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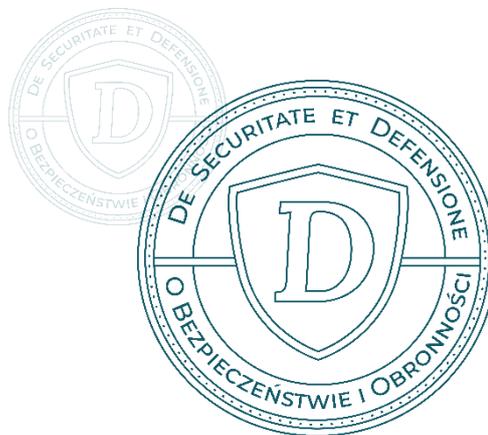
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THE STABILITY OF THE REGIME IN RUSSIA AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

ABSTRACT: The security of a state, especially a modern one, is a complex composition of national values and ambitions, as well as the development of instruments and potentials of the state to achieve the goals resulting from the social contract, which position the state as an entity of the international community with a specific profile and mode of functioning. A unique category of subjectivity and existence in the international arena is the functioning of states with an authoritarian and revisionist profile, as is contemporary Russia. This article analyzes the formula of Russian security policy, which consists of foreign and domestic policy, from which the author tries to isolate specific dependencies and consequences that result from the level of stability of the Russian regime, for global security. This is a legitimate problematic situation for several reasons. Firstly, the contemporary international security arena is looking for a formula to stabilize the unstable order, secondly, Russia remains a very active and insubordinate state in the contemporary global architecture, and thirdly, strategic concerns are raised by visions of Russia both as a failed state and as a totalitarian agent.

KEYWORDS: political stability, Putin's regime, Russia, Russian foreign policy, war

STABILNOŚĆ REŻIMU W ROSJI A BEZPIECZEŃSTWO MIĘDZYNARODOWE

ABSTRAKT: Bezpieczeństwo państwa, szczególnie nowoczesnego, jest złożoną kompozycją narodowych wartości i ambicji, a także wypracowywania instrumentarium i potencjałów państwa dla realizacji celów, wynikających z umowy społecznej, które sytuują to państwo jako również podmiot wspólnoty międzynarodowej o określonym profilu i trybie funkcjonowania. Wyjątkową kategorią podmiotowości i funkcjonowania na arenie międzynarodowej jest funkcjonowanie państw o profilu autorytarnym i rewizjonistycznym, a takowym jest współczesna Rosja. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje formułę rosyjskiej polityki bezpieczeństwa, na którą składają się polityka zagraniczna i polityka wewnętrzna, z której autor próbuje wyizolować określone zależności i konsekwencje, jakie wynikają z poziomu stabilności – tu – rosyjskiego reżimu, dla bezpieczeństwa globalnego. Jest to zasadna sytuacja problemowa z kilku powodów. Po pierwsze tego, że współczesna arena bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego poszukuje formuły stabilizacji rozchwianego ładu, po drugie, że Rosja pozostaje bardzo aktywnym i niesubordynowanym państwem współczesnej globalnej architektury, a po trzecie – strategiczne obawy budzą zarówno wizje Rosji jako państwa upadłego, jak i totalitarnie sprawczego.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Rosja, reżim Putina, stabilność polityczna, wojna, polityka zagraniczna Rosji

INTRODUCTION

The agenda of world interest, or even concern, was dominated, as in the most dangerous moments of contemporary history, by events in the field of international security and interstate confrontations. In a sense, they have replaced vigilance in the field of intrastate analyses. However, it should be recalled that a holistic picture for explication and understanding of the final outcome of problems occurring between states is provided only by the correlation of the internal and external situation of the state. Correct perception and operational reception of political stability allow, for example, to end external escalation and often to prevent it.

In a simplified approach, the political stability of modern states, according to Rodion Aleksandrovich Kandyba, is based on the synergy of indicators: long-term prolongation and continuity – formally and informally determined – of vectors of political processes, the harmonizing factor of the lack of mass protests, stable support for political elites and their most recognizable representatives, that is, for example, the head of state, as well as – an extremely sensitive issue, which is the lack or remaining at a low level of disjunction between individual dimensions of the political scene and power (legislative, executive, judiciary or between the central government – federal or regional). A fundamentally important issue is also the exchange of elites, their mode, or facade rotation, which basically means the lack of this rotation¹.

Basically, the mentioned criteria can serve as a multi-barometer of the political stability of many states; however, certainly not authoritarian states or power centers with a strongly encoded centralization of power and the strategic culture of a totalitarian state, which, in fact, translate not only into the specific legitimization of power and organization of the state, but also on the presence and activity in the international arena²; thus in a straight way on the correlation and configuration of the proportions of the stability components that arise between the domestic and foreign policy factors, that is, also internal security and potential international (non-)security.

A unique example of a state and political regime that cannot be pigeonholed according to the simplest criteria and categorizations is the contemporary Russian regime, which must be treated as a monolithic continuum for 24 years, with strong, centuries-old traditions of uncompromising rule of force.

A problem situation in which, according to the author's research and observations in the current Polish and world literature, there is a research gap in the scope of which a justified attempt (also in the context of Poland's security) to generalize the impact of the regime on society and vice versa, is to make arrangements for the current transition and interaction of the political-wartime-social system, which would allow for better calibration and design of a suitable policy towards Russia.

¹ P.A. Кандыба, *Стабильность политической системы современной России и ротация высшей политической элиты*, „Университетские чтения” 2019, р. 39.

² Vide R. Czachor, *Instytucjonalne uwarunkowania rywalizacji o władzę w post-radzieckich systemach autorytarnych* [*Institutional conditions of competition for power in post-Soviet authoritarian systems*], „Politeja” 4(55)/2018, pp. 175-194.

In view of the significant international activity of Putin's Russia, the subject of this article is the current political regime of Russia in the context of its *modus operandi* of foreign policy and the reconquista of the superpower in the international arena.

Therefore, the cognitive purpose of this article is to reflect on the systemic nature of the internal and foreign (external) policy of the Russian Federation. The utilitarian goal of this article, in comparison to the cognitive purpose, is an actualizing reflection on the connections taking place in the contemporary political regime of Russia in the context of its vision of a global security architecture that still allows for its functioning in a perturbative international environment.

