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## THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**ABSTRACT:** In their action, the Russian authorities use a number of different tools, military strength being one of the key ones. Russia's neo-imperial ambitions are reflected in the new strategic and doctrinal documents. They follow a more confrontational line and emphasize Russia's desire to frame a new architecture of international security. In pursuing its strategic goals, Russia has undertaken a comprehensive programme of technical upgrade of its armed forces, launches impressive military exercise programmes and militarizes the society. The worsening international situation at the beginning of the 21st century, as a derivative of the growing power and importance of the Russian Federation, posed a threat to the countries of the former Warsaw Pact. The aim of the article is to discuss the military tools employed in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, both direct and indirect. In areas of strategic interest outside the post-Soviet area, they mainly take an indirect form. An example of Russia's desire to restore its imperial influence is demonstrations of its strategic combat capabilities, including by taking provocative action in the western direction.



**KEYWORDS:** Russia, foreign policy, military strategy, armed forces, military potential, demonstration of power

### INTRODUCTION

In our contemporary world, affairs related to security have become, and will remain so in the future, one of the most important challenges for humanity. Assessment of current

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evolutionary trends in the strategic security environment permits a conclusion that international security is tilting towards instability. At the turn of the 20th century, global changes occurred in the strategic security domain which were intended to safeguard the international community against future confrontation. Yet, "The end of the Cold War marks the beginning of the third great transformation of the organizational structures and the spirit governing world politics in this century."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the threats we are facing now arouse deep concerns among experts and analysts as to how to perceive them.

British General Rupert Smith<sup>2</sup> said that, "...confrontation, conflict and combat exist all round the world - most noticeably, but not only, in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Palestinian Territories - and states still have armed forces which they use as symbols of power. None the less, war as cognitively known to most non-combatants, war as battle between men and machinery, war as a massive deciding event in a dispute in international affairs: such war no longer exists..."<sup>3</sup> Rupert Smith's words highlight the problem of military challenges and threats, especially in national or territorial conflicts. The use of military power is currently not only part of a military domain but also, and perhaps above all, of a political one.

The analysis of the strategic security environment, the changes that it has undergone, and Russia's aspirations to become the most militarily powerful state make the subject of the use of armed force by the Russian Federation (RF) of interest not only to its neighbours but also to the whole world. The article aims to discuss the use of Russia's military potential in its foreign policy, which poses the greatest security threat not only to the countries of NATO's north-eastern flank but also undermines the security of Russia's neighbouring states. The main research problem has been framed as the following question: How is Russia's military power used in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation?

A hypothesis adopted for further discussion and analysis is significantly related to the research problem as it assumes Russia's determination and capability to employ military tools to pursue its political goals. These tools are employed both indirectly to demonstrate Russia's

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<sup>1</sup> Zygmunt Brzeziński. *O Polsce, Europie i świecie 1988-2001* (Wydawnictwo Bellona: Warszawa 2002), 91.

<sup>2</sup> Rupert Smith - British general, commander of a tank division in the 1991 Gulf War, commander of UNPROFOR forces in Bosnia in 1995, commander of the British forces in Northern Ireland in the years 1996-1998, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) in the years 1998-2001.

<sup>3</sup> Rupert Smith. *Przydatność Siły Militarnej. Sztuka wojenna we współczesnym świecie* (Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych: Warszawa 2010), 21.

global ambitions and directly to maintain Russian influence in the European part of the post-Soviet regions.

In order to support the hypothesis, the potential and main trends and methods of using the military strength in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation have been examined. The paper relies on strategic and doctrinal documents and official statements of the Russian Federation authorities, monograph works by domestic and foreign authors, studies by analytical centres, independent reports of organizations monitoring Russia's activities and mass-media reports covering the subject of the research.

### **REVIVAL OF THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL POWER OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

After the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the armed forces of the Russian Federation (FR) took over the military legacy of the Soviet conventional forces and nuclear potential.<sup>4</sup> According to various sources, the USSR army numbered approx. 4 million men, and the Union's nuclear weapons inventory comprised approx. 5,700 charges.<sup>5</sup> In the conditions of a deep social and economic crisis, with significantly reduced military expenditure, Russia faced the need for profound structural changes of its armed forces. The reforms spanning the years 1991-2008 did not focus on upgrading the Russian army but mainly on reducing its potential. The two Chechen wars exposed the weakness of the Russian army which often had to resort to the assistance of the special formations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>6</sup> The war with Georgia in August 2008 again showed that the Russian armed forces were not prepared for operations on the modern battlefield. Indeed, Russia managed to strengthen its control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but its troops were confronted with a multitude of challenges at the tactical and operational level.<sup>7</sup> The lessons learned from the Chechen and Georgian conflicts accelerated the transformation process in the army.

The process of sweeping reforms in the armed forces began with the appointment of Anatoly Serdyukov to the position of Minister of Defence in February 2007. The minister prepared a programme of reforms which was incorporated in the Plan for the Reconstruction

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<sup>4</sup> In 1991, after the collapse of the USSR, nuclear weapons were still deployed in the former republics of Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. Through bilateral agreements, this inventory was handed over to the Russian Federation.

<sup>5</sup> Norbert Bączyk, Tomasz Kwasek. "Strategiczne Siły Nuklearne." *Nowa Technika Wojskowa* 14(2018), 14.

<sup>6</sup> First and Second Chechen War – armed conflicts between the Russian Federation and Chechen separatists in the years 1994-1996 and 1999-2000.

<sup>7</sup> Czesław Kosior. "Nowe oblicze armii W. Putina cz. I." <https://oaspl.org/2015/10/29/nowe-oblicze-armii-putina-czesc-1/> [last access: 08.09.2020].

of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation until 2016 and the Further Development Strategy until 2020, both documents approved by President Putin in September 2008.<sup>8</sup> The main priorities of the programme were (i) reorganisation of the structure and deployment of the armed forces, (ii) increasing the number of servicemen on permanent contracts, (iii) enhancement of combat readiness, (iv) and acquisition of modern weapons and military equipment. The reform was facilitated by the growing GDP, yet the decisive factor was the political decisions of the authorities to keep increase military expenditure, as evidenced by the continued increase in expenditure during the economic crisis of 2008 and after 2014, i.e. the imposition of international sanctions for the unlawful annexation of Crimea and activities violating the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of Ukraine.

Currently, the Russian approach to foreign policy is rested on three main principles: the classical policy of power of the 19th century, the Cold War thinking models, and the political theory of realism. Russian foreign policy is primarily focused on real policy. It balances power and national interests, while rejecting moral and ethical factors as hindering and complicating the implementation of specific political goals. The issues of state security, especially sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as the ability to advance own interests internally and externally, have remained the central point of Russia's foreign policy.<sup>9</sup> That worked as an incentive to revise the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. The legal basis of the Concept is the Constitution of the Russian Federation, federal laws, universally recognized principles and norms of international law, international agreements concluded by the Russian Federation, Decree No. 605 of the President of the Russian Federation of 7 May 2012 on the means of implementing foreign policy goals of the Russian Federation, and also the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, legal acts of the Russian Federation governing the operation of federal bodies of the state in the sphere of foreign policy and other relevant legal instruments of the Russian Federation.<sup>10</sup> In the Russian Federation, in accordance with Article 86 of the Constitution, foreign policy is overseen by the president,<sup>11</sup> and he establishes political goals in this respect. On 30 November

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<sup>8</sup> Marek Depczyński. *Rosyjskie Siły Zbrojne od Milutina do Putina* (Wydawnictwo Bellona: Warszawa 2015), 147.

