

# NON-MILITARY DETERMINANTS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION POLICY

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## Abstract

*This study analyses various non-military factors in shaping the security policy of the Russian Federation. This work undertakes to establish their substance, content and scope, and to draw the conditions and trends in the political, economic and social security of modern Russia in the context of its international ambitions, role and state security. In the work theoretical method analysis, synthesis, abstracting and generalization were used. Based on the results of the research, it was determined that the specificity of its location definitely exerts an adverse effect on Russian state security. The reconstruction of imperial Russia is among the key goals set forth by Vladimir Putin in Russia's foreign and military policy. In fact, the entire economic, political and military activity of Russia is subordinated to this goal. With regard to the economic and social state, the dependence of the Russian Federation on the extraction and export of crude oil and natural gas is an obvious indication of the constraints of its economy. Moscow's particular interests are formulated in official state documents, such as the Military Doctrine and the National Security Strategy. These documents identify not only external and internal threats to state security but above all indicate the means and methods of possible deterrence.*

**Keywords:** Russian Federation, security policy, social security, economic security

## Introduction

Any attempt to analyse the security policy of a state must essentially involve the characterisation of the environment shaping it and where it is executed – including the impact of both external and internal determinants (Zięba 2004, p. 16). The term *determinants* should be understood as formative factors that define or restrict the implementation of certain security policy objectives and of specific means or methods (Włodkowska 2006, p. 15). Artem Malgin proposes an original ordering of such determinants by classifying them into several categories: material (territorial/geographical, demographic, economic, military), non-material (sociopsychological, ideological and informational), system-related (central and local political system) and institutional/diplomatic factors (Мальгин 2001 cited Włodkowska 2006, p. 19). Considering the above taxonomy, it was resolved that the focus of this study should Russian security policy is primarily influenced by the following determinants: geostrategic position, experience from wars and armed conflicts, climate and terrain, demographic potential, economy and industry, religion, political system, strategic culture and national security strategy. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify and provide a description of the key non-military factors affecting the security policy of the Russian Federation.

## Geostrategic location of Russia

The largest country in the world, Russia is on the one hand, a military and political superpower, and on the other – a highly polarised country marked by tremendous social inequality and coexistence of abject poverty and immense wealth of a small group of oligarchs. The territorial power of Russia covers an area of over 17,100,000 km<sup>2</sup> (12.6% of the world's land area) which is home to 143.5 million inhabitants (Anon, n.d. c). The country stretches from the eastern reaches of Europe (25% of its territory) to the territories of northern Asia (75% of its territory) and encompasses 11 time zones.

With the collapse of the USSR, the Russian state was deprived of its Western buffers in Ukraine and on the Baltic coast, as well as its strong bridgehead in the Caucasus and Central Asia (nearly 25% of the territory of the former empire) hence the current geopolitical position of Russia is essentially unfavourable. The western stretches of the Russian Federation are highly volatile; and it was not until in 2010 that a 40-year Norwegian-Russian dispute over the reservoir in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean was finally resolved<sup>1</sup>. While in 1991, its authorities officially confirmed Finland no longer raised territorial claims against Russia, certain political circles have been still demanding the return of the territories of the Russian part of Karelia and other areas appropriated by Russia at the end of the Second World War, and furthermore, advocate for the restoration of the 1939 border. Similarly, Estonia and Latvia are calling for the restoration of state borders established under the Tartu and Riga Treaties. Finally, there is the territorial dispute between Ukraine and Russia concerning the incorporation of Crimea and Sevastopol into the Russian Federation, which took place in 2014<sup>2</sup>. In fact, virtually the entire southern band of Russian borders from the Black Sea to China is a zone of instability, threatened by Islamic extremism, national and social conflicts.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the region set the scene for several major armed conflicts. One of the most serious ethnic and territorial disputes arose between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 1992-1994 over Nagorno-Karabakh. After the conclusion of military operations, the Azeri side took a firm stand against the deployment of Russian peacekeepers in the region of the conflict, fearing for its sovereignty (Legucka 2013, p.138). The Russian Federation was involved in South Ossetia (1991-1992) and in Transnistria (1991-1992) in defence of interests of Russians minorities in the post-Soviet states. Russian units were also deployed in Abkhazia (1992-1993) and Tajikistan (1994-1994).

<sup>1</sup> The sea covers 175 thousand km<sup>2</sup> and is divided between two countries. The issues regarding fishing and extraction of energy sources shall be governed by the forthcoming agreement.

<sup>2</sup> The Ukrainian-Russian territorial dispute initially oscillated (in 1991-2013) around the lack of a demarcated border between the two countries on the Azov and Black seas. On March 11, 2014, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation carried out a special operation in the Crimea, and consequently a joint assembly of members of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City Council of Sevastopol adopted the declaration of independence of the Republic of Crimea.

To this day, there is an outstanding dispute over the territory of approximately 160 km<sup>2</sup> located on the Russian-Abkhazian border. Similarly difficult is the status of the Caspian Sea: formerly within the USSR, it is now the subject of a dispute between five countries (apart from Russia, the Caspian Sea is accessible through Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan). What further complicates the division of interest zones is the fact that the region is rich in oil and natural gas deposits, which additionally remain relatively unexploited (Bryc 2008, p. 68-72). Concluded in 2005, the delineation of the Russian-Kazakh border determined, *inter alia*, the territorial affiliation of disputed islands in the Caspian Sea basin. In the Far East, Russia borders China – their natural adversary in the contest for influence in these parts of the continent. Although the century-long dispute between China and Russia over the border formed on the rivers Amur, Ussuri and Argun was settled by virtue of a 2004 agreement, it may be predicted with a certain likelihood that territorial differences between Russia and China are bound to become the subject of an open dispute in the future. China has never concealed its plans regarding pursuing claims to a large part of the territories of Eastern Russia, regarded by its authorities to be a legitimate property of China. Admittedly, the process has already commenced – particularly considering the colonisation of Russian Siberia by citizens of the PRC and ongoing preparation of Chinese commandos for operations in extreme cold.