To achieve the cognitive and utilitarian value of the article, the following semi-research goals were designated:

- descriptive – outlining the situation, complexity, and image of the contemporary Russian political regime in the context of its stability,
- diagnostic – determining the conditions for the existence of the Russian regime in context of the goals (successes and failures) of foreign policy,
- prognostic – reflection on the potential limits of the current formula of power of the Russian regime.

The essence and purpose of this methodological structure of the article are to answer the following research questions in the form of:

- general research problem: Can patterns be identified between the stability of the Russian regime and international (non-)security?
- and specific research problems: Is Russia bothered by international fuss and confrontation, or is it, on the contrary, favorable to it?; How does the Putin regime manage Russia during the war effort? and How to build relations with Russia in the context of arrangements regarding the contemporary nature of its statehood?

In the methodological setting of this article, the author proposes the following working hypothesis: However, it seems that the current stage of evolution of the Russian political regime, shaped in an unstable security environment, allows the current Russian establishment to maintain a buffer of power and relative stability, based on demonstrating the need for unprecedented enforcement of external goals for internal stability and development, which ultimately only seemingly stabilizes the power system (and extinguishes the sphere of social expectations), however, having a negative impact on the level of international security, negotiations of the Russian state, as well as the social structure, limiting in long-term the world's trust in Russians, as and prospectively, Russians to this formula of quarrelsome power.

Verification or falsification of the above methodological assumptions will be carried out primarily by the following research methods, performing specific functions, i.e.:

- abstraction and reduction – factors of stability/destabilization of the duration of the Russian regime,

- analyses and analogy – the relationships that arise between foreign and domestic activities (and vice versa) within the scope of the Russian regime,
- deduction and generalizations – in terms of trying to sort out the essence of variations of the security policy of the Russian regime and their translation into international security.

RUSSIA’S HYBRID REGIME: EXTINGUISHING UNIPOLAR NORMS, IMPLEMENTING MULTIPOLAR PLURALISM

Several thousand years of coexistence of the ‘conflicted community of civilization’ have not closed the polemical debate on the formula of looking at a stable *status quo*, and even more so at a peaceful and just future. Also, the contemporary global security landscape, in which the belief that only interests, not ideas (or alliances), are eternal, is characterized by observable trends:

- still high popularity of the ‘democratic promise’ in the domestic sphere and the complicated image of the democratic formula to maintain international security³, as well as
- popularizing the offer of autocratic enforcement of subjectivity and self-agency in the international arena, for which numerous masses in the global context are able to sacrifice the liberal spectrum in their internal everyday life⁴.

Unfortunately, this can be seen in the cracking structure of the global security architecture, basically on every continent and at their junctions (the so-called crumple zones). It is increasingly difficult (which does not mean that this effort has no sense and *raison d'être*) for the current creator and guarantor of order of the last consensus of domination and established rules, i.e. the so-called collective West, to enforce the axioms and mechanisms of the current relative peace dividend. On the opposite pole of apologists for the democratic and liberal *status quo*, revisionists are increasingly visible – with a specific perception of subjectivity in the international arena and vision of interstate relations; but also sensitivity to its internal coherence and the amplitude of social liberation issues.

It is in vain to look for this revisionist front, of which the Russian Federation is a part, not to say the leader (though in fact a buffer and shock-absorber of the Western effort to compete for global values), the criteria of Dahl’s ‘democratic ideal’. Russian society has still not experienced the possibility of strengthening, among others, the autonomy of independent sources of information, allowing for the proliferation of expression of views and criticism toward the government, transparency and effectiveness of choices at the ballot box, real confrontation between political leaders, or social stimulation of the vectors of action of elected institutions and subordinate state instruments⁵. Russian society was not helped in this by the prospect of establishing

³ Vide R. Wike (and others), *Representative Democracy Remains a Popular Ideal, but People Around the World Are Critical of How It's Working*, Pew Research Center, 28.02.2024, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/02/gap_2024.02.28_democracy-closed-end_report.pdf (21.05.2024).

⁴ V-Dem Institute, *Democracy Report 2024 – Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot*, Gothenburg 2024, p. 7, https://www.v-dem.net/documents/44/v-dem_dr2024_highres.pdf (21.05.2024).

⁵ R. Klepka, *Neoutorytyzm – w poszukiwaniu specyficznych cech reżimów politycznych sytuujących się między demokracją a autorytaryzmem* [*Neo-authoritarianism – In search of specific features of political regimes situated*

another sequence of a hybrid form of internal government (with which the vectors of Russia's modified foreign policy were intertwined in a sinusoidal way for a very long time), nor by the current 'war totalitarianism'. At the extreme of Dahl's model, they placed the perspective of social and representative subjectivity, both manifestations of the so-called 'electoral authoritarianism', 'regime of managed pluralism' or increasingly influential in the face of anti-Western propaganda – 'spin dictatorship'⁶. Despite the escalation of the uncompromising nature of Russia's actions in the broadly understood political sphere and the decline of all liberal masks, the Russian regime does not abandon facade democratic mechanisms, which are, in fact, a plebiscite to create Vladimir Putin's popularity.

In support of authoritarian compactness, based on the blurred nature of disinformation on the proper nature of the Kremlin's helm of state, as well as real mechanisms of state management in the field (and against the social feeling of inertia and confusion), the mobilizing nature of psychological tools followed, which had been imputed for several years in the context of states surrounding Russia – in the Kremlin's perception – unfriendly and hostile, such as Poland and Ukraine⁷.

Unfortunately, this had implications for the flexibility to re-evaluate foreign policy and then 'confirm its validity', despite its negative perturbations for the biological, social substance and the image of Russia in the world. The first symptoms of problems with the development of the Western democratic vision of the world, which, in numerous liberal-democratic and commercial-capitalist globalization dimensions, could also be used by Russians (and Russia, among others, counted as a serious player in the G-8), were intertwined with the establishment of the vector the 'old-new' concept of the 'besieged fortress', which should not only be protected for the good of Russia, but also, according to this chronic symptom of the Kremlin, expanded neighborly and globally to mitigate the impact that is imploding Russia internally⁸.

In this way, Russia's domestic policy and foreign policy have become 'asymmetrically symbiotic' dimensions in which, for the last time in Dmitry Medvedev's 'cadence of modernist appearances' it seems that progressive public and governmental hopes to some extent have converged, with respect to Russia's internal reform, as well as an alternative to, for example, 2007 or 2022, building Russia's position in the international arena⁹.

between democracy and authoritarianism], „Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Securitate” 2018, nr 8, p. 149.

