



UKRAINE AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION PRAXIS IN TERMS OF TERRITORIAL CONQUESTS

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The hypothesis of the article is that the Russian Federation has developed a praxis in terms of territorial conquests, based on historical reminiscences, and it will not be renounced, especially in the case of Ukraine. By immersing in history, without making it a determinant of the present and without showing psittacism, we believe that the assertiveness of the Russian Federation in its proximity can be justified only from its point of view. The brutal and completely illegal intervention in Ukraine is an example of reality violation.

The end of communism and the dissolution of the USSR have generated resentment among the Russians, which denotes capitulation. The Russians have probably rejoiced for a while over the end of totalitarianism, but they have constantly regretted the loss of the empire. The "Russian world" is, in fact, nothing but a form of virtual restoration of the Soviet empire, a trap of the past, in the souls and minds of the Russians, a ferment whose purpose is the internal destruction of the states that emerged after the collapse of the USSR, preventing them, by injecting feelings of confusion and nostalgia, to overcome the post-Soviet stage.

Keywords: Russian Federation; praxis; Ukraine; war; international system;



THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM RE-EVALUATION FROM THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION PERSPECTIVE

The war in Ukraine: an epiphenomenon of the international system conceptualization following the *Westphalian* model

All the dominant theories of international relations are an emanation of the international system established after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. It has resulted in freezing the international system conceptualization in the *Westphalian* logic. Moreover, it creates the premises for narrowing the ability to understand premodern international systems, as the historically promoted vision results in the inability to answer the questions of modern international system. *Westphalian* logic acts as a Procrustean straitjacket over any other, more permissive, theory related to international systems. Moreover, it is undeniably true that the structural innovation of the Peace of Westphalia, which led to the emergence of a new type of political actor as a unit of the international system, the sovereign state/nation state, still applies today, with some adjustments. However, being lacking in the ability to understand the international system beyond the perspective of *Westphalian* reasoning, having sovereignty as its basic attribute, generates the propensity of historical processes towards conflicts. Therefore, we believe that the historical perspective identifies the moments of the international systems critical transformation. In this regard, the war in Ukraine is an epiphenomenon of the international system conceptualization following the *Westphalian* model.

The main method used in the present approach is that of historical research, which is based on scientific rigour. It is the scientific rigour that, when applied to the study of some conflicts – in our case, the one in Ukraine, analysed as part of the Russian Federation praxis in terms of territorial conquests –, requires the introduction of criteria and rules that differentiate between what is false and what is true.

It is undeniably true that the structural innovation of the Peace of Westphalia, which led to the emergence of a new type of political actor as a unit of the international system, the sovereign state/nation state, still applies today, with some adjustments. However, being lacking in the ability to understand the international system beyond the perspective of Westphalian reasoning, having sovereignty as its basic attribute, generates the propensity of historical processes towards conflicts.



The current international system is a closed one, where the interaction, process and structure reveal an aggregate following the core-periphery model, which has proved sustainable over time. From this point of view, the international system seems divided into two worlds: “the area of peace” and “the area of conflict”.

Without diving deep into historical epistemology, we note that the effort of documenting the article has been focused on the establishment of some relative truths, because the process of historical knowledge is inexhaustible. History is an ideographic science (according to the Neo-Kantian School of Baden, A.N.), because it does not formulate experimental laws that can be tested in scientific laboratories, even if historical materialism has attempted to do so, but is constituted as a cognitive endeavour that gravitates around two questions: “How?” and “Why?”. “How?” refers to the reconstruction of certain elements, facts, events, and “Why?” to their interpretation. Determining the relationship between “How?” and “Why?” will result in establishing causal relationships. The “relationship” between “How?” and “Why?” is altered by somehow antagonistic reasons: if the answer to the first question is largely due to the person’s capacity to document, make connections, analyse, think critically, the answers to the second question are related to the influences of the social, political, intellectual environment and not only. In this regard, the objective reconstruction of the truth is a desideratum to which we must aspire.

Ukraine: the intersection of the “area of peace” and the “area of war”

In a reductionist manner, the current international system is a closed one, where the interaction, process and structure reveal an aggregate following the core-periphery model, which has proved sustainable over time. From this point of view, the international system seems divided into two worlds: the first one, the area of peace, is dominated by international political actors that do not consider the use of war to resolve their differences, having interdependent political-economic-social-military relations. It is possible because most of the powerful international political actors belong to this area; the second one, the area of conflict, where sovereignty remains sacred, in a strictly Westphalian logic, and where states still use war as an instrument of politics. In this area, states are dominated by the feeling that it is likely for the tensions between them to escalate and, consequently, they

are preparing for war. It is made possible and even accelerated by the weak degree of interdependencies at all levels.

