THE RUSSIAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF SECURITY

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Cite: Berényi, Zoltán (2026): The Russian understanding of the concept of security. *Lélektan és hadviselés – interdiszciplináris folyóirat*, VIII. évf. 2026/1. szám. 71-87.
Idézés: Doi: https://www.doi.org/10.35404/LH.2026.1.71

EP / EE: Ethics Permission / Etikai engedély: KFS/2026/1-LH0004

Reviewers:
Lektorok:
Public Reviewers / Nyilvános Lektorok:
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Anonymous reviewers / Anonim lektorok:
3. Anonymous reviewer (Ph.D.) / Anonim lektor (Ph.D.)
4. Anonymous reviewer (Ph.D.) / Anonim lektor (Ph.D.)

Abstract

The purpose of this study is twofold: on the one hand, to examine how Russia interprets the concept of security, and on the other hand, to critically analyze this interpretation. Although the relationship between NATO and Russia has never been friendly, it has not always been hostile. How did it become so? How did Russian security policy makers come to the conclusion that NATO posed a clear threat to Russia? What is behind Russia's intransigent stance towards NATO? Is there even a solid basis for this

attitude? What does this tell us about the Russian understanding of security? After an overview of the different concepts of security and an examination of the notion of strategic security culture, the second part of the paper attempts to answer these questions.
Keywords: Russia; NATO; security; strategic; security culture
Discipline: political science

Absztrakt
A BIZTONSÁG FOGALMÁNAK OROSZ ÉRTELMEZÉSE
E tanulmány célja kettős: egyrészt annak a vizsgálata, hogy Oroszország hogyan értelmezi a biztonság fogalmát, másrészt pedig ennek az értelmezésnek a kritikai elemzése. Bár a NATO és Oroszország közötti kapcsolat soha nem volt baráti jellegű, ám nem is volt mindig ellenséges. Hogyan változott ez a viszony? Hogyan jutottak az orosz biztonságpolitikai döntéshozók arra a következtetésre, hogy a NATO egyértelmű fenyegetést jelent Oroszországra? Mi áll Oroszország NATO-val szembeni hajthatatlan álláspontjának hátterében? Van-e egyáltalán szilárd alapja ennek a hozzáállásnak? Mit árul el ez nekünk az orosz biztonságfelfogásról? A különböző biztonsági koncepciók áttekintése és a stratégiai biztonsági kultúra fogalmának vizsgálata után a tanulmány második része megkísérli megválaszolni ezeket a kérdéseket.
Kulcsszavak: Oroszország; NATO; biztonság; stratégiai; biztonsági kultúra
Diszciplinák: politikatudomány

Over the last two decades, many members of the Russian state elite, as well as the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, have increasingly asserted that Russia has legitimate security needs, but unfortunately the US, NATO and the 'Western countries' have never been willing to take this into account, and what is more, the Russian leadership has been 'deliberately deceived and defrauded' by these actors in world politics (Net1). This claim was first made in the first decade after the turn of the millennium, when first the Russian military leadership (Net2) and then Vladimir Putin, then Prime Minister (Net3), protested against the establishment of a 'missile shield' and bases in the Eastern European region. Despite the fact that the US administration and NATO have always maintained that these bases are exclusively intended to house interceptor missiles to defend against ballistic missiles launched by North Korea or Iran against European states, the Russian political leadership has insisted at every possible opportunity that the bases could

be used to launch Tomahawk missiles with nuclear warheads, which would directly threaten Russia. And since they are 'too close to Russia', they insisted, the existence of these launch sites is unacceptable to them. So the argument that the presence of NATO bases near Russia's borders is unacceptable to Russia was made long before it was raised in relation to Ukraine.

NATO was founded on 4 April 1949 to provide an organization capable of guaranteeing security against the threat posed to the West by the Soviet Union. This threat, however, dissipated when the Soviet Union collapsed and ceased to exist in 1991. Russia was then integrated into the international system and the world economy as a sovereign state. Although the relationship between NATO and Russia has never been particularly friendly, it has not always been hostile. How did it become so? How did Russian security policy makers come to the conclusion that NATO posed a clear threat to Russia? What are the reasons behind Russia's intransigent stance towards NATO? Is there even a solid basis for this rejectionist attitude? What does this tell us about the Russian understanding of security?