The western borders of Russia continue to provide fuel the unresolved problems, including the Japanese-Russian dispute that has yet to cease since 1945, when the Red Army took control of Japanese islands of the Kuril Archipelago. Although the northern border of the country is marked along the harsh cold coasts of Arctic waters, the area does spark controversy. To date, the Russian parliament has not ratified the Soviet-American agreement of 1990 on the border with the United States on the Bering Sea<sup>3</sup>. In addition, it is predicted that the rivalry between

<sup>3</sup> The longest standing territorial dispute in the High North results from a different interpretation of the provisions of the Convention of 1867 on the course of the line separating the American and Russian sectors. According to the United States, the western boundary of the areas under their sovereignty is the meridian 169° W (crossing the Bering Strait halfway between Cape Chukotsky, Cape Dezhnev and the Alaskan Cape Prince of Wales). According to Russia, the eastern end of its sector runs along the line along the meridian 168°49'30" W, from the Cape Prince of Wales to the North Pole (Łomniewski Zaleski Żmudziński 1979, p. 328).

Russia, Canada, the United States, Norway and Denmark for the oil-rich Arctic region could be the source of new tensions in the foreseeable future.

Lastly, Russia is faced with growing internal challenges connected with the emergence dangerous separatisms, among which, according to Russian experts, the most seriously threatening are those occurring in the Caucasus (with Chechnya and Ingushetia), in the Volga-Ural region and in the Siberian region, the centre of which is the Tyva Republic (Iwańczuk 2006, p. 78).

## Experience from wars and armed conflicts

Another factor instrumental in our understanding of Russia's security policy is the role of historical events related to the conduct of wars and armed conflicts. Inherent in the formation of the state was the turmoil of permanent wars and fighting for control. The first historical ruler of Russia was Prince Rurik, the Varangian (Norman) chieftain of the tribe originating in contemporary Sweden, who in 862 gave rise to the first state of Novgorodian Rus'<sup>4</sup>. The expedition to Kiev (882) led by Prince Oleg, Rurik's successor, culminated in the unification of the northern and southern principalities and the establishment of Kievan Rus'. The ruler in 945-957, Princess Olga of Kiev centralised the state, while her son, Svyatoslav, undertook distant war expeditions, reaching the Crimea, the Caucasus and the Balkans. Through marriage with the sister of the Byzantine emperor, Anna, Kievan Rus' converted to Christianity. The 11th century marked the onset of fragmentation of the state into provinces. Since the death of Yaroslav the Wise in 1054, Rus' began to disintegrate into a number of provincial duchies. In 1169, Prince Andrei Bogolyubsky of Vladimir-Suzdal invaded and burned Kiev to the ground. In 1223, the Golden Horde (also referred to as Tatar Yoke) defeated the Rus' and Cuman armies in the Battle of the Kalka River, and in 1237-1240 Batu Khan conquered virtually the entire Rus' (with the exception of Lands of Polotsk and Pinsk). In 1240, the Novgorod prince Alexander Nevsky defeated the Swedish army. In turn, in the years 1240-1392, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania conquered the majority of

4 Based on (Łowmiański 1973, pp. 9–223).

western Rus' principalities<sup>5</sup>. As a result of the Polish-Lithuanian war (1340-1392), the territory of the Galician-Volhynian Principality was divided between Poland and Lithuania. After the fall of Constantinople (1453), the importance of Moscow as the heiress of Byzantium gradually rose, which was furthermore highlighted by the marriage of Ivan III (the Great) and Sophia Palaiologina. However, prior to those events, in 1462, Ivan III the Great, commenced with the uniting of the country. Taking advantage of the disintegration of the Golden Horde, he ceased paying tribute entirely, repulsed second Tatar attacks in 1472 and 1480, and finally liberated the Rus' lands from the rule of the Tatars. The consolidation of the country was completed by Ivan's successor, Vasili III (ruling from 1505), who apart from annexing the remaining autonomous provinces got involved in the fight against the troubled Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Ivan the Terrible's (1530-1584) policy of territorial expansion has been central to the shape of the modern-day Russia. Between 1548 and 1558, Russians conquered the Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates, taking control over the entire course of the Volga River, only to proceed with seizing control over the Siberian Khanate in 1582. Seeking to gain access to the sea, Ivan IV launched several attempts to take over Livonia, however, neither of the subsequent wars (in 1558-1570 and 1575-1583) ended in victory. In the years 1558-1570, he continued the expansion of Russia to the eastern lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The conquest of western Siberia by the Cossacks, led by Yermak Timofeyevich (1582), initiated Russian expansion to the east, which ultimately reached the Pacific coast, Chinese borders and even spread overseas to North America (Alaska). Despite the fact that Ivan the Terrible successfully doubled the area of Russia (from approximately 2,800,000 km<sup>2</sup> to 5,400,000 km<sup>2</sup>), he left the state in downfall and crumbling, devastated by wars, disconnected from the Baltic Sea under constant threat of invasion from the south on the part of the Crimean Tatars (Скрынников 1992, p. 48). Upon the death of Ivan IV, his immediate successor to the throne, Fyodor I Ivanovich, was still unable to rule, which is why the tsar's brother-in-law, Boris Godunov, was appointed as a regent. After his death (1605), the crisis in Russia intensified, the civil war broke out and the Time of Troubles ensued. The 1613 Zemsky Sobor elected Tsar Mikhail Romanov. In the 17th century, the Romanovs not only rebuilt the country but also

