

# GLOBAL POLITICAL-MILITARY AGRESSIVENESS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION HISTORY AND ACTUALITY–

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## **Abstract:**

*The author considers that the topic of this article is of public interest in Romania, especially after the regional and global politico-military evolutions originating in the aggressive actions and the bellicose statements of the officials from the Russian Federation.*

*I believe that the justified concerns are not only in Romania, but also in all the countries situated in the area Russians refer to as their “close vicinity”, a vicinity that no one knows where it ends - Berlin or the Atlantic!*

*Many Romanian and foreign political and military analysts have noticed a suspicious political passivity from the great European countries (Germany, France, Italy) over the recent demonstrations of the Putin regime. These countries have some common motivations, but also some specific ones in protecting and even in encouraging Russian actions, their main reason being the energy dependence on Russia, but also the vast field of mutual business of all kinds.*

***Keywords:** political-military aggression; the Russian Federation; USA; EU, military potential; military bases.*

## **1. Introduction**

**The study of the history**, political geography, mineral and energy resources, economy, of the population with the specific ethnic mix, as well as of the extraordinary military force of the Russian Federation in the present geopolitical and geostrategic conditions has become an existential obligation of many nations of the world who had and still have the misfortune to be in the vicinity of this new Empire.

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**The Romanian political and military leaders** cannot deny this obligation, given the tragic experiences lived under continuous threat and pressure of the great neighbour in three hundred years of history.

Recent public analyses and surveys conducted in several countries worldwide are ranking the Russian Federation among the top three places as a global threat to the rest of the world, alongside climate changes and ISIS.

I use this opportunity to recall in this brief material the attention of those interested, and especially of the active military personnel, on the articles published by prestigious authors in the “Geopolitica” Magazine no. 73 (1/2018) and no. 74 (2/2018)<sup>1</sup> on the complex issue of the current aggressive policy of the Russian Federation under the authority of President Vladimir Vladimirovici Putin and his team of siloviki. The authors and papers’ titles will be presented in the bibliography, mentioning that the authors, Stan Petrescu, Vasile Simileanu, Gheorghe Vaduva and Constantin Onișor, are reminded by the richness of arguments and the courage of the approach.

In the following, I will try to present, in the limited writing space available, some important aspects of the historical development and consolidation, step by step, of the Russian colossus, from the Principality of Moscow to the Tsarist Empire and then to the Red Empire - the USSR.

The main heir of the current USSR, the Russian Federation, gets stronger in the world arena using all possible means, with the declared goal of regaining the status of superpower, temporarily lost in 1991.

**These data and information are known by the interested public, but I think they do not hurt to be remembered, even briefly, given the developments on the world stage in recent years.**

## **2. Important historical milestones<sup>2</sup>**

**Eastern Slavs** appeared as an identifiable group in Europe between the third and the eighth centuries. Founded and ruled by a Varangian warrior elite and its descendants, **the medieval state Ruthenia** emerged in the ninth century. In 988 Ruthenia adopted **Orthodox Christianity** from the

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<sup>1</sup> „Geopolitica” Magazine, no. 73(1) 2018 and no. 74(2) 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Russia. Wikipedia, free encyclopaedia

Byzantine Empire, starting a synthesis of Byzantine and Slavic cultures that defined **Russian culture** in the next millennium. Ruthenia eventually disintegrated in several small states, most of its territories were then invaded by Mongols, and became tributary to the nomadic Golden Horde in the thirteenth century.

The Great Duchy of Moscow gradually reunified the surrounding Russian principalities around and **gained independence** from the Golden Horde. Until the eighteenth century, this country had extended its borders through **conquests, annexations, and explorations**, turning into **the Russian Empire**, the third largest empire in history, stretching from Poland in the West, to Alaska in the East.

**2.1. Kievan Rus:** The establishment of the first states of eastern Slavs in the ninth century coincided with the arrival of Varangian merchants, warriors and colonists from the Baltic Sea region. They were primarily **Scandinavian Vikings** who ventured along the waterways from the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

According to the **Chronicle of the past**, a Varangian of the Russians named Rurik was elected ruler of **Novgorod** in 862. In 882, his successor, Oleg, extended to the south and conquered Kiev, which until then paid the tribute to the **Khazars**, thus establishing Kievan Rus. Oleg and his son Svetoslav then subjugated the eastern slave tribes to the Kievan domination, destroyed the Khazars Khaganate, and launched several military expeditions in **Byzantium and Persia**.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, Kievan Rus became one of the largest and most prosperous states in Europe. The reigns of **Vladimir the Great (980-1015)** and his son Yaroslav the Wise (1019-1054), constitute **the Golden Age of Kiev**, in which Orthodox Christianity from Byzantium was accepted and the first code of laws of the Eastern Slavs, *Russkaya Pravda*, appeared.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the constant incursions of the nomadic Turkic tribes, such as **the Kipchaks and the Pechenegs**, caused a massive migration of Slavic populations to the forested areas of the North, especially in the area known as Zalesie.

The era of feudalism and decentralization was marked by a permanent internal struggle between members of the Rurik dynasty who reigned collectively in the Kievan Rus. The domination of Kiev weakened, to the benefit of the Vladimir-Suzdal Duchy, to the north-east, the Novgorod Republic in the northwest and Galicia-Volhynia to the southwest.

Eventually, Kievan Rus disintegrated, the final blow being given by the **Mongol invasion of 1237-1240**, which resulted in the destruction of Kiev and the death of about half of the country's population. The elite of the invading Mongols, together with the Turkic peoples conquered by them (Cumans, Kipchaks, Bulgarians), formed the **Tatar** people and founded the Golden Horde, from where they continued to prey the Russian duchies. **Mongols** dominated the **Cumans-Kipchaks confederation and Bulgaria on the Volga** (in the southern and central European Russia today) for more than two centuries.

**Galicia-Volhynia** was eventually absorbed by **the Kingdom of Poland**, while Vladimir-Suzdal and Novgorod Republic, two Mongolian-dominated regions on the outskirts of Kiev, laid the foundations for modern Russian statehood. Novgorod and Pskov have retained a certain degree of autonomy during the Mongolian domination and were largely spared by the atrocities that affected the rest of the country.

Headed by Prince Nevsky, the Novgorod people rejected the Swedish invasion in the battle of Neva in 1240, as well as the Germanic Crusaders in the "Battle on the Ice" in 1242, interrupting their attempts to colonize the northern Ruthenia.

**2.2. The Great Duchy of Moscow:** The most powerful state that eventually appeared after the destruction of the Kievan Rus was the great Duchy of Moscow (the "Muscovite Country" in the Romanian chronicles), originally having a part of Vladimir-Suzdal Duchy, which was still dominated by the Mongol-Tatars and with their complicity, Moscow began to assert its influence in the centre of the Ruthenian region in the fourteenth century, gradually becoming the driving force of the Ruthenian reunification process and the expansion of Russia. The last rival of Moscow, the

Novgorod Republic, thrived as the main fur trading centre and the most eastern port of the Hanseatic League.

The times were hard, with frequent and devastating Mongol-Tatar attacks. Headed by Moscow's Prince Dmitry Donskoy and assisted by the Russian Orthodox Church, the united army of Russian duchies provoked an important defeat to the Mongol-Tartars in the Battle of **Kulikov** in 1380. Moscow gradually absorbed the nearby duchies, including former powerful rivals Tver and Novgorod.

Ivan III ("the Great") eventually freed himself from the domination of the Golden Horde and consolidated all of Central and Northern Ruthenia under Moscow's control. He was the first to take the title of "Great Prince of All Russia". After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Moscow **claimed succession to the inheritance of the Roman Empire of the East**. Ivan III was married to Sofia Palaiologhina, the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI, and took over the Byzantine bicephalous eagle as his own mark, and finally of Russia.