In this paper I try to answer these questions. More specifically, I seek to explore how the Russian leadership interprets the concept of security and to highlight the implications of this interpretation. Attempting to answer the questions listed above requires, first of all, that they be posed in the appropriate historical context, i.e. in relation to the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. In what follows, I will therefore first examine how NATO's relationship with Russia has evolved since the end of the Cold War.

NATO and Russia

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established on 4 April 1949 as a collective defense alliance intended to ensure the security of its member states. Six years later, the Warsaw Pact was created under Soviet leadership as a counterpart to NATO. NATO's founding members included the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Italy, Portugal, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and the Benelux countries. Greece and Turkey joined in 1952, while Spain became a member in 1982. Following the political transformations in Central and Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War, NATO expanded to include several former socialist states, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in 1999, followed by Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004. Albania and Croatia joined in 2009, Montenegro in 2017, and North Macedonia in 2020. As a result, NATO became the largest military alliance in the contemporary international system.

During the Cold War, NATO primarily functioned as a collective defense organization intended to deter potential aggression from the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact states. Following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO continued to exist and gradually

adapted to the transformed European security environment. This development generated debates within Russia regarding the future structure of European security and the role of NATO within it. In the early post-Soviet period, however, relations between Russia and NATO were not exclusively confrontational. In December 1991, Russian President Boris Yeltsin expressed support for the idea of creating a broader European security framework and even referred to possible future Russian membership in NATO as a long-term objective (Net4).

By the mid-1990s, however, Russian perceptions of NATO had become increasingly cautious. Russian political leaders voiced concerns that NATO enlargement might alter the balance of power in Europe and reduce Russia's influence within the emerging post-Cold War order (Net5; Net6). These concerns became particularly visible during debates surrounding NATO enlargement into Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time, NATO pursued several cooperative initiatives aimed at integrating Russia into broader Euro-Atlantic security structures. One important example was the 1994 Partnership for Peace programme, which sought to deepen political and military cooperation between NATO and non-member states, including Russia.

The Partnership for Peace framework promoted consultation, military cooperation, and interoperability among participating states. Although the programme was not formally designed as a pathway to NATO membership, it nonetheless created mechanisms through which partner countries could increase cooperation with the alliance. In the Russian case, cooperation included joint planning activities and efforts to improve coordination between Russian and NATO forces (Net7).

Despite these cooperative initiatives, NATO enlargement remained a contentious issue in Russian foreign and security policy discourse. Russian policymakers increasingly interpreted NATO's expansion as reducing the prospects for Russia's integration into a common European security framework. At the same time, NATO and Russia continued institutional cooperation during the 1990s. In 1997, the two sides signed the NATO–Russia Founding Act, which established the NATO–Russia Permanent Joint Council and outlined principles intended to guide cooperation and consultation (see: Net8). The agreement emphasized commitments to dialogue, mutual restraint, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

The Founding Act also reflected efforts to institutionalize cooperation between NATO and Russia in the broader Euro-Atlantic security environment. It affirmed that the security of the region could not be achieved without taking Russian interests into consideration and stated that the parties would seek to build a stable and lasting partnership. The agreement further confirmed that NATO had no intention of deploying nuclear weapons on the territory of new member states.

Debates concerning NATO enlargement became more pronounced during the presidency of Vladimir Putin (Net9). Russian political leaders increasingly argued that Western states had provided assurances in 1990 that NATO would not expand eastward. Western governments and many scholars, however, have generally argued that no formal agreement prohibiting future NATO enlargement was concluded (Net10). Discussions held during negotiations over German reunification primarily concerned the deployment of NATO forces within the territory of the former East Germany rather than the future enlargement of the alliance more broadly (Net11). Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev later stated that NATO enlargement beyond Germany had not been discussed during those negotiations (Net12).

Throughout the 1990s, discussions between Russian and American leaders reflected differing perspectives regarding the future European security architecture. The administration of Bill Clinton supported the gradual enlargement of NATO while simultaneously attempting to maintain cooperative relations with Russia (see: Net13). Concerns regarding enlargement existed both within Russia and among some Western policymakers, who feared that expansion could negatively affect relations with Moscow (Net14). Although various forms of compromise and cooperation were explored, no formal arrangement granting Russia veto power over NATO enlargement was accepted (Net15).

Tensions surrounding NATO enlargement intensified further in the 2000s, particularly after NATO declared in 2008 that Georgia and Ukraine would eventually become members of the alliance. Russian political leaders strongly opposed this possibility, viewing it as incompatible with Russian security interests (Net16). The subsequent war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 contributed significantly to the deterioration of relations between Russia and NATO states and reinforced mutual distrust.