Throughout history, international systems have had different structures: first, there were imperial or hegemonic control structures, where a single entity dominated the system; then, the bipolar structure emerged, in which two entities dominated the system; last, the balance of power structure, where three or more states controlled the system. It should not be overlooked that the modern state was born in an international context that included a diversity of social units such as city-states, nation-states and empires (Mann, 2017, passim).

Even if, in general, the aim is to anticipate the changes taking place in an international system or, at least, to identify some of their common or complementary elements (changes, A.N.), what can be said about them is that they are closed or open. To clarify this point, we need to go back in time to John Halford Mackinder’s geopolitical theory. According to the mentioned theory, geography has a considerable impact on human mobility. Essentially, what Mackinder tells us is that power is bounded by geography. For the British geopolitician, the world is divided into three large regions: a Eurasian *heartland*, around which there is an inner semicircle, and beyond it an outer semicircle. In his view, the *heartland* represents the starting point of universal history, an “*island-world*” that is a closed international system. Geographical obstacles – the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Indian Oceans, the Sahara Desert etc. – make the communication with the “*outside world*” impossible. However, the “*pre-Columbian*” situation changes after 1492, when transoceanic navigation transforms the “*island-world*” from a closed system into an open one. Thus, the powers from the outer semicircle – Great Britain, Japan, the USA – begin to exert pressure on the *heartland*. The “*Columbian*” era lasts until 1900, when expansion comes to an end because of “*no longer existing property claims*” (Mackinder, 1904, p. 421). Thus, the “*post-Columbian*” era “*closes*” the international system again, this time globally. What is important about these types of international systems, with an impact



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on international relations even today, is how they operate. While in an open system the shock of major changes can be transferred and dissipated in “*unknown areas*”, in a closed system the changes must either reflect or “*reverberate*” throughout the system (Ib., p. 422). Consequently, the war in Ukraine will reverberate throughout the international system, as a whole, and, implicitly, throughout the international security system.

The Russian Federation view of sovereignty in the context of the war in Ukraine

The Russian Federation has a big problem with understanding the term sovereignty. Stephen D. Krasner, a leading international relations theorist, claims that the term “*sovereignty*” has four meanings: international legal sovereignty (the international recognition of a state within its own borders), Westphalian sovereignty (the exclusion of external interference in the actions of the authorities of a state), internal sovereignty (the ability of authorities to exercise control within their own borders) and interdependent sovereignty (the ability to develop policies regarding the flow of information, people, ideas, goods and threats) (Krasner, 1999, passim). Analysing the domestic and foreign policy of the Russian Federation, we realize that it can partially meet only the first two requirements of sovereignty. Being more nostalgic about the past, the decision-making class cannot understand that Yalta (4-11 February 1945), the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), the Peace of Westphalia (1648) belong to the past, and that the state must share authority and absolute sovereignty within international organizations. This is how a Russian success story unfolds: no matter how hard one fights for sovereignty, one ends up strengthening the authorities even more. The more power the authorities have, the less sovereignty the country has. Sovereignty does not mean only, or not at all, the display of a nuclear arsenal or the deployment of special forces in theatres of operations; sovereignty means, above all, assiduous efforts to develop a country, integrate it into the international system and make others recognize it. The Russian Federation proves the opposite: an undisciplined political actor at the international level.

For example, the missile is an essential symbolic element in the Russian mentality. The missile is an object, physically shrouded in mysticism, the graft of the vastness of the territory and, at the same time, the state’s response to the challenge represented by this vastness. A symbol of fear and power alike, the missile is the main attribute of the Russian Federation sovereignty. The Russians feel the fear, but they are, at the same time, “*producers*” of fear and capable of exploiting it, turning it into a political-economic-military resource. The way Vladimir Putin has transformed the Russian Federation serves the Hobbesian world, where a “*war of all against all*” has fear as its main resource and security measures as its remedy. Thus, threats are created by the Kremlin, which then offers us the solution at a not negligible price. Missiles are the personification of the state, of the citizen, of the towering pride.

