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The foreign policy strategy of Russia towards the Baltic states is the implementation of the “new doctrine of limited sovereignty”

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Russia acts on the principle of self-interest and disregards international law, using the system of international treaties as a «restaurant menu». The propaganda of the Russian Federation in foreign policy is primarily caused by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the escalation of the war in Donbas. The basis for the current political regime in Russia is Putin's five factors that endorse authoritarianism, corruption, the use of vast resources, propaganda dissemination, and the legitimacy of using force abroad to protect the population. NATO expansion is seen as an obstacle for Russia, and cooperation depends on the Alliance's readiness for equal partnership. Russia continues to exert pressure on the Baltic states, testing the resilience of NATO, which may threaten this region. Putin also supports separatist entities in the Baltic states and promotes Russian cultural identity abroad. Russia considers the former Soviet space as its sphere of influence and expands cooperation with other regions and countries. The problems associated with the Russian minority, energy security, terrorism, and neighboring border are also mentioned. In order to effectively counter the Russian strategy, the Baltic countries must work together at the international level, interact with their partners and actively pursue policies aimed at strengthening their independence, security and stability. A key element is the development of a united and cohesive position of the Baltic States, as well as cooperation with their partners in the European Union and NATO. The stability of the Russian power system depends on Putin, which is already a problem today. Overall, Russia's aggressive foreign policy activities, especially in the context of the Baltic states and Ukraine, pose a threat to stability and security and can impact the international order. Russia uses various means to ensure its security and protect its interests, including military force, propaganda, and influence operations. However, such actions have significant consequences for regional and international security and require careful analysis and response from the international community.

Key words: Russian Federation, political regime, pressure, danger, strategy, limitations, invasion, aggression.

Introduction. The scientific article analyzes Russia's foreign policy actions under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin in recent years. The study examines Russia's war against Georgia, the annexation of Crimea, and the invasion of Donbas, citing international law and UN resolution articles on aggression. The article also analyzes Russia's policy towards the Baltic countries, which is based on the doctrine of limited sovereignty and the goal of creating a unipolar multipolar system with the United States as the main center.

Purpose and tasks. To study Russia's political strategy towards the Baltic countries and analyze the war and unauthorized invasion.

Research methods. The following methods were used in the scientific article on the topic: comparison method, forecasting, system analysis, content analysis, information approach method, and historical, and systematic methods.

Results. The military aggression of Russia against Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine, attempts to annex the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, military intervention in Donbas, and a full-scale invasion, as well as open confrontation with the West, indicate the implementation by Russia of a new foreign policy strategy. It was presented in a series of speeches by President

Vladimir Putin in 2014 and later detailed in the main policy and security documents of the Russian Federation. According to international law, Russia's regional activities fully correspond to the definition of international political and military aggression. In particular, at the initiative of the USSR, the UN worked for a long time on preparing a resolution of the General Assembly on the definition of the concept of «aggression». This document was adopted on December 14, 1974. Article 1 of the resolution states: «Aggression is the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another State.» Article 3 further defines acts of aggression:

1. Invasion or armed attack by a state's armed forces on the territory of another state, or any military occupation resulting from such invasion or attack, or any annexation by using the force of the territory of another state or its part.

2. Bombardment by the armed forces of a state of the territory of another state, or the use of any weapon by a state against the territory of another state.

3. Blockade of ports or coasts of states by the armed forces of another state.

4. An attack by a state's armed forces on another state's land, sea, or air forces.

5. The use of armed forces by one state that is stationed on the territory of another state, with the consent of the receiving state in violation of the conditions provided for in the agreement.

6. Sending by a state or on its behalf of armed bands, groups, irregular formations, or mercenaries to carry out acts of armed force against another state [7].