⁶ K. Szydywar-Grabowska, *Reżim polityczny Rosji w ujęciu współczesnej politologii [The political regime of Russia from the perspective of contemporary political science]*, „Colloquium” 2018, nr 3, pp. 120-121.

⁷ A. Goszczyński, *Dezinformacja i propaganda w polityce historycznej Federacji Rosyjskiej wobec Polski i Ukrainy (na podstawie publikacji w rosyjskich i prorosyjskich portalach internetowych w 2023 r.). Raport [Disinformation and propaganda in the historical policy of the Russian Federation towards Poland and Ukraine (based on publications on Russian and pro-Russian websites in 2023). Report]*, Fundacja im. J. Kurtyki, Warszawa 2023, p. 65, https://fundacja-kurtyki.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Dezinformacja-i-propaganda-w-polityce-historycznej-Federacji-Rosyjskiej-wobec-Polski-i-Ukrainy_RAPORT.pdf (21.05.2024).

⁸ N. Bugayova, *How we get here with Russia. The Kremlin Worldview*, March 2019, pp. 5-6, <https://www.understandingwar.org/report/how-we-got-here-russia-kremlins-worldview> (21.05.2024).

⁹ A.A. Lyutikh, *Внутренняя и внешняя политика современной России: проблемы взаимозависимости*, „Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne” 2011, 4(11), pp. 89-98.

Reevaluations have reformatted the power style in which it is not decentralized power, strengthened by social cohesion, that brings Russia to unprecedented levels of effectiveness and structural capacity, but the ‘neo-tsar’, Vladimir Putin, is the only guarantee for whom authoritarianism is tolerated and the Constitution of Russia is amended. This was supposed to imply a specific style of presentation of power and its authority in the internal ‘court’ – among the Kremlin and Russian society, which *de facto* meant further declines in freedom indexes, intensification of repression, as well as a neo-revisionist tone toward Russia’s ‘enemies’¹⁰.

The policy path chosen by Russia on the international arena, with growing repression within the state, is evidenced by the fact that, according to the Global Peace Index 2014, it was placed 152nd out of 162 states, opening the worst category of ‘peace orientation’, next to North Korea, Syria and Afghanistan¹¹. In the 2023 edition of the Global Peace Index, understandably, of 163 countries, Russia was no longer the 10th, but the 16th least peaceful state in the international arena¹².

Interestingly, according to the Fragility State Index 2014¹³, around the beginning of hybrid interference in Ukraine, Russia’s internal stability was rated as ‘high warning’, which placed it next to states that traditionally cope with certain destabilizing tendencies, such as Mexico, or can basically ‘force’ social and state stabilization, i.e. Saudi Arabia or Turkey. The Fragility State Index 2023, despite the similar category of instability achieved and the ‘companionship’ of states such as North Korea, Angola, or Palestine, still places Russia’s internal situation among the worst in the world¹⁴.

In both cases, this essentially means locating halfway through the global assessed rate of state stability. This *de facto* creates an equal distance between the least stable countries, such as South Sudan, Somalia, or Yemen, as well as those least affected by the fragility of statehood, Finland, Sweden, and Norway.

WARTIME FORMATTING OF THE RUSSIAN REGIME RESISTANCE

“Russia on the road to victory”, “Zionism and fascism – the roots of kinship”, “(...) The hundred-year-old tradition of British Russophobia continues”, “Terrorism with an ethnic face? A particularly brutal gang of Russophobes is operating on the Belgorod front”, “What is Warsaw preparing for? Polish factories maximize weapons production” – These are

¹⁰ Т. Кустуева-Жан, *Внутренняя эволюция России и ее влияние на внешнюю политику*, https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ifri_rnv_84_rus_tatiana_jean_russie_avril_2015.pdf (21.05.2024).

¹¹ Institute for Economics & Peace Measuring peace in a complex world, *Global Peace Index 2014*, pp. 5-6, https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2014-Global-Peace-Index-REPORT_0-1.pdf (21.05.2024).

¹² Institute for Economics & Peace Measuring peace in a complex world, *Global Peace Index 2023*, pp. 7-9, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/GPI-2023-Web.pdf> (21.05.24).

¹³ Fund for Peace, *Fragility State Index 2014*, pp. 6-7, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/182267/cfsir1423-fragilestatesindex2014-06d.pdf> (08.05.2024).

¹⁴ Fund for Peace, *Fragility State Index 2023. Annual Report 2023*, pp. 4-5, https://fragilestatesindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/FSI-2023-Report_final.pdf (21.05.2024).

just some of the headlines in the second edition of the widely read Russian newspaper *Russky Vestnik* in 2024, through which the complexity of the security situation is explained to Russians¹⁵. It shapes the internal perception of the nation and therefore the optics of the external actions for external security. In the face of such a scenery, it is not surprising that there are many articles in the Russian press and television journalism, including those by Fiedor Papajani, entitled “Russians. Only the restoration of imperial statehood will save our nation.” It is the imperial formula, drawn from and referring to the most extensive territorial scopes of Moscow’s power, that is indicated as a guarantee of prosperity and political stability, an inter-ethnic understanding of the imperial concept, as well as a panacea against the ‘global hybrid war’ of the collective West, which results in the long-term ‘ethnocide’ of Russianness¹⁶.

A supplementary narrative to the strictly political and social perspective of events that take place in and around Russia is provided to the Russian public by a magazine published by the Ministry of National Defense of the Russian Federation, and, therefore, strictly ideologically centralized with the Russian political and military establishment, *Vojenna Mysl*. Currently, most of its content is strictly of a propaganda, patriotic, and mobilization nature. One of the significant articles in this tone was published by General Vladimir Zarudnitskii (the current Director of the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces). He analyzes the geostrategic foundations of national security from the point of view of drawing a new geopolitical map of the world. One of the significant conclusions of this article is the persuasive presentation of a security climate in which the contradictions are not decreasing, but are increasing. This increases the need to be ready for confrontation using the necessary means, even after the end of the war in Ukraine. The general anticipates the likelihood of a literally large conflict in Europe, into which ‘Russia will be drawn’¹⁷.