5 At approximately 1245, Prince Mindaugas united Lithuanian tribes and annexed parts of today's Belarus. Until the end of the 14th c., the Lithuanians subjugated most of the lands of former Kievan Rus to the upper Oka and Vyazma Rivers (Pietkiewicz 2010, p. 145–184).

strengthened and significantly expanded the borders of Russia. The strength of the Russian Cossacks enabled the conquest of Siberia, whereas as a result of a long war with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1654-1667) Ukrainian lands were finally incorporated (as far as the Dnieper) along with virtually entire Grand Duchy of Lithuania including Vilnius. The expansion of Turkey, which in 1672 took Podolia, tipped the balance of power on the northern coast of the Black Sea. The first Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774 was an opening act to an over-200-year-long struggle that culminated in the removal of Turkey from the European shores of the Black Sea (Wisner 1995, p. 67). Modern Russian military history begins with Peter the Great, who founded the Imperial Russian Army (Russian: Русская императорская армия). This military force by Peter succeeded in defeating the Swedish army in the 1709 first great Battle of Poltava against troops of Charles XII of Sweden. Successive victories over Sweden elevated Russia to become the dominant force in the Baltic Sea region. During the time of Catherine II (the Great, 1762-96), the Russian Empire expanded to the west, south and east, and wars were fought with the Ottoman Empire (1768-74 and 1787-92) and with Poland (1794) -95) . In the first decades of the nineteenth century, Russian armies continued a long campaign against the Ottoman Empire. The troops encountered Napoleon's French forces on several occasions in Europe – the most famous of which was the battle won by Russians under the command of Mikhail Kutuzov and simultaneously a legendary defeat of Napoleon in 1812. This victory enabled Russia to begin employing the scorched earth tactics, which left Napoleon and subsequent invaders deprived of material supplies. Under the rule of Tsar Nicholas I (1825-55), Russia became referred to as “Gendarme of Europe.” In 1831, Nicholas suppressed Poland's rebellion against his empire, and in 1849 Russia sent 100,000-man-strong army to nip in the bud the rebellion of Hungarian patriots against the Austrian Empire. The run of victorious campaigns was, however, stopped when the Imperial Army was defeated in the Crimean War (1853-56), which in addition revealed that the Russian command and logistics systems had failed to keep pace with Western Europe with regard to the military science. In the second half of the century, Russia carried out a series of military campaigns to conquer the Central Asian countries, in order to expand the empire and provide domestic cotton supplies. With relatively little military resistance until 1885, the entire region was incorporated into the empire.

Nevertheless, the subsequent Russian-Japanese war of 1904-1905 was far from successful, bringing about resounding defeats on land and sea. Similarly, to the Crimean War, the Russo-Japanese War was a clear signal that the Russian war machine had been slipping behind the modern world; the First World War has provided further confirmation, as the ineffective defence administration and poorly equipped troops are considered to have been the primary causes of the heavy losses suffered in the battles with Germany. The growing internal discontent with tsarism ultimately undermined Russian military efforts during the First World War. In 1917, the Bolshevik revolution resulted in the disbanding of the Imperial Army and Navy. Although the Bolsheviks quickly signed a peace treaty with Germany, the outbreak of civil war became an inducement to defending the state against the White movement. Therefore, in April 1918, the Red Army was established through the announcement of compulsory military service, leading to conscription of peasants and labourers. In 1921, General Mikhail Tukhachevsky began a comprehensive military reorganisation and modernisation programme. In 1937, purges carried out by Joseph Stalin deprived the Red Army of up to 30,000 experienced military commanders, notwithstanding Tukhachevsky. Not long afterwards, the first campaign laid bare the weakness of the army: the Winter War against Finland (1939-40) took a heavy toll when 100,000 soldiers of the Red Army eventually defeated a small Finnish army. Although the Nazi invasion of 1941 penetrated deep into the Russian territory, a new generation of officers managed to rise to the challenge and drive the German army out of Russia having defeated them in the Battle of Stalingrad.

After the Second World War, the Soviet Union, and subsequently Russia, has become involved in several wars and armed conflicts, including: military missions of the Warsaw Pact in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968); Cold War (1947-1991); war in Afghanistan (1979-1989); the first and the second Chechen war (1994-1996, 1999-2009); the war in Georgia (2008); ongoing conflict in Ukraine (from 2013). Most recently, on September 30, 2015, the Federation Council agreed to send Russian troops to Syria.



## Climate and landscape of Russia

The climate of Russia is diverse due to the vastness of its territory. The most important feature of the Russian climate, which shapes the character of the Russian people and their mentality, are long and severe winters. The majority of the land lies in the temperate zone characterised by a continental climate, whose extremely cold type is found in Siberia. A part of the territories in the southeast is subject to a monsoon climate, while the subtropical (Mediterranean) climate is in the southwest (the Black Sea) (*Warunki klimatyczne*, n.d.). The territory of Russia is divided into five main geographical regions: East European Plain, Ural, West Siberian Plain, Central Siberian Plateau and Mountains of Eastern Siberia.

*The East European Plain* lies in the eastern part of Europe. In the northwestern part, it reaches the Scandinavian Mountains, in the southwestern one the natural border is formed by the Sudetes and the Carpathians, in the southeast – the Caucasus, and in the east – Ural. The northeastern part is surrounded by the waters of the Barents and the White Seas, and from the south – by the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Caspian Sea. The greater part of the Eastern European lowland belongs to the temperate zone, which gradually passes from the marine climate to the continental one. The northernmost part of the East European Plain belongs to the Subarctic Belt, *i.e.* moderate air masses are typical in the summer whereas Arctic air masses dominate in winter. From the vertical perspective, the lowest points are located on the Caspian coast, whose level is 27.6 m lower below sea level, whereas uplands rise to 300-350 m above sea level (Anon, n.d. f). From the brief description in the preceding lines, it can be seen that the East European Plain lacks good natural borders, which is the primary reason why it is an area of critical importance to Russia in strategic terms. Apart from being a crucial transport corridor (one of the key trade routes in the world), it is also a key military one. The most massive expansions that originated in the Eurasian area and spread towards Western Europe (Huns, Mongols, Scythians), as well as expansions in the opposite direction (Napoleon, Third Reich) always crossed through the Central European Plain and the East European Plain. The key area on this large European plain is known as the Baltic-Carpathian isthmus (also referred to as the *limes*, or the border of Central Europe). The Baltic-Carpathian Isthmus is an area that channels the Eurasian movement (transport canals, including the movement of