Since then, differing interpretations of European security, sovereignty, alliance membership, and regional influence have remained central sources of disagreement between Russia and NATO members. Russian officials have frequently argued that NATO military infrastructure near Russian borders poses a threat to Russian security, while NATO governments have maintained that the alliance is defensive in nature and that sovereign states retain the right to determine their own security arrangements.

These debates also reflect broader theoretical questions concerning security, reciprocity, and strategic culture. Russian security discourse has often emphasized geopolitical vulnerability, territorial defense, and military power as central components of national security. In contrast, many Western approaches to security increasingly incorporate broader political, economic, and institutional dimensions (Net17; Net18; Net19). The divergence between these perspectives has contributed to differing interpretations of

NATO enlargement and regional security developments since the end of the Cold War (Net20; Net21).

Definition of safety

Security is the process of averting threats to people and their property. According to Barry Buzan, the concept of security refers to freedom from threat and the ability of states to maintain their independence from others, their identity and their ability to function as an integrated whole in the face of what they perceive as hostile and ever-changing forces, with the ultimate goal of the state's survival (Buzan, 1991). Likewise, Williams (2008) argues that security is most often associated with the mitigation of threats to cherished values, in particular threats to the survival of a reference object. It can therefore be concluded that, regardless of whether the concept of security is understood in a classical, state-centered, traditional or non-traditional way, the concept of security is about the protection of values (including living and non-living resources), i.e. preventing the loss of or damage to values.

Security policy during the Cold War followed the logic of the traditional understanding of security. This interpretation defines security as protection from danger, external attack or intrusion. The followers of the security paradigm constructed according to the logic of the traditional interpretation adopt the views on the concept of security of the so-called realist school of international relations theory, in which the reference object of security is none other than the state. This tendency equates the state of security with a peaceful state that can be achieved by military means, deterrence, active defense and the prevention of the outbreak of conflicts by non-aggressive actions. In Walt's view, therefore, those who follow this conception of security policy see the threat of military force and the use and control of military force as the primary issues to be addressed (Walt, 1991).

The traditional understanding of security is therefore strongly linked to the armed forces. Barry Buzan therefore considers the traditional understanding of security to be outdated and in need of renewal. The non-traditional understanding of security seeks to broaden and deepen the concept of security. According to this view, although the need to maintain the state cannot be overemphasized, other factors such as environmental, political, economic and social problems also threaten the life and property of the individual. Proponents of this understanding of security argue that a predominantly military approach to security underestimates the importance of the fact that the main threats to the survival of the state are not military but environmental, health, political, social and economic factors. Therefore, they argue, security in this sense is about the emancipation of man. In other words, they argue that people must be freed from the problems, difficulties and constraints that may prevent them from freely doing what they themselves, following their own discretion, would choose. In today's world,

political, ecological, economic, demographic, and therefore non-military problems in general, pose a serious threat to people's security.

However, since the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century, not only the official security doctrine of the Russian Federation, (Net22) but also the actions of the Russian state have made it increasingly clear that Russia relies primarily on a military interpretation of security. According to this interpretation, it may seem prima facie legitimate to argue that the maintenance of military bases near the borders is totally unacceptable because they pose a serious threat to the security of the neighboring state.

In what follows, we must examine whether this claim can be supported by verifiable arguments. We know that the Russian answer to this question is a resounding yes. However, if we examine the arguments used to justify this statement, we can discover that the proponents of this statement consider one factor to be key: the closer a military base is to Russia, the greater the threat to the security of the Russian state posed by this base. In other words, the proponents of the statement attribute crucial importance to geographical distance: the closer the military base, the greater the threat. Coming to this point in the analysis of the Russian elite's attitude to the issue of security, I believe that there is an issue that should also be mentioned. It seems that the Russian arguments about the danger of military bases near their borders and their argument that they are completely intolerable, unacceptable and that Russia has, in their words, 'the right to take military-technical measures against them', are fundamentally flawed.

First of all, members of the Russian state elite have somehow failed to notice, or do not seem to care, that there are military bases of several countries along Russia's thousands of kilometers of border. Russia has internationally recognized borders in Asia with Georgia, Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, China and North Korea. There is no doubt that of these countries, China is the one whose military power could pose a serious threat to Russia. However, members of the Russian political leadership do not seem to care about this at all. They are not demanding that China dismantle Chinese military bases in the Russian border areas, they are not demanding that Chinese troops not be stationed there, etc. So, if we accept that Russia has "legitimate security concerns" about the proximity of military bases along its borders, then the Russian leadership is, to say the least, illogical in its arguments when it is only concerned about bases near its European borders. In other words, the Russian elite is, to put it mildly, inconsistent about the danger of military bases near its borders.

