EDITED BY ALDO FERRARI

BEYOND UKRAINE.
EU AND RUSSIA IN SEARCH OF A NEW RELATION

INTRODUCTION PAOLO MAGRI

ISPI

Beyond Ukraine. EU and Russia in Search of a New Relation

Edited by Aldo Ferrari

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The Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) is an independent think tank dedicated to being a resource for government officials, business executives, journalists, civil servants, students and the public at large wishing to better understand international issues. It monitors geopolitical areas as well as major trends in international affairs.

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Contents

Introduction

During the last 15 years Putin's policies have produced a number of controversial effects both at the international and domestic levels, some diplomatic results (Syria, Iran), and unresolved regional conflicts (such as in Chechnya, Georgia and, currently, Ukraine). In strictly domestic terms, the early Putin era seemed to bring a sense of stability that most Russians had long waited for, after Yeltsin's chaotic years, often called the "crazy 90's". More recently, mainly owing to high oil prices which remained over hundred dollars for the most part of 2008-2014, the Russian economy experienced a stable and rapid growth. However, as soon as the oil price dropped and sanctions were imposed on the country due to the Ukrainian crisis, its economy and currency inevitably plummeted. The rationale behind it is also the Kremlin's growing power centralization in both the economic and political spheres, which goes hand in hand with the lack of economic reforms and over reliance on energy revenues.

When it comes, in particular, to Moscow's attitude towards the European Union, things have dramatically changed since Putin was first elected President in 2000. At the beginning of his first mandate, Putin opted for a Moscow-centered path, thus trying to gain popular support at home by overcoming the highly criticized Yeltsin's policies that were increasingly read as both ineffective and unjust. In foreign policy he accordingly launched the idea of a Greater Europe. Actually, the project was anything but new. It had already been suggested by both Gorbachev and Yeltsin, although it took a clear-cut shape only under Putin's presidency. The Greater Europe project was rooted in the existence of a 'would-be' common and integrated space and included two pillars: the EU area, with Germany at its core, and the Eurasian Union under

undisputable Russia's influence. To this aim and with the view to highlighting the goodwill of the Russian government to enhance cooperation with the European Union as a pro-active and equal partner, some important steps were taken including the Bologna process (implemented by Russia in 2007), visa liberalization for some categories of Russian citizens, Partnership for Modernization (promoting EU-Russia technological scientific exchange) and, to some extent, energy security cooperation.

However, this strategy proved to be short-lived. Clearly Russia overestimated its ability to convince its European partners to share the same path – on equal footing – to build a common economic and security architecture. Sooner than expected, political divergences and vital interests emerged. As a result, the Greater Europe project was progressively frozen, if not plainly abandoned. As of 2012, Russia started to actively promote its "turn towards Asia", or simply put towards China, which is, at the same time, both a key partner and a major challenge for Moscow. So it comes as no surprise that the Eurasian project started to rank high in Russia's foreign policy. The Ukrainian crisis made this trend crystal clear, and inevitably led to Russia's isolation from the West, which, in turn, ignited a strong anti-Western stance, shared by the vast majority of the population, also thanks to the effective state propaganda.

To make things worse, the Kiev protests that broke out in autumn 2013 further aggravated Russia-EU misunderstandings, with the risk of completely compromising 25 years of efforts by both sides. Indeed, this showed how weak such efforts had always been as the EU-Russia dialogue had never really taken off and never achieved high-level and concrete results.

Against this background, it goes without saying that Moscow has always perceived the EU-NATO expansion with hostility. By the same token, the EU has regarded with suspicion any form of economic and political integration between Russia and post-Soviet countries, reading such initiatives as Moscow's clear attempt to re-start an imperialist project. Ukraine has thus become the main

'battleground' where years and years of misunderstandings, frustration and "missed opportunities" converged.

However, the joint EU-Russia joint attempts to solve the Ukrainian crises, which were undertaken during the "Normandy Four" meetings (Germany, France, Russia, Ukraine), resulted in signing the weak – but still important – Minsk agreements. This helps to prove that there is still room for cooperation between the two sides. These agreements may hopefully set the stage for a more comprehensive deal aiming to close the gap between the EU's and Russia's competing visions.

Bearing all this in mind, this Report investigates the main causes of the revived 'Cold War' by providing the points of view of the main actors involved (Russia, the U.S., the EU as a whole and the "New Europe" in particular) and, at the same time, by sketching out viable options to restart the EU-Russia dialogue.

In their opening chapter, Carmen Claudín and Nicolás de Pedro analyse the relationship between the European Union and Russian federation in the post-Soviet period. In particular, they place the spotlight on the EU 'soft power'. This concept has acquired a negative connotation in Russia's view, since 'colour revolutions' are often interpreted as a result of the EU's expansionism under the 'soft power' policy umbrella. In particular, the ultimate goal of the 'colour revolution' – a democratic Ukraine – would be a denial of 'Putinism'. Accordingly, this would demonstrate that there is no such thing as an Eastern Slavic specialness that legitimizes a model of democracy specific to some Russian tradition.