THE “*BINARY*” NATURE OF RUSSIAN THOUGHT

Russian spiritualism as reflection in the foreign and security policy

The principle that defines the profile of Russian thought is related to the idea of the end of the world. The tribulations of each generation have been generated by the search for this end, under the sign of the establishment of the kingdom of justice. Russian spiritualism has an eschatological starting point, an element that helps us to understand, we believe, the Russians dualistic attitude in perceiving the world: everything on the earth belongs to the forces of evil and must end with the transformation of the world in the spirit of Christian truth. Thus, the Russians disinterest in everything that means the material plane of existence and the organization of civil life is explained by the development of the “*awareness of the end*”. Simultaneously, the awareness of the establishment of the Kingdom of God is one of the reasons for the emergence of non-religious forms of the eschatological idea: the tsarist empire or the atheistic communism.

A retrospective look at the history of Russia, under its various names, reveals the existence of a constant internal conflict, which



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The winding historical evolution of Russia is captured by Alexandr Solzhenitsyn in his assessment made at the end of the 20th century: "Having huge spaces at their disposal, the Russian people experienced a rapid and facile development, but, for the same reason, they did not grow vertically; the <hot heads>, the <born fault-finders> went to spend their energy becoming Cossacks. The Russian leaders suffered from the mania of <colonization> through an irrepressible dispersion, the vocation of concentration being completely foreign to them".

leaves its mark on its behaviour until now. At the origin of the events is a creative force that gives birth to a cultural paradigm, an evolution that is suddenly deviated by certain major disruptive events, which give way to other developments, on a larger scale, but not necessarily with a sense of legitimacy. Out of this process resulted: Kievan Russia, of Muscovite absolutism, Imperial and Soviet Russia, with transitory phases of violence, anarchy and voluntarism. The winding historical evolution of Russia is captured by Alexandr Solzhenitsyn in his assessment made at the end of the 20th century: *"Having huge spaces at their disposal, the Russian people experienced a rapid and facile development, but, for the same reason, they did not grow vertically; the <hot heads>, the <born fault-finders> went to spend their energy becoming Cossacks (while, in Western Europe, people settled in the cities and built the culture). The Russian leaders suffered from the mania of <colonization> through an irrepressible dispersion, the vocation of concentration being completely foreign to them"* (Soljenitiņin, 1995, p. 59).

Belonging to neither Europe nor Asia, the Russian Federation is an *"enormous Western-Orient"* (Berdiaev, 1969, p. 10). It is the first aspect that polarizes the Slavic soul, feeling embarrassed by everything that could limit it. Nikolai Berdiaev highlights the relationship between the physical and spiritual geography of the Russians: *"The landscape of the Russian soul corresponds with the landscape of Russia, the same boundlessness, formlessness, reaching out into infinity, breadth"* (ib., p. 29). The geographical landscape has a psychological counterpart. For example, the same Berdiaev says about Europe that *"the strict parcelling of lands, compartmentalized into narrow categories, favoured the emergence of a civilization, determining in a completely different way both the appearance of the landscape and the character of the people. It could therefore be said that the Russian people are victims of the immensity of the homeland"* (Berdiaev, 1994, p. 29). In other words, the autocratic forms of government in Russia are a reflection of its territorial vastness.

In the case of the Russians, the elementary dimension of spatiality comes with a form of mistrust. It is because, on the one hand, the East has transmitted the teaching about form more like a mirage/illusion, and, on the other hand, the West has placed everything in sustainable forms and categories. Thus, the Russians have felt an insecurity and uncertainty in front of the form, a possible explanation for the repeated failures in establishing and consolidating any democratic forms of statehood. The weakness of the form finds its explanation in the soul of the Russians, in the eschatological and messianic dimension of the soul, the perfect form being the Kingdom of God or the New Jerusalem. Until then, any territorial expansion will be possible and *"legitimate"* for building the *"Citadel of the Future"*.

The obsession with territorial conquests and the failure in establishing a *pax russica*

From the first episodes of expansion, leaders have been obsessed with achieving cohesion and securing borders. Diversity was needed in drafting the statutes for the national and ethnic components of the Empire. Failing, looking through its own lenses, to receive European recognition through the conquests in the West, Russia achieved it through conquests in the East, where it stopped expanding only when it encountered other empires. Its power was based on its European heritage, and its destiny was an Asian one, based on the continuity of Eurasia.

