russian Federation, therefore the threats of a strategic nature were being shaped (see Ivashov 2016; Sergeev 2017).

The military intervention in Ukraine in spring 2014 as well as the illegal annexation of Crimea and occupation of the separate regions of Donetsk and Luhansk were executed when the Military Doctrine of 2010 was in force (adopted on 5 February 2010) in which the main foreign military danger is defined as: *"the desire to endow the force potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with global functions carried out in violation*

of the norms of international law and to move the military infrastructure of NATO member countries closer to the borders of the Russian Federation, including by expanding the bloc" (Kremlin 2010). The capture and occupation of part of Ukraine's territory followed by the extremely negative reaction of the global community as well as the impossibility to shape international public opinion able to legitimize the aggression on the territory of Ukraine led to the Russian Federation adopting a new military doctrine (Russian Newspaper 2014). The new military doctrine more specifically defined the "NATO military threat", which, according to the Doctrine, is becoming more tangible: *"The main external military risks are: build-up of the power potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and vesting NATO with global functions carried out in violation of the rules of international law, bringing the military infrastructure of NATO member countries near the borders of the Russian Federation, including by further expansion of the alliance"* (Russian Newspaper 2014) (see also Vandysheva 2014; Korotchenko 2014; Karaganov 2016).

Apart from clarifying the strategic nature of the NATO threat (RIA Novosti 2014) the new doctrine included a longer list of domestic and foreign threats, with, first and foremost, a foreign threat being the following: *"establishment of regimes, whose policies threaten the interests of the Russian Federation in the states contiguous with the Russian Federation, including by overthrowing legitimate state administration bodies"* (Russian newspaper 2014), while a military threat was defined as: *"intensification of activities of the armed forces of individual states (groups of states) involving partial or full mobilization and shifting the governance and military command and control bodies of these states to functioning as in wartime conditions"* (Russian newspaper 2014). Moreover, it is important to pay attention to the fact that the mechanism of application of nuclear weapons was not changed in the new doctrine

Revisiting (adopting) a new national security strategy was not an exception either. For instance, instead of active at the moment of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine "Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020" (Russian Newspaper 2009) "National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation" was adopted (on December, 31, 2015). It is quite obvious that the "Strategy" was transformed into a more aggressive version. For example, in Strategy (2009) in the chapter "II. Russia and the Modern World: current conditions and trends of development" the Russian Federation points to its predictable behaviour as an international player, with the text containing an appeal to the primacy of international law: *"In the long term, the Russian Federation will seek to construct international relations based on the*

principles of international law, and on the institution of reliable and equal security of nation-states. For the defence of its national interests, Russia, while remaining within the boundaries of international law, will implement a rational and pragmatic foreign policy, one which excludes expensive confrontation, including a new arms race" (Russian Newspaper 2009). In "Strategy 2015" the same chapter "II. Russia and the Modern World", given the context of the 2014 military aggression against Ukraine, states that: *"Russia has demonstrated the ability to safeguard sovereignty, independence, integrity of state and territory and to protect the rights of compatriots abroad. There has been an increase in the Russian Federation's role in resolving the most important international problems, settling military conflicts, and ensuring strategic stability and the supremacy of international law in interstate relations"*. Substituting previously declared obligations to remain within the framework of international law in the old national security concept for its transformation from "declaration to practice", "ensuring the supremacy of international law in interstate relations" in unilateral order that took place after a dramatic unilateral violation of the Budapest Memorandum, violation of territorial sovereignty and illegal annexation of the part of Ukraine's territory speak for themselves (Steshin 2016).

In the "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013) among other points it was pointed out that Russia will: *"build up relations with Ukraine as a priority partner within the CIS, contribute to its participation in extended integration processes"*(48, d), while in the "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation" Article 56 stated that: *"56.The Russian Federation is interested in developing political, economic, cultural and spiritual ties with Ukraine in all areas on the basis of mutual respect and commitment to building partnership relations with due regard for Russia's national interests. Russia undertakes to make every effort to promote political and diplomatic settlement of the internal conflict in Ukraine in cooperation with all the interested states and international agencies"* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016). Therefore, the change of Ukraine's strategic status is taking place, from a partner in the zone of a pro-Russian integration project (CIS) to an object for Russian efforts falling short of strategic partnership but, however, located in the zone of Russian interests and control.