The current policy of the Russian Federation towards the Baltic states is aggressive, and by analogy with the «limited sovereignty» doctrine (the Brezhnev doctrine), it implements the «new doctrine of limited sovereignty.» The new trend that is observed is the gradual formation of a new world order – the «new multipolar system,» which is better described as a «unipolar multicenter system.» The fundamental feature of such a world order is the complete real sovereignty of the only state in the world – the United States. Some states, although actively participating in the activities of the wide network of international organizations, strive to obtain real sovereignty (China, India, Russia, Brazil, Iran, and the EU). Most other countries participating in the wide network of international organizations voluntarily relinquish some of their sovereignty. Russian aggression does not correspond in any way to Russia's real economic and other capabilities. Russia, waving conventional weapons and threatening nuclear weapons, tries to intimidate its neighbors, positioning itself as a great regional power and trying to regain the status of a separate «pole» or at least a «center of power» in global politics. The main ideas and basic elements of the so-called «Putin Doctrine» were formulated in public speeches by its initiator – the President of Russia, in particular in the address to both houses of the Federal Assembly of the country in connection with the proposal of the «State Council of the Republic of Crimea on the accession of the republic to the Russian Federation» (the so-called «Crimean speech» of March 18, 2014); the «Valdai speech» of October 24, 2014; and the address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of December 4, 2014. Later, on December 26, 2014, a new Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation was adopted, which listed among the main external threats to Russia, as «the establishment of corresponding regimes in neighboring states, whose policies pose a threat to Russia's interests» [8]. With this document, the Russian Federation attempted to «legalize» its possible future expansion at the expense of its neighbors. Thus, among the main tasks of the Russian Armed Forces in peacetime is «the protection of Russian citizens outside the country from armed attacks on them». Therefore, even in distant countries, Russian-speaking citizens have the right to military protection from the Russian Federation. However, the fundamental components of «Putin's doctrine» have not been officially proclaimed by the Russian leadership, just as «Brezhnev's doctrine» was not

proclaimed in the USSR at the time [5, p. 21]. The following can be outlined as what is used in practical international activities, especially in the post-Soviet space:

– Russia does not see the collective West as a reliable partner, because despite Putin's warnings in his famous Munich speech in 2007, the US, NATO, and the EU continue to ignore the vital, historical and regional interests of Russia in the post-Soviet space, expanding their influence and «dragging» countries of the region into their structures, pursuing a policy of «containment of Russia»;

– Russia does not see itself as part of the Euro-Atlantic community; it is a country of «sovereign», «controlled» democracy, where about 80% of the population supports Putin's aggressive policies, foreign policy of «land acquisition», anti-Americanism, and confrontation with the West. It is emphasized that Russia has its own identity and belongs to a separate civilization that adheres to its system of values.

– In the current conditions of the disintegration/weakening of the unipolar world order, when the new multipolar («multicentric») world is only forming, «uncontrolled chaos» and the «absence of rules of the game» are highly desirable and accessible for Russia, which significantly expands the boundaries of acceptable behavior in the world for the Kremlin. Hence, Russia's attempts to carry out the hybrid intervention in the internal affairs, electoral processes, and referendums both in the countries of its traditional «sphere of influence» and in the West (the USA, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Serbia), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and others. The main objectives of such intervention are the imbalance and destruction of Western international integration structures (primarily the EU and NATO); erosion and destruction of the world order based on international law, universal values, and obligations; destruction of Euro-Atlantic unity; imposition of a feeling of disappointment and doubt about the viability of liberal democratic values on the broad masses of the European community and aspiring countries;

– The system of international treaties and international law as a whole is not a system of rules/coordinates of international relations for Russia; it is rather a 'restaurant menu' from which Russia can choose what is beneficial in a particular historical moment. The role of international organizations is significantly reduced, as cooperation with them loses its meaning for strong states as soon as it begins to interfere with their national interests. Russia operates on the principle of «Everything beneficial to us, and international law for our opponents».

