

## **CURRENT POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION – A MYSTERY HIDDEN IN AN ENIGMA**

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**Abstract:** *The author considers that the subject of this article is one of public interest in Romania today, especially after regional and global politico-military developments, originating from the aggressive actions and belligerent statements of officials in the Russian Federation, primarily President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin.*

*During 2021, new elements and evidence emerged regarding Russia's destabilizing actions against EU and NATO countries, using direct threats of force, as well as actions from the "hybrid war" range and energy blackmail, through political manipulation of oil and gas supplies.*

*In the military field, Russia has accelerated armament with new types of offensive weapons, such as hypersonic missiles, armoured vehicles of all types, nuclear submarines, fighter and strategic bombing.*

*Multiple actions (political, economic and military) are carried out on a daily basis against all of Russia's neighbours (the obsession with controlling countries in the so-called "close vicinity").*

*Russia exploits the refugee crisis cynically and without restraint, intervening directly with vassal Belarus to increase pressure on the borders of Poland and the Baltic States.*

*The European Union and NATO have **timid and fruitless reactions** to all these actions on the ground.*

**Keywords:** *Russian Federation, President Putin, USA, EU, NATO.*

### **1.Introduction**

**In the last 3-4 years I have published in the Journal of Military Sciences** several articles on the policies of the Russian Federation towards the West, but also towards other state actors in the immediate vicinity and in other parts of the world (articles will be presented in the bibliography).

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I find that with each passing day new elements appear that are likely to increase the concern of the states of the world and, first of all, of the European countries that are members or not of the EU and/or NATO.

**In August 2021, in the Policy Brief Magazine no. 124<sup>1</sup>**, a group of historians and political analysts published under the auspices of the prestigious British **Chatham House** a lucid analysis report of preconceptions and naiveties that affect the West's response to Russia's aggressive actions.

I believe that the analysis helps enormously to understand as accurately as possible Russia's policy in the region and in the world, for example towards the government installed in the Republic of Moldova, against Poland, the Baltic States, Romania and Ukraine, as well as aggressive actions in the Black Sea Basin.

**The Putin regime** and directly the President of the Russian Federation have recently launched a subversion of deeply distorted narratives about **World War II**, an action taken in August, the month of **the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact**.

The material mentioned above dismantles, with solid arguments, 16 of the most widespread myths and prejudices that shape today's perception of Russia in the West, clarifying the detrimental and dangerous impact they have on Western policies. For each of the 16, it shows how the West should critically re-evaluate (if it wants to) its position in order to respond more rationally and more effectively to Russia's actions.

The main argument in the mentioned material is that although many Euro-Atlantic politicians and decision makers tend to take their wishes for granted, in fact **there is not much prospect of Russia becoming a cooperative and constructive partner for Western governments in the near future. We should note that Putin's Russia has a Hidden Agenda** that it pursues with determination in all economic, financial, military and other matters, promoting destabilizing policies and actions without any trace of restraint, primarily against its neighbours and then against EU and/or NATO member countries.

The well-intentioned efforts to **"improve"** relations with Kremlin are doomed to failure, because Russia's geopolitical goals, the values that

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<sup>1</sup> Policy Brief no.124/2021, analysis available at: [www.expertforum.ro](http://www.expertforum.ro)

animate it and its conception of relations between states differ radically from those of the West.

**Consequently, I consider that the presentation, in summary, with some annotations of the author of this material, of the Report “16 myths and prejudices about Russia” is necessary and timely given the recent developments on the world stage, potentially dangerous developments in the short and medium term.**

**One argument** would be that decision-makers in the West and in Romania are overwhelmed by problems such as overlapping crises: political, economic, financial, health, social and moral, having no time and availability to study an interesting material, but with a short life on some media vectors.

**As for Romania**, political actors are also caught in a major political crisis and in the bloody battle for power, to the detriment of solving the serious problems facing Romania and its citizens (the sanitary crisis amid the Covid-19 pandemic, energy shortages that caused the explosion of prices, inflation that is rapidly approaching double digits, extreme impoverishment of 40-50% of the population, etc.), so they no longer have the time and desire for geopolitical analysis or to find appropriate answers.