Thinking from the perspective of the size, duration, and maintaining control over the imperial space during a limited period of time, we note that the Russian Empire ranked first in the world history of empires. Another special characteristic of this empire was that, unlike maritime empires, in which the population of the metropolis was separated from that of the colonies, here the cohabitation of the populations was constant and always raised the issue of the relations between the dominant and the dominated, who, living in same space, had to learn from each other despite the differences between them.



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The fact that the Russian Federation has not gone through a real process of de-Stalinization – as, for example, Germany went through a process of de-Nazification – makes citizens periodically return to certain sad events and characters in history. They are re-evaluated and this process is nothing more than a testimony of an archaic, pre-national condition of national consciousness.

The composition of the empire, including heterogeneous nations and peoples, generated very difficult organizational problems, compared to other empires having possessions on other continents. The core-periphery relations highlighted two antagonistic features: centralization as an organizing guideline and diversity of the state as a practice. All the leaders were tormented by the same question: how can such heterogeneous peoples live in harmony to achieve a *pax russica*? Perhaps, within its Russian limits, the Empire was characterized by a certain degree of maturity governed by orthodoxy, autocracy, national spirit, but could the same principles be applied to non-Russian peoples? The Russian power tried to apply various solutions in order to build a *pax russica*. Throughout that part of the Russian history, it was one constant, which stands out even today, being also the greatest vulnerability: the loyalty of subjects, of all origins, to their rulers and less to the state. That is the reason why the tendencies towards revolts, protests, revolutions are vulnerabilities transformed into sensitivities with historical roots to which the political class is very attentive. It is also one of the explanations, in the Russian view, for the fact that Ukraine, considered part of the empire, must not leave the Russian body. Mention should be made that ensuring a flexibility of the statutes in the colonial space and exercising, in certain areas and in various periods, an indirect authority over it have represented the ruling class great concerns.

The Russian culture of violence

The Russian culture of violence is based on two principles: the right of the mighty and the silence of the weak. The fact that the Russian Federation has not gone through a real process of de-Stalinization – as, for example, Germany went through a process of de-Nazification – makes citizens periodically return to certain sad events and characters in history. They are re-evaluated and this process is nothing more than a testimony of an archaic, pre-national condition of national consciousness. Not being accustomed to freedom, after receiving it in 1991 and “enjoying” it for a while, the people returned it to the state, which has used it precisely to exercise coercion on the people.

The binary, black or white, nature of Russian thought will inevitably lead to polarization and clashes. The country is characterized, at all levels, by resentments, grafted on the search for external alibis. The person or the state responsible for own failures, in other words “*the enemy*”, is the result of resentment, an extension of the ingrained inferiority complex. The enemies bear the blame for the failures of the Russian Federation. Ukraine has become the “*fascist enemy*” – “*fascism*” being the universal characteristic of “*the other*” -, accused of treason and backed by the West, with its theory of *Dolchstoß im Rücken* (“*stabbing in the back*”). Thus, a new “*Russian identity*” is being built, revived on the ideological foundation of the victory against Nazism. Nothing more fake!

Schizophrenia is also a characteristic of Russian thought. Shame mixed with pride, love mixed with hate give rise to a binary nature of Russian thought, painting a black or white picture of the world: “*Who is not with us is against us*”, the Russians against everyone.

The particular interpretation of geopolitics

In the Russian Federation, geopolitics has become a kind of queen of sciences, on which the ruling class has left its mark by inserting messianic myths and clichés such as “*the struggle for resources*”, “*motherland*”, “*national interest*”. Geopolitics has been diverted from its fundamental theories and principles and turned into a tool to justify the fears of the political class, thus becoming a “*fake science*”. The leader of this process is Aleksandr Dugin. It can be seen in the war in Ukraine, where the fear of strategic encirclement, if Ukraine were to join the EU or NATO, without a serious analysis of the risks and threats, as well as of the advantages, has pushed the Russian Federation into a trap. Moscow has turned its fears into self-fulfilling prophecies, in the opposite sense. It “*succeeded*” in uprooting and pushing (following the idea of “*invader by birth right*”) a people, until recently fraternal, in the arms of the West. It is also because Moscow has mistakenly evaluated its geopolitical interests.



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Partisans/rebels/insurgents benefit from the "depersonalization" of the state, taking advantage of the "crowd"/society, moving in and out of it, forcing the state to please them. In the "future warfare" the emphasis will no longer be on the conquest of territory, but of souls. Thus, the partisans/rebels/insurgents will turn into "citizen-soldiers", who will not obey any military rule, like ordinary soldiers, but will act in a permissive civil discipline, which will unite them, and the fight will go on for the conquest of souls.