There is also a narrative that is often voiced by Russian politicians such as Dmitry Medvedev, and echoed by public figures such as academic Noam Chomsky (Net23), John Mearsheimer, (Net24) and New York Times journalist Thomas L. Friedman (Net25), as well as politicians such as Clare Daly (Net26), MEP, Mick

Wallace (Net27), MEP (Net28), and the list is by no means exhaustive. Vladimir Putin himself has repeatedly presented this narrative, the central claim of which is that if Ukraine joins NATO, there is a possibility of a NATO base near Kharkov, which, the Russian President has repeatedly stressed, is unacceptable because it would allow NATO weapons to be deployed only some 350 kilometers from Moscow, and Russia therefore considers it justified to "demilitarize" its neighboring state by launching a special military operation to prevent this (Net29; Net30; Net31; Net32). However, it does not seem to have occurred to Russian security policy makers that, in accepting the principle of reciprocity, they would accept that other states would be entitled to launch similar military operations to destroy Russian bases on the Russian side of the border that threaten their security. In other words, by subordinating the legitimate security interests of other states to the security interests of the Russian state, the Russian state is violating a fundamental principle of the UN Charter that must be respected in relations with other states.

However, is it only because of a disregard for the principles of reciprocity and equal rights that the Russian position that the existence of military bases in border areas is unacceptable can be challenged? In order to answer this question, we will now examine the claim at the heart of the Russian narrative in a somewhat more general context. Do military bases in border areas really pose an unacceptable threat to the security of neighboring states?

There are numerous military bases near state borders around the world. Yet, since the end of the Cold War, no state has attacked its neighbor for this reason, nor has it tried to justify its actions by claiming that the mere existence of a military base in such close proximity is unacceptable and intolerable. There are numerous examples of military bases being located along or in the immediate vicinity of the borders of countries. There are many such bases in NATO member states in Europe and North America, for example. However, there are also bases in border areas of non-NATO countries, for example in Ireland, Switzerland, and in the Americas, for example in Mexico or Brazil. Canada and Mexico have military bases along their borders with the US, but this does not seem to be seen as a threat by US national security decision-makers (Gonzalez and Haggard, 1998). Moreover, it is clear that successive US administrations have had no intention of invading Mexico and Canada, and, to use Vladimir Putin's expression, of 'taking military-technical measures to solve the problem'... So, either the US political leadership does not consider these bases as a threat to US national security, or it has not yet noticed the existence of these military bases. Needless to say, it is probably not the case that the military bases in Canada and Mexico are invisible and undetectable, but that the US administration or US politicians simply do not see them as a threat to US security.

In fact, if we look at other continents, we can discover something very similar. The Australians do not see US bases, US navy ships as a threat to Australia's security, and to mention a few other Asian countries, neither Japan, nor South Korea, nor Taiwan see that as a threat to their national security (Haas, 1986). This is also fully true for countries in Central, Northern, Southern and Western Europe. I have not been able to find a single serious objection from the governments of Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Poland, the Czech Republic, Switzerland or Austria to the operation of military bases in border areas by neighboring states. Of course, it could be argued that this is due to the fact that these states are NATO members, but while this is true of most of them, it is certainly not true of Switzerland and Austria. These states react differently to the existence of military bases close to their borders than Russia does. Russia also has a large naval base in the Kaliningrad region. Despite this, no state in the region, neither Germany, nor Poland, nor Sweden, nor Finland, nor Denmark, has demanded that Russia abolish it. In other words, they assess the importance of the physical distance factor for military bases differently from the Russian state. The reason for the different reaction is therefore the different degree of threat associated with the distance from the border of the phenomenon that potentially threatens the security of the state. The Russian state elite perceives and reacts differently to phenomena at a certain distance from the borders of the Russian state than the leadership of other states.

According to the theory of strategic security culture, states perceive and react to impacts on their security according to their own strategic security culture. In other words, the characteristics of the strategic security culture determine the perception and assessment of potential threats to the security of the state.