Social engineering extended to the Russian nation in the context of foreign policy (which has a very strong impact on the internal situation, including the level of the Russian family), two years after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, appears to give the Kremlin control over the temperature of political stability. At the same time, it lacks several symptomatic features that would be present in a democratic state and reveals paradoxical dependencies characteristic of the type of political system in Russia. Research by the Levada Center, conducted in February 2024, shows, first of all, that¹⁸:

- 76% of the respondents are in favor of Russian military activity in Ukraine, including 40% who strongly support it,

¹⁵ *Passim* „Русский Вестник” 2024, 2(1149).

¹⁶ *Vide* Ф. Папаяни, *Русские. Только восстановление имперской государственности спасет наш народ*, „Русский Вестник” 2024, 2(1149), p. 5.

¹⁷ В.Б. Зарудницкий, *Тенденции изменения системы обеспечения военной безопасности государства в условиях новой геополитической карты мира*, „Военная Мысль” 2024, 2, p. 14.

¹⁸ Levada Center – Yuri Levada Analytical Center, *Do you personally support or not support the actions of the Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine?*, 07.05.2024, <https://www.levada.ru/en/2024/05/07/conflict-with-ukraine-assesments-for-february-2024/> (21.05.2024).

- three-quarters of the respondents believe that military operations bring progress and success for Russia, but nearly half of the respondents would opt for initiating peace negotiations; although a similar pool of respondents (with strong support for the war in general) also sees the need to continue the war in Ukraine,
- The Russian war propaganda worked quite effectively, as it encoded in the respondents a complete list of ‘rational’ reasons for starting the war from Russia’s point of view, including, for example, protection of the Novorossiia population, protection of the state, fight against Nazism or protection against NATO, and even answers, in which several percent of the respondents indicate that it was not Russia that started this conflict,
- although on average a dozen or so – 12-13% of Russians do not follow the war situation at all, and about 30% do it only slightly, almost 65% assume that the regime will order another mobilization of troops, with almost 70% (mostly in large cities, including Moscow) denies the need to conscript, train, and send further troops to the front.

The war situation, which finds its peculiar reflection, as can be seen above, in public perception, is, according to the author of *Novaya Gazeta Yevropa*, Leonid Kozmana, quite strongly from the point of view of Kremlin expectations, stabilized after a period of turmoil of the state and political organism, by the decision to invade and certain reactions of indignation for these activities. This determines the specific reality of the Russian nation in which: the regime has become more established in war management (including the rotation of exposed persons of Putin’s entourage, designers, and implementers of the war, in which Witold Jurasz sees Gaddafi’s methods¹⁹), deconcentrated and resigned elites found it justified to tactically come to terms with the current state of affairs, the masses have become tame and indifferent to the war, which gives the establishment a certain handicap and comfort in ruling. This includes crossing further limits of the rationality of military operations in Ukraine or attempts to implode or confront NATO. Even if, as Kozman refers to Russia’s ‘isolation’ in the world, “the main guest of honor of the parade will be (only) the President of Guinea-Bissau”²⁰.

According to a researcher at the Ukrainian Center for International Security, Maksym Razumny, the specific ‘anatomy of resilience’ of the Russian regime is based on a methodically restored imperial model, the stage of which we can currently see in the field of domestic and international politics, the foundations of which are: the expansionist vector of ‘imperial (post-Cold War) revenge’, an omnipotent management system of the ‘center’ and a distanced and controlled ‘province’, creating a tsarist community against the one-power rule of Vladimir Putin, as well as cementing and improving the effectiveness of the above elements through two key binders: invasive ideological pressure and terror (official and unofficial) of the repressive

¹⁹ W. Jurasz, „Zasada Kaddafiego”. *Co oznaczają ostatnie ruchy Władimira Putina* [„The Gaddafi Rule”. *What do Vladimir Putin's recent moves mean?*], 13.05.2024, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/zasada-kaddafiego-co-oznacza-ostatnie-ruchy-wladimira-putina/qcqs7p> (21.05.2024).

²⁰ Л. Гозман, *Добро пожаловать в реальность. Тем, кто не принял войну, нужно готовиться к долгой борьбе*, 19.05.2024, <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2024/05/19/dobro-pozhalovat-v-realnost> (21.05.2024).

apparatus, aimed at neutralizing threats and suppressing oppositional impulses²¹. There are often voices here in terms of actions already carried out, as well as maintaining the impression of attempts to revive the scale of internal control and global influences, such as Katrine Belton, who reports in her book “Putin’s People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took On the West” reconstruction mechanisms and the effects of coupling the domestic and foreign policies of the ‘late Putin’²². This was supposed to determine the fashion for the admissibility of specific methods, as well as to categorize the new-old key to the effectiveness of Russian superpower status, symbolized by the fanfare of hanging the Russian flag in Sevastopol in 2014²³, or by the very long confusion of the West with the gambit ultimatum at the turn of 2021 and 2022.

The need to equip the authoritarian establishment and its internal and external unprecedentedness with a specific style of managing millions of Russians and international public opinion made Putin aware of the underlying tendencies related to specific political upheavals. As Kiril Rogov periodizes and concludes on this basis, the Kremlin is aware of a fairly simple pattern²⁴:

- increases in popularity caused by foreign ‘successes’ (2000 – Chechnya, 2008 – Georgia, 2014/2015 – the annexation of Crimea and 2022 – an unprecedented military move against Ukraine),
- popularity peaks on a social/financial basis (2005 or 2018), as well as on a political/ opposition/ dissident basis (2011/2012 and 2021).

Managing the ‘subcutaneous’ doubt of elites and society (keeping in mind the appearance of stability of the epilogue of the Soviet Union) prompted Vladimir Putin to reform the priorities of weaving the structure of the network of dependencies with key factions of the establishment and his entourage. The long-maintained quite equal distance of the ‘authoritarian pluralism’ of the foundations of Putin’s success from the faction of the civil security apparatus, the army, oligarchs, technocrats or specific groups such as (ultranationalists, Wagner Group or Night Wolves) has been replaced by a close rapprochement (and sufficient contentment) of the circles gathered around Patrushev and Shoigu or Gerasimov (and now, in some cases, their deputies). In relation to the currently less useful environment of oligarchs or technocrats, a procedure was used that could be called the ‘stock market of selective favoritism’²⁵. The pre-war situation, and certainly the war situation, created by the Kremlin, generated demand for a specific potential of lobbyists. Of course, it controls a certain level of social moods and expectations, but to a much

²¹ M. Razumnyi, *Resilience of the Russian state system and processes within the Russian elite in the context of the 2024 presidential election campaign*, Centre for International Security/Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, p. 2, https://analytics.intsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Eng_CIS_12_Russia_Elections-2024.pdf (08.05.2024).