## **2. Preliminary commentaries**

**Returning to the Chatam House Report, we can appreciate that the policy of Western countries towards Russia** has not achieved its main goal, that of building a stable and functional relationship with Moscow, as the vision behind it has often been unrealistic, or simply erroneous.

In the mentioned analysis, the authors call on Western governments and institutions to re-evaluate their preconceptions about Russia in order to react more effectively to the increasingly visible challenges. **Effective** it means discouraging Russian aggression abroad and subsequently building less antagonistic relations with Russia, without compromising the principles of sovereignty on which the Western world is based.

**It is surprising and difficult to understand how certain misconceptions have become extremely widespread in Western decision-making circles.**

The report explains the impact of these misconceptions about Russia and, on a case-by-case basis, proposes a better-founded alternative.

**The origin of these myths** can be divided into several broad categories. **Some have their source in the West**, in the assumptions made by some politicians and decision-makers whose life experience is reduced to interacting with Western-style democratic systems.

All the popular mythology we are talking about only **reflects an inadequate knowledge of Russia**. For example, this strengthened the general impression that the regime is in fact a “one-man show” controlled by Vladimir Putin, and this is based on a lack of understanding of how this state is actually governed, ignoring the important role that others officials and the institutions led by them play in the design, negotiation and implementation of public policies. Likewise, the assumption that what will come after Putin will be better than the current leadership is explained by the natural human inclination towards optimism, in the absence of contact with the realities of Russian politics and history.

**Most of the myths presented in the analysis have become entrenched in Western political discourse and as a direct consequence of well-targeted Russian lobbying and misinformation.**

**Some reflect Russia’s older aspirations:**

- The establishment of a pan-European security system modelled on a Russian project, promoted since 1950;
- The idea that Russia can legitimately claim a geographical area of interest;
- The (debatable) argument that the Ukrainians and Belarusians, together with the Russians, form a great Slavic people, without their own identities and separate state forms;
- At other times, Russia's purpose in fuelling a myth may be linked to a specific diplomatic objective such as the promotion of the **Eurasian Economic Union** as an EU-equivalent economic integration project.

Many of these myths deliberately promoted by Russia, or not, are naively received in the West because they offer comfortable explanations to an audience that does not know Russia’s historical vision or how its leaders today define the national interest. Approaching this mythology also provides convenient excuses for inaction - or strategies of self-reassurance in the face of fears and discomfort at the idea that Russia is a strategic adversary

whenever we are confronted with otherwise unacceptable Russian actions. As such, these myths directly exert a corrosive influence on Western policies, distorting them in the direction of desirable results for Russia, but not for the West.

The authors jointly state that the purpose of the Report is to demystify these preconceptions and to encourage Western policy makers to re-evaluate their position. By questioning the wrong premise of Russia's analyzes and the erroneous arguments of policies based on them, Western politicians and officials are invited to re-evaluate their position on Russia and, consequently, their own decisions that have taken place from here.

**In April 2021, US President Joe Biden expressed his desire to have “predictable and stable relations” with Russia.** The fact that Russia quickly and pressed rejected the offer means that the relationship seems to have returned to its usual state of instability. The relationship with Russia is, however, predictable in one respect: **the analysis in the report clearly suggests that Russia will continue in the near future to violate internationally accepted principles of conduct and to commit aggression unhindered, using the myths dismantled in the report as justification.**

The Russian leadership will obviously continue its efforts to redefine the balance of global power and negotiate with Washington for a more favourable context for Russia. For American policymakers and their allies, as well as for the general public, it is more important than ever to separate the myth from reality in the complicated relationship with Russia.

### **3. Myth number 1: Russia and the West are just as bad.**

» **This narrative promoted by Russia** says: “Russia behaves like any great power. The West has also had its drifts from the principles of international law, as has Russia, disregarding in some places the rules it preaches. Since the collapse of the USSR, America has considered itself entitled to leadership status in a unipolar world. Not only does the US violate international law, but it puts itself above it.

