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## **Russian Federation - from strength to weakness, from West to East, from a permanent member to a potential outsider**

**Mădălina Elena Lupu**

PhD student, National Intelligence Academy „Mihai Viteazul”, Bucharest, Romania

lupu.madalina@animv.eu

**Abstract.** This article focuses on the Russian Federation as a state in between strength and weakness, West and East, a permanent member and a potential outsider. It begins with the Russian decline in power, using as measurable indicators the five dimensions of security promoted by the Copenhagen School of security studies. It continues with Russian foreign policy reconfigured from West to East and with proposals regarding the United Nations reform and the establishment of a new Special Court to sanction the Russian political and military leader's crime aggression against Ukraine. In the end, the scenario method is a research method. We advance three possible scenarios: the most likely scenario for the Russian state that is based on the Russian state defeat, war reparations imposed and accountability for political and military leaders; the worst-case scenario that involves the tactical nuclear weapons use in Ukraine and an international answer accordingly and the optimistic scenario for the Russian state that involves winning the war, but without international recognition and legitimacy for victory.

**Keywords.** Russian Federation, power, foreign policy, Ukraine war, United Nations, Special Court

### **1. Introduction**

Given the Russian Federation's hybrid and conventional threats impact on the security architecture of the 21st century, we intend to analyze the evolution of this state paying attention to three important areas: power, foreign policy and international relations. We will start with Russian power decline started in Ukraine war context, we will continue with the Russian foreign policy redirected from West (United States of America, European Union) to East (China, India) and then with the proposals regarding the United Nations (UN) reform and a new *Special Court* establishment to sanction the aggression crime committed by Russian political and military leaders. In the end, we will indicate the most-likely scenario, the worst-case scenario and the optimistic one, regarding the Russian state evolution in the Ukraine war.

### **2. Russia's declining power**

John Mearsheimer [1] claimed, as early as 2014, that the Russian Federation was in decline and predicted that the Russian state would diminish its power even more over time, without mentioning the scenario of a potential war. In the Ukraine war context, in order to validate or invalidate the diminishing power of the Russian state, we propose to use as

measurable indicators the five dimensions of security promoted by the Copenhagen School of security studies: the military, political, economic, societal and environmental. Among these five dimensions, we will also mention the imagological dimension and the intelligence one that were affected by Russia's military aggression.

Regarding the military power, it is noteworthy the statement of the Russian Minister of Education, Sergey Kravstov [2], dated November 09, 2022, about the reintroduction of military training into the Russian educational curriculum. It is relevant that this initiative of the Russian state is reactivated after 30 years and inspired by the Soviet model, that this program will contain a minimum of 140 hours per year and that is about to start in September, 2023.

This Russian initiative, which took shape since 2014 after the Crimea annexation, from the past perspective shows the return to functional models from the Soviet era that were centered on the military side and from the future perspective it shows the direction of Russian politics. This future direction, in which peaceful intentions cannot be taken into consideration, should be a real concern for European and international security.

According to the *Global Firepower Index* [3] for the year 2023, the Russian Federation ranks second, between the United States of America which takes the first place and China which is in the third position, in relation to the 145 states that are evaluated annually by the international company *Global Firepower*, in terms of military power held by these states. We note that this favorable position, resulting from the *Global Firepower Index*, is occupied by the Russian state, despite the military losses that were recorded during the Ukraine war until the time of the evaluation, the last review being carried out recently, on 19.01.2023.

Regarding the Russian military power, on October 19, 2022, the Minister of Defense of Estonia, Hanno Pevkur [4] estimated that the time required restoring the Russian military power held before the Ukraine war outbreak is likely to be between 2 and 4 years. In addition to the time factor, regardless of its duration, in this process of restoring Russian military power it should be considered the human factor affected during the war, the technological factor that has been affected by sanctions applied in the military industrial sector, a sector that was directly targeted by the sanctions applied to the Russian state; as well as the economic factor also affected.

The domestic and foreign political dimension was also affected by the Russian leader's actions, actions that were against democracy, international law, the *Charter of the United Nations* and all the other official documents that are based on democracy. Prior to these actions, the domestic political dimension was facing difficulties. In this sense, we will highlight the results of the *Bertelsmann Transformation Index*, a tool that evaluates the government act quality and the Russian state transformation towards a democratic direction and a market economy. This research was carried out by *The Bertelsmann Stiftung* foundation, at the Russian Federation level [5], between the interval 01.02.2019 - 31.01.2021.

The results of this assessment indicate a tendency to decrease the quality and availability of essential services in several Russian regions as a result of insufficient financial resources; a control exercised directly by the Russian state over the most influential media institutions; the fragile existence of a balance between the fundamental institutions (executive, legislative and judicial) and checks on them; a very low degree of trust in democratic institutions (Parliament, political parties, media institutions), with the exception of the Russian president who was in the time analyzed at a very high degree of trust from the Russian population.