troops); the area offers ideal conditions for manoeuvring armies, which is why multiple battles have been fought in the region for centuries. The space located in the north, between the northern tip of the Carpathians and the Baltic Sea, has tremendous military importance. The gap is 300 miles wide at its narrowest point, and runs to the west of Warsaw from Elbląg in northern Poland to Cracow in the south. This is the narrowest point in the Central European Lowland and simultaneously the weakest spot in Russia's strategic plan. Furthermore, the danger for Russia results from the fact that the plains of northern Germany expand from this point eastwards: the Great European Plain initially slowly spreads to form a triangle, which opens up rapidly once across the Bug River to form the East European Plain and further towards the Moscow Uplands. The area is the largest Russian centre of gravity, and is therefore not conducive to the organisation of defensive operations, as Russian forces would be forced to form a defence belt of an ever-increasing width, becoming spread over a considerable territory. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of attacking enemy forces the natural lay of terrain is a factor facilitating offensive operations in a chosen direction, *e.g.* Moscow. Moreover, the further the Russians would retreat eastwards, the wider the front would become adding to the attacking forces' advantage. The attacker must, however, make provisions with regards to securing proper logistics facilities, *e.g.* the sheer length and extension of lines of communication is highly likely to be the source of difficulties with timely supply of equipment and food to the army. Another factor hampering the conduct of activities is the climate, and in particular cold winters, which also affects the efficiency of the equipment and the well-being and condition of soldiers. The southern part of the East European Plain is of no less military importance than the aforementioned. At this point, the Carpathians arch away from Romania through Western Ukraine to Slovakia. The area of Ukraine and Moldova is therefore of key importance. Controlled by Russians, it provides them with an opportunity to base themselves on the Carpathian line; however, if taken over by an adversary the region would constitute a buffer zone or a base. The Black Sea creates a natural southeastern border (buffer) between Europe, the Middle East and Asia. The Black Sea is the only large sea basin between the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean. It is an alternative way for military power projection in the direction of Russia because the Carpathian chain in Romania and the Caucasus mountains are the natural barrier for the conduct of land operations from the south. The Caspian Sea, another strategically important region, brings

together five countries: Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Azerbaijan. The enormous oil and gas deposits under the seabed add to the intensity of the competition for access to them, which is the primary reason for the fact that for over 20 years after the collapse of the USSR, the territorial status of the sea – the course of the borders and the division of the sea between the neighbours – has yet to be regulated. The control over the Caspian Sea directly translates to gaining control over the routes of oil and gas supplies from Central Asia to Europe. The Caspian Sea provides a natural boundary for Iran, and it is on its west coast that the mountains of the Caucasus extend, which are highly difficult to pass in either direction (separating Russia from Iran and Turkey). The Caucasus range runs into the Black Sea, thus fully securing the southern border of Russia.

*Ural* is another important strategic region of Russia. Located on the eastern edge of Europe and forming a border with Asia, it consists of a single, narrow and yet extensive mountain range of the Ural Mountains and their geological extension – the islands of Vaygach and Novaya Zemlya in the Arctic Sea. The Megaregion of Ural stretches from the Kara Sea in the north to the Turgay Plateau in the south, over the distance of 3000 km in length and 200 km in width. The climate of the region is continental – subarctic in the north, and temperate in the south. Ural lies almost entirely in Russia, except for its southernmost edge – lying in Kazakhstan. The mineral-rich rocks of Central and Southern Ural are extensively exploited, which has transformed these regions into one of the largest industrial districts in Russia. During the Second World War, the region, also referred to as the Stalin Line, provided armament for the fighting troops. Offensive operations from the southern direction through the Ural are impossible. There are virtually no northbound roads from the south deep into Russia; the ones that exist are either easy to defend or break up in sparsely populated areas.

*Siberia* is the largest region comprising the West Siberian Plain, the Central Siberian Plateau and the Mountains of Eastern Siberia. Siberia is a geographical region located in northern Asia, stretching between the Ural Mountains in the west, the Arctic Ocean in the north, the Pacific Ocean in the east and the steppes of Kazakhstan and Mongolia in the south. The region extends from west to east over 7,000 km, and from north to south over approximately 3,500 km.

Spreading over approximately 13 million km<sup>2</sup>, which account for *circa* 10% of the Earth's surface, Siberia is sparsely populated – the population density is one of