2. Changes in security discourses

The perception of Russian military aggression within the Russian power

discourse of the Russian Federation is quite consistent and univocal, and is also based on legitimation of "Putin's policy on Ukraine" by the Russian political establishment and legal decisions of the legislative, judicial and executive branches of power. Taking into account not only the special status of Vladimir Putin defining the foreign policy course of the Russian state but also the monopolistic nature of his personal power in the Russian political system, it is possible to state with confidence that this is his personal public and rhetorical activities that shape the content of the "security discourse". For instance, his personal political statements (addresses etc.) in modern Russia are the turning points forming its discourse and political agenda. For example, "Munich speech" (2007), "Crimean speech" (2014), "Valdai speech" (2017) by Vladimir Putin defined both the course of development for the state as well as the discourse system (the discourse of threats, the discourse of dangers, security discourse etc.) where the former was taking place.

In a special address by the President of Russia Vladimir Putin to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (18 March 2014), the so-called "Crimean speech", Putin declared the annexation of Crimea as an imposed necessity: *"Let me note too that we have already heard declarations from Kyiv about Ukraine soon joining NATO. What would this have meant for Crimea and Sevastopol in the future? It would have meant that NATO's navy would be right there in this city of Russia's military glory, and this would create not an illusory but a perfectly real threat to the whole of southern Russia. These are things that could have become reality were it not for the choice the Crimean people made, and I want to say thank you to them for this"*. Within the security discourse defined by Vladimir Putin, the alleged NATO threat is so significant that it demands considerable violations of international law in the name of the security of the Russian state. Putin also sees a domestic threat for the stability of his regime that lies in the foreign influence ("foreign threat" discourse): *"Some Western politicians are already threatening us with not just sanctions but also the prospect of increasingly serious problems on the domestic front. I would like to know what it is they have in mind exactly: action by a fifth column, this disparate bunch of 'national traitors', or are they hoping to put us in a worsening social and economic situation so as to provoke public discontent?"*

In the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly (Kremlin 2014b) Vladimir Putin mentioned Ukraine seventeen times, each time pointing out that the tragedy of the Ukrainian people is the result of an inadequate perception of the role of Russian interests (and its readiness to defend the "red lines" of national interests and security which he had outlined before, for

instance, in his "Munich speech"). When evaluating the sanctions against Russia due to its annexation of Crimea, Putin explains them as an imminent threat and refers to the traditional idea of the "hostile West" and "containment doctrine": *"The policy of containment was not invented yesterday. It has been carried out against our country for many years, always, for decades, if not centuries. In short, whenever someone thinks that Russia has become too strong or independent, these tools are quickly put into use"; "However, talking to Russia from a position of force is an exercise in futility, even when it was faced with domestic hardships, as in the 1990s and early 2000s. We remember well how and who, almost openly, supported separatism back then and even outright terrorism in Russia, referred to murderers, whose hands were stained with blood, none other than rebels and organised high-level receptions for them"* (Kremlin 2014b).

The main threat, according to Putin, is lack of attention to Russia's role and position in the world and regional politics, while he himself defines Western nations and the USA as the main international destabilizers: *"Since 2002, after the US unilaterally pulled out of the ABM Treaty, which was absolutely a cornerstone of international security, a strategic balance of forces and stability, the US has been working relentlessly to create a global missile defence system, including in Europe. This poses a threat not only to Russia, but to the world as a whole – precisely due to the possible disruption of this strategic balance of forces"*. However, Putin's main message for foreign and domestic consumers of such discourse in this case is expressed in the following: *"No one will ever attain military superiority over Russia. We have a modern and combat ready army. As they now put it, a polite, but formidable army. We have the strength, will and courage to protect our freedom. We will protect the diversity of the world. We will tell the truth to people abroad, so that everyone can see the real and not distorted and false image of Russia"* (Kremlin 2014b).