We note that this level of popularity of the Russian leader, according to polls, has been at a very high level since the Crimea annexation and is still at a very high level during the Ukraine war. According to a research carried out by the *Statista* Research Department [6], in

October 2022, regarding the level of acceptance by the population of the activities undertaken by the Russian leader, it resulted in a majority support of approximately 80%. The research carried out also mentions the high degree of popularity of the Russian leader, which has been maintained, even after the Western sanctions were applied in 2014.

The Bertelsmann Transformation Index [5] also indicates a decrease in the number of licensed banks in the Russian Federation (from 842 at the end of 2014 to 149 at the beginning of 2019); a fluctuating monetary and fiscal policy in relation to the economic sanctions that have been applied to the Russian Federation and the global depreciation of oil; a finding of corruption including at the level of the judicial system; an organized discouragement of media institutions and Non-governmental organizations and a civil society that is characterized by passivity and as being unable to generate a real impact at the Russian society.

The research also indicates a distance from the United States of America (USA) and the European Union (EU) and a proximity to China; a decrease in Russian credibility internationally as a result of the Crimea annexation, of the Litvinenko, Skripal and Navalny cases; of Russian support showed for Western populist factions; of the permanent membership use of the *United Nations Security Council* and the personal relations with states under international pressure, relations that have been used in international conflicts resolution.

The assessment conclusions, regarding the Russian governmental act quality and the Russian Federation transformation towards a democratic direction and a market economy [5], indicated a Russian state in an impasse, at the beginning of 2021. This impasse was determined by economic and political situation decrease and this decrease had been determined by the non-compliance with the rules and international norms; by an increase in economic disparities between regions and by an ineffective management of the government system. At this impasse, it is proposed the foreign support for Russian domestic reform focused on state stability, sustainable economic growth and a democratic participation of the Russian society in this process by the USA and the EU. Their external support is justified, on the one hand by the Russian failures recorded over time in the implementation of such a reform and on the other hand by the disadvantage of a failed Russia neither for the European continent, nor for the American global actor, nor for the international system.

Regarding the economic dimension, the response of European and international actors to Crimea annexation, the Russian military actions in eastern Ukraine (2014) and the Ukraine war (2022 - present) has been centered on sanctions applied to the Russian state, sanctions that would affect the Russian economy and thus diminish the resources that would support such actions. From 2014 to 2022, (from Crimea annexation to the Ukraine war), the sanctions against the Russian Federation were extended, other sanctions were added to other Russian or pro-Russian actors and to other Russian companies and entities.

Former North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) official, economist Edward Hunter Christie [7], argued that Western sanctions after the Crimea annexation had achieved their proximate objective of damaging the Russian economy. Regardless of these damages, the Russian Federation launched the Ukraine war on February 24, 2022 and supports it even now, in 2023, despite the sanctions that were applied previously (Crimea, 2014) and those that were applied after the beginning of war, sanctions that exceeded in amplitude the ones applied for the annexation of Crimea.

On October 31, 2022, the *Council of Europe* and the *Council of the European Union* published an *Infographic - Impact of sanctions on the Russian economy* [8], after the eight packages of sanctions against the Russian Federation and Belarus were applied. Note in this *Infographic* the decrease in the Russian economy, the trade decline, the inflation increases and

the repercussions on the capital market in the Russian Federation, according to estimates of the *World Bank*, the *International Monetary Fund*, the *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development* and the *Moscow Stock Exchange*. Looking ahead, the persistence and diversity of economic sanctions will further diminish the Russian economic sector. But, even if these sanctions against the Russian state are lifted, it will take a long time and additional resources to be able to return to the initial economic state, an economic sector that was already a weak point of the Russian state.

The social dimension was also affected by the financial sanctions applied to those in the elite category; by the consequences of Western sanctions that led to the ruble devaluation; by the Western companies' withdrawal through the loss of foreign capital and jobs by Russian citizens; by the restrictions applied to the independent press; by the measures applied to citizens participating in protests against the war or by the restriction of freedoms of expression and information.

Regarding the lack of the Russian population, which was already a weak point of Russian society, according to the *International Futures* forecasting system [9], the Russian Federation population is on a downward trend compared to the year 2030. To the decrease of the Russian population is added the Russian human losses in the military field, as well as the exodus caused by the war and by partial mobilization, Russian citizens about which there is no certainty that they will return in full, after the end of the war.

To compensate for the Russian military losses resulting from the Ukraine war and to continue the started war, Russian leaders resorted to partial mobilization. A method identified and applied by the Russian state to compensate for the lack of population, which represents one of the pillars of any state, consisted in the annexation of Ukraine several regions (2022), starting with Crimea in 2014 and by deporting the population from the annexed regions under humanitarian pretexts, in the Ukraine war context.

The environmental dimension not only of the Ukrainian state, but of the entire European continent could have been and could be affected by the occupation of the largest Nuclear Power Plant on the territory of Europe, Zaporizhzhia, by the Russian military. At the same time, the environmental dimension not only of the Russian state, but of all the states that are part of the international system could be affected by the nuclear threat rhetoric promoted by the Russian state leaders with the Ukraine war outbreak, with the war evolution and with failures of Russian military actions.