True sovereignty is a feature of only strong states. Other countries, one way or another, cede part of their sovereignty to stronger partners/allies or international security organizations. Post-Soviet countries are

practically deprived of the right to real sovereignty, as they are only endowed with «limited sovereignty», which does not contradict the vital interests of Russia. Similar «conceptual arguments» justify the «legitimacy» of Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine and attempts to annex Crimea, the 2008 intervention in Georgia, Russia's interference in political processes in Belarus in August-November 2020, and, at the same time, its failure to assist for 30 years in the case of a sustainable settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The new global and European order that Putin is trying to impose extends Russia's influence not only in the post-Soviet space but also throughout the Baltic region. An important factor here remains the completion of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which will require an expansion of Russia's military presence in the Baltic Sea under the pretext of its military defense. Since the aforementioned «new doctrine of limited sovereignty» («Putin's doctrine») belongs to the main categories of the Westphalian international system, it can be considered that in connection with the growth of these new «centers of power», this doctrine is an attempt to further change the Westphalian world order.

Although the Baltic countries are full members of NATO, Russia continues to exert provocative pressure on them, which indicates that Russia is testing the strength of the alliance's unity and still hopes to spread Putin's doctrine to the Baltic countries. According to several analysts, the Baltic countries could be the next target of Russian aggression, which could happen through a destabilization campaign – subversive activities, military infiltration, media propaganda, cyber attacks, information manipulation, and speculation related to «problems of the Russian-speaking population» [9]. The threat from Putin's foreign policy strategy is now much greater than the threat from the «Islamic State,» as defeating the latter will depend only on the number of resources allocated to it. Russia, on the other hand, has a nuclear arsenal, and its strategy is to continue its imperialist expansionist policy in the post-Soviet space through military force and powerful propaganda, as well as to try to destroy the international security system by undermining unity in NATO and the EU, for example, through open bribery of elites of certain countries or financial support for radical and marginal European parties.

Although presented as a type of soft power strategy, it reinforces all sorts of justifications for propaganda in the Baltic countries and support for pro-Russian separatist entities in the official political ideas of Russian policy and religion, which some supporters of a hardline often use. «The Russian Federation supports compatriots living abroad in realizing their rights, ensuring the protection of interests, and preserving Russian cultural identity», the statement said. It states that Russia's ties with

compatriots abroad have allowed it to «strengthen the image of a democratic country striving to create a multipolar world» on the international stage [2]. Putin has long highlighted what he sees as a tragic fate, in particular, the approximately 25 million ethnic Russians who found themselves outside of Russia in newly independent states after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991; he called such events nothing less than a geopolitical catastrophe. Russia still considers the former Soviet space, from the Baltic to Central Asia, as its legitimate sphere of influence – an idea that many of these countries, including the West, fiercely resist. The new policy aims to strengthen cooperation with Slavic countries, China and India, as well as strengthen its ties with the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa [2]. During a video conference discussing the long-term socio-economic development of the Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky agglomeration, Putin hinted that places, where Russian blood had been shed have a special significance. «We have a sacred duty to ensure that the victims of past generations are justified. It is in our hands today. We must do this today, we must», Putin said, according to the Kremlin transcript [2]. In recent years, northeastern Europe has faced significant security challenges. Since the Baltic countries of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania joined NATO and the European Union in 2004, they have also brought significant defense upgrades to the region. However, concerns about overall sovereignty and peace in the region are serious issues that could harm European security and the state of NATO in northeastern Europe. There are several security issues in the Baltic region. Despite NATO's mostly open attitude towards Russia, the Russian regime has taken a clear and public anti-NATO position in the past few years. Additionally, Russia sees NATO as a threat to its national security [1]. This statement is prompted by the increasing military presence of the United States and NATO allies in Baltic and Eastern Europe. There is still significant tension between NATO allies, Baltic states, and the Russian Federation. For example, there is an unresolved border issue between Estonia and Russia, stemming from Russia's unilateral change to the Tartu Peace Treaty line of 1920 [4]. Another instance of exhaustion is the cyber attacks on Estonia in 2007 [3]. There are significant problems with Russian minorities in the Baltic countries who are susceptible to the anti-Western propaganda spread by the Russian Federation. Another problem that remains is the energy security of the region supplied by Russia. Finally, in addition to the aforementioned problems, the three Baltic countries also face the same terrorism threat as the rest of the NATO countries. The Russian power system is unstable and therefore requires constant personal intervention from Vladimir Putin. The current situation may well resemble the late Soviet era