²² Vide K. Белтон, *Люди Путина. О том, как КГБ вернулся в Россию, а затем двинулся на Запад*, Таллинн 2022.

²³ K. Kurczab-Redlich, *Wowo, Wołodia, Władimir. Tajemnice Rosji Putina [Vova, Volodya, Vladimir. Secrets of Putin’s Russia]*, Warszawa 2016, p. 678.

²⁴ K. Rogov, *What is Behind the Myth of Putin’s “Contract”?*, SCEEUS (Stockholm Centre for Eastern European Studies) Voices on Russia series, NO.3/2024, p. 5, <https://www.ui.se/globalassets/ui.se-eng/publications/sceeu/what-is-behind-the-myth.pdf> (21.05.2024).

²⁵ G.S. Terry, *From Neo-Patrimonialism to Neo-Praetorianism. The Impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War on Russia’s Internal Power Structure*, [w:] *Ukraine’s Struggle, Russia’s Dilemmas, and Global Consequences*, ed. S. Šrāders, Tartu 2024, p. 30.

greater extent influences the possibility of projecting the ideological view (albeit militant), ‘Russkiy mir’. Hence, the synergy and symbiosis of ‘altar and power’ is stronger and much more visible in the media (also globally). Its goal is to cultivate coherence of all tense links in the stability of Russian statehood: the social sphere, diplomacy, and, above all, the Armed Forces. Its purpose is to project the transcendence and missionary nature of the Kremlin’s vision toward the social audience and the reserved internal political scene, as well as to emphasize the unity and correctness of Russia’s actions in the world²⁶.

Referring to the faction’s fight for Putin’s recognition of international security, it should also be stated that the greatest challenge for its participants is the influence and reaching Putin with specific ideas of the so-called patriot factions whose goal is to strengthen the state in many aspects, so far, along one line, the line of uncompromisingness. In the internal dimension, this means, for example, intolerance of the opposition or spreading suspicion among agents, while in the international arena it is the result of what the international community has known Russia for in recent decades, revanchism and confrontation²⁷.

THE COMPLEXITY OF AUTHORITARIAN BALANCE

Analyzing the potential prospect of inefficiency and erosion of the Putin regime from the perspective of historical ‘troubles’ over Volga, Dmitry Travin, a St. Petersburg journalist and economist, as well as the author of many publications on the modernization of Russia, claims that the condition for the survival of the modern Russian regime is the efficiency and spectacular nature of the actions of the government, agencies, and state services. They determine the redistribution and sharing of the ‘resource cake’. Similarly, the potential for destabilization and the door to destructive scenarios for the Kremlin are opened by inefficiency – for example, in terms of ensuring living conditions – as a fuse of the internal situation, or, especially in Russia, of the perceived international position of the state, which can be considered as a ‘fuse of the fuse’, through which internal ineffectiveness can, in fact, be masked²⁸.

So far, despite many analyzes and despite facts that would delegitimize another regime, the above scheme deprives the regime’s architects of more serious concerns. The prediction of the fall/change of the regime has been going on for a long time. Tracing the predictive factors of a potential transformation or palace revolution in Russia²⁹:

- full appropriation and authoritarian subordination of power by the tsar-Putin,

²⁶ A. Curanović, *Domestic Lobbyists and Conservatism in Russian Foreign Policy*, [w:] *Russia’s Foreign Policy: The Internal-International Link*, ed. A. Ferrari, E.T. Ambrosetti, ISPI, Mediolan 2021, pp. 61-64, https://www.es-teri.it/mae/resource/doc/2021/07/ispi_russia_foreign_policy.pdf (21.05.2024).

²⁷ G. Osiecki, T. Żółciak, *Rewolucja na Kremlu nie była przypadkiem. Ekonomista ministrem obrony? Rosja wysłała sygnał* [*The revolution in the Kremlin was not an accident. Economist as defense minister? Russia sends a signal*], 01.06.2024, <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/rewolucja-na-kremlu-nie-byla-przypadkiem-ekonomista-ministrem-obrony-rosja-wysyla-sygnal-7033425862638336a.html> (02.06.2024).

²⁸ Д.Я. Травин, *Продуцествуе ли путинская система до 2042 года?*, Санкт-Петербург 2016, p. 315.

²⁹ N. Petrov, *Putin’s Downfall: The Coming Crisis of the Russian Regime*, Essay - ECFR 166/2016 (April), p. 3, https://ecfr.eu/archive/page/-/ECFR_166_PUTINS_DOWNFALL.pdf (21.05.2024).

- manual management through the crisis (see, among others, show-scolding of government meetings),
 - narrowing development horizons and international interactions,
 - mobilization and subsequent military recruitment,
 - or conflicts in the political and military base, elites,
- it can be stated that all these factors *de facto* occurred, but did not materialize the change scenario. The Russian regime has experienced various phases, but it has never lost its internal initiative or the impetus of foreign interference, although for almost a decade in Ukraine it did so through the instruments of ‘subtle’ anarchization of another state community.

Analysis of the situation of the regime two years after initiating the invasion, and earlier after a year of announcing it, in the context of the current ‘in-game’ scenarios of Russian (r)evolution proposed by Casey Michel, that is:³⁰

- life-long power of V. Putin,
 - ‘springs of ultranationalists’
 - ‘technocratic reset’,
 - ‘the return of a democratized Russia to the international community’,
 - or anarchic breakdown of statehood, internal chaos, and civil war,
- it rather provides a picture of Russia closest to the extension of the first scenario, namely, maintaining, or perhaps trying to tighten, the methods of a dictator who often experiments with internal power and external influence.

For now, it seems that it is also far from the factors of Putin’s failure and ‘political fatality’ in the war in Ukraine, which Duncan Allan would see (in the context of increased subjectivity and courage to ‘continue to stay at the helm’ of the Russian regime) in, among others: total withdrawal resulting from cyclical and strategic defeats in Ukraine, involving the surrender of all territories, as well as pressure on the regime in terms of reparations or trial of war criminals, the leading variables of which could include, the devastating discrepancy between the life situation and economic condition of Russia and the rest of the alike powers, or the unsuccessful reorientation of the shipment of hydrocarbons, which builds war capital³¹. The symbols of the contemporary stability of the regime in Russia (remembering, among others, Aleksandra Litvinenko, Anna Politkovskaya, and Boris Nemtsov) remain the executed (in the dark aura of understatement and retaliation of the regime) dissidents and enemies of the regime. The first is, of course, the author of the quasi-coup, associated with Russia’s activities in the gray security zone and at odds with

³⁰ Passim C. Michel, *Russia Tomorrow: Five Scenarios for Russia’s Future*, Atlantic Council – Eurasia Center, February 2024, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Five-Scenarios-for-Russias-Future.pdf> (21.05.2024).