Regarding the imagological dimension, the Russian Federation faces a decline in influence and in credibility, domestically and internationally, as a result of the Ukraine war outbreak or as a result of the nuclear threat rhetoric, as central elements. As for the domestic intelligence dimension of the Russian state, it faced also losses of credibility as a result of the assessments made before the Ukraine war outbreak.

Regarding the foreign dimension of the intelligence activity, on November 16, 2022, the general director of the British Security Service (MI5) mentioned an aspect that we consider to be relevant for the research, in the sense that it will affect in the short and medium term the foreign intelligence activity and Russian foreign policy too. As a result, Russian decision-makers will no longer benefit from the same level of information from outside the country.

Ken McCallum [10] declared that the Russian Federation faced, at the level of 2022, a substantial expulsion of Russian officials worldwide. Also, he mentioned that of the approximately 600 Russian officials expelled from the territory of Europe, about 400 of them were assessed as carrying out acts of espionage. At the same time, the British official mentioned that they will not limit themselves to the action of expulsion, but they will also pay attention to

the preventive dimension, in order not to allow the restoration of the situation that had been before the expulsion.

In this first section of the article, we highlighted a Russian state found in an economic and political impasse for the years 2019 - 2021. At the level of 2022, in the Ukraine war context, we highlighted a Russian state facing difficulties at the military, political, economic, societal, environmental and the foreign intelligence levels. Also, we highlighted a Russian state that continues to stand out in terms of military power in the Great Power Rankings in 2023, a military power that will be strengthened for the future by reintroducing military training into the Russian education curriculum at the end of 2023 and at the same time a Russian state whose political leader benefits from a very high degree of popularity, domestically.

The Russian military, political, economic, societal, environmental and intelligence dimensions to this point, after a year of war, reflects a Russian state in decline. In perspective, there are no favorable conditions for ending the war in the short term; the sanctions already applied can be amplified during the war, while supporting the war will increase costs, which will contribute to the Russian Federation declining power.

### **3. Russia's foreign policy – from West (United States of America, European Union) to the East (China, India)**

By the fact that the Russian Federation was actually willing to start a war on February 24, 2022, a war directed not only against Ukraine, but also against democratic world, the Russian state transitioned from the previously used hybrid threats to conventional ones that characterized the 20th century. This real threat, doubled by the Russian nuclear threat rhetoric, reconfigured the Russian Federation relationship with the Great Powers (the United States of America or Great Britain, for example), with the other democratic states' leaders that supported Ukraine, with the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* and with the *European Union*.

This move of the Russian Federation on the international system chessboard had major effects not only at the Ukraine and the Russian Federation level, but also at the European and international level. At the level of Ukraine, on the one hand, it determined and continues to cause an aggravated state of insecurity for the population, irrecoverable human losses, immeasurable material losses and approximately 8 million of Ukrainian refugees on the European territory [11]. On the other hand, it determined the submission of an official application for becoming a *European Union* member on February 28, 2022 and the submission of an official application to the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* on September 30, 2022.

Regarding the Russian Federation, the Ukraine war has determined so far human and material losses in the military field; protests and an exodus of the Russian population in the societal sector; economic sanctions, withdrawals of the international companies headquarter from Russian territory or the devaluation of the ruble in the economic sector and the exclusion from some unilateral formats, internationally.

At the European level, the Russian war action determined on the one hand Russian deterrence by increasing defense budgets; by deploying additional military forces on the eastern border of Europe by NATO; by training the military forces of Ukraine; by economic sanctions and by measures to reduce dependence on the Russian energy. On the other hand, it determined the significant support of Ukraine through European military and economic funding.

Internationally, the Ukraine war generated a food crisis, the suspension of the Russian Federation from the *United Nations Human Rights Council* and a resolution adopted by 141

states on ending the Ukraine war by the Russian Federation, while 35 states abstained<sup>1</sup> and five states voted against this resolution<sup>2</sup>, among others. From the 40 states analysis that did not support the UN resolution<sup>2</sup>, it is noteworthy that 16 states are from the African continent, that Belarus is the only European country that supports the Ukraine war and that India and China did not vote for the end of the war, given the fact that China is one of the permanent members of the *UN Security Council* which has responsibilities in the maintaining international peace and security process.

An indicator that explains the position of these states in relation to the Ukraine war is, in our view, the index of democracy within these states. From the ranking of states by quality of democracy [12], carried out at the *Julius Maximilian University* in Würzburg (Germany), we find the 40 states that did not support the UN resolution included in four categories, the category of *hybrid regime*, *deficient democracy*, *moderate autocracy* and *hard autocracy*.

According to this research, the following states were included in the category of *hybrid regime*: El Salvador, Bolivia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Mali, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and India and in the category of *deficient democracy* were Namibia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Mongolia and Armenia. In the category of *moderate autocracy*, we found in the research Cuba, Nicaragua, Algeria, Angola, Central African Republic, Congo, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Iraq, Iran, Kazakhstan, Belarus and the Russian Federation. In the last category of *hard autocracy*, we found Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, Sudan, South Sudan, Laos, Tajikistan, North Korea, Eritrea, Syria and China.