NATO's intervention in the former Yugoslavia was no different from Russia's intervention in Ukraine. An America still guided by the Monroe Doctrine (any intervention by foreign powers in the two Americas is a threat to the United States) should not morale Russia about spheres of

influence in the former USSR. And the EU is, in essence, an undeclared empire”.

» **The authors of the Report** consider that “this extremely widespread line of argument ignores significant differences in policies and conduct. **The “West”** is a community of common interests and values; NATO and EU enlargement was requested. The EU may be an empire, but then it is an invitation. NATO enlargement also took place on demand: those on the outside demanded to be included, and those on the inside imposed conditions, and not the other way around”.

» **Second**, no great power resembles one another. Some arouse fear and rejection, others comfort and safety. Poland, the Baltic States and Romania really want more American troops in Central and Eastern Europe, no less.

» **Russia**, on the other hand, is arrogantly trying to impose on its neighbours a harsh policy of so-called “good vicinity” with or without their consent and considers that it would be entitled to a “privileged sphere of interest”.

In 2010, when Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych abandoned the idea of joining NATO, it immediately shifted its anger over the Association Agreement with the EU. Yanukovych had to give it up in 2013, under extreme pressure. Controversies over Western military interventions cannot be compared to the duplicity, lack of diplomacy and mass violations of the treaties that preceded Russia’s interventions in Georgia and Ukraine. The West sometimes needs to explain its decisions better, indeed, **but there is no equivalence between its actions and those of Russia.**

» **Part of the university environment, some think-tanks, media, artists’ groups or various parliaments** embrace this “moral equivalence” as an orthodoxy, it also predominates in the liberal circles in Russia, from which one day the future leaders of the country will emerge, people who condemn Putin’s regime for its cynicism, but who do not believe that the foreign policy of the US or the EU is fundamentally different from his. Given all this, **the myth is much more influential than it seems at first glance.**

**4. Myth number 2: “Russia and the West are pursuing the same thing”**

» Western policies of engagement with Russia are doomed to failure if they start from the idea that at some level, Russia’s and Western’s interests must be aligned or at least partially overlapping. The urge to normalize relationships without understanding the root causes of discord only makes things worse, not better. Both strategically and in sectoral detail, Russia’s goals and vision of state relations are incompatible with what Western states and societies find acceptable. In order to keep these conflicts and contradictions under control, it must be admitted that Western values and interests are irreconcilable with Russian ones, and the long-term relationship must be adapted to this reality.

» **“Normal” relations with Russia** involve, for example, counteracting Moscow’s hostile actions, which is a constant in our history with Russia. And yet the destructive adventures of the Russians: subversion, murder and assassination, undisguised electronic warfare or diversionary cyber attacks, take us by surprise whenever it happen.

» **Russia’s idea that only the great powers can be fully sovereign must be firmly opposed.** It is well known that Russia is constantly calling for its involvement in foreign policy decisions beyond its borders, in a way that is totally incompatible with Euro-Atlantic values, according to which **small states must also be sovereign and independent.**

» In short, the West wants an international order based on respect for state sovereignty, and **Russia wants and expects to be allowed to limit the sovereignty of its neighbours.**

**5. Myth number 3: “Russia has been promised that NATO will not expand”.**

» **Although the narrative of betrayal is popular today in Russia,** in fact the USSR has never received an official guarantee that NATO will not expand after 1990. Moscow is simply manipulating history to maintain the anti-Western consensus on domestic politics. In 1990, when **Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to include united Germany in NATO,** he neither requested nor received official guarantees regarding NATO’s enlargement beyond German territory.

» **The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the USSR** changed the security situation in Europe, and Russia's new leaders did not question the principle that European countries were completely free to make their own security commitments. **Likewise, the NATO-Russia Founding Act, signed in 1997, recognized "the intrinsic right of all states to choose the means by which to ensure their own security".**

» Over the centuries, history has shown that Russia secures its security through influence in neighbouring states. **His military establishment grew with the idea that Russia must always wage defensive wars outside its own borders.** We have no evidence that if the EU and NATO did not expand, Russia would have abandoned its traditional view of security.