UKRAINE: OBJECTIVE OF RUSSIAN "RE-IMPERIALIZATION"

The "Socium" of E.F. Morozov

Seen as a social phenomenon, war must be analysed as a function of the state policy and the society policy, exactly as polemology suggests, only if the society policy is linked to the state policy. The state-society relationship is complicated, the state being an emanation of the society and the society carrying out its policy through the state. Following the logic, it can be affirmed, to some extent, that the state was created by society to be able to wage wars. That is the reason why the definition given by Clausewitz, namely that "war is a continuation of politics by other means", is defining when we try to understand what war is. Assuming, however, that the state was not created, first of all, so that the society could wage wars, it has also acquired this function. In this way, the society opened the path for the state to emancipate itself from it, becoming a mechanism of coercion.

The fact that states have often reached the conclusion of partial demilitarization has come into contradiction with societal militarization, responsible for the scale of partisan/rebellious/insurgent actions, which often come into conflict with own states when sovereignty is weakened or disappears as such. Even if the war impulse is removed from the state level, "it moves to certain preferred layers and sectors of the socium", a term used by E.F. Morozov in the foreword to the book by E.E. Messner, "Mutiny, or the name of the Third World War". Morozov tells us that "(...) the socium responds by increasing the level of military activity at the social level" (Messner, 2015, p. 9).

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will go on for the conquest of souls. The "citizen-soldier" will not stand in the front as at the liturgy. Iron discipline, tireless energy, courage, bravery, duty to country, hardships, privations, danger will depend on the changing state of mind of the "citizen-soldier", unchecked by self-discipline or imposed discipline, for the "future warfare" will not be governed by the laws of classical warfare.

It is one of the ingredients used by the Russians in the war in Ukraine.

The partisans/rebels/insurgents are psychologically linked to the people they belong to, "taking from their soul disposition the strategic directives: to attack, to retreat, to resist in battle, to fight without resisting" (Ib., p. 73). The strategy of the "future warfare" will be to take, from a psychological point of view, "prisoner" the enemy people, by inducing doubt and confusion, with the aim of convincing them of the victory of the aggressor's ideas and making them adhere to them. Disinformation, manipulation, propaganda, subversion, persuasion play an important role in this whole process. For example, the Russian ruling elite used the psychological effects of some ideas, based on Pavlov's experiments on "conditioned reflexes", to "train" the people. It explains the states of ecstasy of the citizens when they heard slogans about "the greatness and genius of the leader" or "the construction of socialism".

Vladimir Putin's "compatriots"

When we talk about "compatriots", we must refer to the concept of the Russian nation. Thus, five concepts of what the Russian nation means have been identified in the Russian public space: the first concept highlights the identity of the union, recalling an older idea in which the Russians have the mission of creating and maintaining a multinational state with the role of "teacher of other peoples"; the second concept refers to the Russian nation, which includes the entire community of Eastern Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians), who speak the same language, share the same religion and culture; the third concept is an integrative one having as core all the Russian language



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MILITARY
THINKING

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It was Boris Yeltsin who, through the policies promoted to help the "compatriots", sowed the seeds of the policies developed by Vladimir Putin to transform them into a vehicle through which Moscow's influence is exercised in former Soviet republics. It should be mentioned that the Russian Federation has never wanted to turn "compatriots" into repatriates.

speakers, as the first language spoken, regardless of ethnicity, including parts of Moldova, Ukraine, the countries of the Caucasus, Kazakhstan etc.; the fourth concept refers strictly to race, only those with Russian blood being included here; the fifth concept has a civic aspect and includes all citizens of the Russian Federation (Tolz, 2001, pp. 235-260). The Russian Federation had a vision that was totally opposite to that of Israel regarding the issue of "compatriots", in the sense that the latter marched towards helping them to settle and develop where they were, outside the country's borders, developing policies that would not disadvantage them in relation to the native populations, while enjoying the same rights and freedoms. Time has shown that the Russian Federation has turned "compatriots" into *primus inter pares* among native populations. It was Boris Yeltsin who, through the policies promoted to help the "compatriots", sowed the seeds of the policies developed by Vladimir Putin to transform them into a vehicle through which Moscow's influence is exercised in former Soviet republics. It should be mentioned that the Russian Federation has never wanted to turn "compatriots" into repatriates. It has rather been a policy thought out and developed in the sense of exercising Russian influence abroad. Also, through non-coercive measures, Moscow has provided its foreign policy with a "humanitarian" aspect.