A comparative analysis of the state's number that voted for the *UN General Assembly* resolution from 2014 regarding the non-recognition of Crimea annexation by the Russian Federation in relation to the state's number that voted for the *UN General Assembly* resolution from 2022 regarding the Ukraine war ending shows an increased number of UN member states that participated, from 169 to 181 and also an increase from 100 states to 141 states that voted in favor of the resolutions.

The Ukraine war has revealed how the states in the international system took position to the borders violation of an internationally recognized state, a violation that can be surpassed in gravity only by the nuclear threat. We note that from the number of states that abstained and voted in favor of war, a total of 40 states, six are nuclear powers (China, India, the Russian Federation, Pakistan, Iran, North Korea), a statistic that represents a worrying indicator for international stability.

During the *World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2023*, the American diplomat Henry Kissinger [13] drew attention to three relevant aspects to research. The three issues referred to the potential of the Ukraine war to permanently restructure the global order, the influence of the current relationship between the United States of America and China on future generations and the possibility of the Russian Federation alienating itself from Europe and reorienting itself towards a permanent alliance with China. We consider a relevant variable in mitigating the Russian Federation decline to be represented by China's position in relation to Russian political leaders. More than the fact that India and China did not vote ending the war;

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<sup>1</sup> Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, Equatorial Guinea, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Mali, Sri Lanka, Madagascar, Bangladesh, Laos, Vietnam, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, India, China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia

<sup>2</sup> Belarus, North Korea, Eritrea, Syria and the Russian Federation

these two states are softening the effects of Western sanctions on the Russian Federation by extending cooperation agreements with the Russian state.

On February 4, 2022, twenty days before the Ukraine war outbreak, a meeting took place between the President of China, Xi Jinping, and the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, on which the friendship and cooperation relationship between the two states, a relationship that has reached its maximum level so far, falling into the category *without limits*. This discussion materialized in a *Russia-China Joint Statement on International Relations* [14].

From this document [14], it is relevant the Russian Federation's position in relation to Taiwan that involves supporting the *One China principle*, confirming that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China and opposing any form of independence manifested by Taiwan in relation to China. At the same time, attention is drawn to China's opposition regarding the continued expansion of NATO, as well as China's acceptance and support of Russian proposals regarding the security guarantees on the Europe territory for the Russian state. We note from here the mutual and public support of the security interests of the two actors.

Within this *Russia-China Joint Statement on International Relations* [14], both states emphasize the intention to respect moral principles; of assuming the responsibility of world powers and permanent members of the *UN Security Council*; of firm support for the central role of the *United Nations* in the international system; to defend the international law, the foundations of the *UN Charter* and the establishment of a prosperous, a stable and a just world. At the same time, the two states leaders reaffirm, paradoxically, the need for a consolidated, not divided international community and for cooperation instead of confrontation. With the Ukraine war outbreak on February 24, 2022, twenty days away from this *Declaration* and considering China's abstention vote on the *UN Resolution* to end the Ukraine war, it becomes visible that these commitments of the two leaders are in contradiction with their actions.

Also, on February 4, 2022, two substantial contracts regarding the additional delivery of natural gas and the delivery of oil were signed between the supplier Russia and the beneficiary China. For the long-term supply of natural gas, an *Agreement* was signed between the Russian energy company *Gazprom* and the Chinese oil company *China National Petroleum Corporation* [15], the supply will be carried out on the Far East route through the *Power of Siberia 2* natural gas pipeline. This pipeline can be considered a Russian alternative to the natural gas pipeline on the European continent *Nord Stream 2* which is completed, but non-functional in the Ukraine war context. Unlike *Nord Stream 2*, the *Power of Siberia 2* pipeline is at the stage of completing feasibility studies, but has the consent of the Chinese beneficiary when it becomes operational.

For the oil supply, an *Agreement* was signed between the Russian integrated energy company *Rosneft Oil Company* and the Chinese oil company *China National Petroleum Corporation* [16] under which 100 million tons of oil will be supplied to China for a period of ten years. These two contracts, signed before the war, show on the one hand a redirection of long-term gas and oil reserves to China in the case that standard deliveries to *European Union* member states and other states will be affected by the war evolution and on the other hand show China's support for the Russian Federation.

Another element that is favorable to the future cooperation between the Russian and Chinese states is represented by the new mandate at the leadership of China won by the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, in October 2022. We mention the fact that, similar to the Russian leader, the Chinese leader acted in 2018 to extend the mandate and duration of China's leadership through Constitutional changes that allowed the possibility and legitimacy of the third mandate obtained by Xi Jinping in 2022. It draws attention that the domestic, but also international landscape is

dominated by leaders who preside and set the foreign policy of the Russian and Chinese states, the Russian leader for about 20 years, and the Chinese leader for 10 years.