³¹ D. Allan, *Imagining Russia’s future after Putin. Possible outcomes of a defeat in Ukraine*, May 2023 – Briefing Paper, Russia and Eurasia Programme, p. 3, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/05/imagining-russias-future-after-putin/russias-foreign-policy-orientation-end-2027> (21.05.2024).

Russia's military leadership, Yevgenii Prigozhin. The second is a symbol of suppressed affront to the structural depravity of the state, Alexei Navalny³².

According to the report of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, the influential war conditions for the duration of the Russian regime, are mainly (or primarily) the perception of success or failure in Ukraine, military revolts in the field, or mass desertions that disorganize the war effort, and the extent to which Russians as a nation perceive the war in terms of an 'existential campaign' for the survival and security of Russia, rather than another tragic statistics of war losses³³.

However, according to the authors of the report, the geopolitical conditions of the existence of the Russian regime, often not treated properly or not noticed, have for several years, especially in war situations, turned out to be a very important factor in Russia's relatively high flexibility in implementing its controversial global subversion of international order. Thus, on the one hand, China's neutral support for the war has a backup influence on the Russian regime, which the authors place at the opposite pole of multilateral bodies – such as the United Nations or the UN Security Council. Factors that mobilize the regime include relations with the US, the EU, and, above all, the readiness and effectiveness of the West in transferring support to Kiev. According to the creators, the lower-ranking spectrum of the presence of the regime as a stable one is its influence on 'near abroad' or a niche influence on international bodies, the level of relations in Asia, Africa, and South America³⁴, which may be surprising, considering Moscow's projection of the importance of BRICS.

Regarding the internal aspects of the stability of the court of Russian authoritarianism, Andrea Kendall-Taylor divided them into two groups. The first, such as: the lack of a real and communicated alternative to Putin's offer, full control over the national infosphere, the 'correct' level of well-being of Russians, a fundamentally depoliticized – without real political ambitions – army, the presence of loyalty of power structures (despite, for example, criticism of the SVR for assessing Ukraine's morale before the war), Putin's general popularity or the effectiveness of the 'besieged fortress' accepted as reality. Potentially negative factors for the Kremlin are said to be: potentially exceeding the critical mass in terms of repression, cracks in the negative consensus of the elites, and – interestingly – the manifestation and scale of influential dissident emigration, affecting not only the internal situation, but also the foreign perception of Russia as a place to live³⁵.

An important voice in the context of translating the domestic policy situation into Russia's international policy and vice versa appears to be that of Max Bergmann of the Center for Strategic

³² P. Obaji, *Kremlin Wants to Purge Prigozhin Loyalists From Key Wagner Roles*, 30.06.2023, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/kremlin-wants-to-purge-prigozhin-loyalists-from-key-wagner-rolesf> (21.05.2024).

³³ B. Deen, N. Drost, M. Carsten, *After Putin, the deluge? Foresight on the possible futures of the Russian Federation*, *Clingendael Report (Netherlands Institute of International Relations)*, October 2023, p. 26, <https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/after-putin-the-deluge.pdf> (21.05.2024).

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

³⁵ A. Kendall-Taylor, *The Russia Stability Tracker*, November 2023, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/the-russia-stability-tracker-nov23> (21.05.2024).

and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington. Firstly, he indicates that although it is the social side – the nation – that has the initiative to introduce changes, it is worth strategically communicating readiness to accept Russia into the democratic family of nations. On the other hand, the perception of the stability determines the current policy of the West towards Russia³⁶, but also, importantly, towards Ukraine. This issue is expressed, for example, by the West's dilemmas about whether to participate in controlling the escalation of the situation around Ukraine (or continue to hand over the initiative to Putin), which can be portrayed, among others, through long debates on the training of Ukrainian soldiers on Ukrainian territory, consent to attacking Russian territories with weapons transferred from the West, or a different response than before to the acts of hybrid war of Russia and Belarus on the ground of NATO / EU.

RUSSIA AND THE WORLD: IN THE LOOP OF THE AUTHORITARIAN Demeanor of the Kremlin

Meanwhile, Russia – primarily its regime – has no dilemmas about what it needs to implement its neo-power plan, which in fact brings it mainly international criticism, constant pressure of impairing resources and the state institutions, as well as loss of international trust. The years 2008-2024 are marked by a significant reorientation of Russian polystrategic priorities, compared to the years 2000-2007, dominated by the boycott of the consensus and categorical disagreement with the West and states interested in accession to the euroatlantic structures or simply independence from Russia. International economic relations and, incidentally, even the interest in cooperative strengthening of international security of the earlier era, were replaced by an obsession with shaping a new international order (from now on intended to be fair and balanced) and the weaponization of foreign policy. As a result, it has lost any attachment to the supremacy of law in international relations (to which it constantly refers), not to mention the principles of international humanitarian cooperation³⁷.

In this way (probably bearing in mind historical periods in which alleged international inertia was combined with attempts to reform or quasi-democratic re-evaluation of political, social and economic relations), the Russian establishment faced a narrow choice of maximizing the cult of power. The cult of power in international relations is understood as a fragmentation of NATO, treated as a paper tiger, as well as the management of possible symptoms of internal weakness, but also as the cult of power in internal relations, building credibility (and securing discipline and subordination to the implementation of the global renaissance of powers) of the

³⁶ M. Bergmann, *What Could Come Next? Assessing the Putin Regime's Stability and Western Policy Options*, CSIS, 20.01.24, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-could-come-next-assessing-putin-regimes-stability-and-western-policy-options> (21.05.2024).

³⁷ D. Jarnicki, *Rosyjska wizja współczesnej globalnej architektury bezpieczeństwa [Russian vision of contemporary global security architecture]*, Siedlce 2023, p. 464.

course in the international arena. This was also dictated by the need to reconcile the social and business side with the understood consequences of subsequent geopolitical disturbances³⁸.