the lowest in the world and is equal to merely 3 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. The climate of Siberia is characterised by short, and in the east extremely short, relatively warm summers, long, severe winters and scant precipitation. Average temperatures of the hottest month, July, are in the range between 10°C in the north to 19°C in the south. Such geographical and climatic features were significant barriers to the economic development of Siberia. Nevertheless, for several reasons, the region still plays a strategic role for Russia. Primarily, the control of Siberia protects Russia against the Eurasian countries, which are one of the two traditional routes of invasion. Siberia provides a strategic protection zone for Russia during potential Western invasion: the deployment of a large number of troops there is difficult, if not impossible. Although admittedly, the attack against Siberia is difficult – the land is, in fact, scarce in attack targets (the role of defence installations is assumed by the weather) moreover the terrain and the sheer size of the region alone are difficult to maintain, that there may be doubts about the sensibility of the entire undertaking. The period when the territories are not covered with impassable mud or snow spans for a mere three months per year, after which time it becomes impossible to provide army supplies by land. The attack of any Asian power on Siberia is therefore impossible. The only threat to Russia in this region is the attack from the sea (as did the Japanese in 1905), which would allow an invader to get a foothold in coastal provinces (such as Primorsky Krai or Vladivostok [in fact Vladivostok is the capital of the Primorsky Krai – translator's note]). Considering the infrastructural costs that were to be involved, the extraction of raw materials in the depths of Siberia is extremely difficult and may prove hardly possible or economically viable. From the northwestern Mongolian border, following a straight road to the southwest through the territories of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the territory of Russia is protected by the northern extension of the Himalayas, the Tian Shan Mountains. Further to the west, along the Afghan and Iranian border, there are lowlands adjacent to the mountainous border. Finally, in the small region on the border with Afghanistan there is a barren desert impassable for a large army.

## Population potential of Russia

A certain regularity in the history of Russia shows that periods of deep chaos were typically accompanied by demographic crises. This was the case during the 17th century's Time of Troubles or during the wars and revolutions of the early 20th century, which culminated in the Bolshevik takeover of power. Similarly, the collapse of the USSR coincided with the demographic crisis. Nevertheless, while the previous crises occurred as a result of such factors as war, famine, epidemics or repressive policy on the part of the authorities, and were followed by a marked population boom, the one currently observed is systemic and structural. It is mainly caused by civilisation factors related to the change of the family model or the place of a woman in a contemporary world. In Russia, their negative impact on population growth is further reinforced by excessive consumption of high-percentage spirits, low work culture (adding to the high accident rate) and insufficient health care (approximately 3% of GDP allocated per year). In 1991, the Russian Federation was ranked 6th in terms of population, in 2012 it was 10th, while in 2014 – 9th<sup>6</sup>. It is estimated that the population of Russia in 2018 will decrease by 167,000 and drop to 143 854,000 in 2019 (Anon, n.d. b). It is moreover anticipated that by 2050, the Russian population will decrease by about 30 million in response to growing emigration, suicide and murder rates as well as the spread of diseases and debilitating addictions. According to the estimates of the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) in 2050, the Russian Federation will suffer further population depletion and fall to 14th position in the ranking.

From the viewpoint of demographics, the least favourable conditions occur in the central and northern part of European Russia. A better demographic situation prevails in the Ural region and in southwestern Siberia; in the Far East and North Siberia, however, the demographic situation is critical. The population is leaving areas with difficult climatic conditions *en masse*. Only the population living in autonomous republics situated on the northern slopes of the Caucasus (Chechens, Ingushians, Karachayans, Ossetians, Balkars, Cherkeshians, Dagestan peoples) exhibit a high rate of natural and real increase. In these societies, mainly large

<sup>6</sup> Data based on reports from Russian Federal State Statistics Service, (Федеральная служба государственной статистики, n.d.).

Muslim families are still prevalent, and the model of life and family relationships are completely different from the ones in areas inhabited by secularised Russian population.

Significantly, Russia is a multinational country: of more than 100 different nations and nationalities, the most numerous group are Russians (81.5% – in 1989), Tatars (3.8%), Ukrainians (2%), Chuvash (1%), Bashkir (1.1%), Chechens (1%), Armenians (0.6%) and others (Anon, n.d. e).

Over 4/5 of the entire population is concentrated in the European part of Russia. The least populated is East Siberia and the Far East (less than 2 people per km<sup>2</sup>). Immediately after the collapse of the USSR, the country was flooded by a wave of immigrants mainly originating in the former Soviet republics (from Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Tajikistan). The current population decline is partially compensated by migration. According to the Federal Migration Service of Russia, there are currently 11 million foreign residents in Russia, 2/3 of which are former citizens of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

## **Economy and industry**

One of the key indicators for the expression of the level of economic development of the state and its effective operation in the international space is the economic potential. It is derived from such factors as natural resources, means of production, employment, scientific and technological potential, accumulated national assets, as well as the level of development. The most comprehensive measure of the assessment of the economic potential of the state is Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a measure for the characterisation of the level of economic development of the state.

According to GDP ranking published by the World Bank, with a result of USD 1.719 trillion, the economic potential of the Russian Federation earns it 11th place in the world (data for 2018) (World Bank, n.d.). A global insurer of trade receivables, Euler Hermes' 2019 forecasts predict a 1.9% increase of Russian GDP and the rise of oil price to USD 56 per barrel, whereas Russian export is expected to increase by USD 26 billion (Business Insider Polska, 2017).

According to the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation, the GDP growth rate in December 2018 amounted to 1.5%. Simultaneously, official data published in October 2018, indicated the level of 1.8%, whereas in September 2017 the projections indicated that Russian economy would expand at the rate of 2.1%. Such discrepancies in performance are among the key reasons hampering Russia's strive to regain the status of a world superpower. Nevertheless, the country still exhibits the nuclear potential and the wealth of energy resources that allow it to maintain the *façade* of a superpower (Czajkowski 2011, p. 102). Considering wealth in natural resources Russia remains at the forefront of the richest countries in the world. It has one of the largest drinking water resources in the world (1/3 of the world's fresh water resources – the Lake Baikal alone accounts for 20% of the world's water supply). From the perspective of the entire Federation, Russia accounts for about 70% of energy resources and a 60% share of various mining ores. Crude oil reserves amount to 48.6 billion m<sup>3</sup>, while natural gas reserves to 48 trillion m<sup>3</sup>. The vast and wild stretches of land cover virtually all naturally found chemical elements, ranging from innumerable resources of iron ores, diamonds, nickel, copper, titanium, zinc, niobium, tin, silver, gold, platinum, quartz or coal. Currently, over 100 different minerals are being extracted in Russia *en masse*.