This commitment of the two leaders, Russian and Chinese, assumed before the war from equal positions, followed by the contracts signed between the two states, can turn into a relationship of subordination in the case that the Russian Federation will be defeated in the Ukraine war. On the one hand, a possible failure of the Russian state would imply the need for increased support from China, which would lead to the increase of China's superiority over the Russian state, making Russia even more vulnerable. An eventual win of the Russian state following the war would imply the need to provide mutual support to the Chinese state in achieving the supremacy goal.

Another actor that is relevant in mitigating the Russian Federation decline is represented by India, which joins China on the list of states that abstained from voting on the resolutions of the *UN General Assembly* on the Ukraine war. At the same time, India represents the state to which the Russian Federation redirected its main oil exports in 2022, as a result of Western sanctions, alongside China as the majority beneficiary. During 2022, there were five meetings between the Foreign Ministers of the two states, the most recent meeting on 08 November 2022 having as its central theme the joint production of modern weapons, the delegation of the Indian state being represented by several key sectors (agriculture, oil and gas, marine, financial, chemical and fertilizer, industrial and trade).

The Belarus state proved to be indispensable for the Ukraine war through its strategic position between the Russian and Ukrainian borders, becoming a state that facilitated part of the offensive from Belarusian territory. At the same time, Belarus is the only European state that voted against the resolutions of the *UN General Assembly* regarding the Ukraine war. Iran and North Korea were among the states that provided military support to the Russian Federation for its use in the Ukraine war, while Hungary was among the *European Union* member states whose political leaders opposed sanctions on the *European Union* and whose political leaders intensified cooperation with the Russian state during the Ukraine war.

In the second section of the article, we showed that the 40 states that did not vote for ending the Ukraine war by the Russian Federation are included in the category of *hybrid regime*, *deficient democracy*, *moderate autocracy* and of *hard autocracy*, categories that are in opposition to the democratic regime that promotes peace and an international system based on rules. At the same time, we showed the advanced and unlimited cooperation between the Russian and Chinese leaders, as well as a redirection of Russian gas and oil reserves from Europe to China, in the long term. Along with China, India is also listed as the country to which the Russian Federation redirected its main oil imports in 2022, as a result of Western sanctions applied to the Russian state.

#### **4. Proposals to sanction the Russian state - A *United Nations* reform and a new *Special Court* for aggression crime**

In this section, we start from the difficulty faced by the international community to sanction the Russian Federation as a permanent member of the *UN Security Council* and as a state that initiated the Ukraine war, difficulties that have determined some proposals for reforms of the *United Nations* and for the establishment of a new *Special Court* to sanction the crime of aggression by Russian political and military leaders against Ukraine.

Between 13 and 27 September 2022, the 77th session of the *United Nations General Assembly* took place. This event included on the topic of discussion of the American president the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the Russian nuclear threat and the actions

of annexing regions of Ukraine based on referendums, with the mention that the Russian Federation holds the status of a permanent member of the *United Nations Security Council* and signatory state of the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*.

In this session, the Japanese Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida [17] stated that the *United Nations* had failed in ending the Ukraine war and brought into discussion the reform of the *UN Security Council*. The Japanese prime minister justified this reform on the basis of the Ukraine invasion by a veto-wielding permanent member, an action that had undermined the international rules-based order and affected its credibility. The Japanese leader asked for the full discussions to start on the reform of the *UN Security Council*, in 2024 at the *United Nations Summit*. In this context of suggested reforming direction, it is important to mention Japan's aspiration to become a permanent member in the highest decision-making body of the *United Nations*.

In this session, the president of the *European Council*, Charles Michel [18] advocated for a reform of the *United Nations*, but immediately, unlike the year 2024 advanced by the Japanese leader. The European leader noted that the use of the veto had become the rule, being no longer an exception, and expressed the belief that the suspension of a *UN Security Council* permanent member should be automatic if that member started a war that was unprovoked, which is unjustified and which was condemned by the *UN General Assembly*, obviously referring to the Russian Federation.

On October 3, 2022, a *Resolution of the European Parliament* was adopted regarding *Russia's escalation of its war of aggression against Ukraine* [19], a resolution that was based on the illegal annexation of four regions of Ukraine (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia), on the decree of partial mobilization in the Russian Federation and on the threat of nuclear weapons use. By means of this *Resolution*, the UN member states are requested to revoke the right of veto held by the Russian Federation within the *UN Security Council*, the expulsion of the Russian state from the *United Nations* and, last but not least, the suspension of the membership held by the Russian Federation within the *World Trade Organization* (WTO); of the *World Customs Organization* (WCO); of the *International Monetary Fund* (IMF); of the *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund* (UNICEF) and the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO).

Next, we propose to analyze the legal possibility of expulsion or suspension of the Russian state from the *United Nations*. The *United Nations Security Council* [20] dates back to 1945, carries out its duties based on the *UN Charter*, has fifteen members, of which five states have the status of permanent member (the United States of America, Great Britain, France, China and the Russian Federation) and 10 UN member states hold the status of non-permanent member states, by rotation.