Kirill Telin from Lomonosov Moscow State University calls this a strict instrumentalization of the ‘crisis’ as an urgent need in Russian discourse, to explain the regime’s efforts to achieve ‘stability’. The composition and logic of this seemingly antithetical discourse are based on several assumptions: contrasting disinformation through strict maneuvering between crisis and stability, as well as contrasting justification of one’s own actions in a crisis situation (or the ‘historical moment’ in which Russia finds itself) in order to restore stability. Additionally, through willing and expansive handling of the crisis, the need to achieve political stability is shaped (and at the same time overcomes any resistance to discounted measures). If this fails, the responsibility for the spectrum of the crisis is ceded to conspiring external forces or internal enemies. As Telin points out, this intricate transmission of perception has long lost the features of pragmatic political communication with the nation or external partners. Instead, it gained the status of a pragmatic play on emotions and fears³⁹.

Russian security policy, foreign and domestic, has been taken over, as Fenghua Liu points out, by an obsession closely related to political stability in the state, as well as the reception of the international image, that is, the category of sovereignty, which resonates independently in the subsequent octaves of Russian diplomacy of the last 30 years, which happened to be dominated by the ranking of policy priorities with the following characteristics:⁴⁰

- pro-Western,
- neo-Slavic,
- multipolar,
- cooperation and support for strategic stability,
- great power pragmatics,
- as well as great power strength.

Therefore, as Bobo Lo, a renowned researcher of Russia, points out, the regularity of Russian policy in relation to its general state situation is the constant sending of misleading messages that require (especially after 24 February 2022) ‘strategic patience’. Russia, even ‘autoimmunologically’, taking into account its factors and designates of strategic culture, opposes preventive sensitivity and maintains uncertainty – either for its own domestic audience, or for states that are considered to be in its orbit, or for its strategic competitors. On the one hand, even in periods of the best economic situation of cooperation (or apparent neutral kindness and vectors of non-collision international affairs), it is not a coincidence that, according to Lo, occurring in periods of global economic crises (or pandemic), we can expect de-escalation and

³⁸ Г. Перепелица, *Культ силы во внешней политике России как квинтэссенция российского национального интереса*, „Дипломасја і Bezpieczeństwo” 2015, 1(3), p. 108.

³⁹ К.О. Телин, *Кризис как потребность: встроенные парадоксы российского официального дискурса*, „Политическая наука” 2022, 3, pp. 234-235, 251-252.

⁴⁰ F. Liu, *Russia’s Foreign Policy Over the Past Three Decades: Change and Continuity*, “Chinese Journal of Slavic Studies” 2022, 2(1), pp. 98-99.

deliberation, as well as reservations and negations. Even during the so-called American-Russian ‘reset’ after 2008 (which for the Russians was supposed to be a reference to the thaw of the era of superpower parity of ‘Cold War 1.0’), Russia focused on highlighting its demands and pushing the projection of its own geopolitical metaconcepts, such as Open Eurasia from ‘Lisbon to Vladivostok’⁴¹. The essence of this now forgotten climate of Russia’s relations with the Western world was a subliminal play on the reproaches of the alleged depreciation of Russia by the West, not losing the specific and established authority of the government, nor, above all, the prospect of reheating the ‘besieged fortress’ if the situation changed dramatically and the ‘internationally consensual Russia’ stopped bringing any benefits to the Kremlin.

The panacea for benefits (in terms of the international hierarchy), as well as the phantom pains of the former superpower (in terms of status), as well as current fears about, for example, color revolutions (and in this sense it will be ‘active defense’ in Russian perception), Russia finds, as Mirosław Minkina points out, in the entire spectrum of ‘confrontational policy’. According to Minkina (apart from the obvious acts of faith in the effectiveness of Russian instruments in Syria and Ukraine), it is a dynamic combination of: information confrontation, digital-information revolution, and counter-revolution, but also strategic deterrence against the powers that are reluctant to Russia⁴². Therefore, this strategy takes into account both the stability of the regime and the issue of global (civilizational) security. Thus, it links both issues very closely, *de facto* making activity and initiative (not to say spectacularity) dependent on monitoring threats to internal and external sovereignty, doctrinally legitimizing the nuclear narrative in this context against the threats created, but also mitigating potential threats by influencing the harmony of competitors (*vide*: Brexit or interference in American elections)⁴³.

Furthermore, also important for the durability of the Putin regime is the issue of the continued effective use in many fields and in many parts of the world of quasi-state, ‘praetorian’ entities or those with unclear connections to the Kremlin. They operate in the gray zone of pursuing the Kremlin’s interests and use such tools that, through Russian influence, drive the Kremlin’s external power (e.g. the newly arranged subordination of the Wagner Group) and internal power (e.g. Kadyrovites)⁴⁴.

However, it is necessary to distinguish and specify two observable phenomena that have occurred in recent years at the intersection of foreign and domestic policy. The first was, according to Serena Giusti, a quite clear desire to make the foreign policy of the Russian

⁴¹ B. Lo, *Russia’s crisis – what it means for regime stability and Moscow’s relations with the world*, 2009, Centre For European Reforms, https://www.cer.eu/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/policybrief_russia_19feb09-771.pdf (21.05.2024).

⁴² M. Minkina, *Rosyjskie instrumentarium wplywu, nękania i prowokacji* [Russian instruments of influence, harassment and provocation], Siedlce 2023, pp. 9-44.

⁴³ *Vide* M. Isikoff, D. Corn, *Rosyjska ruletka. Jak Putin zhakował Amerykę i wygrał wybory za Donalda Trumpa* [Russian roulette. How Putin hacked America and won the election under Donald Trump], Warszawa 2018.

⁴⁴ *Vide* J. Watling, O.V. Danyluk, N. Reynolds, *The Threat from Russia’s Unconventional Warfare Beyond Ukraine, 2022–24*, RUSI Special Report, February 2024, <https://static.rusi.org/SR-Russian-Unconventional-Weapons-final-web.pdf> (25.05.2024).

Federation an indisputable sacred (*sacrum*) and a value of national consensus⁴⁵. On the other hand, we are observing an extremely sad asymmetric perspective of the consequences of foreign policy, in which the goals of the Kremlin and society seem to be diametrically blurred. The state leadership, according to Andrei Kolesnikov, regularly carries out activities toward its geopolitical rivals that are intended to permanently encode the social ‘normality of the crisis’, and in fact to invasively make it common for the morale of the nation, and thus ensure indifference in the context of the ‘short horizon of life planning’⁴⁶ – or in the context of the effect of internal repression or another military adventure by Moscow.