The premise of some analyses related to the fact that the Russian Federation would have an inherent natural right to privileged interests in some states – which were part of the defunct Russian Empire and, later, the USSR – is totally wrong. Realist or constructivist theoretical approaches to international relations promote the idea of the great power status of the Russian Federation in its region, its aggressive policies being a reaction to the disregard of Moscow's interests by NATO and the EU. These approaches, emanating from the analysts in the service of the Kremlin and from the Western ones alike, start from the wrong idea of a disagreement, also a source of conflict, between the interests of the Russian Federation and those of the West in the former Soviet space, with an emphasis on affecting the Russian Federation interests in that area, with both camps considering former

Soviet Socialist Republics as passive actors. The mentioned disregard ignores, sometimes even denies, the views and security interests of those states in the region. The Kremlin's non-coercive policies turned into *hard power* actions when some states in its area of influence, considered its own, dared to discuss joining NATO or the EU.

„Re-imperialization”: vehicle for the Russian Federation war in Ukraine

Re-imperialization means the resuscitation or reconstitution of an empire (Motyl, 2001, p. 5). According to other sources, an empire is defined as "a relationship, official or unofficial, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. This control can be acquired through force, political cooperation, economic, social or cultural dependence" (Doyle, 1986, p. 45). For Motyl, an empire is "a hierarchically organized political system, having a radial structure – like a spoked wheel –, within which an elite and a central state dominate peripheral elites and societies, acting as intermediaries in their main interactions and channelling the flows of resources from the periphery to the centre and back to the periphery" (Motyl, ib., p. 4).

The Russian Federation considers itself a national state rather than a civic one, and the desire for re-imperialization gets clear from Vladimir Putin's speech on 18 March 2014, after the annexation of Crimea: "millions of people went to sleep in a country to wake up in another, overnight becoming ethnic minorities in the former republics of the Union, while the Russian people has become one of the largest, if not the largest ethnic group in the world separated by borders" (Putin, 2004). Also, Dmitri Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation at that time, declared after the Russo-Georgian war, that "(...) as in the case of other countries, there are some regions where Russia has privileged interests" (Friedman, 2008).

Motyl observes that "Retaining their importance as historical reality, conceptual category and analytical tool, empires refuse to disappear" (Motyl, ib., p. 3). In the case of the Russian Federation, compatriots become a pretext and an engine for transmitting



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The “compatriots” are a resentful population, who live in a different reality, the one imposed and promoted by Moscow, and refuse to obey and adapt to the laws and norms of social coexistence in the newly emerged states. The “compatriots” must be reintroduced, it can be also understood as used, in/by Russki Mir. This is the Kremlin’s thesis as well as alibi. It is where the explanations for Moscow’s retaliatory actions must be sought.

the ideology manufactured by the Kremlin to unify the populations remaining outside the borders.

The vehicle of the re-imperialization of the Russian Federation is the population of the defunct USSR remaining outside the country’s borders, and here we do not mean only ethnic Russians/Russian diaspora/Russian minority, but also Russophiles, Russophones (Russian speakers), nostalgic people, agents of influence etc., in short “*compatriots*”, who consider themselves part of *Russki Mir*. It is the strategic function of ethno-re-imperialization. The withdrawal of the USSR’s imperial structure left behind, among other things, the “*imperial*” citizens, now minorities in the states that emerged after the collapse of communism, a social category dedicated to the metropolis, contemptuous of the natives, characterized by superiority and arrogance. The “*compatriots*” are a resentful population, who live in a different reality, the one imposed and promoted by Moscow, and refuse to obey and adapt to the laws and norms of social coexistence in the newly emerged states. The “*compatriots*” must be reintroduced, it can be also understood as used, in/by *Russki Mir*. This is the Kremlin’s thesis as well as alibi. It is where the explanations for Moscow’s retaliatory actions must be sought. The thesis was stated as early as 1992, by Sergey Karaganov, then becoming the “*Karaganov doctrine*”, by which the author stated that the Russian Federation should assume a proactive policy, as a former imperial power, and offer the citizens from outside the borders, distributed in the role of “*compatriots*” protection and support. The Kremlin’s problem is that these “*compatriots*” are no longer just a mass for manoeuvre at Vladimir Putin’s disposal, as they have learned to distinguish what is best for them. For their part, the “*compatriots*” would prefer a negotiation of the status up to the point of being used as instruments for putting into practice some sophisticated matters, such as frozen conflicts. Thus, the enlargement of entities such as NATO and the EU to their eastern border is hampered by the unresolved issues related to the relativization of the borders of some countries bordering the border. In the dispute between the West (NATO, EU) and the Russian Federation, the major difference is that

the former is incomparably stronger, but less motivated, while the latter is weaker, but more motivated.