**2.3. The Russian Tsarist Empire:** In the development of the idea of the Third Rome, the great Prince Ivan IV ("the Terrible") was officially crowned as Russia's first "Tsar" in 1547. The Tsar promulgated "Sudebnik of 1550" as a new code laws, established the first representative Russian feudal organism „Zemski Sobor" and introduced local self-government in rural areas.

In his long reign, Ivan the Terrible almost doubled the vast Russian territory by annexing the three Tatar principalities (Kazan, Astrakhan and Khanate of Siberia) in which the Golden Horde had been separated. Thus, at the end of the sixth century, Russia had already turned into a **multi-ethnic, multi-confessional and transcontinental state**.

There followed a series of events and wars that weakened the Russian Tsarist Empire, including a civil war (1601-1603).

The Polish-Lithuanian Union occupied parts of Russia, including Moscow. In 1612, the Poles were forced to withdraw by Russian volunteers ruled by two national heroes, merchant Kuzma Minin and Prince Dmitri

Pojarski. **The Romanov Dynasty** ascended the throne in 1613, by Zemski Sobor decision, and the country began to gradually recover.

Under Romanovs, Russia continued its territorial growth in the seventeenth century, a period that represented the **Cossacks' era**. Cossacks were warriors organized in military communities, similar to pirates and pioneers in the New World. Other wars followed with neighbours, revolts and new territorial changes.

In the East, the rapid exploitation and colonization of some huge Siberian territories was largely driven by Cossack hunters seeking furs and ivory.

**2.4. Imperial Russia:** Under **Peter the Great**, Russia was proclaimed as **Empire in 1721** and became recognized as world power. Ruling between 1682 and 1725, Peter defeated Sweden in the **Great Northern War**, forcing it to yield **Western Karelia and Ingria**, as well as Estonia and Livonia, providing Russia with access to the sea and maritime trade. In the Baltic Sea, Peter founded a new capital called **Sankt Petersburg**, later known as the “window to Europe” of Russia. The reforms of Peter the Great have brought considerable Western-European cultural influences to Russia.

The reign of the daughter of Peter I, **Elisabeth** (1741-1762), brought Russia's participation in the Seven Years War (1756-1763). During this conflict, Russia temporarily annexed East Prussia and even conquered Berlin. However, at the death of Elisabeth, all these conquests were returned to the Kingdom of Prussia by Peter III of Russia who had a pro-Prussian orientation.

**Ekaterina II** (“the Great”) reigned between 1762 and 1796, a period called the “period of Russian Enlightenment”. She expanded Russian political control over the Polish-Lithuanian Union and incorporated most of its territories into Russia during Poland's divisions, pushing the Russian border to Central Europe in the west.

In the South, after the success in the Russian-Turkish Wars against the Ottoman Empire, Ekaterina crossed the Russian border to the Black Sea, defeating the Crimean Khanate.

Following the victories against **Qajar Iran** in the Russian-Persian Wars until the first half of the nineteenth century, Russia also gained significant territories in the Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus, forcing Iran to give up to Russia definitively territories known today as Georgia, Dagestan, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Expansion continued during **Alexander I (1801-1825)**, which pulled **Finland** from the weakened Kingdom of Sweden in 1809 and Bessarabia from the Moldavia dominated by Ottomans, in 1812. At the same time the Russians colonized Alaska and even founded settlements in California such as Fort Ross.

In various alliances with European countries, Russia fought against **Napoleon's France**. The French invasion of Russia, at Napoleon's power peak in 1812, reached to Moscow, but eventually failed amid the resistance of the Russians in combination with the fierce cold of the Russian winter (95% of *Le Grande Armée* soldiers died). The Russian army led by Kutuzov and Barclay de Tolly pushed Napoleon out of the country and crossed Europe to Paris.

At the end of the conservative reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855), a peak of Russia's power and influence in Europe, was disrupted by the defeat in the Crimean War.

Nicholas successor Alexander II (1855-1881) adopted important changes in the country, including the abolition of serfdom in 1861. These Great Reforms stimulated industrialization and lead to the modernization of the Russian army, which managed to free Bulgaria from Ottoman domination in the war of 1877-1878. In this favourable historical context, fighting with the weapon in hand, Romania gained its independence in 1877 from the Ottoman Empire.

The end of the nineteenth century brought the rise of various socialist movements in Russia. Alexander II was killed in 1881 by revolutionary terrorists. His son, Alexander III followed to the throne (1881-1894).

The last Russian Emperor Nicholas II (1894-1917) was unable to anticipate the events of the **1905 Revolution**, triggered by the defeat in **the Russian-Japanese War** and by the incidents of the demonstrations known

as the **Bloody Sunday**. The revolt was stifled, but the government was forced to carry out major reforms (the 1906 Russian Constitution), including to grant freedom of expression and assembly, to legalize political parties, and to set up an elected legislature body, **the State Duma of the Russian Empire**.

### **2.5. The February Revolution of 1917 and the Russian Republic:**

In 1914, Russia entered **World War I**, responded to the Austro-Hungarian Empire's declaration of war against Serbia, the ally of Russia, and fought on several fronts, although it was isolated from its allies in **Entente**.

**In 1916**, the Russian Army's **Brusilov Offensive** almost completely destroyed the military capabilities of Austria-Hungary. However, the public mistrust of the people in relation to the regime has been exacerbated by the increase of war costs, the large number of victims, and rumours of corruption and betrayal. All these have formed the climate of the 1917 Russian Revolution, made in two major stages.

**The February Revolution of 1917** forced Nicholas II to abdicate. He and his family were imprisoned and later, in 1918, they were executed in Ekaterinburg during the Russian Civil War. The monarchy was replaced by a shaky coalition of political parties on 6/19 January 1918. **The Russian Constituent Assembly** proclaimed Russia as a Feudal Democratic Republic. The next day, the Constituent Assembly was dissolved by the Pan-Russian Central Executive Committee.

**2.6. Soviet Russia and the Civil War:** Simultaneously with the Provisional Government, the Socialists founded a parallel government, **the Petrograd Soviet**, which exercised power through democratically elected councilors and peasants called **Soviets**. This competition among the revolutionary authorities has aggravated the crisis in the country instead of solving it.

Finally, the Revolution of October 1917, led by Bolshevik leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, overthrew the Provisional Government and brought to the Soviets all the power they used to found the first socialist state in the world.



Following the October Revolution, a civil war broke out between the anti-Communists of the White Movement and the new Soviet regime with the Red Army. Bolshevik Russia lost the territories of Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic States and Finland, by signing the **Brest-Litovsk Treaty**, which ended the hostilities with **the Central Powers** of World War I. The Allied Powers launched a first military intervention in support of counter-communist forces. Meanwhile, both the Bolsheviks and the White Movement have launched campaigns of deportations and executions against the opposite camp, known as **Red Terror** and **White Terror**, respectively. By the end of the civil war, Russia's economy and infrastructure had been seriously damaged. Millions of people became white immigrants, and the famine in 1921 produced 5 million casualties.

**2.7. The Soviet Union:** The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (SFSR), together with the Soviet Republics of Ukraine, Belarus and the Transcaucasian, formed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR or the Soviet Union) on December 30, 1922. Of the 15 republics that were to form the USSR, the largest in size and over half of the total population of the Union was the Russian SFSR, which would dominate the Union throughout its 69 years.