Concepts of strategic security culture and security community and characteristics of Russian strategic culture

Baun (2005) defines strategic security culture as 'a fairly persistent factor that is essentially a continuous determinant of security policy formulation, a factor that does not immediately take fully developed form but is shaped by the activities of government, in response to external security challenges and as a result of domestic political processes' (Baun, 2005). Farrell (2005) defines strategic security culture as a set of doctrines, attitudes, habits, norms and patterns adopted by the state. In his view, states' strategic decisions are closely linked to their perceptions, norms and beliefs about the use of force, i.e. the objectives that can be achieved through the use of force.

It was Jack Snyder who first pioneered the use of cultural factors in the study of Soviet nuclear strategy to examine security issues. He argued that 'the socialization process results in the development of more or less enduring general beliefs,

attitudes and patterns of behavior about nuclear strategy, which place nuclear strategy at the level of 'culture' rather than mere policy' (Snyder, 1977, 5). Like Jack Snyder, Colin Gray and Kenneth Booth also recognized the link between the cultural features of strategy and nuclear strategy. They defined strategic security culture as 'a way of thinking about and acting on force that derives from national historical experience, a sense of national responsibility [and...] a civic culture and way of life'. This, according to Gray (1981), provides the medium for debates about strategy; and at the same time it autonomously determines the patterns of strategic policy (Lantis, 2009).

Alistair Johnston defines a strategic security culture as an integrated system of symbols (i.e. reasoning structures, languages, metaphors, analogies, etc.). He argues that strategic security culture, by articulating ideas about the role and effectiveness of military force in interstate political affairs and by giving these ideas an aura of realism, makes strategic preferences uniquely credible and effective, thereby serving to provide a broad and long-term foundation for high-priority strategic goals (Johnston, 1995). The carriers of strategic culture and its values are people, political leaders, political parties, government institutions and military-related institutions and organizations. According to Meyer (2005), four main determinants (domains) shape strategic culture, particularly from a military perspective: the objectives of the use of force, the methods of using force, the authority to use force at the national and international levels, and the preferred mode of security cooperation. According to Berger (1998), strategic security culture changes when 'dramatic events or traumatic experiences radically undermine faith in fundamental beliefs and values'. In line with the above characteristics, I accept Johnson and his colleagues' definition of strategic security culture, according to which it is nothing more than 'a set of shared beliefs, assumptions and behaviors, arising from shared experiences and accepted narratives (both oral and written), that shape collective identity and collective behavior, relationships with other groups, and that determine the appropriate goals and means to achieve security objectives' (Johnson et al., 2009, 4).

The implication is that if the norms and values of a strategic security culture determine the assessment of each phenomenon, states that respect common norms will be better able to establish and maintain their security based on the principle of reciprocity. In fact, Karl Deutsch (see: Deutsch, et al., 1957) discovered this as early as the 1950s when he coined the concept of the "security community". By the term "security community" Deutsch meant that the real and ultimate basis for the common security of countries lies in shared values and norms. He argued that countries that shared the same values, followed the same norms and respected the same values (one of the most important of which was freedom) did not pose a threat to each other's security and did not even need to conclude a written

security treaty or even establish a common institutional framework to safeguard their security in order to ensure peace between them (Deutsch, 1961).

Analyzing the statements made by members of the Russian state elite and the behavior of the Russian state, it is clear that Russia does not respect the same values as other European states or NATO members when it comes to state security. As Eitelhuber observes, Russian strategic culture is characterized both by 'an almost obsessive perception of a general threat to Russian sovereignty and territorial integrity and by the great power aspirations that appear in response' (Eitelhuber, 2009, 27). Fritz Ermarth (2009) sees the source of this in history and argues that: 'The traditional Russian strategic culture - from the transformation of Tsarist Russia into a state in the middle of the last millennium through most of the Soviet Union's existence until the late 1980s - can be described as one of the most militant and militarized strategic cultures in history' (Ermarth, 2009, 85). According to Pipes (1997, 74), 'Russia's claim to world power status has traditionally relied on military force and the temptation to invoke this tool again and again'. Fritz Ermath also argues that the superiority complex is fuelled by geography, history (especially the victory in the Great Patriotic War and Russia's role in 'saving the world') and messianism, while the inferiority complex is the result of a lost great power position and alienation. Ermarth (2009, 88) therefore argues that 'Russian foreign policy culture displays in rhetoric and action a confusing combination of often contradictory attitudes: on the one hand, defensiveness bordering on paranoia, and on the other, self-assertion bordering on belligerence'. According to Arbatov (1994) and Geoffrey Hosking (2012), Russian superpower status has been built on three fundamental elements, which have come to define Russia's strategic culture today:

- A state-controlled economy subordinated to the main objective of securing military power (in order to win wars),
- An authoritarian or totalitarian political system based on a hierarchical, messianic ideology,
- Empire building based on territorial expansion.