Russian economy continues to show inefficiency that fails to rise to the level expected of a state that considers itself a superpower. The sluggishness in the modernisation of the economy and boosting its innovativeness is likely to take adverse effect, leading to stagnation and further dependence on the knowledge of technologically advanced countries. In face of an array of barriers to the modernization of Russian economy (cf. e.g. (Bieleń Skrzypek 2014)), Russia's participation in BRICS initiative is particularly noteworthy<sup>7</sup>, as it has allowed Russia to consolidate the state's energy position in the world and gradually strengthen various sectors of industry (e.g. automotive, aerospace, electrotechnical, electrical, chemical, atomic and space). Undoubtedly, what currently remains the realm of unrivalled Russian domination is space exploration. The largest cooperation in the space sector binds the Russian Federation with China. The cooperation covers

7 BRICS – an acronym for the association of Brazil, Russia, India, China and from 2011 South Africa. BRICS countries do not form a political alliance (such as the European Union), or a formal trade association. The objectives of the associated countries are: to create a new currency system; to increase the role of developing countries in present world monetary institutions; to reform anachronistic and impotent UN (Anon, 2012).

an extensive and diversified range of initiatives, both on the industrial level (in the rocket technology industry) and research and development (joint expedition to the Moon). The cooperation of approximate intensity within the BRICS group is developing with India<sup>8</sup>. 16 agreements undersigned by both countries during the BRICS summit held in the Indian city of Goa on October 15, 2016, set out the cooperation plan regarding defence, oil extraction and energy. In addition, Russia's 2012 accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) boosted its export expansion, particularly of oil and natural gas. As part of the said expansion, we ought to recall the construction of new pipelines: Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2, BTS 2<sup>9</sup>, TurkStream<sup>10</sup>, Eastern Siberia–Pacific Ocean oil pipeline, as well as port terminals for gas and oil. Factors fostering economic development of the Russian Federation are also the aforementioned arms and space industry<sup>11</sup>. The former – fuelled by flourishing export – brings an annual income of USD 15 billion (Euro-Dane, n.d.) (planes, ships, submarines, helicopters); the latter sector begins to close the distance on American competitors and with the ongoing implementation of modern technologies, in the near future it may well outperform them.

## Religion

**8** India is growing at an annual rate of 8% of GDP and is becoming a serious military player in the international arena. They are capable of waging war on two fronts, primarily in response to threat on part of Pakistan and China. In addition, Mumbai is practically the centre of global IT services and technologies (Anon, 2012).

**9** The BPS-2 project (Балтийская трубопроводная система-2) is a pipeline with a total length of 1,170 km along the Luga River from Unecha to the Ust-Luga terminal near St. Petersburg. The capacity of the “Baltic Pipeline System” is about 38 million tons per year. BPS-2 is an alternative to the Druzhba Pipeline built in the 1960s - the route of Russian oil supplies to European consumers. The project is carried out on behalf of the Russian government with a view to ensuring the supply of Russian oil to Europe and to avoid the risks associated with the transit of oil through the territory of other countries (Oilcapital.ru, n.d.).

**10** The TurkStream pipeline is set to replace South Stream project, abandoned by Russia in December 2014.

**11** Russia holds leading positions in global rankings, including aeronautics and astronautics, with a budget of approx. USD 15 billion. Russian space programme is the responsibility of the Federal Space Agency (Федеральное космическое агентство) - Roscosmos. For the period of 2006-2015, the lower house of the Russian parliament (Duma) has granted the Agency RUB 305 billion (approx. USD 11 billion). All planned Russian space-science expenses in this period amounted to RUB 425 billion; cf. (Чеберко 2016).



Currently, several hundred religious communities, representing almost all religions and beliefs in the modern world, operate on the territory of Russia. According to a research conducted by *Pew Research Center*, 73.3% of Russian citizens are Christians (71% Eastern Orthodox, 1.8% Protestant, 0.5% Roman Catholic), whereas Muslims are the second largest religion in the country and account for 10% of the faithful. Believers of other religions, such as Buddhists, pagans, Charismatic Christians, constitute less than 1% of the population. Finally, the approximate percentage of agnostics and atheists is 16%.

The Russian Orthodox Church is currently the largest religious community in Russia and the former USSR – in addition, it is the largest of the Orthodox Churches in the world. Under its jurisdiction, there are 30,675 parishes and 805 monasteries, which provide the service for 150 million believers in over 60 countries. The Church is divided into 59 metropolises (296 dioceses). The hierarchy of this Church includes 217 diocesan bishops and auxiliary bishops, in addition to 30,000 priests and deacons. The Russian Orthodox Church runs 5 clerical academies and 2 universities, 48 clerical seminaries (including 3 abroad – in the USA, France and Japan) (Anon, n.d.).

Almost since the establishment of the Russian Federation (after the period of communist rule), the Orthodox religion has been an important foundation of Russian policy aimed at building public awareness on the basis of a religious binder. However, the chance for the transformation of the Russian Federation into a religious state is non-existent (Borowik 2000, p. 131).