Following the death of Lenin in 1924, a **troika** was designated to govern the Soviet Union. However, I.V. Stalin was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party and managed to suppress all groups within the party and to concentrate all power in his hands.

What followed under Stalin ruling is well known: the Great Purification, mass repression between 1937 and 1938, the launch of the concept of planned economy, the collectivization of agriculture, the establishment of criminal labour camps, massive deportations and exiles of the population. The famine of 1932-1933 followed. Stalin imposed an intense pace of industrialization, and on this basis, the Red Army consolidation took place.

Stalin and his clique, working closely with Hitler's Nazi regime, contributed to the annexation of Austria and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia (1938) by the latter.

In 1938-1939 the Soviet-Japanese War took place, and in August 1939 the Soviet Government and the German Government concluded the criminal Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, by which they split their spheres of influence in Europe and annexed new territories. **The USSR occupied Western Ukraine, Bessarabia, Herta territory, Northern Bucovina, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.** In September 1939 URSS split Poland with Germany.

On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany broke the non-aggression pact and invaded the Soviet Union. Recent data and information show that Germany has overtaken Stalin's attack by about two weeks.

How war evolved is well known, including its geopolitical and geostrategic consequences. Central and Eastern European states have come under the authority and leadership of the Soviet Union, a situation that lasted until 1989-1990.

After Stalin followed **Khrushchev (1955-1964)** and **Brezhnev (1965-1983)**. The latter is the author of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (the Russians withdrew their forces only in 1989). There followed two meteoric leaders: Andropov and Cernenko, followed in 1985 by the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

**Gorbachev (1985-1991)** introduced the policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) in an attempt to put an end to the economic stagnation period.

From the Khrushchev period to 1989, the so-called Cold War functioned between the Western States on the one hand and the USSR on the other hand.

Gorbachev's reforms have failed lamentably, leading to an increase in poverty and food shortages.

**In November 1989, the Berlin Wall fell,** and some East European countries were detached from the Soviet tutelage.

**During 1991,** economic and political turmoil began to boil after Baltic Republics chose to separate from the Soviet Union. On March 17, 1991, a referendum was held, in which the vast majority of the participating citizens voted in favour of modifying the Soviet Union into a New

Federation. **In August 1991**, a coup d'état attempt by some members of Gorbachev's government aimed at preserving the Soviet Union instead it lead to the end of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and a new wave of declarations of independence of the constituent republics. On December 25, 1991, the USSR dissolved in 15 post-Soviet states.

**2.8. The Russian Federation:** In June 1991, **Boris Eltzin** became the first directly elected president in Russia's history (of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, which on December 25, 1991 became the Russian Federation). After the disintegration of the USSR, a series of reforms took place, such as:

- The privatization of some economic assets;
- The liberalization of markets and trade;
- The application of "shock therapies", on the recommendation of the International Monetary Fund.

All these have resulted in a major economic crisis, characterized by a 50% drop in GDP and industrial output between 1990 and 1995.

**Privatization** has passed control over businesses in the hands of people with relatives or relations within the Government. Many new rich people have moved assets and money outside the country into a huge capital migration. Recession led to the collapse of social services, birth rate collapsed as mortality increased. The poverty rate increased to 49% by 1993. The 1990s led to the generalization of extreme corruption and organized crime, both financial and violent.

The 1990s were also affected by conflicts in the North Caucasus (Chechnya, Abkhazia, Ossetia in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, and Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova).

**As successor of the USSR**, Russia took over both its rights (such as the seat in the UN Security Council) and its responsibilities, such as resolving external debt, with about half of the population of the USSR at the time of dissolution. Large fiscal deficits have caused the 1998 financial crisis and a further drop in GDP.

**On December 31, 1999**, President Yeltsin suddenly resigned (Yeltsin manoeuvre), leaving office in the hands of recently-appointed

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who then won the presidential election in 2000.

Putin has succeeded to stabilize economy, to halt insurgencies in the North Caucasus, helped by the high oil price combined with a weak currency.

After the economic crisis triggered in 2008, oil prices fell and Russia's economy stagnated, with poverty rising again (20% of the population).

Although Putin has strengthened an authoritarian and undemocratic regime that systematically suppresses opposition movements of any kind, his coming to power has coincided with some economic opportunities and the repression of insurgencies, facts that have made him popular in Russia.

President Putin is in his fourth mandate (2018-2024) after he was prime minister between 2008 and 2012.

In 2014, after President Viktor Yanukovych of Ukraine fled the country following street demonstrations, Putin requested and received from the Russian legislature the approval to deploy Russian troops in Ukraine. After occupying Crimea, Russia organized a "referendum" there and announced results that favoured separating the region from Ukraine, followed by its accession to the Russian Federation. On March 27, 2014, the UN General Assembly condemned in a resolution the annexation of Crimea by Russia by 100 votes to 11, with 58 abstentions. After annexation, Russia started an intensive militarization process on the Peninsula.

**In September 2015**, Russia launched a military intervention in the Syrian Civil War consisting of air strikes against groups opposing the totalitarian regime of Bashar al-Assad, whether ISIS militants, from the al-Nusra Front (al-Qaeda in Levant), Kurdish groups or Syrian anti-Assad rebels. Actions continue on this date (March 2019).

**In recent years**, the Putin regime has triggered widespread actions (misinformation, lying propaganda, cyber-attacks, spy infiltration and commando groups) against the states of the European Union, the US and other countries, in order to weaken their cohesion and create divergences and divisions in public opinion in the concerned countries, in order to promote its aggressive expansionist policies.

### **3. Russian Federation political geography<sup>3</sup>**

**The geography of Russia** describes the geographical features (territory, climate, relief). It extends along the largest northern part of the Eurasian Supercontinent. Although there is a large part of the Arctic and Subarctic areas in this territory with less population, economic activity and physical variety than in other countries.

**Most of the country** is made up of vast plains, both in the European as well as in the Asian part, the latter being known by the generic name of Siberia. These plains are predominantly steppe in the south, and in the north there are forest-covered plains with tundra on the northern coast.

**Mountain chains** are met along southern borders, such as the Caucasus Mountains (Mount Elbrus, 5,633 m, the highest peak in Russia and Europe), the Altai Mountains, the Verkhoyansk Mountains and the volcanoes in the Kamchatka Peninsula. In the central area are the Ural Mountains, a mountain range stretching from north to south, which divides Eurasia conventionally into two continents, the European and Asian.

**The Russian Federation has (without Crimea) an area of 17,075,400 square kilometres (rank 1 in the world).**

This country has a very long coastline over 37,000 km along the Arctic and Pacific Ocean as well as closed or semi-enclosed seas such as the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea or Caspian Sea. The most important Russian islands are Severnaya Zemlya, the Franz Josef Territory, the Novosibirsk Islands, the Wrangel Island, the Kuril and Sakhalin Islands.