<sup>9</sup> Bogdan Panek. *Polityka Federacji rosyjskiej w regionie Europy, Azji i Pacyfiku* (Difin: Warszawa 2015), 94.

<sup>10</sup> "The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (approved by President Vladimir Putin on 30 November 2016), item 2." [https://poland.mid.ru/web/polska\\_pl/koncepcja-polityki-zagranicznej-federacji-rosyjskiej/-/asset\\_publisher/x9WG6FhjehkG/content/id/23812495](https://poland.mid.ru/web/polska_pl/koncepcja-polityki-zagranicznej-federacji-rosyjskiej/-/asset_publisher/x9WG6FhjehkG/content/id/23812495) [last access: 15.09.2020]

<sup>11</sup> Bogdan Panek. *Polityka Federacji rosyjskiej...*, 100.

2015, President Vladimir Putin signed the new Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, which supplanted the document of February 2013.

That initiative was aligned with the newly drafted doctrinal documents. On 25 December 2014, President Vladimir Putin signed Decree No. 2976 implementing the amendment to the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation.<sup>12</sup> The doctrine replaced the previous document from 2010<sup>13</sup> to mirror the changes in the security milieu and the Russian experience of armed conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. The document highlights the increase of NATO's military potential and global footprint. External threats also included the establishment and development of strategic anti-missile defence systems, plans to deploy weapons in space, the development of strategic non-nuclear precision weapon systems, and the spread of global extremism and terrorism.<sup>14</sup> The amendments to the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation clearly prioritize the confrontational course of Russian security policy towards NATO and underline Russia's ambitions as a global power. The priority of cooperation and provision of security for the states of the post-Soviet area is tantamount to maintaining supremacy and influence in the region. The option of using the armed forces outside the country is clearly outlined. The document also acknowledges the emergence of new attributes of contemporary conflicts with the use of military, political, economic, and information tools.

However, Russian politics is not only about an arms race. In order to prepare well and then put the adopted plan of military strengthening into effect, modifications in the internal and external security policy were also needed. Therefore, the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation of 31 December 2015 sets out Russia's security policy and the related objectives for the security system. The strategy was implemented by Decree No. 683 of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and replaced the former strategy adopted in 2009 with an outlook to 2020. It reads that the strategic defence goals, reflecting one of the nine national priorities, are to be achieved, inter alia, through the so-called enhancement of the military organization of the state, improvements in the forms of using the armed forces,

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<sup>12</sup> "Военная Доктрина Российской Федерации 2014." <http://www.mid.ru/documents/10180/822714/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf/d899528d-4f07-4145-b565-1f9ac290906c>, [last access: 16.09.2020].

<sup>13</sup> "Военная Доктрина Российской Федерации 2010." <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/461>, [last access: 16.09.2020].

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 12.

and increased mobilization preparedness of the Russian Federation.<sup>15</sup> The development of the country's Military and Industrial Complex was emphasized on top of the urgency to create strategic reserves of raw materials in order to satisfy the mobilization needs of the Russian Federation.<sup>16</sup> The values that safeguard national interests include, for example, the strengthening the state's defence capabilities and the confirmation of the Russian Federation's status as one of the leading global powers striving to build a strategic balance in the conditions of a multipolar global order.<sup>17</sup>

## **THE USE OF MILITARY POTENTIAL FOR DETERRENCE**

Deterrence by means of military potential is achieved by the mere possession of relevant military force that fulfils a deterrent function. Depending on the political intentions of a state, it can be used to discourage a potential opponent from taking hostile action or to forcing certain decisions. The idea of deterrence is to exploit fear,<sup>18</sup> which is particularly evident in the use of nuclear weapons for this purpose.

As regards the Russian Federation, resorting to the use of the nuclear inventory remains the most important military tool in competing in the global system. This is true both about the existing potential and the doctrinal use of this potential, also in response to a conventional attack. Maintaining the status of a superpower while the Russian economy reveals major weaknesses is possible mainly through the maintenance of the Strategic Nuclear Forces (SNF) capable of carrying out strategic strikes. Therefore, for obvious reasons, the development and upgrading of the Russian nuclear weapons remains a priority for the Kremlin. This inventory is the only Russia's military component that can match the power of the United States. The potential effects of the use of weapons of mass destruction remain a tool for influence over decisions made in the global arena.

In part, Russia purports that the expansion of the elements of the U.S. antiballistic-missile shield is the main driver of its defence expenditure and officially presents the shield as a way

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<sup>15</sup> "Decree No. 683 of the President of the Russian Federation on the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation of 31 December 2015, item 34." [https://poland.mid.ru/web/polska\\_pl/koncepcja-polityki-zagranicznej-federacji-rosyjskiej//asset\\_publisher/x9WG6FhjehkG/content/id/23299928](https://poland.mid.ru/web/polska_pl/koncepcja-polityki-zagranicznej-federacji-rosyjskiej//asset_publisher/x9WG6FhjehkG/content/id/23299928), [last access: 08.10.2020].

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, 62.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, 30.

<sup>18</sup> Rafał Kopeć, Przemysław Mazur. *Odstraszanie militarne w XXI w.* (Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny w Krakowie: Kraków 2017), 15.

to enhance U.S. offensive capabilities. In fact, Russia is clearly concerned about the reduced efficiency of its strategic nuclear assets. Countries that have declared their readiness to join the U.S. anti-missile screen project have been confronted with Russian attempts to force them to withdraw from the project through intimidation by the use of nuclear weapons. In August 2008, the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff of the Russian Federation, Gen. Anatoliy Nogovitsyn, issued a warning statement that facilities such as the U.S. anti-missile base planned to be deployed in Poland would always be listed as priority targets to be destroyed in the event of a conflict.<sup>19</sup> In June 2015, the deputy secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, Yevgeniy Lukyanov, confirmed that the elements of the antiballistic-missile shield deployed in Poland and Romania would automatically become Russian targets.<sup>20</sup> In March 2015, the Russian ambassador to Denmark, Mikhail Vanin, announced in the Danish press that if the Danish navy participated in NATO's anti-missile screen system, it would become a target for Russian missiles.<sup>21</sup> There were many more such threats, all aimed at hampering the progress of the American project. Although, in Poland and Romania, which were aware of their firm geopolitical position, they did not produce the intended results, they were likely to have contributed to the resignation by the Czech Republic from the construction of an American radar system in that country. The actual decision to withdraw from the project in the Czech Republic was made by the U.S. president, but the construction would not have been possible anyway due to opposition from the majority of the Czech policy makers.<sup>22</sup>

Part of the nuclear rhetoric of Russian politicians is intended not only to disrupt the process of deploying the U.S. anti-missile screen in Europe but also to influence NATO's and American decisions regarding NATO's presence on its eastern flank. Nuclear threats are intended to influence the decisions of individual states in order to shatter NATO's unity. To do so, Russia also takes advantage of the imperfections of NATO's decision-making procedure, which requires members' unanimity. The permanent presence of allied troops on NATO's eastern

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<sup>19</sup> "USA: groźby Rosji wobec Polski niepokojące." <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiata,2/usa-grozby-rosji-wobec-polski-niepokojace,67849.html>, [last access: 06.10.2020].

<sup>20</sup> "Rosja grozi Polsce i Rumunii: Będziecie celem dla naszej broni jądrowej." <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/swiat/artykuly/493735,rosja-grozi-rumunii-i-polsce-straszy-ze-wyceluje-w-nas-rakiety.html>, [last access: 06.10.2020].