Agnia Grigas identifies seven steps in the “*re-imperialization*” policy: 1) non-coercive measures; 2) humanitarian policies; 3) actual policies regarding compatriots; 4) passporting; 5) information warfare; 6) protective measures; 7) informal control or official annexation of territories inhabited by “*compatriots*” (Grigas, 2022, passim).

For example, Ukraine did not know “*What it is*” for a long time. To clarify, over Ukraine came the war started by the Russian Federation, and a major role was also played by the elites, who drifted, sometimes with the East, sometimes with the West. In these two countries, it is not the “*compatriots*” that are strong, but it is the state that is weak. The country’s failure after the collapse of the USSR is the failure in assuming identity.

Of course, an analysis should be conducted regarding the idea of whether the Russian Federation wants to re-imperialize or just limit former Soviet republics in terms of their foreign policy, especially in relation to them joining NATO and the EU, the latter variant also guaranteeing “*good neighbourly relations*” (Menkiszak, 2014, p. 4). In any case, the Kremlin is trying to create an alternative order in the post-Soviet space, especially by creating the Eurasian Economic Union. The motivation of re-imperialization policies is to ensure the security of the country.

The Russian Federation considers that it has an inalienable right to its own sphere of influence. Re-imperialization is a matter of *soft power*. Taking into account the stages proposed by Agnia Grigas, non-coercive measures come in support of diplomacy and have the role of increasing the ability of the Russian state to exercise its influence based on its policies, culture and values, perceived as legitimate (Nye Jr., 2004, pp. 11-15). The question that legitimately arises is whether the Russian Federation employs *soft power* methods. The answer penned by one of the experts in the field is that Moscow demonstrates its influence through “*hard diplomacy*” and “*soft coercion*” (Sherr, 2013, p. 2).



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Starting from the premise that the purpose of diplomacy is to avoid war, in the case of the Russian Federation, it is exactly the opposite: it uses war to obtain diplomatic results. In this regard, the three scenarios of the war in Ukraine would be: most likely – war of attrition, of long duration; worst case – the war in Ukraine could evolve favourably for the Russian Federation, in the sense that all of Ukraine will be conquered; best case scenario – the cessation of hostilities, the signing of a Peace Agreement, the withdrawal of Russian troops.

CONCLUSIONS

The ups and downs of Vladimir Putin's popularity in the polls in the Russian Federation have led to changes in the terms of the social contract between him and society. Even if one of the "secrets" of Putinism consists in the ability to conquer each redoubt, one by one, leaving the impression on the civil society that everything is a "personal business", so that, when it is completed, it will be too late for an effective resistance, through the war launched against Ukraine, Vladimir Putin is only accelerating the process of intellectual, political and institutional decay of the Russian Federation.

Starting from the premise that the purpose of diplomacy is to avoid war, in the case of the Russian Federation, it is exactly the opposite: it uses war to obtain diplomatic results. In this regard, the three scenarios of the war in Ukraine would be: *most likely* – war of attrition, of long duration, with intermittent freezing phases, in which the Ukrainians will continue to resist, there will be millions of refugees, and the Russian Federation will have to spend enormous sums to support the war effort, which will lead to the collapse of the national economy, with the specification that, in the event that Moscow does not achieve any more notable victories, Vladimir Putin's regime may shatter; *worst case* – the war in Ukraine could evolve favourably for the Russian Federation, in the sense that all of Ukraine will be conquered. From an ethno-political point of view, the Russians have long been an empire capable of "hosting" various nations and making them serve their interests; *best case scenario* – the cessation of hostilities, the signing of a Peace Agreement, the withdrawal of Russian troops, all of which being possible only in the event of Vladimir Putin's resignation or replacement, through a coup d'état or revolution. The regime created by Vladimir Putin cannot survive a defeat.

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