when, a year or even six months before its collapse, few in the West expected such a rapid onset of revolutionary, rapid, and tumultuous political change. It should be noted that the problem of the danger of the spread of Soviet nuclear weapons was resolved fairly quickly – in just three years [6, p. 96]. So, it can be argued that Russia's aggressive international military and political activities, particularly against Ukraine and the Baltic states, and other manifestations of Russia's domestic and foreign policy, at least over the past 8 years, demonstrate compliance with the criteria for implementing the «new doctrine of limited sovereignty» – «Putin's doctrine». And the basis of the political regime in Russia and the internal basis of Putin's foreign policy «doctrine» are five internal factors, namely: the consolidation of an authoritarian regime within the country; massive corruption at all levels, including the highest; the use of vast energy and other natural resources of the country; a powerful comprehensive propaganda machine; the concept of the legitimacy of the use of Russian military force abroad «to protect Russian speakers».

Conclusions. Russia prioritizes its own interests and disregards international law, using international agreements to its advantage. The foreign policy of the Russian Federation is propagated through their full-scale invasion of Ukrainian territory and escalation of the war in Donbas. Russia views NATO expansion as an obstacle and cooperation depends on the Alliance's readiness for equal partnership.

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Зовнішньополітична стратегія Росії щодо країн Балтії як «доктрина обмеженого суверенітету»

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Росія діє за принципом вигоди для себе та нехтує міжнародним правом, використовуючи систему міжнародних договорів як «ресторанне меню». Пропаганда Російської Федерації в зовнішній політиці є спричинена насамперед повномасштабним вторгненням Росії на територію України та ескалацією війни на Донбасі. Основою ж для теперішнього політичного режиму Росії є п'ять факторів Путіна, які затверджують авторитаризм, корупцію, використання величезних ресурсів, поширення пропаганди та легітимності використання сили за кордоном для захисту населення. Розширення НАТО розглядається як перешкода для Росії, а співпраця залежить від готовності Альянсу до рівноправного партнерства. Росія продовжує чинити тиск на країни Балтії, випробовуючи міцність НАТО, і може спричинити загрозу для цього регіону. Путін також підтримує сепаратистські утворення в країнах Балтії та російську культурну ідентичність за кордоном. Росія вважає колишній радянський простір своєю сферою впливу і розширює співпрацю з іншими регіонами та країнами. Зазначаються також проблеми, пов'язані з російською меншиною, енергетичною безпекою, тероризмом та кордоном сусідніх країн.

Для ефективного протидії російській стратегії, країни Балтії повинні спільно працювати на міжнародному рівні, взаємодіяти зі своїми партнерами та активно вести політику, спрямовану на зміцнення своєї незалежності, безпеки та стабільності. Ключовим елементом є розбудова об'єднаної та згуртованої позиції країн Балтії, а також співпраця зі своїми партнерами у Європейському союзі та НАТО. Стабільність російської системи влади залежить від Путіна, що вже є проблемою сьогодення. Загалом, відображається агресивна зовнішньополітична діяльність Росії, особливо в контексті країн Балтійського регіону та України, яка створює загрозу для стабільності та безпеки, а також може вплинути на міжнародний порядок. Для забезпечення своєї безпеки та відстоювання своїх національних інтересів, Україна та балтійський регіон повинні вести активну зовнішньополітичну діяльність, сприяти формуванню міжнародного об'єднання, а також розвивати ефективну стратегію взаємодії.

Ключові слова: Російська Федерація, політичний режим, тиск, небезпека, стратегія, обмеження, вторгнення, агресія.