<sup>21</sup> "Ambasador Rosji grozi Danii w związku z tarczą antyrakietową." <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/dania-ambasador-rosji-michail-wanin-grozi-bronia-atomowa/fbdwte>, [last access: 06.10.2020].

<sup>22</sup> "Obama porzucił sojuszników w Czechach." [http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114881,7050366,Obama\\_porzucil\\_sojusznikow\\_w\\_Czechach.html](http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114881,7050366,Obama_porzucil_sojusznikow_w_Czechach.html), [last access: 06.10.2020].

flank significantly limits Russia's westbound military scenarios, as it would risk the eruption of a global conflict that it would not be able to win. It should be stressed that despite the go-ahead decisions made at the NATO summits in Newport and Warsaw regarding the presence of allied troops on the eastern flank, the decision-making process that followed was largely impeded, especially by some Western countries disinclined to worsen their relations with Russia.<sup>23</sup>

## **DEMONSTRATION OF MILITARY STRENGTH**

As regards the ultimate objective, demonstration of a military strength is remarkably similar to deterrence by military potential. However, it is manifested in a more direct presentation of this potential, which may be accompanied by an undertone that shows readiness to use it.<sup>24</sup> Such demonstrations of the Russian armed forces are primarily military exercises and the concentration of a significant number of military units in certain locations carried out in parallel. Other forms of demonstration include provocative actions of selected units simulating attacks or violating the air space and sea borders of other countries; there is also a more traditional way, i.e. military parades and new weaponry shows at international fairs and arms exhibitions.

The significant increased frequency of training programmes and exercises was a consequence of the new reforms and was primarily aimed at increasing the combat readiness of military units. In terms of the number of exercises, Russia probably trumps over NATO three times.<sup>25</sup> The size of engaged forces and resources as well as the theatre of operations are also much larger. According to the official announcements of the Defence Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, about 800 training projects at the operational level were carried out in 2017 only, and since 2012, 24 ad hoc combat readiness audits have been held of the Military Command System components (the strategic level).<sup>26</sup> Given the aim of this paper, the author will only focus only on the most important exercises that were also intended to demonstrate power and arouse fear among the authorities and societies of Western countries and Russia's

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<sup>23</sup> "Wschodnia flanka NATO jednoczy siły." <http://www.dw.com/pl/wschodnia-flanka-nato-jednoczy-si%C5%82y/a-18830586>, [last access: 10.10.2020].

<sup>24</sup> Ireneusz Topolski. "Instrument polityki zagranicznej państwa, Teka Komisji Politologii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych" *OL PAN* 11/3(2016), 154, [http://www.pan.lublin.pl/wydawnictwa/TPol11\\_3/9\\_Topolski.pdf](http://www.pan.lublin.pl/wydawnictwa/TPol11_3/9_Topolski.pdf), [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>25</sup> "Россия проводит военные учения в три раза чаще, чем НАТО." <https://inosmi.ru/politic/20170824/240101907.html>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>26</sup> "Przemówienie Szefa Sztabu Generalnego Sił Zbrojnych Rosji Walerija Gierasimowa." <https://bmpd.livejournal.com/2935520.html>, [last access: 14.10.2020].



neighbours, which, in consequence, was to extract certain political concessions. Some of the exercises were clearly exploited to launch or support specific military operations.

Special attention should be drawn to the strategic military exercises of the Russian armed forces conducted each year in a different location of strategic interest to the Russian Federation. Elements of a psychological game with Russia's neighbours and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe were already tested during the ZAPAD 2009 exercise, when it was suggested that Russia was exercising a tactical nuclear weapon attack on Warsaw.<sup>27</sup> The KAUKAZ 2008 exercises facilitated the concentration of troops which were used in the conflict with Georgia afterwards. During the exercise, even before the attack on Georgia, Russian combat aircraft violated Georgia's airspace several times.<sup>28</sup> During the ZAPAD 2013 exercise, the official scenario was to defend the Union State of Russia and Belarus; however, the very nature and the theatre of operations clearly showed that the exercise followed an offensive line along with the attack on the Baltic States and Poland. During the exercise, the operations geographical scope was shifted north towards the border with Finland and Norway.<sup>29</sup> In April 2014, Russia began concentrating its armed forces in regions bordering Ukraine. It was officially labelled, "exercises of battalion tactical groups of military formations of the South and West Military District." As a result, at the beginning of May, there were already 40,000 Russian troops at the border, who were later used in the summer offensive in eastern Ukraine.<sup>30</sup> In September 2015, the CENTRUM 2015 strategic exercise was carried out on 20 exercise grounds of the Central and South Military District. One of the goals of the exercise was to test the capability of strategic deployment of troops over a distance of 5000 km.<sup>31</sup> Some days later, it turned out to be a practical preparation for the launch of a military operation in Syria.

Another Russian military demonstration was the strategic ZAPAD 2017 exercise carried out in the western direction. Again, the official scenario of the exercise was the defence of the Union State of Russia and Belarus in response to a terrorist attack by no-name countries located

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<sup>27</sup> "Tomasz Szatkowski dla Fronda.pl: Rosja ćwiczyła atak bronią nuklearną na Warszawę." <http://www.fronda.pl/a/tomasz-szatkowski-dla-frondapl-rosja-cwiczyyla-atak-bronia-nuklearna-na-warszawe,36743.html>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>28</sup> Radosław Grodzki. *Wojna Gruzjińska – Rosyjska 2008. Przyczyny - przebieg – skutki* (Replika: Zakrzewo 2009), 97.

<sup>29</sup> "Zapad 2013: 'ćwiczone uderzenie na Polskę i państwa bałtyckie'." <https://www.polskieradio.pl/75/921/Artykul/946692,Zapad-2013-cwiczone-uderzenie-na-Polske-i-panstwa-baltyckie>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>30</sup> "Rosyjska recepta na artykuł 47.4 Zasłona dymna nie tylko na Zapad." <https://www.tvp.info/33991961/rosyjska-recepta-na-artykul-474-zaslona-dymna-nie-tylko-na-zapad>, [last access: 10.10.2020].

<sup>31</sup> Anna M. Dyer. "Rosyjskie manewry przygotowaniem do działań ekspedycyjnych." *Biuletyn PISM* 83(2015), [https://www.pism.pl/files/?id\\_plik=20534](https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=20534), [last access: 10.10.2020].

in the geographical area of Poland and the Baltic States. According to data from the Ministry of Defence of Belarus, 7,200 Belarusian and 5,500 Russian troops took part in the exercise, of which 3,000 Russians operated on the Belarusian territory.<sup>32</sup> In fact, about 100,000 men were involved in the exercise, as indicated by, among others, the German Minister of Defence, Ursula Von der Leyen.<sup>33</sup> The geographical coverage of the exercise was not only the exercise grounds in Belarus and Kaliningrad Oblast but also the north-west part of Russia, where the formations of the Northern Strategic Command were operating in parallel. The exercise also coincided with minor training projects in the south near the border with Ukraine. In other words, the exercise virtually covered the entire western Russian border. Russia practised an intense conventional conflict, and NATO countries were clearly identified as a potential enemy (as follows from the exercise maps presented by the Belarusian Ministry of Defence) that should be opposed.<sup>34</sup> In addition to scenarios including, in particular, the attack on the Baltic States and the north-east part of Poland (Suwałki Gap), some operations in the north-west direction were also practised. Scandinavian sources observed the simulation of a landing operation, involving the navy and air force, on the Norwegian island of Svalbard in the Barents Sea.<sup>35</sup> According to sources relying on German intelligence data, in the last days of the exercise, the strategic Tu-95 bombers practised a bombing raid on the coasts of Denmark and Germany.