Currently, the Orthodox Church in Russia has assumed the role of an institution indispensable for the Russian authorities to conduct their policy, both internal and foreign. Thus, it is clearly favoured over other religions, and moreover has the status of the state religion. The Church earned the gratitude of the authorities through the support declared to Vladimir Putin during the presidential election. On the eve of the elections, Putin sought to win the support of religious leaders in his country, promising to allocate tens of millions of dollars for renovating religious facilities and financing religious schools. In turn, the Orthodox Church, which until then had prohibited the participation of the clergy in the elections, changed the decision and issued a decree allowing the clergy to employ their voting rights as a form of protecting the interests of the Church. In this respect, it must be noted that a close relationship between religion and the state has been

established in modern Russia. This state of affairs is reflected in the statements of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, who emphasised the need for full coordination and partnership between the state, the church and Putin, having been recognised by the latter as a natural partner of exercising political power in the country. During the ceremony of enthronement of Bishop Kirill as the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Putin said: “At the most critical moments in our history, people have turned to their roots, moral foundations and religious values,” adding that “the church has fulfilled the moral vacuum that emerged after the decline of values as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991” (Hamdi, 2018). Close relations with the Church generate obvious benefits to the Kremlin – primarily reinforcing the credibility of representatives of the political establishment in the eyes of the Russian people. Hence, the Russian Orthodox Church’s involvement in the conflict in Ukraine was marked by Kirill arguing that the conflict in Ukraine is a religious war against the Russian Orthodox Church, unleashed by the Greek Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Churches that broke away from the guardianship of Russia. Ukraine belongs to the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church, but on December 15, 2018, in Kiev, Epiphanius I, Metropolitan of Kyiv was appointed as primate of the newly created Orthodox Church of Ukraine, independent of Russia. In turn, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, said: “We unanimously define and declare that the entire Orthodox Church within the limits of a politically formed and completely independent Ukrainian state (...) is now a canonical autocephaly, independent and self-governing (Союз православных журналистов, n.d.). In response to the planned attempt to grant autocephaly to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church broke off relations with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Russian state authorities also reacted to the situation in the church in Ukraine: *Russia is ready to defend the interests of the Orthodox believers in Ukraine by political and diplomatic means should it come to illegal acts and the use of violence* (Chinkova 2018). Therefore, the situation in the Church may be a factor continually destabilising the political situation in Ukraine and contributing to the extension and escalation of the armed conflict.

Considering the analysis presented in this section, it can be concluded that the Russian Orthodox Church has already become an effective political force, which influences the internal and external policy of the state.

## Political system

The current political system of the Russian Federation developed as the aftermath of the following two absolutely fundamental events in history: Perestroika and the dissolution of USSR. The former commenced in 1985 upon Mikhail Gorbachev's coming to power. The latter is the concluded in 1991 collapse and dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), as a result of which a presidential draft of the new constitution was prepared and implemented in 1993 (after the referendum held on December 12, 1993) (Конституция Российской Федерации, 1993). The Constitution of the Russian Federation sets out the legal framework for the current political system. According to Article 1 of the Constitution of the RF of December 12, 1993, Russia is a democratic federative state with a republican form of government<sup>12</sup>. A closer analysis of the history of Russia indicates that the power in this state has always belonged to people, which is further confirmed in the Constitution, whose Article 3 stands that the sole source of power in the Russian Federation are its multinational people (Носителем суверенитета и единственным источником власти в Российской Федерации является ее многонациональный народ) (Конституция Российской Федерации, 1993). It should be moreover stressed that for the most part of its history, the power in the Russian state, in fact, belonged to those who have been able to obtain or maintain it by force. Russians have only tended to elect rulers that ensured securing Russia's position in the international system through their hard-line approach. Despite the centuries' long Russian history, turns and tribulations, the principle has yet remained unchanged. Currently, the President is the centre of power and is considered the major integrating force (Article 85). The Constitution of the Russian Federation clearly elevates the role of the President, whose role is detailed prior to that of important organs of power as the Federal Assembly and the government. The President is granted extensive competences, which go far beyond the realm of the executive authority, mainly due to his possession of statutory instruments – the use of decrees.

<sup>12</sup> The term „republican form of government” refers to the fact that the public authorities are elected.

The political system of the Russian Federation consists of the classic three branches: the legislative power, consisting of two chambers (the Federation Council – the upper chamber and the State Duma – the lower chamber), the executive power – the president and government – and the judiciary. The Russian Federation consists of 83 federal subjects composed of 21 republics, 46 counties, 9 countries, 4 autonomous districts, a Jewish autonomous region and two cities of federal importance (Moscow and St. Petersburg) (Anon, n.d. d). The above-mentioned constituents of RF possess local organs of authority, legislation, statute or constitution, however, they do not have the status of states.

The essential powers with regard to security policy are reserved for the federal authorities. They are the centre of gravity coordinating state security policy, including, *inter alia*, supervision over defence production and defence industry<sup>13</sup>. The president of the Russian Federation plays a pivotal role in the Russian security system. The role of the president's advisory body is fulfilled by the Security Council of the Russian Federation, appointed pursuant to Article 83 G of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The Council's task is to introduce proposals and solutions regarding the functioning of Russia's security system, strategic assumptions, define the state of current threats, and issue the opinion on the application for the introduction of martial law. Legislative power yields negligible competence in terms of security. The State Duma determines federal spending and approves the defence budget of the Russian Federation, whereas the role of the Council of RF is to approve the decision of the Duma regarding plans for financing security and the federal law created by the lower chamber, presidential decrees regarding the involvement of armed forces or other military formations to perform state-security-related tasks and their non-statutory tasks, on the introduction of martial law and the use of armed forces away from Russia (Федеральный закон об обороне от 31 мая 1996 года N 61 – Ф. Раздел II Статья 5 oraz Закон Российской Федерации „О безопасности”, от 5 марта

**13** The specific tasks and responsibilities of the federal government bodies are set out in the Federal Law on Defence of April 24, 1996 and its subsequent modifications. cf. федеральный закон об обороне от 31 мая 1996 года N 61-Ф. Detailed provisions regarding the tasks of individual bodies have been introduced successively under the presidential decrees of: 30 June 2003 (No. 86-FZ), 11 November 2003 (No. 141-FZ), 29 June 2004 (No. 58-FZ), 22 August 2004 (No. 122-FZ), 7 March 2005 (No. 15-FZ), 4 April 2005 (No. 31-FZ), 26 December 2005 (No. 185-FZ), 3 July 2006 (No. 96-FZ), 6 July 2006 (No. 105-FZ), 4 December 2006 (No. 201-FZ), 19 June 2007 (No. 103-FZ) 26 June 2007 (No. 118-FZ).