The characteristics of Russia's strategic security culture could be described by another terminology, the concepts of empire and periphery. As argued by Miskimmon and his co-authors (see: Miskimmon et. al; 2013, 1), the introduction of the use of these two concepts was stimulated by the need for a new analytical framework in the post-Cold War period. The current international system was "cemented" at the Yalta Conference in 1945 with the elevation of the permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to the status of the 'five decision-makers' of the world (Plokhy, 2010). However, even during the Cold War, this UN-linked communication practice was not fully accepted by the international community of nations, nor was it fully enforced (Bisley 2012), not to mention the fact that it was fundamentally shaken by

the disappearance of the Soviet Union from the world political map in 1991.

According to a growing body of literature on contemporary imperial entities (e.g. Motyl 1997, 1999, 2001; Zielonka 2011, 2012, 2013; Parker 2008, 2010; Gravier 2009; Behr - Stivachtis 2015; Vernygora et al. 2016; Parchami 2019; Kasper-Vernygora 2020), the imperial paradigm serves as a tool to highlight some of the specific features of the geo-strategically significant interaction between the imperial core and the periphery. Parker (2010, 111), in detailing the relationship between the two, points out that 'the extension of empire's dominance was not based solely on the internal nature of the empire, but also on the relationship of empires to the wider: ecological, social or political environment; to the international system or to the global environment'.

In his seminal work on the modern international system, Zielonka (2012) defines Russia as a contemporary empire. He defines empire as 'a vast territorial entity with global military, economic and diplomatic influence' that 'must engage in activities that impose significant internal constraints on it at the periphery of [...] empire' Zielonka (2012, 509). With regard to Russia, Zielonka (2012, 511) sees the country's 'primary interests' as centered on 'recovering from the Soviet collapse', its 'key sources of power' as 'energy and military force', and the essence of its imperial 'civilizing mission' as embedded in the framework of 'stability and security'.

Conclusion

The activities of the Russian state in the international security space since 1991 clearly show that Russia's strategic security culture has imperial characteristics, and Russia treats its neighbors and other states accordingly. However, an imperialist security culture cannot be the basis for real security. Stable and reliable security communities cannot be based on an understanding of values, and in particular of freedom, that is typical of states with imperial characteristics. An imperial state denies individuals, social groups and other states freedom of choice in terms of their identity, their values and the norms they wish to follow, the conceptual framework and narrative they wish to use to interpret the world, and how and with whom they wish to interact in the world. And since I believe that it is essential for respect for human dignity that at least the conditions for freedom from external constraints, i.e. the conditions for a negative conception of freedom, are met, I argue that denying an individual, or a group of individuals, the freedom to choose between alternatives is nothing less than a curtailment of the conditions necessary for that individual, or group of individuals, to exist in a human way. The latter, in my view, is nothing other than the imposition of a way of being other than a normal human way of being on the person or group of persons subject to the restriction, i.e. the degrading, inhuman treatment of the subject of the restriction. Russia's conduct in the international security space since 1991 clearly shows that the Russian imperialist

strategic security culture denies individuals, social groups and other states freedom of choice on the issues outlined above. Thus, we can only conclude that the members of the Russian power elite have misinterpreted the concept of security and the fundamental issues related to it, even from the very basics. It seems that, entangled in the shackles of an imperialist strategic culture, they are convinced that Russia's security is threatened primarily by forces outside Russia and that, consequently, they must be dealt with accordingly. It is obvious that this elite is incapable of understanding that the threat to Russia's security comes primarily from within Russia. This elite fails to understand that Russia's security is most threatened by the values and norms prevailing in Russian society.

My final conclusion is that the imperialist strategic security culture is ultimately damaging Russia because it isolates it from the world in the long term. Unfortunately, Russia's imperialist war of conquest against Ukraine has also made it clear that security guarantees can only work if they are based on common values shared by countries. That is why Russia has not respected the Budapest Memorandum, which guaranteed Ukraine's security. This is one of the many things that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has shown the world. It has clearly shown that a security treaty with a country that does not consider the values and standards of its contracting partners to be respected has no deterrent effect at all.

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