Another example of Russia's display of power was the Vostok 2018 exercises on 11-17 September. It spanned almost all exercise grounds of the Central and East Military District. The armed forces involved were the Pacific Oceans Fleet and the Northern Fleet, the airborne forces of the Russian Federation, long-range aviation, military transport support, and operational and tactical air force of the Air and Space Forces. In total, about 300,000 soldiers, about 1,000 aircraft, helicopters, and unmanned aerial vehicles, about 36,000 tanks, transporters, and other vehicles, and 80 ships and auxiliary vessels were deployed for the exercises. The theatre of operations was extremely extensive: some military units were moved over a distance of 7,000 kilometres and the sea vessels travelled 4,000 NM.

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<sup>32</sup> "Совместное российско-белорусское стратегическое учение Запад-2017."

<https://structure.mil.ru/mission/practice/all/more.htm?id=12140115@egNews>, [dostęp: 14.10.2020].

<sup>33</sup> "Zapad 2017 drill – what does Russia want?" <http://www.dw.com/en/zapad-2017-drill-what-does-russia-want/a-40428943>, [last access: 12.10.2020].

<sup>34</sup> Anna M. Dyer. "Co udowodnił Zachód '17." <http://polska-zbrojna.pl/home/articleshow/23731?t=Co-udowodnil-Zachod-17-#>, [last access: 12.10.2020].

<sup>35</sup> Kjetil Stormark. "Russian forces exercised attack on Svalbard." <https://www.aldrimer.no/russian-forces-exercised-attack-on-svalbard/>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

On 16-21 September 2019, Russia conducted another strategic military exercise. These were traditional manoeuvres, every year rotating between four strategic operating theatres: Zapad [West] (in 2009, 2013 and 2017), Vostok [East] (2010, 2014 and 2018), Centr [Centre] (2011 and 2015) and Kaukaz [the Caucasus] (2012 and 2016). It is commonly believed they were the culmination of the show of Russia's military might. The Centr-2019 scenario was divided into two stages: the first one focused on exercising anti-terrorist activities, anti-aircraft operations, as well as reconnaissance and defence operations performed by combined forces. The other was to practise switching from defensive operations into counter-attacks aimed at completely destroying the enemy's military potential.<sup>36</sup> Particularly important in the scenario was the use of coalition forces in joint military operations against terrorist forces in the strategically important Central Asian region. The military command and control bodies engaged in the manoeuvres represented the Central Military District, the Caspian Fleet of the South Military District, part of the East Military District forces, the Airborne Forces, long-range transport aviation, and military Air and Space Forces. Military contingents of the People's Republic of China, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan were engaged in exercising joint operations. In total, about 128,000 men took part in those strategic staff and command exercises plus over 20,000 arms and military equipment, about 600 aircraft and up to 15 ships and auxiliary vessels. Up to 12,950 servicemen (including the Russian Federation troops: up to 10,700, foreign troops: up to 2,250) participated in the practical exercises on the training grounds in Донгуз, Тоцкий, Аданак, alongside up to 250 tanks, up to 450 infantry fighting vehicles and armoured personnel carriers, and up to 200 artillery sets.<sup>37</sup> With such fire power, the joint manoeuvres were the most multicultural strategic military exercises ever carried out by the Russian Federation.

Russia also uses smaller-scale exercises to demonstrate its military capability. This is clearly experienced by the Baltic States. They are particularly threatened by a possible attack of the Russian Federation due to their limited military potential, favourable terrain conditions and the Russian national minority in these countries. Besides the ZAPAD series exercises, there are also numerous minor activities involving airborne troops or the air force, which exerts constant

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<sup>36</sup> "Стратегическое командно-штабное учение Центр-2019."  
<https://structure.mil.ru/mission/practice/all/centr-2019.htm>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem.

pressure on smaller neighbours. At the exercise ground in the Pskov region, the Russian armed forces have already carried out manoeuvres with 2,500 soldiers and 40 aircraft.<sup>38</sup> Since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, Russian combat aircraft have been regularly violating or simulating violations of the Baltic States' airspace. Only in 2014, fighters from the NATO Air Policing mission<sup>39</sup> were scrambled in emergency due to the threat to the Lithuanian border 68 times; 150 air incidents were reported in Latvia; and the Estonian authorities informed about five violations of its air border by Russian aircraft.<sup>40</sup> According to the commander of the Finnish armed forces, Gen. Jarmo Lindberg, in 2017 the number of Russian flights by combat aircraft in the Baltic Sea region was three times higher than in 2012.<sup>41</sup> Incidents also take place across the Baltic Sea. In September 2015, three Russian warships ordered a Lithuanian civilian vessel to change its course in the Lithuanian exclusive economic zone (EEZ).<sup>42</sup> In August 2016, Russian submarines exercised firing off the coast of the Lithuanian city of Neringa.<sup>43</sup> In May 2017, three Russian warships were sighted near the Latvian sea border.<sup>44</sup> April 2018 saw a new form of Russian military demonstrations in the international waters of the Baltic Sea. In connection with the planned missile firing exercises, the Russians informed about three areas that would be dangerous for sea and air navigation in the south and south-east part of the Baltic Sea: near the sea borders of Poland, Latvia and Sweden, despite the fact the Baltic Fleet of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation has its own maritime exercise zone off the coast of Kaliningrad

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<sup>38</sup> "Russia Sent 2,500 Troops to Its Border Near Latvia and Estonia Amid Fears of Conflict and Annexation." <http://www.newsweek.com/russian-forces-drop-nato-border-632178>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>39</sup> NATO Air Policing, an air defence mission to guard the free airspace of NATO member states. It has been carried out specifically in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia since these countries joined NATO in 2004 due to the lack of their own air force. In 2014 the mission was intensified in response to Russia's activity in the region.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Frear, Łukasz Kulesa, Ian Kearns. "Brinkmanship: Close Military Encounters Between Russia and the West in 2014." European Leadership Network, <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Dangerous-Brinkmanship.pdf>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>41</sup> "Wzmożona aktywność rosyjskiego lotnictwa. „Ciemne loty” nad Bałtykiem." <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/wzmozona-aktywnosc-rosyjskiego-lotnictwa-ciemne-loty-nad-baltykiem-6228792129697409a>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>42</sup> "Lithuania issues note to Russia over Baltic Sea conduct." [https://www.baltictimes.com/lithuania\\_issues\\_note\\_to\\_russia\\_over\\_baltic\\_sea\\_conduct/](https://www.baltictimes.com/lithuania_issues_note_to_russia_over_baltic_sea_conduct/), [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>43</sup> "Rosyjskie okręty podwodne u wybrzeży Litwy." <http://niezalezna.pl/85215-rosyjskie-okrety-podwodne-u-wybrzezy-litwy>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>44</sup> Caroline Mortimer. "Russian warships spotted just outside Latvia's territorial waters in latest show of strength." <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-baltic-agression-navy-latvia-warships-victory-day-a7725261.html>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

Oblast.<sup>45</sup> Latvia closed part of its airspace, and ferries running between Sweden and Poland had to change their route due to the manoeuvres.<sup>46</sup>

All these activities arouse concern among the authorities and societies of the Baltic Sea region, in particular in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Apart from the support provided by NATO, namely deploying allied battalion combat formations in each of these countries, the Baltic States themselves have taken impressive steps to strengthen their military potential, which is a great financial effort for their small economies. Since 2014, Lithuania and Latvia have almost doubled their defence expenditure.<sup>47</sup> As part of strengthening security on the borders with Russia, the Baltic States are building fences, which, as the official narrative puts it, are intended to prevent the inflow of illegal immigrants from the east.<sup>48</sup> The propaganda message of Russia's military demonstrations in the Baltic Sea area is also targeted at Western countries and is expected to undermine NATO's unity by attempting to convince some politicians and societies in the West that any military action in defence of the distant Baltic States is pointless. This message is enforced by provocative flights of strategic bombers flanked by fighter and tanker aircraft carried out off the coast of Western European countries and even the United States,<sup>49</sup> thus demonstrating Russia's readiness to operate in these directions.