In Russia there are some of the largest rivers in length and/or flow in the world. For more details, see the map.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geografia\\_Rusiei](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geografia_Rusiei)

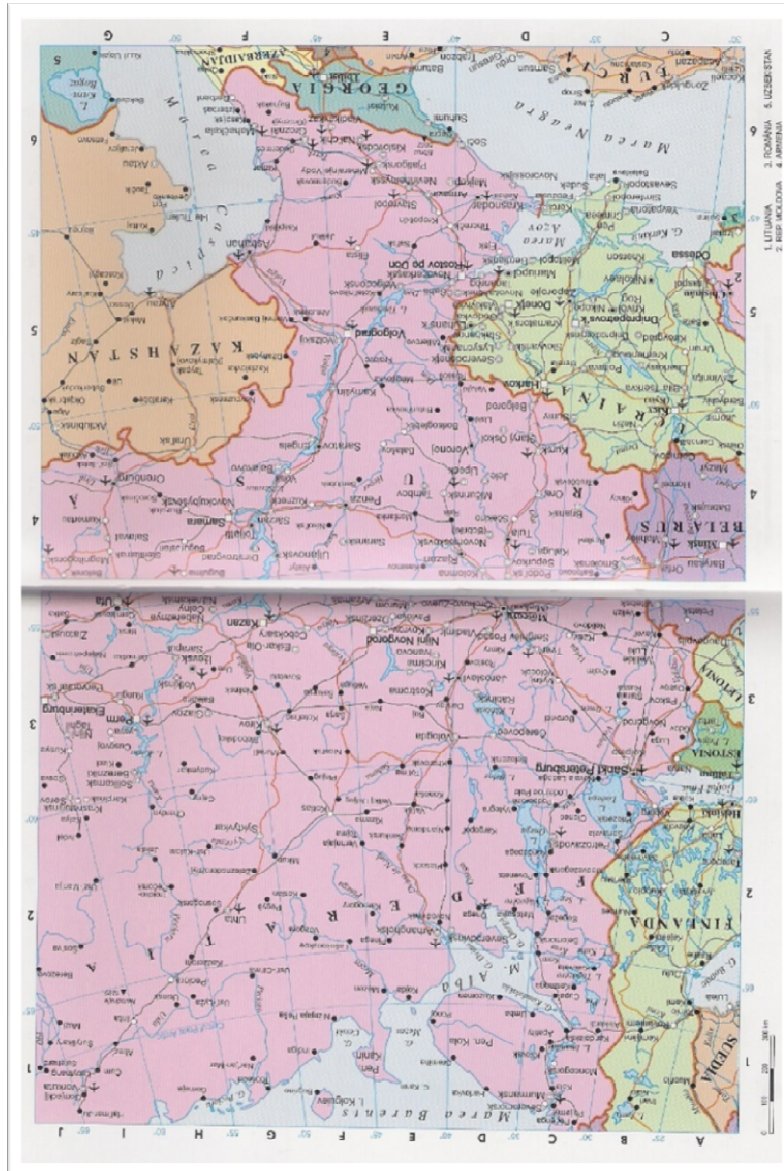


Figure no. 1. The Russian Federation, European Part  
Source: Octavian Mândruț, *Atlas geografic de buzunar*, Editura Corint, București, 2013, pp. 68-69.

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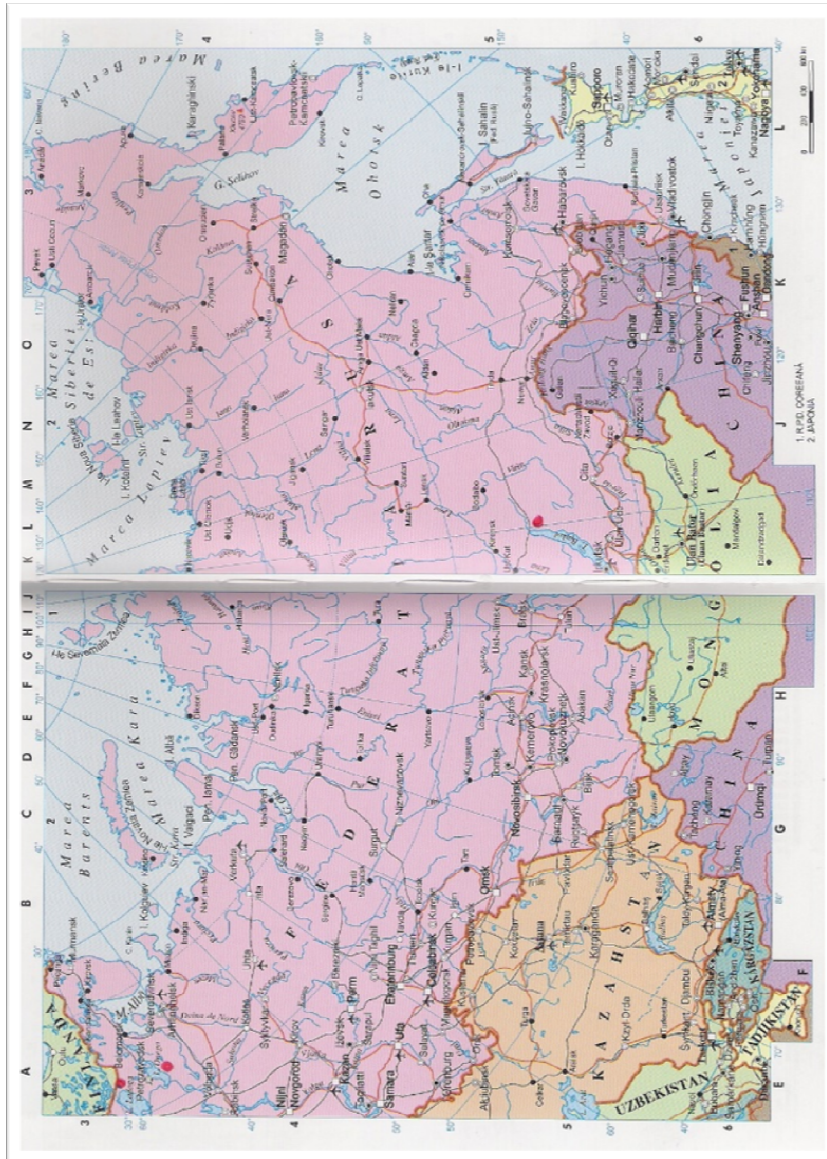


Figure no. 2. The Russian Federation. Asian Part  
Source: Octavian Mândruț, *Atlas geografic de buzunar*, Editura Corint, București, 2013, pp. 68-69.

Among the most important lakes in Russia are Baikal (the deepest lake with the largest freshwater volume in the world), Ladoga and Onega.

**Borders:** The simplest description of Russia is that of a large layout on two continents, with a vast seaside and a number of important islands and an enclave (Kaliningrad, in the northeast corner of the Baltic Sea).

Frontiers and seaside, starting from the north-east, in the trigonometric sense, are:

- The borders with Norway and Finland;
- A short seashore on the Baltic Sea, with Sankt. Petersburg port, from Finland to Estonia;
- The borders with Estonia, Latvia, Belarus and Ukraine;
- The Black Sea coast, from Ukraine to Georgia;
- The borders with Georgia and Azerbaijan;
- The Caspian Sea coast from Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan;
- The borders with Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia, again with China and North Korea;
- The maritime frontiers with the US and Japan.

The very wide seaside allows Russia to reach all seas of the world and links with all the maritime nations and all the straits.

Through the North Pacific has access to:

- The Sea of Japan (with the western shore of Sakhalin);
- The Okhotsk Sea (with the eastern shore of Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands);
- The Bering Sea (with the eastern shores of the Ciukotsk Peninsula and the Kamchatka Peninsula).

**Kaliningrad Enclave** belonging to the Russian Federation has borders with:

- Poland to the south;
- Lithuania to the north and east;
- The Baltic Sea.

**The ports** of the Russian seaside of the **Baltic Sea** and Black Sea have smaller access to other seas than in the case of the Pacific and Arctic ports, but that does not diminish their importance. The Baltic Sea provides immediate access to the ports of other nine countries and between mainland Russia and the Kaliningrad enclave. Through the straits between Denmark



and Sweden, the Baltic Sea is linked to the North Sea and the oceans in its north and west.

**The Black Sea** offers immediate access to the ports of five other countries, and via the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits and the Istanbul port, connects with the Mediterranean Sea, and further through the Suez Canal and the Gibraltar Strait to the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. **The Caspian Sea**, the largest saltwater lake, is a closed sea, with no access to the Planetary Ocean.