According to the founding document, the *UN Charter*, the *United Nations Security Council* has the possibility to summon the parties involved in a conflict for its peaceful resolution, to recommend to them solution methods or to referral to the *International Court of Justice*, an institution that represents the judicial pillar of the *United Nations*. At the same time, this decision-making body of the UN has the possibility, in certain cases, to impose sanctions and in the last instance to authorize the use of force by the member states, their alliances or by the peace operations authorized by the United Nations, when there is no longer peaceful means of conflict resolution with the intention of maintaining or restoring international peace and security.

Among the five permanent states of the *UN Security Council* that have exercised their right of veto [20] over time, thus not ensuring unanimity in adopting decisions, it is noteworthy that the largest percentage (approximately 49%) it is held by the Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics (USSR) and the Russian Federation which succeeded it in the Council after 1991 when the USSR dissolved, followed by the United States of America (29%).

In such cases, where veto rights are exercised and there is no unanimity and no decisions adopted within the Council, the *UN General Assembly* [20] has the possibility to recommend to the other UN members taking collective measures in order to maintain or to restore international peace and security. There is also the possibility for the *General Assembly* to meet in a *Special Emergency Session* at the request of nine members of the *Council* out of the fifteen or at the request of the *General Assembly* members' majority. At the same time, there is a *Standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council*, in which case it is requested by the permanent members the justification for using the veto right.

After the Ukraine war outbreak on February 24, 2022, the leader of the Russian state exercised the right of veto on the *UN Security Council* resolutions of February 27, 2022 and September 30, 2022. These resolutions were about immediate cessation of the war and the Russian troops withdrawal and about the Ukraine regions annexation (Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia). In both cases, unanimity was not ensured in decisions adopted, which determined the meeting in two *UN General Assembly Emergency Sessions* on March 1, 2022 and October 12, 2022. As a result, two resolutions were adopted regarding the cessation of immediate nature of force use in Ukraine, the total and unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine and the immediate reversal of Russian Federation declaration regarding the four Ukrainian regions annexation.

Regarding the possibility of expelling or suspending the Russian Federation from the *UN Security Council* [20], according to Article 6 of the *UN Charter*, the expelling of a *United Nations* member can be done if this member has persistently not respected the *UN Charter* principles, it is carried out on the recommendation of the *Security Council* and by the *General Assembly*. It is also relevant that this initiative has no precedent during the operation of the *United Nations*.

According to Article 5 of the *UN Charter*, the suspension can be made on the recommendation of the *Security Council* and by the *General Assembly* when measures of a preventive or enforceable nature have been applied against this member by the *Security Council*, capacity of membership that may be restored by the *Council*. At the same time, the *Security Council* recommendation regarding the expulsion or suspension of a UN member state is conditioned by the concurrent vote of the *Council* permanent members and can only be carried out through an amendment to the *UN Charter*, if they do not agree to their own expulsion or suspension, as the case may be.

More than the proposals to expel or suspend the Russian state from the *United Nations*, the analysis of open sources identified developments in the assimilation of the Russian regime with a terrorist regime and in the direction of condemning the Russian war of aggression. In the *European Parliament Resolution on Russia's escalation of its war of aggression against Ukraine* [19], it is called to impose similar sanctions on the Russian army as on terrorist groups.

The *Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly no. 2463 (2022) regarding further escalation in the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine* [21], dated October 13, 2022, explicitly mentioned the current Russian regime as a terrorist regime. In this document, the *Council of Europe* member states are requested to initiate steps to urgently establish a *Special International Court*, an institution aimed at prosecuting the crime of Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Regarding the *United Nations* reform, the *Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe* agreed to expand the role of the *United Nations General Assembly* in order to maintain international peace and security. The need to expand this role of the *UN General Assembly* can be justified by the major difference between the resolutions of the two UN entities (the *UN Security Council* and the *UN General Assembly*). This major difference lies in the mandatory nature of their implementation, being mandatory only resolutions that have been issued by the *UN Security Council*.

On October 16, 2022, the ministers of the Baltic states [22], Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, requested the European Union and international partners to establish a *Special Court* in Ukraine to investigate the aggression war against Ukraine and to ensure the Russian Federation's responsibility. The three ministers of the Baltic states note that there is no *International Court* or *International Tribunal* to condemn the Russian political and military leadership for the aggression against Ukraine. Thus, this *Special Court* would have, by investigating crimes of aggression, a complementary role to the *International Criminal Court* that tries individuals for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. We note that the ministers of the three Baltic states have notified an international jurisdictional loophole, the implementation of which will be able to benefit and other states in the future.

Later, on November 30, 2022, the *European Commission* officials [23] expressed to the EU member states their willingness to collaborate at the international level for the establishment of *an international ad hoc tribunal* or *a specialized hybrid tribunal*. This institution would have as specific attributions the investigation and the prosecution of the crime of aggression committed by the political and military leaders of the Russian state against Ukraine. The first response to this initiative was offered by the French state, whose foreign ministry [24] announced on the same date that it had started the process of founding a *Special Court for the Crime of Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine*, together with partner states from the territory of Europe and with Ukraine.