The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation traditionally demonstrate their potential at the annual military parades celebrating the anniversary of the WW2 Victory Day. In 2018, over 13,000 troops and 160 combat vehicles took part in the parade on Moscow's Red Square. The latest Su-57 fighters, the Terminator tank support vehicles, the Uran-6 and Uran-9 robot tank systems, as well as the Korsar and Katran unmanned aerial vehicles were on display for the first time. Apart from Moscow, military parades were held in 28 Russian cities engaging a total of

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<sup>45</sup> "Komandosi z Rosji przy polskiej granicy. Test rakiet na Bałtyku, zamknięte niebo nad Łotwą." <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114881,23226384,komandosi-z-rosji-przy-polskiej-granicy-test-rakiet-na-baltyku.html>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>46</sup> "Rosyjskie manewry rakietowe niedaleko Szwecji." <https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/60680/Rosyjskie-manewry-rakietowe-niedaleko-Szwecji.html>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>47</sup> COMMUNIQUE PR/CP(2017)111, Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010-2017), [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2017\\_06/20170629\\_170629-pr2017-111-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_06/20170629_170629-pr2017-111-en.pdf), [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>48</sup> "Łotwa postawiła płot na granicy z Rosją. Litwa i Estonia też budują. Przyczyną nielegalni imigranci." <http://wolnosc24.pl/2017/02/05/lotwa-postawila-plot-na-granicy-z-rosja-litwa-i-estonia-tez-buduja-przyczyna-nielegalni-imigranci/>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>49</sup> "68 alarmów na Litwie, 150 incydentów na Łotwie, 5 naruszeń przestrzeni Estonii. Rosjanie nie próżnują." <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiate,2/68-alarmow-na-litwie-150-incydentow-na-lotwie-5-naruszen-przestrzeni-estonii-rosjanie-nie-proznuja,471596.html>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

over 55,000 military men.<sup>50</sup> Not all of the shows were successful. For example, during the 2015 parade, the new T-14 Armata tank broke down on Red Square, which was broadcast all over the world.<sup>51</sup>

International fairs and arms exhibitions are used to showcase Russian military equipment, establish contacts, and win new contractors and customers. In the aftermath of the economic sanctions imposed on Russia by Western countries, which also targeted the arms industry, Moscow is focusing on military cooperation with Asian and African countries and is looking for customers mainly in these markets. One of the largest undertakings of this type in Russia is the Army international military and technical convention held in many Russian cities. Equipment combat capability presentations are held on exercise grounds, including at sea in the case of navy weapons. The 2018 convention exhibited more than 18,000 pieces of various types of military equipment and weapons.<sup>52</sup>

## **MILITARY PRESENCE OUTSIDE THE NATIONAL BOUNDARIES**

In the 1990s, Russia was forced to dissolve most of its military bases abroad and withdraw its troops, in particular from the European countries of the former Warsaw Pact and several other bases around the world. The collapse of the Soviet Union forced a new approach to the safeguarding of Russian interests in the former Soviet republics. In most of them, as a result of political pressure or participation in local conflicts, Russia managed to leave old or install new military bases. Today, Russia maintains military presence in seven countries (former Soviet republics) as well as having military bases in the occupied Crimea and Syria. Most likely, it is also taking steps to establish or restore bases in other regions of the world.

There are currently two Russian military facilities in Belarus. The Volga radar station in Hantsavichy near Baranavichy<sup>53</sup> is a vital element of the integrated air defence system installed

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<sup>50</sup> "Rosja pokazała światu swój potencjał militarny." [http://www.wnp.pl/przemysl-obronny/rosja-pokazala-swiatu-swoj-potencjal-militarny-zdjecia,322843\\_1\\_0\\_0.html](http://www.wnp.pl/przemysl-obronny/rosja-pokazala-swiatu-swoj-potencjal-militarny-zdjecia,322843_1_0_0.html), [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>51</sup> "Moskwa: Wpadka na próbie przed defiladą zwycięstwa. Popsuł się czołg T-14 Armata." <http://www.polskatimes.pl/artykul/3852489,moskwa-wpadka-na-probie-przed-defilada-zwyciestwa-popsul-sie-czolg-t14-armata-zdjeciavideo,id,t.html>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>52</sup> Maksymilian Dura. "Armia 2017: Rosjanie ujawniają najnowsze uzbrojenie." <http://www.defence24.pl/armia-2017-rosjanie-ujawniaja-najnowsze-uzbrojenie>, [last access: 14.10.2020].

<sup>53</sup> Grzegorz Kuczyński. "Ile baz za granicą ma Rosja? Putin: prawie wcale. Fałszywa skromność." <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiata,2/ile-baz-za-granica-ma-rosja-putin-prawie-wcale-falszywa-skromnosc,438923.html>, [last access: 15.10.2020].

back in 1995.<sup>54</sup> The other facility is the 43rd Naval Communication Centre in Vileyka in Minsk Oblast. It was set up in 1964.<sup>55</sup> Its main role is to secure communication with Russian nuclear submarines. The establishment of a Russian air base in Bobruisk, Belarus, is being negotiated. Although the two states concluded the relevant agreement in 2013, the facility has not yet materialized.<sup>56</sup> It seems that President Lukashenka is blocking the progress of this project expecting Russian concessions and new fighter aircraft for the Belarusian air force. Pursuant to the agreement between the government of Belarus and Russia, which entered into force in November 2017, it will be the responsibility of the Russian Ministry of Defence to secure the military bases on the Belarusian territory and supply weapons that Russia would like to use in the event of a threat to the Union State or warfare.<sup>57</sup> Belarus remains a very important region of the Russian presence. This is mainly due to its geographical situation, which deepens the westbound operational capacity of the Russian armed forces in the event of a defence operation. On the other hand, Belarus can serve as a starting point for an offensive operation in the western direction if offensive plans were to be implemented. It should be emphasized that Minsk recognizes the existence of the Union State of Russia and Belarus and its membership in the CSTO as the basic guarantees of security.

The Russian military presence in Transnistria started in the 1990s when the remnants of the locally stationed Soviet 14th Army supported the conflict between local separatists and Moldovan forces and helped create today's breakaway state in the territory of Moldova. The core of the Russian contingent in Transnistria is formed on the so-called Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF) formed on the basis of the 14th Army. The group numbers ca. 1,200-1,500 contracted soldiers (two motorized battalions and support and protection units). The land forces are supported by a helicopter force. In addition, a Russian peacekeeping battalion has been deployed in the country to man 15 control checkpoints on the basis of a tripartite agreement (Moldovan-Transnistrian-Russian).<sup>58</sup> Their official task is to protect the Russian military warehouses left behind by the 14th Army. In fact, the unit safeguards Russian

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<sup>54</sup> Anna M. Dyer. "Wyzwania dla białoruskiej polityki bezpieczeństwa." *Biuletyn PISM* 11(2018), [https://www.pism.pl/files/?id\\_plik=23973](https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=23973), [last access: 15.10.2020].