In the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly (Kremlin 2015) despite even more tensions due to the influence of the "Ukrainian issue" in Russia's foreign policy, Ukraine was not mentioned at all. However, it was the threat of international terrorism that was defined as the main threat factor at both the international and local security level. It is exactly these words that Putin begins his address with: *"I would like to begin my Address with words of gratitude to the Russian servicemen who are fighting international terrorism"*. The Russian military campaign in Syria is seen by Putin as the most adequate answer to the growing threat of international terrorism. If in the 2014 Address terrorism was mentioned only within the context of the recent

domestic threat, which had already been neutralized, in 2015, according to Putin, this threat is growing and in order to overcome it: *"We must stop our debates and forget our differences to build a common anti-terrorist front that will act in line with international law and under the UN aegis"*. In fact, Putin, instead of international discussion on the issue around "national sovereignty integrity" offers a new format of international consensus – the global fight against international terrorism: *"Every civilized country must contribute to the fight against terrorism, reaffirming their solidarity, not in word but in deed"*. In this address, taking into account tensions between Russia and Turkey (Turkish authorities, the state of Turkey) had escalated by then, Turkey is referred to as a terrorist accomplice, therefore, Turkey is being defined in this rhetoric as a "threat-state" not only to Russia, but also to the entire system of global security: *"We know, for instance, who are stuffing pockets in Turkey and letting terrorists prosper from the sale of oil they stole in Syria…We remember that the militants who operated in the North Caucasus in the 1990s and 2000s found refuge and received moral and material assistance in Turkey…We have many good and reliable friends in Turkey. Allow me to emphasize that they should know that we do not equate them with the certain part of the current ruling establishment that is directly responsible for the deaths of our servicemen in Syria. We will never forget their collusion with terrorists. We have always deemed betrayal the worst and most shameful thing to do, and that will never change. I would like them to remember this – those in Turkey who shot our pilots in the back, those hypocrites who tried to justify their actions and cover up for terrorists"*. To President Putin the necessity to form a global anti-terrorist front is the most important task in order to 1) ensure security of the political course, 2) transform the security discourse, and 3) stabilize the general political situation in the Russian Federation: *"We have mobilized our Armed Forces, security services and law enforcement agencies to repel the terrorist threat. Every one must be aware of their responsibility, including the authorities, political parties, civil society organisations and the media"*.

In the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly (Kremlin 2016b) Ukraine was not mentioned at all either, neither as a factor of danger, nor as a focus for possible efforts to ensure security; however, there is also a considerably lower level of rhetoric related to the threat of international terrorism (leaving behind the issue of international terrorism and its actual dangers was caused by instrumental difficulties of Russia's military campaign in Syria and its inability to build "post-Crimean international consensus" offered earlier). Instead, Putin offers a potential instrument for guaranteeing international security which is increased cooperation between Russia and the United States

in addressing pressing issues of international policy: *"Cooperation between Russia and the United States in addressing global and regional issues will benefit the whole world. We have a shared responsibility to ensure international security and stability, to strengthen non-proliferation regimes. I would like to emphasize that attempts to break the strategic parity are extremely dangerous and can lead to a global catastrophe. We must not forget about it even for a second. I certainly count on joining efforts with the United States in the fight against real rather than fictional threats, international terrorism being one of them. That is the task our servicemen are fulfilling in Syria. Terrorists have suffered significant losses. The Russian Army and Navy have shown convincingly that they are capable of operating effectively away from their permanent deployment sites"*. Yet the efforts made by Putin to "reload the security discourse" from "anti-American" to "partnership discourse" were fuelled by Donald Trump winning the US presidential elections, followed by the expectations of upgrading bilateral relations while searching for a new consensus (with further recognition of Crimea as Russia's territory and lifting personal and sectoral sanctions).

Another essential element of the Address (2016) was the call for public consolidation in the face of foreign and domestic threats: *"When people feel they are doing the right thing, they act in close solidarity, and advance with confidence along the chosen path. In recent years, we have had a hard time, but these trials have made us even stronger, truly stronger, helped us better and more clearly define those areas in which our efforts must be even more persistent and vigorous"*. (Kremlin 2016b) This call "for rallying" should be interpreted as the rallying of people to the elite, which makes it impossible to have "colour revolutions" in Russia, something Putin is aware of permanently.