The obsessive repetition of the idea that "the West has betrayed Russia's trust" helps maintain anti-Western consensus in society, and the hesitant response of NATO leaders has allowed the myth to become a **"fact"**. In this context it is the gross falsification of the preliminaries and the unfolding of the World War II, in which the blame is thrown on the shoulders of Poland, instead of the real culprits - Hitler and Stalin.

#### **6. Myth number 4: "Russia is not in conflict with the West".**

» **Although Euro-Atlantic leaders do not like to admit it, the natural state of Moscow is one of confrontation with the West.** An essential element of the conflict is the use of unconventional hostile measures, above the acceptable threshold for peacetime activities, but without open hostilities.

**Kremlin** is trying to undermine Western interests with a well-known set of tools, such as election influence, state-approved assassinations and information warfare. It is important to emphasize that unconventional hostile measure and indirect actions are not only **features of this conflict, but also contribute to the (erroneous) perception of the lack of conflict.**

#### **7. Myth number 5: "We need a new pan-European security architecture that includes Russia".**

» **Russian leaders support the idea of an European security system,** based on treaties, extended to the entire continent, to replace the existing "Euro-Atlantic" structures and, in particular, NATO. However, the



proposal is problematic because it ignores the fundamental differences between Russia and the West regarding the understanding of sovereignty (see myth number 2). Russia wants the privileges of a “great power”, limitations on the sovereignty of neighbouring countries and a rule by which states should not be criticized if the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law are violated in internal affairs.

**This idea collides with fundamental Western interests and values.** Thus, even if new pan-European security architecture is to be built, the fundamental differences in vision between the two sides would impede the functioning of the system. Western decision-makers should understand very clearly that the disagreement with Russia on the architecture of European security is profound, with rapid harmonization being unlikely.

» **Western politicians** and other public actors must remain calm. Russian leaders will continue to harass the Western public and undermine their confidence in European security institutions by amplifying the danger of instability and war usually projected on these structures. In itself, a bad relationship with Russia is not a tragedy, nor does it necessarily undermine the interests of the West.

**Western governments should treat Russia as it is, not as they would like it to be.**

**8. Myth number 6: “We need to improve our relationship with Russia, even if it does not make any concessions, because it is too important”.**

» **The myth** is based on the premise that the geopolitical importance of Russia, clear to everyone, plus mutual economic interest and a kind of compensation for the loss of the Cold War would be sufficient reasons for a successful reset of relations with Russia, and the result will be a full functional relationship.

**The authors of the report believe that the “relationship” would not work because the Kremlin’s increasingly authoritarian regime relies heavily on the appearance of the West, especially the United States, as a threat to “Russia Fortress”.**

» It must be borne in mind that Moscow does not initiate any cooperation agenda; this is invariably the initiative of Western politicians and diplomats.

» **Western decision-makers must expect the Kremlin's vision of Russia, that of a legitimate "fortress" to play a major role in the world, but threatened by external powers, and especially the United States, to remain an ideological basis of the regime.**

**9. Myth number 7: "Russia has the right to a defensive perimeter - a sphere of "privileged interests", including the territory of other states".**

» **The idea that Russia** should have the right to an exclusive sphere of influence in other states, especially in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, is absolutely problematic. It is incompatible with Euro-Atlantic values of state sovereignty and the right to self-determination. It would also be to the detriment of the geopolitical order and international security, because it would open the way, even implicitly, to Russian actions - **territorial aggression, annexation, even armed conflict in the truest sense** - which can destabilize Russia's neighbours or all Europe.

Russia would feel entitled to dominate neighbouring states and violate their territorial integrity.

» **The assumption that Russia should have a defensive perimeter, a sphere of influence in its immediate vicinity that would prevent the presence of any other power outside the region, has a neo-colonial vision.**

**10. Myth number 8: "We need to create a gap between Russia and China to prevent combined action against Western interests".**

» **The idea that the West** could exploit tensions between Russia and China is due both to a misunderstanding of the relationship between the two countries and to an overestimation of the possibility of influencing this relationship through external pressure. The myth has a corollary: we assume that Russia and China form a single strategic entity, which has somehow been **"allowed"** to develop due to the negligence of Western decision-makers. In fact, just as the West did not contribute to the Sino-Russian rapprochement, so it will not be able to ruin it.