<sup>55</sup> Grzegorz Kuczyński. "Ile baz za granicą ma Rosja..."

<sup>56</sup> Juliusz Sabak. "Łukaszenka: Nie potrzebujemy rosyjskiej bazy wojskowej. Potrzebujemy rosyjskich samolotów." <http://www.defence24.pl/lukaszenka-nie-potrzebujemy-rosyjskiej-bazy-wojskowej-potrzebujemy-rosyjskich-samolotow>, [last access: 15.10.2020].

<sup>57</sup> Anna M. Dyer. "Wyzwania dla białoruskiej..."

<sup>58</sup> "Rosyjski bastion na tyłach Kijowa. Potencjał militarny Naddniestrza." <http://www.defence24.pl/rosyjski-bastion-na-tylach-kijowa-potencjal-militarny-naddniestrza>, [last access: 15.10.2020].

influences in Moldova and obstructs Moldova's aspirations to join NATO. Additionally, since the beginning of the conflict in Donbas, the Russian contingent in Transnistria has been exerting extra pressure on Ukraine, which is forced to maintain some armed formations in this area in order to protect its borders against being raided by Russian units.

Armenia is home to two Russian military bases. Gyumri, near the Turkish border, houses the 102nd War Base. It is in fact a motorized brigade with one tank battalion, three motorized battalions, and support and protection units. The 988th Anti-aircraft Missile Regiment equipped with the S-300W4 sets is also stationed there. On the other hand, 3624. Air Force Base operates near Yerevan and is ready to handle Russian combat aircraft.<sup>59</sup> In 2010, Yerevan and Moscow concluded an agreement extending the lease of the 102nd War Base until 2044. In addition, Armenians agreed to enter into treaties establishing joint air defence and Armenian-Russian operational troops.<sup>60</sup> Russia's main goals of keeping its troops in Armenia, like in other bases in the Caucasus, is to maintain political influences in the region. In view of Georgia's drive towards NATO and Azerbaijan's limited interest in integration within the CSTO and the Eurasian Economic Union, Armenia's role is no doubt pivotal. The Russian bases also control the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. During the mass protests in Yerevan in May 2018, which sparked the government crisis in Armenia, Russian military potential was also an element of pressure on Armenian politicians to put the crisis to an end quickly.

In the Caucasus region, Russia also has military bases in the separatist republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Gudauta, Abkhazia, is home to the 7th War Base with a deployed unit comparable to a motorized brigade. Besides, Gudauta has the largest Russian military airport in the region. Despite the 2009 plans to build a military seaport in Ochamchire, Abkhazia, to harbour the Black Sea Fleet, nothing has been undertaken so far. Under an agreement between Russia and Abkhazia signed in 2014, a Joint Army Group is being formed<sup>61</sup> of the Russian and local separatist units from Abkhazia. Tskhinval and Dzava, South Ossetia, is home to the 4th War Base with a unit comparable to a motorized brigade. Additionally, the base has missile systems equipped with the BM-30 Smiercz sets, Buk-M1 anti-aircraft sets and an Iskander-M

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<sup>59</sup> "Южный военный округ (ЮВО)." <http://mil.kavkaz.com/index.php/voorujonnie-cili-racii/vo-cv/u-vo>, [last access: 15.10.2020].

<sup>60</sup> Marek J. Chodakiewicz. "Bazy moskiewskie w Armenii." <http://www.tysol.pl/a6439-Prof-Marek-Jan-Chodakiewicz-dla-TS-Bazy-moskiewskie-w-Armenii>, [last access: 15.10.2020].

<sup>61</sup> "Rosja przesuwa faktyczne granice na Kaukazie. Układ z Abchazją." <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiatea,2/rosja-przesuwa-faktyczne-granice-na-kaukazie-uklad-z-abchazja,491863.html>, [last access: 15.10.2020].



missile battery. The units in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are subordinated to the South Military District of the Russian Federation.<sup>62</sup> In October 2011, the then Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, signed a law on the ratification of agreements with Abkhazia and South Ossetia on the installation of Russian military bases on their territory. The document provides for the operation of Russian bases in the territory of Abkhazia and South Ossetia for 49 years with the option of automatic extension of this period every 15 years.<sup>63</sup>

The largest number of Russian military facilities can be found in Kazakhstan. Russia leases from Kazakhstan the Baikonur Cosmodrome. It accommodates the 32nd Test Facility and the Sary-Shagan exercise. Together with the Kapustin Yar ground in Astrakhan Oblast in Russia, it offers a test area for medium-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles. The 49th Radio Engineering has been established near Lake Balkash. It supports the operation of the Dniepr-M radiodetermination station. The 999th Air Base is located in Kant, Kyrgyzstan. It houses several Russian aircraft (mainly the Su-25 strike aircraft, the An-26 cargo aircraft and the Mi-8 helicopters).<sup>64</sup> Under a bilateral agreement, the base has been leased until 2032 with the option of automatic extension of the lease term for subsequent five-year periods.<sup>65</sup> Part of the 999th base is an anti-ship torpedo experimentation base at Lake Issyk-Kul, the 338th Communication Node of the Russian fleet in Khaldovar and a seismic station in Mailuu-Suu.<sup>66</sup>

The largest foreign aggregation of Russian troops is the 201st War Base in Tajikistan. The base falls under the Central Military District of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. The 201 base is home to the 149th and 92nd Motorized Regiments stationed in Dushanbe, the 191st Motorized Regiment stationed in Kurgonteppa and three military exercise grounds in Momirac, Laur, and Sambula.<sup>67</sup> In Tajikistan, Russia also maintains an optical and electronic complex (Window) which tracks satellite movements. The control of the Tajik-Afghan border is

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<sup>62</sup> "Южный военный округ (ЮВО)." <http://milkavkaz.com/index.php/voorujonnie-cili-racii/vo-cv/u-vo>, [last access: 15.10.2020].

<sup>63</sup> Natalia Olszanecka. "Rosja będzie posiadała bazy wojskowe w Abchazji i Osetii Południowej." <http://www.psz.pl/162-wschod/rosja-bedzie-posiadala-bazy-wojskowe-w-abchazji-i-osetii-poludniowej>, [last access: 15.10.2020].

<sup>64</sup> "Воздушно-космические силы." <http://milkavkaz.com/index.php/voorujonnie-cili-racii/vkc>, [last access: 16.10.2020].

<sup>65</sup> "В Кыргызстане создана объединенная военная база РФ." <https://az.sputniknews.ru/russia/20170129/408633994/kyrgyzstan-voennaja-baza-rossii.html>, [last access: 16.10.2020].

<sup>66</sup> Jacek Potocki. "WOJSKOWE MACKI." <http://www.polska-zbrojna.pl/home/articleinmagazineshow/8443?t=WOJSKOWE-MACKI>, [last access: 16.10.2020].