President Putin monopolized the political agenda in the Russian Federation which led to the "security discourse" being far from a product of public or party discussions (the discussion between power and opposition on the issues of foreign and security policy are non-existent). For instance, even the ruling party "United Russia" in their electoral campaign (2016) prior to the State Duma elections (the seventh convocation) demonstrated impersonalized exploitation of the security discourse: *"We have efficient, mobile, well equipped Armed Forces. They are the guarantee of our security. We launched a military reform just in time. And the move when even in difficult times we defended military spending from cuts was strategically correct", "We believe it is necessary to maintain high-level combat readiness and flexibility of the Armed Forces, reinforce the system of strategic deterrence and carry on*

further modernization of non-nuclear weapons", "We will support the active and balanced position of the Russian Federation on the settlement of the Northern Korea nuclear issue, the promotion of initiatives to launch an inclusive system of regional security in this region including both the USA and their allies as well as China and Russia. This being said, it is essential for Russia to maintain a neutral position". (United Russia 2018). That means that the ruling party is reproducing the general security doctrine and the so-called "Putin's policy". The parliamentary parties with lower relevance are being even more careful when interpreting the issue of security in their programme documents.

It is quite often that Vladimir Putin (and his political and institutional circles) defines the sources and levels of national security threats via public "discussion platforms" that represent the infrastructure of forming a power discourse. For instance, on 19 October 2017 at the "Valdai Club" meeting Putin responded to the question regarding the strategic threats of NATO's growing military presence and frequent military manoeuvres near Russian borders with de facto affirmations that he does not see NATO as a strategic threat: *"We analyze this, we look carefully. Every step is known and clear to us…This does not concern us. Let them train like this. Everything is under control."* Which could serve as a somewhat positive signal of Putin's certain readiness to some foreign policy détente, perhaps in the context of deploying a peace-keeping mission in Donbas. For this "domestic consumer" of national security discourse should be duly prepared through reducing in the Russian public consciousness the vitality of the threat about "NATO/West forceful approximation" to the zone of Russian interests.

Yet on more conservative platforms such as the influential "Izborsk Club" (its chairman A. Prokhanov) joining both radical communists and national conservatives-Eurasians, who, despite the retranslation of the general threat and security discourse defined by Vladimir Putin, permanently see threats and dangers posed by the US destructive role on the international arena: *"..US ruling elite is not going to refrain from its former policy concerning Russia – the policy that can be called Cold War-2", as well as "a much bigger danger lies within the domestic threat given the conditions of the coming elections"* (Izborsk Club 2017). Within the security discourse of national conservative platforms such as the "Izborsk Club" domestic threats are brought on by the following – the USA, West, NATO, liberals, anti-Stalinists, and "national traitors".

3. Transformation of security policies

The Russian Federation documents of strategic nature (Military Doctrine, National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation and other documents of strategic planning) are traditionally disbalanced by voluntary manual management by the supreme authority. Therefore, the security policy is mostly implemented within the context of personal policy – the so-called "Putin's policy".

The annexation of Crimea and pro-Russian marionette regimes in separate areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions brought significant consequences, namely: 1) halting strategic partnership with Ukraine, 2) post-Soviet states reconsidering their strategy of relations with Russia (erosion of post-Soviet consensus) and 3) the USA, Canada, EU and other countries introducing a considerable number of personal and sectoral sanctions. As a result of reinterpreting a new international context, in which Russia is about to operate in the medium term perspective, at the normative and institutional level, the following strategic documents were adopted, reviewed or clarified: Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (Russian newspaper 2014), National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation (Presidential Decree of the Russian Federation 2015), Russian Federation Food Security Doctrine (2015), Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2016), Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation (Russian Newspaper 2016), the Russian Federation Economic Security Strategy until 2030 (The Russian Federation Economic Security Strategy until 2030 2017). The main "novelty" of revision and clarification of strategic documents is giving an opportunity for Russia's supreme power to conduct a more radical security policy.