Later, on 19.01.2023, the *European Parliament* [25] adopted with 472 votes the establishment of a *Tribunal on the crime of aggression against Ukraine*, 33 abstentions and 19 votes against this approach. The jurisdiction of this tribunal will not only be limited to the investigation of the political and military leaders of the Russian state, but will also be extended to the leaders of the Belarusian state who favored the Russian Federation crime of aggression.

From the third section of the article based on the analysis of open sources, came proposals to reform the *UN Security Council*, proposals coming from the Japanese Prime Minister and the President of the *European Council*. At the same time, there were requests from the *European Parliament* to revoke the right of veto held by the Russian state in the *UN Security Council*, to expel the Russian state from the UN and to suspend the membership held by the Russian state in several international organizations (WTO, WCO, IMF, UNICEF, UNESCO). Also, from the *European Parliament*, there were requests to sanction the Russian army similar to terrorist groups.

From this section also resulted from the *Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe* an association of the current Russian regime with a terrorist regime; urgent requests regarding the establishment of a *Special International Tribunal* to sanction the crime of Russian aggression and an agreement on the *United Nations General Assembly* role expansion in international peace and security. A request to establish a *Special Court* has also been identified from the ministers of the Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In the end, the progress from request to concrete fact was also identified. More precisely, at the beginning of 2023, the *European Parliament* adopted the establishment of a *Tribunal on the crime of aggression*

against Ukraine which will have jurisdiction over the investigation of the political and military leaders of the Russian and Belarusian states.

## 5. Scenario Method

Up to now, we have shown the declining power of the Russian Federation, its foreign policy turned from West to the East and the proposals of a *United Nations* reform and of a new *Special Court* for aggression crime establishment. In this last section, we intend to analyze the possible Russian Federation evolution in the Ukraine war context, using the scenario method as a research methodology. We advance three possible ways for the Russian state: *to be defeated*, *to escalate the war by using tactical nuclear weapons* and *to win the war*.

Thus, it will analyze the most likely scenario for the Russian state, that in our view is based on the Russian state defeat, the worst-case scenario that involves the tactical nuclear weapons use in Ukraine and the optimistic scenario for the Russian state that involves winning the war. We mention that these three scenarios that we will develop are three forecasts, and not certainties, being influenced by research results, but also by subjectivity.

### 5.1. *The most likely scenario for Russian state*

Given the Russian military losses, the sanctions' effects, the diplomatic isolation, the international support, the Ukraine resistance and the Russian military failures so far, we advance the following scenario as being the most likely: **a Russian state defeated in the Ukraine war, war reparations imposed and accountability for political and military leaders**. We believe that the Russian state will be defeated because its war is not only against Ukraine, but against the democratic world, that there will be imposed war reparations because the Russian state started the war and that there will be held accountable by the new *Special Court* for aggression crime, this institution being created for this purpose.

We start from the premise that *the Russian state will not initiate peace negotiations, unless it wins its cause*. The key in ending the war is, in our view, the international support for Ukraine. Ending the war on its own initiative by the Russian state, without the fulfillment of the declared goals, on the one hand would not justify its start, nor the losses up to this stage. On the other hand, it would endanger the Russian political leader's legitimacy and the Russian Federation's stability, so we cannot expect this to happen.

The military power of the Russian Federation in relation to the military power of the Ukraine is in imbalance. In this sense, the military and financial assistance gradually provided to the Ukrainian state, depending on the war's evolution, from Europe, the United States of America and from other continents has the role of helping to achieve a certain balance in war now and in peace negotiations, in the future. The more the Ukraine will benefit from military and financial assistance, the more are the chances of negotiations that will ensure a favorable position for Ukraine, despite the losses suffered. Military results are, in fact, what ensure the degree of diplomacy success in peace negotiations.

Without favorable peace negotiations, the Russian state will most likely not accept defeat, but rather try to regain what lost on the ground of battle, but also the status it had before the war outbreak. Regardless of the period of regaining its diminished power or the difficulty of this process in the absence of resources, the Russian Federation will remain a regional player and a conventional and nuclear power that should not be underestimated, but rather should be given the highest level of attention, because it will not accept to have an inferior status in the medium and long term, nor being a spectator in the international order shaping.

Attention should not be limited only to the Russian Federation and the future of the Russian state, depending on the outcome of the war. Also, it should be extended to the balance of power redistribution between the Great Powers, because the war outcome will have not only regional, but also global implications. At the same time, attention must be paid on what the defeated state will do about the defeat and about the new balance of power. A defeated, economically sanctioned and diplomatically isolated Russian state can be compared to Germany after the First World War (1914 - 1918) and the Treaty of Versailles (1919). Although the Russian state does not represent a direct threat to the United States of America, compared to China, it remains a relevant actor on the global stage and a nuclear power whose instability, diplomatic isolation from the Great Powers or exclusion from the international landscape it would pose a danger not only to the Great Powers, but to all of humanity.