<sup>67</sup> "Центральный военный округ (ЦВО)." <http://milkavkaz.com/index.php/voorujonnie-cili-racii/vo-cv/tc-vo>, [last access: 16.10.2020].

supported by the Operational Group of the Border Service of the Russian Federation.<sup>68</sup> In 2012, the bilateral agreement on the presence of Russian troops in Tajikistan was extended until 2042.<sup>69</sup>

Russia sees its military presence in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan primarily as a way to maintain its influence in the region. Due to the supremacy of China's economy over Russia's, the military presence of the latter and the security system established under the CSTO will remain a key tool of influence over the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. Besides, according to the CSTO charter, the states-parties are obliged to agree and coordinate their positions on foreign policy and regional security problems.<sup>70</sup> The Russian forces in Tajikistan play a special role as they curb the influx of immigrants and Islamic terrorists from Afghanistan. Despite concerns about excessive political dependence on Russia, especially after the events in Ukraine in 2014, security issues and Russian support make the authorities of the discussed Central Asian countries interested in a limited Russian military presence on their territory.

The Russian military presence in Crimea, after Ukraine became an independent state, was regulated no earlier than under a bilateral agreement dated 31 May 1997. Under this agreement, which was in force until 2017, up to 25,000 Russian marines of the Black Sea Fleet were stationed in the ports of Sevastopol, Feodosia (additionally in the Mykolaiv shipyard in Ukraine) and at Hvardijskie and Kacha airports. During the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko, Ukraine refused to sign additional agreements related to Russia's requests to carry out weaponry replacements in the fleet. It was no earlier than in April 2010 that the then President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, agreed to extend the agreement until 2025 in exchange for annual lease payments and a reduction in the price of Russian gas imported to Ukraine.<sup>71</sup> Incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation led to dynamic development of the military potential on the peninsula. It covered not only the naval forces of the Black Sea Fleet but also coastal units, which were gradually expanded by new anti-aircraft and missile units. The development of the new formation was formally completed in 2016, and since then, the units

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<sup>68</sup> Aleksander Hiełahajeu. "Rosyjskie bazy wojskowe za granicą: pozostałości sowieckiej potęgi i zdobycze nowych napaści." <http://belsat.eu/pl/news/vajskovyya-bazy-rf-u-zamezhzhy-reshtki-savetskaj-velichy-i-zdabytki-novyh-aktau-agresii/>, [last access: 16.10.2020].

<sup>69</sup> Grzegorz Kuczyński. "Ile baz za granicą ma Rosja? ..."

<sup>70</sup> Wojciech Górecki. "Coraz dalej od Moskwy Rosja wobec Azji Centralnej." (OSW: Warszawa 2014), 85.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Śmigieński. "Militarne i polityczne znaczenie Floty Czarnomorskiej po zawarciu umowy o przedłużeniu jej stacjonowania na Ukrainie." *Biuletyn PISM* 74(2010), [http://www.pism.pl/zalaczniki/Biuletyn\\_682.pdf](http://www.pism.pl/zalaczniki/Biuletyn_682.pdf), [last access: 16.10.2020].

have been systematically re-armed with new military equipment.<sup>72</sup> This formation consists of the Black Sea Fleet deployed in two main bases, in Sevastopol and Novorossiysk (Krasnodar Krai) and the coastal units of the 22nd Army Corps with the command in Simferopol, subordinated to the fleet command.

So far, two new squadrons equipped with the S-400 anti-aircraft systems have been deployed on the peninsula; there is a plan to station one more. In March 2017, the Murmansk-BN radio-electronic warfare system was deployed in Crimea. By 2020 the Voronezh-DM radar station<sup>73</sup> is going to be expanded as part of the central warning system against missile attacks. The coastal defence missile units have been equipped with the modern 3K60-Bał and K300P Bastion anti-ship systems with a fire range of up to 300 km. At the beginning of 2018, the Ukrainian side estimated that there were approximately 23,000 Russian troops in the occupied peninsula, and the potential of the Black Sea Fleet exceeded 30 warships<sup>74</sup>

With its entire military potential, Crimea has become Russia's strategic point of influence over the entire Black Sea (including the components of the U.S. antiballistic-missile shield in Romania). The anti-aircraft and missile systems installed on the peninsula, combined with other military capabilities, play a key role in building the A2/AD anti-access system, thus limiting the freedom of manoeuvre of NATO's air and naval forces in the region. The Crimean potential is also relevant in exerting military pressure on Ukraine. It creates a real threat of a landing operation in the direction of Odessa and significantly limits the Ukrainian options of using the Black Sea both for the military and economic purposes. The naval base in Sevastopol also supplies the Russian contingent in Syria.

Outside of the former Soviet Union, Syria is the only country with Russian military bases. The Russian presence in this area is focused on the naval base in Tartus and an air base in Hmeimim. Since 1977,<sup>75</sup> the seaport in Tartus has served as a logistic support station for vessels operating in the Mediterranean Basin. After the launch of the Russian military operation in Syria, its role has been growing steadily. In January 2017, Russia concluded an agreement with

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<sup>72</sup> Marcin Gawęda. "Rosyjskie siły na Krymie." *Wojsko i Technika* 7(62), 62.

<sup>73</sup> A radar system with an effective range of 6,000 km, capable of simultaneously tracking up to 500 air objects. The main task of the radar is to detect ballistic and manoeuvring missiles threatening the Russian integrated air defence system.

<sup>74</sup> Antoni Rybczyński. "Kalibry, jachonty i S-400. Lotniskowiec Krym straszy nie tylko Ukrainę." <https://www.tvp.info/36605928/kalibry-jachonty-i-s400-lotniskowiec-krym-straszy-nie-tylko-ukraine>, [last access: 16.10.2020].

<sup>75</sup> Maksymilian Dura. "Baza w syryjskim Tartusie pozostanie rosyjska." <http://www.defence24.pl/baza-w-syryjskim-tartusie-pozostanie-rosyjska>, [last access: 17.10.2020].

Syria to expand the naval base in Tartus and use it for another 49 years, with the option of further extension of the term. Under the agreement, Russia may harbour up to 11 warships in the base at the same time, it may use the port infrastructure free of charge, and the base is excluded from Syrian jurisdiction.<sup>76</sup> The other Russian base in Syria is Hmeimin airport near the civil airport in Latakia. The agreement to share the base with Russia for free and for an indefinite period was signed on 26 August 2015.<sup>77</sup> The goals of the Russian presence in Syria are discussed in Section 3.5.3. hereof.

So far, Russia has not installed any other military bases outside its territory. However, it is holding high-level talks to probe the possibility of leasing military facilities in various parts of the world.

For example, negotiations were held with Vietnam on restoring the naval base at Cam Ranh, which Russia abandoned in 2001. In October 2016, however, the Vietnamese Minister of Foreign Affairs definitely opposed the idea of foreign troops stationing in Vietnam.<sup>78</sup> Despite the absence of an official agreement, the Russian air force has already used this base many times, for example, for tank aircraft refuelling strategic bombers operating in Southeast Asia.<sup>79</sup> Although, in practice, Russia's influence on moulding the situation in Southeast Asia is limited due to the presence of China and the USA, Moscow will make attempts to gain a foothold in the region using military instruments.

Russia is also seeking to increase its political and military footprint in South and Latin America with a view to destabilizing that traditional sphere of U.S. influence. In March 2014, the Minister of Defence, reported that Russia was about to close negotiation on the establishment of Russian military bases in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba, which was officially denied by the authorities of the first two countries.<sup>80</sup> Argentina, on the other hand, agreed to accommodate a Russian military base on its territory.<sup>81</sup> However, most of Russia's declarations

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<sup>76</sup> "Rosja i Syria podpisały umowę o rozbudowie bazy w Tartusie." <http://www.defence24.pl/rosja-i-syria-podpisyly-umowe-o-rozbudowie-bazy-w-tartusie>, [last access: 17.10.2020].

