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Abstract of the doctoral dissertation entitled  
*The Role of the Armed Forces in the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation  
between 2008 and 2022*

The main goal of my doctoral dissertation entitled *The Role of the Armed Forces in the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation between 2008 and 2022* was to show how significant was the use of the armed forces in Russia's foreign policy between 2008 and 2022. The timeframe of this study – 2008–2022 – is defined by two landmark events. In 2008, for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia went to war with another country. Russia had, of course, previously been involved in armed conflicts in the post-Soviet space, but in Abkhazia and the South Ossetia, or in Transnistria, it pretended that it was not acting there as the Russian state. In 2008, however, it acted openly against Georgia for the first time, officially sending its troops into the territory of a foreign state to fight against its armed forces. The year 2022, , marks an equally clear turning point, marked by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Following an analysis of source materials and the relevant literature, the following research hypothesis have been formulated:

The military factor is a key element in the pursuit of Russian foreign policy objectives such as: maintaining the country's territorial integrity, preserving Russia's dominant position across almost the entire former Soviet Union, and restoring Russia to its role as one of the world's most important players.

The study employed the following methodological approaches used in political science:

- decision analysis,
- systems analysis,
- critical literature review,
- political and military analysis of specific events.

In order to test the hypothesis, the study was divided into five chapters. Chapter One examines the role and position of the Russian armed forces within the state apparatus between 2008 and 2022. Chapter Two provides an overview of the key objectives of Russian foreign policy for the period 2008–2022. Chapter Three describes the reform of the Russian armed forces, the launch of which is regarded not only as the most significant turning point in their current functioning, but also demonstrates how it has influenced Russia's foreign policy.

Chapter Four analyses Russia's wars since 2008 – namely, its involvement in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria – and their international consequences, including for Russian foreign policy. Chapter Five demonstrates how Russia has used military force – in the form of hybrid operations, private military companies, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, and military bases abroad – to pursue its foreign policy objectives.

The analyses and research carried out clearly show that, for Russia, the military factor is crucial to the conduct of its foreign policy, and that the Russian authorities assess the country's international standing on the basis of its ability to project military power across various geographical areas and in all operational domains. Thus, the research hypothesis that the military factor in the years 2008–2022 was a key element in the pursuit of Russian foreign policy goals such as maintaining the country's territorial integrity and Russia's dominant position across almost the entire former Soviet Union, as well as Russia's return to the role of one of the world's most important players, has been confirmed.

The main conclusion of this dissertation is as follows: the armed forces and their capabilities will remain an intrinsic and crucial element of Russia's foreign policy. Moreover, the research carried out in this paper suggests that Russia will continue to use hard power as its primary tool in attempting to shape the international order, unless it encounters firm resistance from stronger states and organisations such as the US and NATO. This threat will be particularly significant for neighbouring countries that serve as examples of success, such as Poland, which Russia will seek to turn into a zone of reduced security, justifying this by the need to maintain strategic balance and invoking its own interpretation of the principle of indivisible security. In its policy, Russia will exploit all that it perceives as the West's weaknesses, namely democracy and a focus primarily on defence. Russia will therefore continue to carry out hostile hybrid operations directed primarily at NATO countries, seeking to weaken their political systems as much as possible, exacerbate social polarisation, and force Western governments to manage chaos on an ad hoc basis and respond to hybrid incidents, rather than focusing on the strategic level.

Keywords: Russia, armed forces, foreign policy, security policy