This situation is, of course, beneficial to the Russian authorities, which still do not care about the lives of hundreds of thousands of soldiers thrown to the front, although it causes an obvious impasse in the development of the state. Moreover, it pursues the non-obvious goal of the authoritarian circle, which is vividly outlined by Maria Domańska. The spread of marasmus related to Russia’s confrontational style of existence in external terms, as well as the fenced monopoly on Russian civilizational success, causes a kind of ‘fetishization’ of the current regime, according to the saying: a known enemy is better than unknown prospects of change. Meanwhile, as Domańska notes, further strategic fetishization and toleration of destructive impunity will only repeat sequences of exceptionally high stability of the regime – like in January 2021, the effects of which (especially in the case of forced ‘patriotic education’ of Russians) may be more and more bold and more unfavorable to the global security situation⁴⁷. In this context, it is important to point out the opinion of Agnieszka Legucka, who notes that the Russian political system is ‘stable’ but, paradoxically, in some circumstances ‘not necessarily durable’, which may especially manifest itself if Putin does not manage to triumphantly end the war in Ukraine in his own authoritarian terms⁴⁸.

What remains intriguing is the variant and prospects of further internal fetishization of the regime if Putin was to drag the fate of Russians into a devastating confrontation with NATO, as well as the consequences of possible tactical successes in exposing NATO’s erosion and indolence. At least several dozen Euro-Atlantic states and tens of millions of rational Russians should not want to allow such a prospect to occur.

⁴⁵ S. Giusti, *Russia’s Foreign Policy for the country’s stability*, ISPI Analysis, No. 165-April 2013, p. 8, https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/publicazioni/analysis_165_2013.pdf (21.05.2024).

⁴⁶ А. Колесников, *Режим размываемой консолидации: система Путина до и после выборов-2024*, 06.03.2024, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/03/rezhim-razmyvaemoj-konsolidacii-sistema-putina-do-i-posle-vyborov-2024?lang=ru> (21.05.2024).

⁴⁷ M. Domańska, *The fetish of Russia’s stability: an intelligent weapon against the West*, 24.03.2023, <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2023/03/24/the-fetish-of-russias-stability-an-intelligent-weapon-against-the-west/> (21.05.2024).

⁴⁸ A. Legucka, *Putin 5.0. Konsekwencje dla polityki wewnętrznej i zagranicznej Rosji*, 15.04.2024, <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/putin-50-konsekwencje-dla-polityki-wewnetrznej-i-zagranicznej-rosji> (21.05.2024).

CONCLUSIONS

The security policy of the Russian Federation over the last 20-30 years has been a campaign of consistent obsession with goals and an impatient search for the right situation in terms of the selection and implementation of appropriate tools that will give the Kremlin effectiveness and self-agency. A non-obvious but important process of the neo-power struggles of the Russian Federation was to secure the impression of cohesion, stability and acceptance of the so-called 'Putin's Russia', understood as a formula of power, a type of regime and a new construct of Russia's social contract.

Today, it is known that for most of the time Vladimir Putin controlled the state, and it is difficult to call Russia a peaceful country. Russia 'found' enemies according to established patterns, based on the complex of defeat in the first Cold War and as a result of this downfall. It is, among others, the West that became the target haven for its former satellites, as well as states striving for real sovereignty. This is currently resulting, first, in the methodical destruction of the Ukrainian 'brother nation', and several hundred million more people around (and away from) Russia are considering starting a world confrontation based on this division. Enemies are also traditionally located in Russia itself; hence, the permanent lack of consent to the development of potentially revolutionary cells for the Russian system of power, that is, civil society.

This situation raises obvious questions about what is true. What exactly is 'Russkiy mir' and what is the 'indivisibility of global security' that Russia wants to introduce in the multipolar variant? In terms of the former, it is certainly not a 'peace' formula and, in terms of the latter, not the situation that guarantees 'sovereignty' of states, as Ukraine and the protesters and critics of Russia's war policy have clearly seen.

There are a number of other issues that allow us to positively verify the hypothesis and answer research problems. Analysis of the most important elements and acts of Russia's security policy indicates that confusion of adventurism and chaos management does not necessarily harm the power system, which, based on chaos, gains the ability to creatively translate this chaos. Unfortunately, similarly to the precise attacks on Ukrainian critical infrastructure, all assets that could hinder Russia – depriving it of the flexibility of subordination and military management in a society that is drained of these assets and, above all, beliefs and ambitions – were also precisely suppressed.

This has resulted in a situation in which both internal and external enemies are afraid of the unpredictability of the Kremlin, which only fuels its strategic initiative and petrifies its stability, fueled by the methodically established 'deep state' and 'negative consensus'.

In conclusion, it should be noted that 'Putin 5.0' is a regime focused on achieving neo-power goals based on the formula of an aggressive, imperial and at the same time 'besieged fortress', which, however, puts pressure on the regime for its two-track stabilization. This is a formula of an uncompromising, though selectively targeted and balanced, idea of fear, a conditionally pragmatic de-escalation, which will, however, leave the Kremlin with the impression

of the fragility of the agreement. Even during the last ‘reset’ with the West, Russia focused on assertive and transactional conditions, in the narrow ‘concert of powers’ sense to which it strives, pushing internally the idea of self-tenancy, although wrapped in traces of democracy. However, this is a safe distance from the democratic formula, as in the case of Yeltsin, as a traumatic warning leading to international depreciation and loss of internal authority. Russia cares about mutually legitimizing internal and external dimensions. The contours of the world prompted to Russians are simple. The evil West is waiting for Russia to stumble. According to the Kremlin, the contemporary and future world is not the West, but, for example, the East and the South. Moreover, the part beyond the Urals is presented as the target development part of Russia.

The potential ‘limit’ of the above polystrategic vision is the combination of: the patience of the elites and Putin's inner circle in enforcing the Kremlin's revisionist expansion in the West, but also China's real long-term interests towards Russia (and its East), as well as the situation when young people from St. Petersburg and Moscow (not only from the provinces and peripheries), will finally be harnessed to materialize the extremely irrational Kremlin's vision. An important factor will also be the potential balancing of the strategic initiative through greater symmetry of the polemics on the escalation ladder (deterrence) with the global West, which has not existed so far and which allows Russia to both expand externally and increase its internal dictate.

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