<sup>77</sup> "‘Bezplatnie i bezterminowo.’ Rosyjska baza w Syrii z przywilejami." <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiata,2/syria-baza-hmejmim-w-prowincji-latakia-bezplatnie-dla-rosjan,611046.html>, [last access: 17.10.2020].

<sup>78</sup> "‘Nie’ dla rosyjskiej bazy. Wietnam wydaje oświadczenie." <http://www.defence24.pl/nie-dla-rosyjskiej-bazy-wietnam-wydaje-oswiadczenie>, [last access: 17.10.2020].

<sup>79</sup> "Amerykanie chcą, by sojusznik wyrzucił Rosjan z bazy z czasów wojny." <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiata,2/amerykanie-chca-by-wietnam-wyrzucil-rosjan-z-bazy-z-czasow-wojny,523212.html>, [last access: 17.10.2020].

<sup>80</sup> "Wenezuela i Nikaragua nie chcą rosyjskich baz wojskowych." <http://www.defence24.pl/wenezuela-i-nikaragua-nie-chca-rosyjskich-baz-wojskowych>, [last access: 17.10.2020].

<sup>81</sup> Maksymilian Dura. Rosja chce mieć bazę wojskową w Argentynie, <http://www.defence24.pl/rosja-chce-miec-baze-wojskowa-w-argentyinie>, [last access: 17.10.2020].

about expansion in that direction should be treated as pure propaganda. Considering the huge cost of maintaining military bases in remote regions of the world, where Russia has no real possibility of gaining an advantage over the USA, it will most likely pursue its political goals by resorting to cheaper and more covert methods.

The situation in Africa is completely different. This is where Russia has been successful in real attempts to increase its military presence. In November 2017, the Russian Minister of Defence visited Cairo to talk about a bilateral military and industrial cooperation. The cooperation is to be rested on an agreement on the mutual use of airspace and air bases by Egyptian and Russian combat aircraft.<sup>82</sup> Based on the available information, the agreement has not been concluded yet. This may be due to Cairo's opposition to Russian support for the Syrian regime and attempts to negotiate discounts on arms supplies from Russia. However, given the importance of Egyptian airports in backing the Russian operations in Syria and covert operations in Libya, Moscow will continue to exert pressure on Cairo to close the deal. Russian entities or the so-called Private Military Companies, controlled by the Russian secret services, have been spotted in the Central African Republic where Russia is seeking to obtain licences to extract gold, diamond, and uranium deposits at the expense of France. Unofficial sources also report the presence of Russian special forces in Sudan and Libya.<sup>83</sup> In November 2017, the President of Sudan, Umar al-Bashir, during his visit to Russia, said in an interview for Ria Novosti that he had discussed with the Russian president and the Minister of Defence in Sudan the possibility of establishing a military base on the Red Sea.<sup>84</sup> Russia's initiatives in Africa respond to the global rivalry for influence on the continent that has not been extensively explored to date. Using its growing position in the Middle East, Russia is striving to transfer it to regions with the traditional presence of European countries but already penetrated by the USA and China.

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<sup>82</sup> Juliusz Sabak. "Wizyta Szojgu w Kairze. Rosyjskie bazy w Egipcie i Sudanie?" <http://www.defence24.pl/wizyta-szojgu-w-kairze-rosyjskie-bazy-w-egipcie-i-sudanie>, [last access: 17.10.2020].

<sup>83</sup> "'Kremłowski wyścig po Afrykę.' Rosjanie wkraczają na nowy kontynent." <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiata,2/wplywy-rosji-w-afryce-rosyjskie-gazety-o-dzialaniach-kremla,832606.html>, [last access: 17.10.2020].

<sup>84</sup> "Nad Morzem Czerwonym może powstać rosyjska baza wojskowa." <https://pl.sputniknews.com/swiat/201711286810868-Sputnik-Rosja-Sydan-Morze-Czerwone-baza-wojskowa/>, [last access: 17.10.2020].

## CONCLUSION

The collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical disaster of the century for today's Russian ruling elite. This opinion was expressed by the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, back in April 2005.<sup>85</sup> After that, it became a leading idea for the political and scientific circles as well as the entire Russian society. According to Russian analysts of the Valdai Club,<sup>86</sup> the system of state and territorial structure established under the Belovezha Accords,<sup>87</sup> after the national catastrophe of 1991, is illegal, unstable, and accidental.<sup>88</sup> Russia's initiative of the last decade have clearly shown that it is striving to reinvent the global order created after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In their action, the Russian authorities use a number of different tools, military strength being one of the key ones. The study of the military potential of the Russian Federation and how it is used, as discussed in the article, seems to fully support the hypothesis.

Russia's neo-imperial ambitions are reflected in the new strategic and doctrinal documents. They follow a more confrontational line and emphasize Russia's desire to frame a new architecture of international security<sup>89</sup>. In pursuing its strategic goals, Russia has undertaken a comprehensive programme of technical upgrade of its armed forces, launches impressive military exercise programmes and militarizes the society. Defence expenditure has become a priority and has been maintained at a high level against all economic odds. The State Armaments Programme 2018-2027 confirms that Russia's aggressive external policy will continue to gain momentum.

The military tools in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation include both direct and indirect forms of influence. In areas of strategic interest outside the post-Soviet area, they mainly take an indirect form. To keep a strategic balance of power with the United States, Russia prioritizes the upgrading of its nuclear inventory. Another example of Russia's desire to

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<sup>85</sup> "Rosja/ Władimir Putin: 'Upadek ZSRR katastrofą.'" <http://www.psz.pl/162-wschod/rosja-wladimir-putin-upadek-zsrr-katastrofa>, [last access: 17.10.2020].

<sup>86</sup> The Valdai International Discussion Club is an annual meeting of renowned experts specializing in Russian internal affairs and foreign policy; it was inaugurated in 2004.

<sup>87</sup> The Belovezha Accords - an agreement on the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States concluded by the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Belarus and the presidents of Russia and Ukraine on 8 December 1991.

<sup>88</sup> Mikhail Barabanow, ed. *Military reform: toward the new look of the Russian Army* (Moscow 2012), 9, [http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/Military\\_reform\\_eng.pdf](http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/Military_reform_eng.pdf), [last access: 17.10.2020].

<sup>89</sup> See more: M.A.Kamiński, *Ewolucja wywiadu jako instytucji państwa*, Warszawa 2021, s. 457-469.

restore its imperial influence is demonstrations of its strategic combat capabilities, including by taking provocative action in the western direction, including off the coast of the United States.

Russia's direct use of its armed forces takes place mainly in the post-Soviet countries where Russia clearly asserts its dominance and obstructs its neighbouring countries in establishing political, military, and economic cooperation with the West (excluding the Baltic States) or China. This is clearly seen through the location of Russian military bases and the military cooperation under the CSTO. The conflicts with Georgia and Ukraine confirm that whenever Russia believes that its political interests are at risk, it is also able to launch direct military intervention. The operation in Syria, on the other hand, testifies to Russia's attempts to break out of political isolation, voice its ambitions and demonstrate ability to regain a superpower position.

The studies of many analytical centres, as well as the literature on the subject, confirm Russia's aggressive attitude. However, there are no up-to-date and comprehensive studies examining the actual capabilities of the Russian armed forces and the forms of their use to achieve foreign policy goals. This paper can be regarded as a starting point for further research in this area.

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