An important element of transforming Russian security policy is introducing and implementing an "anti-sanction regime" (both personal and economic) against 1) politicians, public figures and state authorities whose governments introduced sanctions against Russia and 2) economic activities of separate enterprises located in those states. An anti-sanction regime plays the role of punishment for countries that traditionally export to the Russian Federation, as well as serving as an instrument for consolidation and rallying of its population in the situation of foreign policy isolation. Adopting a "State Programme on Import Substitution to 2020" (2015) became an essential element of Russia's security policy in the new conditions within the context of "anti-sanctions" (Kremlin 2016a).

Crimea's annexation and Russian intervention in 2014-2015 took place against the backdrop of the completed second phase of military reform, the main result of which, according to experts, was increased combat readiness and deployability of the Armed Forces (military reform for 2008-2020 was planned as military and institutional revision of the Russian army after the Georgia-Russia war of 2008 and an instrument of increasing its combat readiness). As a result of reform in 2016 more than 50% of the forces were to be supplied with modern weapons, while by 2020 army and navy rearmament was to reach 80%. According to the Global Firepower World Military Strength Ratings, Russia ranks second, with the USA taking first place and China third. Currently Russia's military manpower makes up 798,500 men, with its military budget making up $44.6 bn (Global Fire Power 2017).

Creating a new internal federal security service, the National Guard of the Russian Federation, became quite an important element for institutional transformation of the security sector (Kremlin 2016c). The National Guard of the Russian Federation reports directly to Vladimir Putin, while being led by General Viktor Zolotov (personally loyal to Vladimir Putin), therefore, a special federal agency loyal to the President of the Russian Federation is in fact being launched, securing the loyalty of Russian society and regional elites.

Dramatic militarization of the Southern Military District bordering Ukraine became an extremely negative element of the new security policy after the annexation of Crimea. In particular, in the Southern Military District Russia formed four new divisions, nine brigades, twenty-two regiments including two missile brigades equipped with "Iskander-M" complexes (RIA Novosti 2016). At the same time in 2016 the 150th Idritsa-Berlin Motor Rifle division with its headquarters located in Novocherkassk was launched (Polonskiy 2016). Moreover, in 2015-2017 there were multiple statements regarding the revival of the earlier existing 42nd Guards Evpatoriyskaya Krasnoznamennaya Motor Rifle division on the basis of the 17th, 18th and 19th motor rifle brigades.

Given the current situation of Russia's isolation from military and political cooperation with NATO member states, military drills and manoeuvres gained a special meaning (there were more than 200 military exercises in the Southern Military District in 2013-2016), with their main target being to demonstrate considerable combat readiness of the Russian Army to the West. For example, Caucasus-2016 strategic command and staff drills took place on the territory

of the Southern Military District on 5-11September 2016, with a total number of 12,500 military personnel involved, and Zapad-2017, joint strategic drills of the Armed Forced of Russia and Belarus that took place on 14-20 September, 2017, with 12,700 military personnel.

Conclusions

Russian military aggression against Ukraine in 2014-2015 led to the loss of trust regarding the capabilities of the highest Russian authorities to fulfil international obligations. Having found themselves in a situation of insufficient foreign support due to the illegal annexation of Crimea and launch of puppet regimes in separate areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Russian authorities revised strategic documents and implement actions aiming to: 1) legitimize "territorial acquisitions", 2) provide for a new strategic agenda, 3) neutralize the domestic threats for the Russian political regime, 4) destabilize the domestic political situation in Ukraine, 5) destroy the "pro-Ukrainian" coalition or pro-Ukrainian consensus, foreign policy support for Ukraine against Russia.

Regarding the revision of strategic documents and evolving security discourse, a special place is reserved there for a new global threat – international terrorism, as well as a necessity to search for an international "post-Crimean consensus". According to this thinking, constructing a new adversary should "reload" relations between Russia and the West (NATO, USA, EU) and form a new consensus, where Russia's contribution towards the fight against global terrorism will perform the same role as USSR's contribution to the victory of the anti-Hitler coalition.

Ukraine remains an important factor for Russia's security discourse and policy. Russia's military build-up within the immediate territorial proximity to Ukraine, occupation of Crimea and support of the puppet regimes in separate areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions allow the prediction of the security deficit in relations between Ukraine and Russia in the medium-term perspective and escalated tensions at the Ukrainian-Russian borders.

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