**11. Myth number 9: “The West’s relationship with Russia must be normalized to counter China’s momentum”.**

» **Approaching Russia** as a strategic option to counter China could take place under the conditions set by the Kremlin, which would mean sacrificing the sovereignty of other post-Soviet states, which has been so hard won. We forget that if we got along better with Russia, regardless of the price paid, that would have no impact on China’s ambitions and the tendency to increase its capabilities.

» **Western nations cannot afford to focus exclusively on China’s challenge and ignoring Russia’s aggressive behaviour.**

**12. Myth number 10: “The Eurasian Economic Union is a genuine and significant equivalent of the EU”.**

» **Russia presents the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)** as an EU partner in a large free trade area stretching “from Lisbon to Vladivostok”. **In reality, the EAEU is a political project devoid of the elements of a true common market.** Russia is disregarding the very rules of the organization through which it is trying to reaffirm its power and with which it wants the EU to cooperate. **Trade** is not a separate and unpoliticized dimension in Russia’s foreign policy, but it is strongly subordinated to it. Russia has no real interest in genuinely liberalizing trade, either within the EAEU or by creating a free trade regime with the EU.

» The origin of the problem lies in the fact that, from the very beginning, Moscow created the EAEU as a means of compensating for Russia’s loss of power in the region following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and not as a way to support deeper economic integration with members.

» **Russia has no interest in liberalizing trade with the EU because it is unlikely to benefit from such a measure: 82% of Russia’s exports are energy resources.**

**13. Myth number 11: “The peoples of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia form a single nation”.**

» **Kremlin** tends to present regional history in order to legitimize the idea that Ukraine and Belarus are part of Russia's “natural” sphere of influence.

In fact, both countries have deeper European roots than Kremlin would like to recognize

» For a deeper understanding of the complex issues of culture, history and the legitimate aspirations of Ukraine and Belarus, a more applied study of Russia’s assertions should be used, using neutral sources as well.

» One problem for the EU is that far-right movements and parties in Western Europe - Austria, France, Germany and Italy - have sometimes embraced this myth of the enduring Russian nation (there are signs that these movements are generously sponsored by Russia). Many EU politicians and bureaucrats in Brussels are confused to understand the truth, naively coming to Russia’s aid.

**14. Myth number 12: “Crimea has always been Russian”.**

» **Kremlin propagates the fiction that Crimea** has “legitimately and voluntarily separated from Ukraine<sup>2</sup>, “reuniting” with Russia in 2014. If left unchallenged, this myth risks further undermining Ukraine’s territorial integrity by encouraging expansionist powers in other parts of the world.

» **Today’s heightened militarization** of Crimea and illegally imposed navigation restrictions in the Sea of Azov increase the level of vulnerability in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean to Russia’s security threats.

» **The reality is, however, that the Crimean Peninsula** belonged to Russia only for a short period of its history. Prior to 2014, Crimea had been part of Russia for a total of 168 years, so less than 6% of the historical period mentioned in the documents. **After Ukraine’s independence in 1991, there was no notable separatist movement in Crimea.**

» **The “referendum”** organized by Russia and held in conditions of coercion on March 16, 2014 was just a **metaphor meant to formalize the military occupation** of the peninsula by Russia.

» **In Europe**, a number of political parties and politicians, mostly from the right-wing populist spectrum, with strong ties to the Kremlin, have spread the word that “Crimea is Russian anyway”.

» **In fact, Crimea** belonged to Soviet Ukraine longer than Soviet Russia. There is another widespread myth, namely that the peninsula was a gift given to Ukraine in 1954 to mark the “union with Russia from 1654”.

**And this is wrong:** the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine that year was made to help the peninsula’s economy, which was in crisis at the time due to water scarcity and rural depopulation.