Russia's great frustration is that the straits named above are controlled by other powers.

The Russian Federation is spread over 11 time slots.

According to recent statistics, Russia has 13 cities with over 1 million inhabitants: Moscow, Sankt Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Ekaterinburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara, Omsk, Kazan, Chelyabinsk, Rostov-on-Don, Ufa, Volgograd and Perm.

#### **4. Russian Federation population**

According to data from 2017, the Russian Federation has 144 million inhabitants (8th place in the world), with a density per square kilometre slightly above 8 inhabitants.

**Ethnic Russians make up 81%** of the country's population. In the Russian Federation, however, many important minorities also live. In total, **160 ethnic groups** and different native peoples live within its borders. Approximately 73% of the population live in urban areas, while 27% live in rural areas.

After the 2010 census, apart from the ethnic Russians (81%), there are 3.7% Tatar, 1.4% Ukrainians, 1.1% Bashkir, 1% Chuvash, 11.8% other unspecified ethnicities.

Since 2009, there has been an annual population growth in Russia, due to increased birth rates and reduced mortality.

The government is implementing a series of programs designed to increase birth rates and to attract more immigrants. Monthly child allowances have been doubled to the equivalent of \$ 55, and a unique \$ 9,200 payment is granted for women who have a second child. Putin says that in 2025 the population of Russia could reach 146 million inhabitants.

The 160 ethnic groups speak 100 languages, of which 35 languages are officially recognized in Russia in different regions by local governments.

**Religion:** The Russians have practiced Orthodox Christianity since the tenth century. The Soviet period has meant the destruction of religion and churches, so today only 16-20% of them still declare themselves Orthodox believers. Following the Orthodox religion are Islam and then Buddhism.

**Health:** The Russian Constitution guarantees universal health care. In practice, the situation is not so pink. In 2014, life expectancy in Russia was 65.29 years for men and 76.49 years for women. This is the case for an average of 0.859 men per woman, a big imbalance.

**Education:** Russia has the greatest number of college graduates, or higher in terms of the percentage of the population in the world, with 54%.

**The Russian Federation** has notable achievements in folk culture, architecture, visual arts, music and dance, literature and philosophy, cinema and animation and the mass-media, sports and other fields.

## **5. Economy, mineral and energy resources**

**Russia** has a mixed economy with medium to high incomes. It is the 12th world economy by nominal GDP and the 6th by purchasing power parity.

**According to data in 2013**, the nominal GDP was \$ 2,553 billion, GDP per capita was \$ 18,800, inflation 6.8%, population under the poverty line 11.3%, labour force 73,290,000, and unemployment rate 5.8%.

In 2013, Russia had reserves of \$ 515.6 billion. It is believed that in 2019 this reserve is higher.

The Russians like to say that under their feet is all Mendeleev's table. For the most part, this is true, with Russia being rich in iron ore, uranium and rare metals.

An important economic asset, with strategic and military value, is provided by the energy resources, represented by oil and natural gas.

The situation in 2012 was as follows:

### **Oil:**

- Yearly production (2012) = 10,397 million barrels, the 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the world following Saudi Arabia and USA;

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- Oil reserves = 74,200,000,000 barrels, representing 5.33% of the total reserves of the world, 8<sup>th</sup> place worldwide.

**Natural gas:**

- Gas production (2017) = 690.5 billion cube meters, 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the world after USA, and 1<sup>st</sup> place at export.

- **Gas reserves** = 47.57 trillion cubic feet (25.0 2%), 1<sup>st</sup> place in the world.

USSR and then the Russian Federation managed to dominate the natural gas market in Europe, with almost all EU countries dependent on imports (primarily Germany).

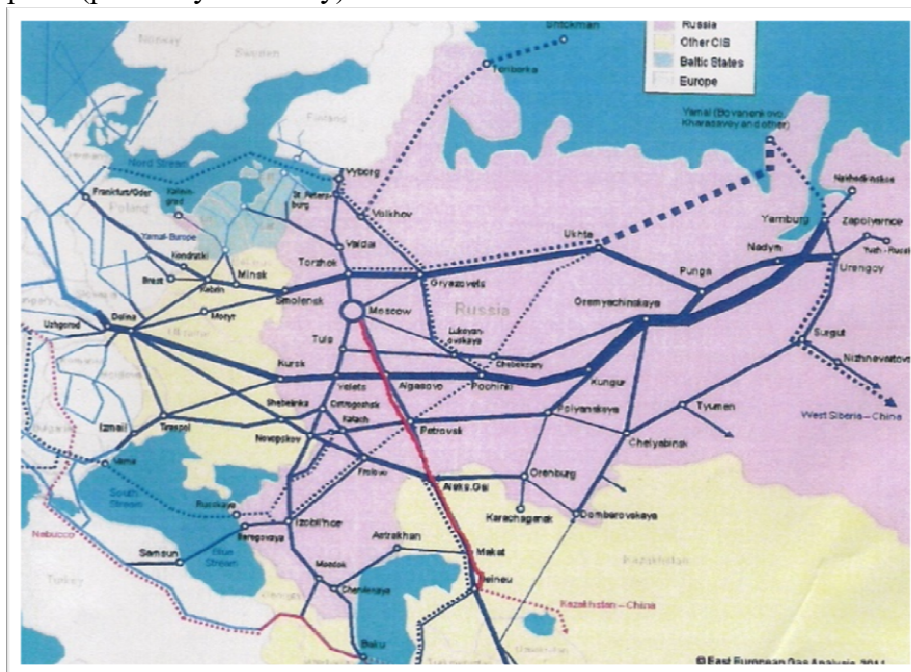


Figure no. 3. The structure of the gas pipeline network of the USSR

*Source: East European gas Analysis<sup>4</sup>*

**The Russian Federation** has important achievements in space technology, automotive, communications, and especially in the armament industry, where it is the second largest exporter in the world after the USA.

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<sup>4</sup> East European gas Analysis, <https://eegas.com/fsu.htm>

In recent years the army of the Russian Federation has a large amount of modern weapons for all categories of armed forces.

**Russia exports** (\$ 515 billion in 2013) are heading towards the Netherlands 14.6%, the People's Republic of China - 6.8%, Germany - 6.8%, Italy - 6.2%, Turkey – 5.2%, Ukraine - 5.2%, Belarus - 4.7%.

**Russia's imports** amounted to \$ 341 billion in 2013, consisting of Western technology and food products.

**In conclusion**, one can say that despite the USA and EU sanctions, after the annexation of Crimea and aggression in the East of Ukraine, Russia has a considerable economic power, mainly supported by the energy resources.

## **6. The political system of the Russian Federation**

**According to the Russian Constitution**, the country is a federation a semi-presidential republic where the President is the Head of State and the Prime Minister is the Head of the Government. Structurally, the Russian Federation is organized as a multi-party representative regime, with the federal government comprised of three branches:

- **Two-Chamber Legislature: The Federal Assembly** of Russia, consisting of 450 State Duma deputies and 170 members of the **Federation Council**, adopts federal laws, declares war, ratifies treaties, approves budgets and charges the president;

- **The Executive: The President** is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, has the right to veto the draft legislative acts before they become law, appoints the **Russian Government (the Cabinet)**, and appoints generals and officers in high positions. The government administers and applies federal laws and policies;

- **Judicial Power: the Constitutional Court**, the Supreme Court, and the lower federal courts, whose judges are appointed by the Federation Council on the recommendation of the President, interpret the law and may repeal the laws that they consider unconstitutional.