A failure of the Russian Federation in the Ukraine war, combined with a fragile political power, a reduced military power, a deficient economy, a diminished and dissatisfied population, can lead to social tensions and political instability. Social tensions in Russian society have been manifested since the 1990s, at the beginning and during the Ukraine war, but they were not at a large level. In terms of political instability, a possible change in the state leadership, as a result of social tensions or coming from outside the current Russian regime, would not automatically guarantee a change in Russian policy either. What is the most relevant is the fact that Russian political power gravitates around a small circle of influential people. The possibility of a deep change in the level of Russian policy in the short and medium term is reduced, because this circle cannot be accessed from the outside, nor can it be eliminated from the Russian political landscape.

In case of a possible current Russian leader replacement that would allow the war ending, but not by the leader who initiated it, it will most likely be a change only to create a new Russian state image and a policy that creates the appearance of a political change. In our view, this political change would involve condemning the previous regime and its actions, would opt for peace, for regional and global security and would allow a way to return to cordial relations with the West before the start of the Ukraine war.

### ***5.2. The worst-case scenario for Ukraine: Russia uses nuclear power***

From the hybrid threats analysis, we note that the Russian state used the conventional dimension with an intimidating role. Similarly, from the conventional threat analysis, we note that Russian leaders used the nuclear dimension with the same intimidating role. At the same time, we note that nuclear rhetoric was used by several Russian political leaders (president, vice-president of the Security Council, foreign minister) in certain key moments of the war, as: after its start; after receiving military assistance that could have a real impact on the war course; after certain military failures suffered by the Russian state; but also, after certain recorded victories, such as the annexation of the four Ukrainian regions, in order to secure them.

The worst-case scenario involves a Russian Federation that will use nuclear power, at the minimum level, by using tactical nuclear weapons that are intended for use on the battlefield and that have limited action power at a certain area or objective level, as opposed to strategic ones. Their use could be considered imperative by the Russian state to win the war, but also to draw attention to the nuclear asset that the Russian Federation is willing to use, even at a low level, when there is no other alternative to achieve its goals in the Ukraine war. In this case, we believe that the Occidental answer will be accordingly, which will not allow Russian Federation to win the war this way, so it won't be a win, in the end.

In case of crossing the red line between conventional and nuclear, by using this last asset owned by the Russian state, not only Ukraine, but the whole of humanity will be in question, so there must be an international answer. Once this nuclear threshold is crossed, there will be no more security, no more limits and no functional control mechanisms to guarantee the non-use of nuclear power, no matter the level.

From a nuclear threat perspective, alongside a Russian state that seeks to impose itself through the use of conventional force and through a nuclear threat rhetoric, we also find an ambitious China that aims to dethrone the United States of America, an Iran that produces concerns about the development of its own nuclear bomb, an unpredictable North Korea, a Pakistan and an Indian state in close proximity and conflict.

### ***5.3. The optimistic scenario for the Russian state***

The optimistic scenario for the Russian Federation is to win the war. Should the Russian state be victorious in this war, this potential victory will not automatically attract international recognition from democratic states as a regional leader and as a global actor, as happened to the Crimea annexation. We appreciate that the price paid by Ukraine for this war, but also by the Russian population not involved in this war and by the democratic world, would overshadow any positive result obtained by the Russian state.

The Ukraine war revealed to us, during the first year of its deployment, what is the democracy position in relation to autocracy, as well as Great Powers and European states, international organizations and international law in relation to the Ukraine war. We appreciate that this democratic attitude could be amplified if the Russian state wins the Ukraine war and more than that, at a macro level, a new international policy of Russian state containment will begin, similar to the Cold War period.

In this scenario, the most relevant variable for the rise or the fall of a victorious Russian state will be represented, in our view, by the stability of the American state and its foreign policy, more precisely by the result of the presidential elections in the United States of America, an electoral process that will take place in 2024.

## **6. Conclusion**

An overview of the first sections shows a Russian state whose dimensions: military, political, economic, societal and intelligence have been affected; a Russian state whose foreign policy has been redirected from the West to the East (China, India) and whose actions in Ukraine generated discussions on: reforming the *United Nations Security Council*; expanding the *United Nations General Assembly* role in maintaining international peace and security; revoking the veto right held, expelling or suspension from the *United Nations*; suspension of WTO, WCO, IMF, UNICEF and UNESCO membership; imposing on the Russian Federation military similar sanctions to terrorist groups; the establishment of a *Tribunal on the crime of aggression against Ukraine* to prosecute the Russian aggression crime against Ukraine and a Russian state whose current regime is associated with a terrorist regime.

Given the Russian military losses in the Ukraine war, the sanctions' effects, the diplomatic isolation, the international support for Ukraine, the Ukraine resistance and the Russian military failures so far, we advanced and developed the following scenario as being the most likely to happen: a

**Russian state defeated in the Ukraine war, war reparations imposed and accountability for political and military leaders.**

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