» **The idea that the Crimean peninsula belongs by law to Russia** overlooks Russia’s serious violation of the principles of international law and **opens the Pandora’s box on redrawing borders and igniting conflicts in other parts of the world. This legitimizes Russia’s neo-imperialist perspective and the logic of the “spheres of influence”**, both of which erroneously state Russia’s right to act as it wishes in relation to its smaller and weaker neighbours, especially if there is hosted a significant proportion of Russians ethnicities or Russian-speaking population.

#### **15. Myth number 13: “The liberalization reforms of the Russian market in the 1990s were a failure”.**

» **It is true** that there was an attempt to liberalize the market at that time and production fell sharply in the next six years, but the reform was not the cause of the economic downturn.

» **Liberalization as originally conceived has never been fully or adequately implemented in Russia.** Where the reform itself was implemented, for example in Poland, the decline in production was short and modest.

» **What happened in Russia** is that the authorities were politically weak and could not keep up until the economy stabilized (inflation control, public finance management), while another pillar of the reform, privatization, was deeply vitiated by corruption. The reform was blocked by the social and political backlash.

» **This myth**, that liberal reforms would have devastated Russia in the 1990s, seems very credible to some European decision-makers. Especially for those who, from the left or the right, today look indulgently at

Vladimir Putin's regime. The myth of the economic crisis triggered in Russia by liberal reforms is also advantageous for Russia's current leadership, although **even the 2.6 million siloviki**<sup>2</sup> who stopped those reforms prevent nowadays the country from having a more efficient and dynamic economy. The experience of economic reform in the 1990s illustrates a striking truth: **what is happening in Russia given the size and resources of the country, it depends primarily on the decision of the Russians.**

**16. Myth number 14: "Sanctions are a wrong approach".**

» **The West imposed sanctions on Russia** for the first time in March 2014, after the annexation of Crimea, and then extended them to a longer list of areas. Economic sanctions have already proved their practical and normative value in response to Russia's unacceptable behaviour, but it takes time for them to work; their effectiveness should not be judged by **impossible standards.**

» **Despite rumours to the contrary,** the sanctions influenced Moscow's actions and had an effect, despite difficulties in enforcing them on a large and pressure-resistant **"target".**

» **Sanctions also fulfil the demonstrative function** of condemning unacceptable political conduct and reaffirms the collective commitment to international norms and principles.

» Those who propose lifting sanctions on the grounds of their inefficiency rarely propose alternative policies that change Russia's behaviour more quickly. It calls for the abolition of the sanctions regime, but without putting anything better in place. Such "arguments" are either a bad strategy or one springing from bad faith.

» **Sanctions** are probably the West's most powerful tool because they are based on its strengths: **Russia's dependence on technology, capital and dollar transactions and the Russian elite's need to shelter its wealth away from the state of prey, they initially acquired it.**

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<sup>2</sup> Politicians or high-ranking officials related to intelligence and military services.

**17. Myth number 15: It all comes down to Putin: Russia is a centralized, iron-handed autocracy”.**

» **It is tempting to believe that Vladimir Putin** makes all the important decisions in Russia on his own, then politicians and bureaucrats apply his instructions without fail with a system called “**vertical power**”, and political institutions such as parliament and regional authorities do nothing but execute the wishes of the leader.

» The projection of Putin’s image of power serves the Kremlin’s informational purposes of portraying the world as a president with absolute force - which, of course, creates emulation in other undemocratic states as well.

» **In reality, the government in Russia is not a one man show.** Contrary to popular belief, many actors and institutions can play a substantial role in decision-making and policy implementation in the territory. The personal role of the president is often exaggerated, and external observers ignore or do not understand the role of collective bodies, or overestimate the level of managerial competence and discipline in the apparatus, or do not take into account the own interests of some characters around Putin.

» **In order to understand how the government works,** we must take into account the power and complexity of the Russian bureaucracy, whose importance will continue to grow.