**The President** is elected by popular vote for a term of six years (eligible for as many mandates but no more than two consecutive terms).

**The Cabinet** is made up of Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers and a few others; all members are appointed by the President on

the recommendation of the Prime Minister (whose appointment must be approved by the State Duma).

Although theoretically is a multi-party system, Russia's political life is dominated by the **United Russia** Party and its satellites, the more serious political movements being repressed by the authorities. Other parties so tolerated are the Communist Party, the ultranationalist grouping **the Liberal Democratic Party** and **A Just Russia** Party. In 2013, Russia was ranked by *The Economist* on 122 out of 167 countries in the "Democracy Index".

**External Relations:** The Russian Federation is recognized in international law as the successor state of the former Soviet Union. It is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and other international organizations.

Russia has diplomatic relations with 191 countries and has 144 embassies.

### **7. The military forces of the Russian Federation**

After the dismantling of the USSR, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation were created on May 7, 1992. The Russian Army is organized into five main components:

- Land Forces;
- Air Forces;
- Military Marine;
- Aerospace defence Forces;
- Strategic Missile Forces.

**In 2019** there are 2,100,000 people **in the Russian Armed Forces**, of which 1,136,000 soldiers, although in numbers from public sources<sup>5</sup> there are far fewer (1.9 million, of which 798,628 soldiers).

**Russia has** the largest nuclear weapons stockpile (8,500 pieces, 1<sup>st</sup> place in the world), the second fleet of ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, and the only force of active strategic bombers, besides the USA. Its tank force is the largest in the world, with approximately 22,700 units, 50% being manufactured over the last ten years.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: [globalfirepower.com](http://globalfirepower.com)

In all other categories of weapons it has very large quantities, as follows:

- Armoured vehicles – 28,000;
- Self-propelled artillery – 6,000;
- Towed artillery – 4,700;
- Rocket projectors – 3,800;
- Fighters – 3,100;
- Attack helicopters – 1,655;
- Aircraft carriers – 1;
- Frigates – 5;
- Destroyers – 15;
- Corvettes – 81;
- Submarines – 65;
- Cruise Missiles with 2,400 km range – 64<sup>6</sup>;

• AA S-300 and S-400 defence systems installed especially to its western borders (Kaliningrad, Sankt Petersburg, Crimea, the western border with Ukraine, the Moscow region, etc.). The number of these systems is still unknown to the public.

**The Russian Federation** has a huge and completely native armaments industry that produces almost all for its armed forces, but it also exports massively, ranking second place in the world after the USA. It owns 35% of global arms sales (it sells in 80 countries).

**Russia's official military budget** is about **\$ 95 billion in 2019** (the figure may be much higher given the proverbial secrecy of the Russians), being the third largest after the budgets of USA and China.

#### **Bodies responsible for command and control of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation:**

- Supreme Commander: President of the Russian Federation (until 2024 - Vladimir Putin);
- The Security Council of the Russian Federation, chaired by the President of Russia;

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<sup>6</sup> Russia has violated the INF Treaty by stating that it does not own such weapons.

- The Defence Minister of the Russian Federation, now General Sergei Shoigu;

- The General Staff, currently headed by general aggressor Valery Gerasimov.

Four military districts are organized **on the territory of Russia:**

- West - with its centre in Sankt Petersburg;
- South - centre in Rostov, Don;
- Central – with the command in Ekaterinburg;
- East – with command in Khabarovsk.

**As usual**, throughout its history, whether Imperial, Soviet or Russian, the Kremlin power continues to project its force abroad, having its bases and troops in Ukraine, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transdnistria, Syria, Libya, Venezuela, Afghanistan, Cuba, and perhaps disguised also in other countries.

In Ukraine, Syria, Libya and Venezuela, (the famous Spetsnaz GRU military forces are disguised as mercenaries of private security companies, as Wagner Company is, considered by many analysts to be Vladimir Putin’s personal army.

According to the statement of the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, made at the UN, Russia has the following forces in the “terrestrial aircraft”, Crimea:

- Militaries – 32,500;
- Artillery systems – 88;
- MLRS – 52;
- 372 armoured vehicles;
- 113 fighters;
- 62 attack helicopters;
- 6 warships;
- S-300 and S-400 anti-aircraft systems;
- Tu-22M3 strategic bombers;
- BUK-M2 and Panţîr-S1 systems;
- Iskander missile systems;
- “Ball” and “Bastion” missile defence system;
- 6 submarines with Kalibr cruise missiles.

In Donbas:

- 496 tanks;
- 938 armoured vehicles;
- 128 multiple missile launchers;
- 776 artillery systems.

As a result of these attack forces accumulation, the Chief of Staff of the Ukrainian Air Force General Viktor Muzhenko said on March 6, 2011 that Russia is preparing a massive three-way attack on its country (North, East and South)<sup>7</sup>.

This possible evolution is also a direct threat, of extreme gravity to Romania.

**Also, Russia has been preoccupied since 2000 to strengthen its military and surveillance devices in the Arctic Ocean (Figure 4).**

At the same time, Russia is developing and modernizing military bases in the west of its territory, in order to threaten and control EU and/or NATO member countries (Figure no. 5)<sup>8</sup>.

On the Antarctic continent, Russia has seven scientific research stations that also have a military role to oversee competitors in the area (Figure no. 6).

From the above, of course in summary, it can be concluded that the Russian Federation has a huge military force capacity and capability, potentially aggressive, to any country in the world, the first target being Europe.

The current leadership of the Kremlin continues with determination the aggressive policy of the Tsarist Empire, the USSR, and now the Russian Federation, in order to become a world leader and to control and subdue the democratic states every day.

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<sup>7</sup> *Evenimentul zilei*, Romanian Journal, 07.03.2019.

<sup>8</sup> "Geopolitica" Magazine, no. 73 (1/2018), p. 20.



GLOBAL POLITICAL-MILITARY AGGRESSIVENESS  
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION HISTORY AND ACTUALITY–