1992 г. No. 2446 – I Статя 16). In practice, therefore, the responsibility for the implementation of security policy, using the armed forces and other military formations and state organs is borne by the government. It follows that the political system has a considerable impact on the creation of the defence policy of the Russian Federation.

## Strategic culture

According to Stephen P. Rosen, strategic culture is the beliefs and assumptions defining the adopted rules of military behaviour in international relations – primarily regarding decisions to undertake military actions, preferences, how to conduct hostilities and the admissible death toll during the war (Rosen 1995, p. 20). According to I. Klein, strategic culture is a set of attitudes and beliefs maintained by the military establishment regarding the political goals of war and the most effective strategy and operational method to achieve them (Klein 1991, p. 5).

Russian strategic culture is deeply rooted in the geographical, spiritual and military factors. Therefore, an important element of this culture is the search for security through territorial expansion reinforced by the Orthodox path. The creation of the Russian Empire is regarded as the means of response to threats. It can be noticed that actions undertaken by Russia are primarily motivated by the inherent philosophy that conquering neighbouring countries Russia would effectively lead to developing a protective belt; not unexpectedly, having established the protective belt, the state will approach another stronger adversary, so the march will have to be continued until no enemy is left in sight. Obviously, under no circumstances is withdrawing from the occupied region possible. Let this be evidenced by the imperialist sentence pronounced by Captain Gennady Nevelskoy on August 13, 1850, at Nikolayevsk-on-Amur: “*Where Russian flag was once raised, there it should not be lowered*” «Где раз поднят русский флаг, там он спускаться не должен». It should be emphasised that building an empire for Russia is not a state matter, but a nationwide one. The empire was built by the government, business, merchants and other actors, *i.e.* Cossacks, refugees, *etc.* Russian strategic culture is famously insensitive to loss. Throughout its history, Russia has displayed the greatest human potential in a strategic European theatre of operations, and thus could afford to

exhibit such an approach. Therefore, for Russians, the world is a zero-sum game (where they lost – there they won). Russian strategic culture is also characterised by a clearly defined goal of action. This is evident in the case of Ukraine, where the message is unambiguous that there is only one Russian nation that can form two separate states, but it is to be directed by an only one leader from Moscow. The Russian strategic culture is thus historically deep-rooted in the prevailing cult of power. The traditional autocratic non-liberal Russian political system – as it is under Putin's rule – allows political leadership to make quick decisions. In Western liberal democracies, the decentralised political power and the division of responsibility between ministries and agencies (many of which work according to their own organisational culture) prevent the emergence of one dominant culture of strategic thought, which limits the decision-making on national security.

Physical and ethnographic geography of Russia, in particular the lack of “fixed” borders that could be defended “made the country vulnerable to neighbouring empires (Ermarth 2006).” Therefore, the external threat from the west, south and east has been forcing Russian leaders over the centuries to develop strong military capabilities to defend the state interests. In addition, the desire to join the ranks of the great European empires has been a constant inspiration for Russian leaders to proceed with their own imperialist strategy.

The coherent external threat, imperialism and a large population of people capable of providing the indispensable human resource for workforce and army have led to developing the Russian strategic culture enriched with military elements. Military-type statehood and culture developed in battles with the Golden Horde (under Ivan III, Vasili III, and Ivan IV). This hypothesis is confirmed by the words of one of the Russian historians W. Kuliczowski, who in his book “Russian History” emphasises that “*the Moscow state was a state of people working for military, the land of people performing continuous military duty, organised on the principle of a military camp, a society consisting of commanders, soldiers. It was a militarised state and a militarised society, not only during wartime but also in the time of peace, governed by the model of military management, which had to affect its spiritual and moral nature*” (Ключевский, 2011).

In the Western world, there is no counterpart of the Russian strategic culture, in reality, it is rather unlikely that the Western strategic thinking system could adopt or develop the Russian approach. The Russian strategic culture is a set of basic

assumptions and values that determine the goal-setting, abilities, structure and ultimately behaviour. These fundamental assumptions shape all military concepts and establish a unique way of forecasting military security in Russia.

After years of marginalisation, in the last four years, the Russian military strategic culture has eventually returned to exert great influence on the political system of the state. The said culture of strategic thinking plays a dominant role in the country's war preparations and in shaping its economic priorities; it also provides the appropriate framework for organising the security and defence system of the Russian Federation during peace, crisis and war.

## Summary

The defence policy of the Russian Federation is impacted by numerous factors. In the geopolitical aspect, the territory of Russia has suffered a significant decrease – 15 new, formally sovereign states appeared. As a result of the collapse of the USSR, Russia has lost the majority of its convenient access to sea routes, and it became separated from Western and Central Europe, as well as from Central Asia. Currently, Russia is a country extending from Eastern Europe, through the northern part of Asia, to the Pacific Ocean. The specificity of its location definitely exerts an adverse effect on Russian state security. The reconstruction of imperial Russia is among the key goals set forth by Vladimir Putin in Russia's foreign and military policy. In fact, the entire economic, political and military activity of Russia is subordinated to this goal. Moreover, in the pursuit of the goal, the authorities have also harnessed religion, which since the collapse of the Soviet Union, following years of indoctrination, is set to shape the new face and values in society. Traditionally, Orthodoxy dominates the entire territory of the country. With regard to the economic and social state, the dependence of the Russian Federation on the extraction and export of crude oil and natural gas is an obvious indication of the constraints of its economy. Moscow's particular interests are formulated in official state documents, such as the Military Doctrine and the National Security Strategy. These documents identify not only external and internal threats to state security but above all indicate the means and methods of possible deterrence.

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