

Abstract

The objective of this doctoral dissertation was to define the goals of the Russian Federation's security policy towards the European post-Soviet states, identify the instruments employed to achieve these goals, and develop scenarios for the potential reintegration of this area with the Russian Federation. The research focused on Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova, former Soviet republics located in the European part of the USSR. The dissertation is based on the assumption that Russia perceives this region as an area of crucial strategic importance, referred to as its "near abroad" and seeks to restore influence lost after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The main research problem concerned the identification of the objectives of Russia's security policy towards these states, the means used to pursue them, and possible reintegration scenarios by 2032. The study was conducted within the discipline of security studies. It involved the analysis of Russian doctrinal documents, including security strategies, military doctrines, and foreign policy concepts, as well as scholarly literature and statements by Russian authorities. Comparative analysis, case studies, inductive and deductive reasoning, and scenario analysis based on expert consultations were applied. The empirical research covered the years 2014–2022, focusing on actual actions taken by Russia towards the European post-Soviet states, beginning with the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the armed conflict in Ukraine. The forecast horizon was set to 2032, enabling the construction of scenarios within a medium-term strategic perspective. This time frame was chosen to capture key trends that are likely to shape the regional situation over the next decade. The analysis was conducted across four complementary dimensions: political, economic, military, and cultural-informational, providing a comprehensive perspective on the instruments utilized by Russia in its security policy toward the region.

Chapters two and three are theoretical and analytical in nature, serving to construct the conceptual framework and identify the main determinants of the Russian Federation's policy. They constitute the foundation for the empirical and prognostic parts of the dissertation, allowing for a coherent interpretation of both Russia's past activities and possible future developments. This approach ensures methodological continuity and facilitates the transition from theoretical reflection to the analysis of strategic realities.

The research findings demonstrate that Russia's security policy towards the European post-Soviet states is consistent and directed towards the restoration of regional dominance. Analysis of doctrinal documents and Russian activities indicates that the main goals of Russia's policy are to counter the Euro-Atlantic integration of the region's states, to maintain a buffer zone

separating Russia from the West, to promote the reintegration of the post-Soviet space through multilateral formats under Russian leadership, and to safeguard Russia's economic interests, particularly in the energy sector. Russia employs a broad range of instruments to achieve these objectives, including diplomatic pressure, support for pro-Russian political forces, manipulation of resource supplies, provision of economic incentives, military exercises, troop deployments, and, where necessary, direct military actions, as well as propaganda activities, the promotion of the "Russkiy Mir" concept, and the protection of the Russian-speaking diaspora. The assessment of Russia's actions between 2014 and 2022 reveals an intensification of military activity and a gradual escalation of political and economic pressures on other regional states, particularly Belarus and Moldova. In the cultural and informational sphere, Russia has expanded its disinformation operations aimed at weakening the links of post-Soviet states with the West and strengthening pro-Russian identities. The dissertation developed scenarios for developments up to 2032, ranging from "soft" reintegration based on political and economic instruments and soft power, through hybrid pressure scenarios involving persistent asymmetric actions, to direct confrontational variants involving military escalation. Expert assessments indicated a high probability of asymmetric and mixed scenarios characterized by the absence of stable solutions and the continuation of strategic competition.

The dissertation successfully addressed the main research problem formulated as: What are the objectives of Russia's security policy toward the countries of the European post-Soviet space (Belarus, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova, and Ukraine) and what reintegration scenarios for this region may be realized by 2032? The analysis demonstrated that the Russian Federation consistently seeks to maintain strategic control over the region it considers its sphere of privileged interests, using a wide array of political, economic, military, and cultural-informational instruments.

The research results confirmed the main hypothesis that Russian revisionism is one of the key factors destabilizing the international security system. The reintegration of the European post-Soviet space is perceived by the Kremlin as a crucial condition for restoring Russia's great power status and is part of a broader project aimed at reshaping the geopolitical order with Russia aspiring to be one of its principal pillars.

The scientific contribution of the dissertation lies in the development of a coherent, multidimensional model for analyzing the Russian Federation's security policy towards the European post-Soviet states, integrating both retrospective and prognostic approaches. The dissertation advances research tools useful for forecasting the strategic behavior of revisionist states and allows for the reassessment of theoretical concepts, in particular the theories of neo-

imperialism and the doctrine of the "near abroad" in light of contemporary geopolitical realities. The findings, based on doctrinal, empirical, and scenario analyses, hold potential practical relevance for academic institutions, security policymakers, and decision-makers. They may serve as a foundation for a better understanding of the Russian Federation's strategic intentions and for the development of appropriate responses to threats emerging in Eastern Europe.

Keywords: security policy, Russian Federation, European post-Soviet states, international security, Russian revisionism, neo-imperialism, near abroad, Russkiy Mir, hybrid warfare, Euro-Atlantic integration, strategic priorities, reintegration scenarios, regional security, strategic forecasting.