Figure no. 4. Russia's Military Dispositive at the Arctic Ocean

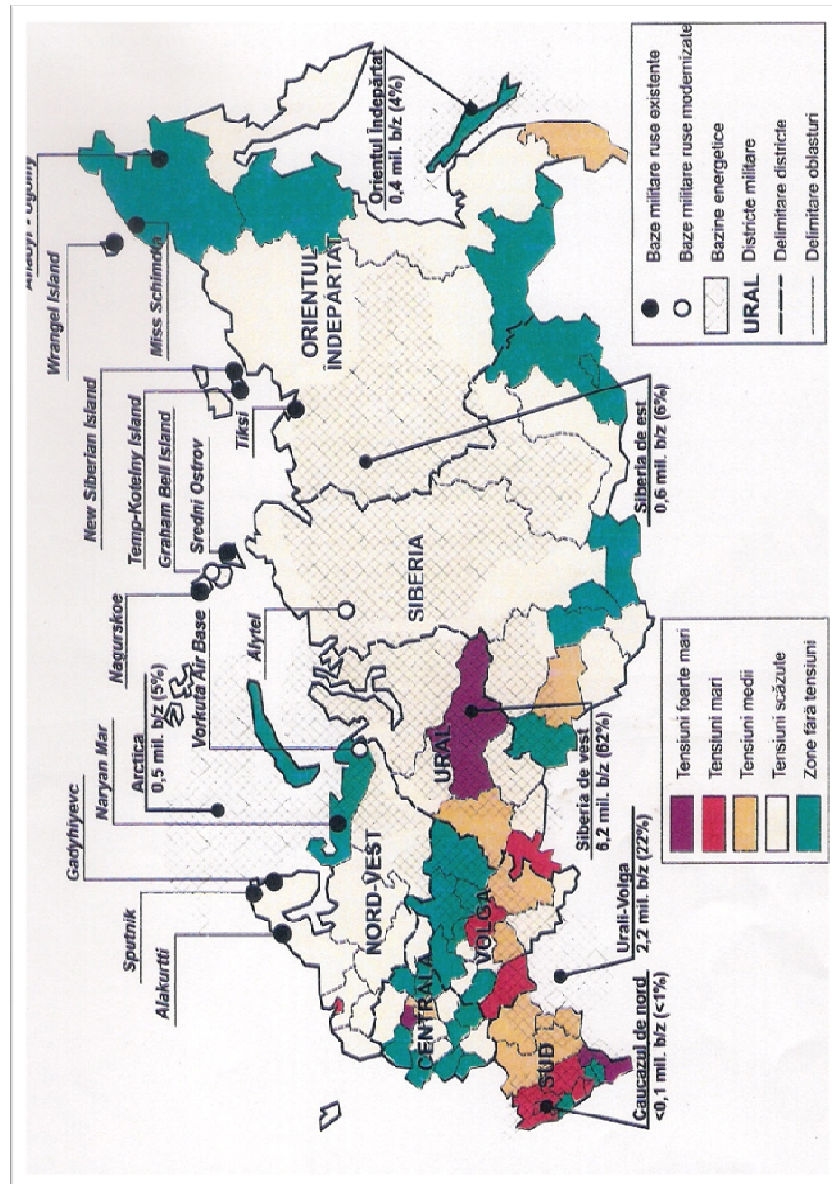


Figure no. 5. Existing and modernized Russian military bases

GLOBAL POLITICAL-MILITARY AGGRESSIVENESS  
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Figure no. 6. Scientific research stations which also have a military role

## **8. Russia's aggressive and destabilizing actions on neighbouring countries, EU countries, as well as the US and other countries of the world**

**The Russian Federation**, after 2000, has begun an ample process of arming and training for an aggressive war that may erupt at any time.

It also developed and develops complex means of pressure and influence on neighbouring countries and other countries of the world (political, economic, technological, informational, cybernetic and military in the so-called "hybrid war" category).

**In the current political and geostrategic context**, it is necessary to recall the complicated dossiers of frozen conflicts, presented in detail by Prof. Stan Petrescu, Ph.D. in the *Geopolitica* Magazine no. 73 (1/2018)<sup>9</sup>. Without going into detail, we sum up their names: Russia-Georgia, Russia-Ukraine, Russia-Baltic States, Moldova and the case of Transnistria, Chechnya, Russia-Armenia-Azerbaijan, Russia's hybrid war in Crimea.

These frozen conflicts can be activated at any time by the Kremlin, with the involvement of its military forces and the actions of mercenaries in private armies (in fact Spetsnaz GRU forces).

**After the annexation of Crimea**, Russia stepped up its efforts to strengthen its power in the Black Sea area, taking advantage of Turkey's double play. There is a strong arming of the peninsula, as well as an increase in combat ships deployed in the Russian ports of the Black Sea. For details, it can be looked at the article "*Evolution of the Balance of Power in the Black Sea Region*"<sup>10</sup>.

**In the view of current Kremlin leaders** an important objective is the strategies of blocking and diverting the evolution of the European Union and, in this context, to undermine and weaken its member countries<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Professor Stan Petrescu, Ph.D., *Rusia de la conflictele înghețate la război hibrid*, "Geopolitica" Magazine, no. 73(1/2018), pp. 21-36.

<sup>10</sup> Marius Roșu, *Evoluția balanței de putere în Regiunea Mării Negre*, "Geopolitica" Magazine, no. 73(1/2018), pp. 37-48.

<sup>11</sup> Mădălina Virginia Antonescu, Ph.D., *Competiția pentru putere în secolul XXI: Forme ale strategiilor posibile ale Rusiei de blocare/deturnare a evoluției UE*, "Geopolitica" Magazine, no. 73(1/2018), pp. 49-59.

We can keep in mind the intense actions of propaganda, misinformation, fake news, and cyber-attacks over the EU's economic and financial infrastructures and over the US. Russia's involvement in US presidential elections, in the Brexit process, but also in the elections in Germany, France, Italy, and other countries (including actions against Romania) is well-known.

**Moscow's leaders** develop and apply, without any resentment, complex actions from the class of analysts called "The Hybrid War", using, in their interest and without scruples, the territorial, economic, financial, confessional and political disputes between some European countries as well as between the Middle East countries<sup>12</sup>.

It is noteworthy that the timid attempts by NATO and other Eastern European countries to defend their territory against threats coming daily from Moscow provoke the unjustified rage of Russia's political and military leadership.

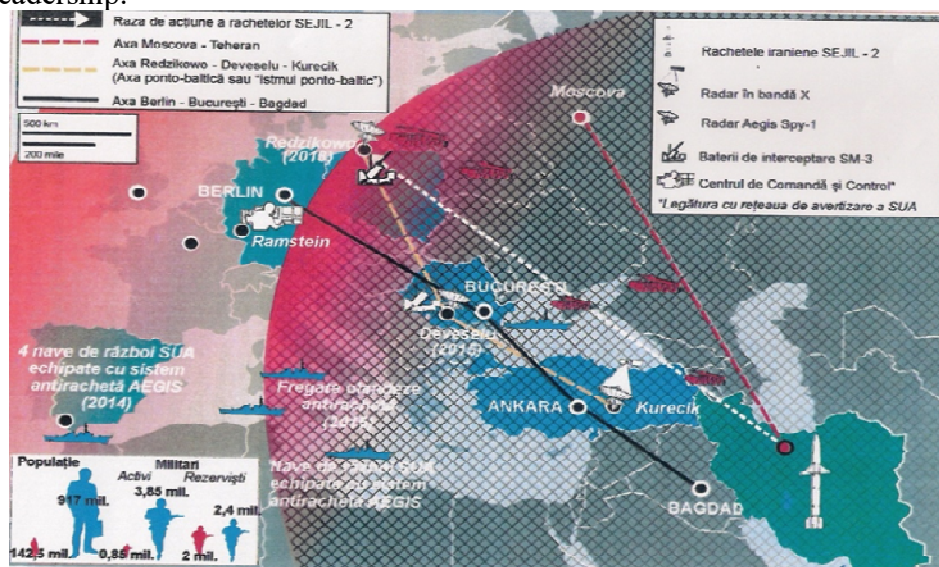


Figure no. 7. Anti-missile capabilities developed by 2018

<sup>12</sup> Vasile Simileanu, Ph.D., Războiul hibrid – abordări geopolitice, geostrategice și de geointelligence, "Geopolitica" Magazine, no. 73(1/2018), pp. 75-98.

I believe that, in this context, we cannot omit the analysis made by Brigadier General Gheorghe Vaduva in his article “*Russia is Russia and so*”<sup>13</sup>. In the material is made a correct radiography, without partisan passions, of the actions of the last years of the Euro-Asiatic Empire at the East, actions that can threaten at any moment the peace of the world and, of course, Romania’s security.

In the course of 2018, but also in the first months of 2018, numerous warnings were issued from some political leaders and military-political analysts on Russian intentions and actions.