**18. Myth number 16: “After Putin, something better will follow”.**

» **This myth is the embodiment of the triumph of hope over historical experience and analysis.** Russia has its structural problems, beyond those created by Putin’s government. Anti-Western sentiment, though not necessarily generalized, was amplified by Putin to take root in the hearts and minds of many Russian citizens, including young people, on certain issues. That will not change after Putin leaves because Russian society suffers from a post-imperial syndrome, characterized by deep resentments towards the West, which, in the eyes of the Russians, did not allow their country to remain a superpower or offer it a decent position in the current international system.

» **As such, the likelihood of a post-Putin Russia adopting political democracy is even lower than in the 1990s.** Almost two generations matured after the collapse of the USSR, but they lived under Putin and tend to be post-Soviet rather than anti-Soviet in the world view. Free and fair elections have not taken place for years; the few remaining chances of having substantial democracy evaporate quickly.

» **For a responsible and efficient government,** the country would need new staff in the elite bureaucracy and at the top of the political decision, but today in Russia there are no conditions to cultivate this personal profile. **Regardless of Putin's successor, Russia's political culture will continue to be an obstacle to a more constructive relationship with the West.**

#### **19. Some conclusions, recommendations, principles and possible courses of action**

**The report of international experts (historians and political analysts)** is from my point of view exceptional and timely, given the current conditions on the world geopolitical scene. The value lies in providing relevant advice and solutions for Western political actors.

**It is a merit to point out, of the Expert Forum Organization,** that it brought to the Romanian public space this **complex Analysis**, based on historical and political arguments. Congratulations for this gesture ([www.expertforum.ro](http://www.expertforum.ro)).

I have chosen to reproduce broad passages from the mentioned Report in order to bring to the attention of interested readers of **the Journal of Military Sciences**, a set of arguments for dismantling the 16 myths and for today's Romanian decision makers to understand more correctly the complexity of future relations with Russia.

» **It should be noted** that the authors of the report (Analysis) made a number of pertinent recommendations on improving policy decisions, which should be better anchored in reality.

» **These recommendations make the most** of a long experience of experts, an experience that, unlike that of politicians, has not been limited or constrained by electoral mandates or the whims of political fashion.

» For ease of presentation, the joint recommendations are presented briefly and grouped thematically, as follows:



- **Basic principles: understanding the relationship**

- **It is necessary to understand that Russia**, at present, is not a partner of the West and it is necessary to recognize the reality of this disagreement. There are good reasons why attempts to identify common ground with Russia have failed in the last 25 years, **as the strategic interests of Moscow and the West are incompatible;**
- **It is not implied that Russia** is interested in cooperating to reduce tensions or that Western countries can persuade Russian leaders to change their position;
- The confrontation with the West helps the Kremlin to strengthen its political control internally;
- It must be accepted that a bad relationship with Russia is not a tragedy, if you do not have the means to improve it anyway. Diplomatic tensions are an inevitable result of understanding the nature of the Russian political system at its current stage.

- **Managing the relationship with Russian leaders**

- A realistic goal of the relationship with Russia must be identified, what should the West expect from Russia, what is acceptable and what is not in this relationship? “Unacceptable” actions must be defined and serious consequences created when Russia violates the principles and rules of international law;
- It must be understood that other actors or institutions also have a say, not only Putin, but also the importance of the many actors who support him and sometimes constrain his actions;
- **Do not make decisions in advance** relying on the improvement of the political line after the departure of the current leaders. Putin and his entourage follow traditional Russian principles and guidelines, and their conflicting foreign policy should not be seen as a **historical anomaly**.

- **At the end of the report, proposals and suggestions are made on:**

- Stronger support for Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet space;
- A more correct understanding of international security in the face of **increasing Russian aggression**;
- A clearer explanation of the current relationship between **Russia and China** and how the West should handle the situation;
- Maintaining the **sanctions** regime;
- A better understanding of the Russian business community and economy in the context of actions that have undermined the interests and solidarity of Western countries (the case of Nord Stream 2);
- Approaching the policies of the West, given that **it has excelled in its predilection for error** in relation to Moscow;
- **Western politicians are advised to invest in expertise on Russia's knowledge.**

**As far as I am concerned, I believe that this material can also be useful to Romanian politicians and experts, in their effort to position themselves as correctly as possible in EU and NATO relations with Russia.**



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