**Thus, the Swedish Defence Research Agency**<sup>14</sup> came to the conclusion based on some hard-to-disputed arguments that Russia is preparing for a new world war. Why this serious conclusion? Because the Russians organize and carry out actions that lead to this situation:

- They were moving from offensive applications with 10,000 troops in 2017 to 300,000 troops in 2018;
- There is a massive training of reservists;
- Many new weapons are produced and tested;
- They Infringed the “INF Treaty” by developing and positioning 64 SSC-8 cruise missiles (with nuclear or conventional warheads ranging 2,400 km);
- Sending “green men” to Syria, Libya, Venezuela and perhaps other countries;
- Identification of the propaganda, misinformation, cyber-attacks against EU countries and other countries.

**US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo** said in Slovakia on February 12, 2019: “*Russian President Vladimir Putin poses a threat to democracies around the world*”<sup>15</sup>.

**US Ambassador to Romania David Schaefer:** “*Russia has a strategy to weaken Romania and its links with the West*”<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Brigadier General Gheorghe Văduva, Ph.D., *Rusia este Rusia și atât*, “Geopolitica” Magazine, no. 73 (1/2018), pp. 115-125.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Digi24, 11.02.2019.

<sup>15</sup> Sources from the Romanian media (Hotnews, Evenimentul Zilei etc.), 13.02.2019.

**Recently, US General Ben Hodges**, former US Force Commander of Europe and Chief of NATO forces in Europe, said in Prague that Russia could occupy Odessa and then attack and occupy Romania<sup>17</sup>.

**Alerts and warnings** about Russia's aggression were also issued by some Romanian politico-military analysts, through papers and studies published in various magazines, books on geopolitical and geostrategic issues, and positions on various media vectors.

**It remains to be seen** how NATO, the EU, and last but not least, Romania is responding to this wave of intimidation actions and to direct threats almost daily by the current leadership in Moscow !?

Information from public sources show an excessive shyness from NATO and/or EU democratic countries to counteract Russia's actions.

### **9. Some conclusions and lessons for political and military leaders in Romania**

**Political and military analysts** from NATO and/or EU member countries agree that over the last ten years the world has entered a dangerous situation of turmoil, originally being the aggressiveness and destabilizing actions of the Russian Federation (politically, propagandistic, economic, military, cybernetic, etc.) directed against the NATO and European Union member states.

Of course, world peace is also threatened by other state and non-state actors (North Korea, the Islamic State, the resurgent and terrorist movements in the Middle East, Africa and South America), as well as the serious dysfunctions in the Earth's natural environment (global warming, massive deforestation, excessive exploitation of natural resources, etc.).

The brief presentation of the potential dangers, including military threats, which for Romania come from the eastern area, aims to bring to the attention of the Romanian political and military leaders the need for permanent vigilance, accompanied by a thorough preparation for with respect to a possible aggression.

**Some conclusions<sup>18</sup>:**

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<sup>16</sup> Source: hotnews, 24.02.2019.

<sup>17</sup> Sources from the Romanian media (Hotnews, Evenimentul Zilei etc.), March 2019.

• **The Romanian Armed Forces** suffered large amputations of personnel, military units and weapons destruction, without a serious political-military analysis of the risks and threats in our region.

**In 1989**, there were 340,000 troops **in the army**, and the reserve consisted of 820,000 people capable of serving in the event of a crisis or war.

**Now, in 2019**, there are 70,000 soldiers on paper, and in fact 60,000 (politics does not want to fill the peacekeepers for unknown reasons) and only 80,000 people are in the reserve position. The point is that some and these ridiculous number of personnel (0.30% of the country's population) seem too big.

• **The political factor** (President, Parliament, Govern, Ministry of Defence), as well as the military represented by **the General Staff of Defence**, treated with disinterest and with great superficiality the real problems of the Army (personnel, training, weapon systems, living conditions, etc.). There have been long periods in which no one has spoken of the defence and, consequently, no reasonable and necessary efforts have been made to correct things.

• **Defence budgets** have been on paper between 0.4% of GDP (Vacaroiu Government) and 2% of GDP for 2017 and 2018. In reality, the budget actually allocated did not exceed 0.9% -1.1% of GDP, without anyone seems disturbed (CSDC, Parliament, Government, Ministry of Defence, etc.).

• **As a result**, the main procurement programs were cancelled in 2017 and 2018 or sent in an uncertain future. No one is responsible for these anti-national offenses.

• **The indigenous industrial base for Defence** has been planned to be destroyed, knowingly and badly, remaining small islands and marginal production entities, but these remains are left to die slowly and surely.

• The so-called **Continuous Reform of the Army** was summed up to a single dimension - the destruction of many military units (some at the

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<sup>18</sup> Lieutenant General (R) Constantin Mincu, Ph.D., *Îngrijorări actuale justificate pentru elita politică și militară a României*, "Științe Militare" Magazine, no. 1/2019.



pressure of real estate “sharks” that have taken over the land ceded with political support) and the massive reduction of troops.

- Marginally, new combat systems and equipment have been put in place and have no serious effects in strengthening the Defence.

- **Active and reserve militaries** are attacked and insulted daily by some politicians. The start was given in 2010 and continues today.

- **The army’s top military functions** (and other state institutions) are increasingly aggressive promoted obedient and politically supportive personnel instead of professionals and people who still believe in patriotism and moral values.

- **It has been obsessively repeated** since 2002 that we no longer need large army because NATO defends us. **Under the current circumstances, this idea is a great stupidity.** NATO will defend us if we will be able to defend ourselves, even for a week. Recent statements by US President Donald Trump and other civilian and military officials from the American Administration should awaken to reality. So far there are no positive signs!?

- **Older or newer weapon systems and equipment** are devoid of normal maintenance and repair work, rapidly approaching collapse. Reported reason - there is no money.

- **The main provisions of the “National Defence Strategy of the Country”** are not followed systematically, with the pen in hand, to see what has been achieved and what is not (and who are the political and military officials who regard the document as a mere paper).

- **The “Country Guide for Defence Strategy”** for the period 2015-2019 remained a theoretical document, an essay, with no practical relevance.

- **Multiannual procurement plans** are a myth, a legend, and have never worked. Each Government and each Defence Minister changes everything and takes it from scratch. Or it is known that a complex system of weapons or equipment cannot be achieved in one year. For some, 10-15 years are needed, with rhythmical budget allocations, to the level required by plans and projects. No one wants to understand this simple reality, applicable to any serious army.

• The Romanian Armed Forces is as low as possible in important chapters for deterrence and reprisal, for example: new multirole combat aircraft, attack helicopters, anti-tank means, tanks and armoured carriers with increased capability of hit and survival in combat. The fighter's equipment is outdated and far from modern standards.

**There would also be place for some other more suggestions and propositions:**

• **Those responsible in the CSDC, the Parliament, the Government, the Ministry of National Defence and the Defence Staff** to review their functioning laws and responsibilities in the job description and act accordingly.

• **The Defence Committees of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies** to stop mime the work and to take seriously the plans and analyses because the material is abundant.

• **General and Colonels** at the head of the Armed Forces should leave aside timidity and obedience to the political leaders and take a more resolute stance on the vital issues of the defence of the country. I think time has no patience.

• **Chief of Defence Staff** (whoever he is) to prepare and make a detailed and honest presentation on the **“real state of the Armed Forces”** in front of Parliament. If the current leaders of the two Chambers refuse (as is to be expected), the report can be made public, assuming responsibility for the institutional and personal consequences.

**In conclusion**, we find data and information from various sources, that some of our neighbours are not sleeping, preparing themselves from the military point of view and not only for aggressive actions.

**Romania and the Romanian Armed Forces** seem asleep in the project, striking the pitch on the spot, or even giving back. Nothing binds, nothing is built, and everything is about an embarrassing political noise. This is not how a country in a dangerous region can defend itself.

**Who has the power to understand the gravity of the situation and to move things out of the place!?**



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