However, as Aldo Ferrari put it in chapter 2, competition over the post-Soviet space remains the major obstacles to reach mutual understanding. The different assessments of 'colour revolutions', the clash over missile installations in Eastern Europe, the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008, the opposing political projects regarding post-Soviet states gradually strengthened a sharp contrast that exploded at the end of 2013 in Ukraine. According to Ferrari the weight of history and the determination of Russia to defend its interests have to be seriously taken in account by the EU when drafting scenarios for the post-Soviet space.

The Ukrainian crisis is therefore the latest episode of a progressive deterioration in relations as Luca Ratti highlights in chapter 3. Both NATO and the European security architecture are still facing unresolved issues which are a legacy of the Cold War. Their origins has to be found in the volatile nature of the East-West settlement which brought the Cold War to an end, with the agreements of 1989-1990 failing to clarify the former Soviet space's collocation in the new European security architecture.

However, one should not make the mistake of considering the EU's policy towards Russia as a monolith, one consistently backed by all the member states together, suggests Stefan Bielański in chapter 4. The Baltic States with a large Russian-speaking population and Poland have traditionally had strong anti-Russian sentiments, fearing the revival of Russia's imperialistic ambitions, which led them to join NATO. On the other hand, Hungarian and Czech Republic leaders seem much less worried and do not intend to close the door on a foreign policy stance built upon closer (at least bilateral) relations with Russia.

By any account, today's confrontation between Brussels and Moscow is a lose-lose game, according to Ivan Timofeev in chapter 5 who underlines the need to relaunch the Russia-EU dialogue, and establish a mechanism of regular multilateral consultations (contact groups) on the crises in Europe. A key condition for this is sparing no effort in achieving a cease-fire in Ukraine, by jointly promoting negotiations among the conflicting parties and aiming at a long-term solution to the conflict by re-shaping the country's territorial structure.

The benefits of talking with adversaries is also underlined by Sean Kay in chapter 6. Even though the United States has often sought to isolate governments not adhering to international norms, there have been exceptions, like during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, that brought significant results. He argues that Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea has added greater cohesion to the West while accelerating a rebalancing of responsibility sharing between the United States and Europe. According to Kay a careful mix of political and economic punishment, diplomatic

engagement, and symbolic reassurance on NATO membership may provide a framework for limiting the damage and reestablishing Russia-West relations.

All in all, no one seems to gain from this confrontation. This holds true especially for the EU, Russia and post-Soviet countries. A viable way-out can be found only by restarting dialogue among these actors and acknowledging, instead of ignoring, their respective interests.

Paolo Magri
ISPI Executive Vice President and Director

1. The EU and Russia after Crimea: Is Ukraine the Knot?

Carmen Claudín, Nicolás de Pedro

The annexation of Crimea, the Russian military intervention in Eastern Ukraine and the subsequent Western sanctions and Russian countersanctions have shaken the ground of the already crumbling European status quo. And arguably it is for long to come. The anniversary of Helsinki +40, next July 2015, will hardly be an occasion for rejoicing. Not only have the dividing lines between the East and the West not been erased yet, as was envisioned in 1975, new ones have appeared and put the whole process under the shadow of the "what's next?" question.

The centrality of the Ukrainian question for Russia lies in the fact that it is not simply a foreign affairs issue – like Iran or China is. Ukraine is at the heart of Russia's national interests and essentialist narrative. On the contrary, for the EU, Ukraine was an issue of mere foreign policy – with no perspective at all of an institutional integration - but now it has become a matter of self-assertion and inner coherence of its own values. As for Ukraine, the vast majority of its citizens – be them Ukrainian or Russian speakers – will not give up their regained independence. So any possible arrangement with Russia will be viable only if grounded on respect for this premise.

The EU and Russia have had a problematic relationship since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia has always been at the core of the EU's policy towards its European neighbourhood while Moscow has never found a framework to connect with the EU in which it would feel truly comfortable. The issue of its relation to Europe (and, at the other end, to Asia) has always been complex

for Russia and has historically inhabited the heart of its identity quest and its debates about the *specificity of a Russian way*. By contrast, no complexity prevails in the relationship with the U.S. Here each actor has a clear understanding of each other's position and role in what is regarded as a world competition.

The EU's attitudes towards its huge neighbour have evolved into what some have called "Russia fatigue". Whatever official statements have said, the EU and its member states separately have always seen Russia, although to different degrees, primarily as a problem. During Yeltsin's tenure, the constant alarm focused on Russia's domestic instability. With Putin's consolidation of internal power and economic growth, the concern shifted to his increasingly assertive foreign policy. It is therefore the urgency in addressing *the problem* that has largely dictated the EU's behaviour towards Russia and has engraved on it a unique stamp in which preventive concern appears inseparable from intents of constructive proposals.

For Russia, the importance of the economic dimension of its relations with the EU has never managed to displace the Russia/United States axis from its central place in Moscow's foreign policy. In the Russian worldview, a great power is measured largely by the stature of its partners/competitors. With this approach, Russia can hardly see the EU, however much it is its largest trade partner, as a mighty actor, which really represents in world politics the exponential sum of its members. Thus neither European soft power nor indeed its internal divisions convey to the Kremlin this idea the way the United States does.

Therefore the dialogue between the EU and Russia is strongly conditioned by the divergence of the dominant narratives. This clash of perceptions and understandings lies at the heart of the knot.

Clashing perceptions: the dynamics of estrangement

The EU and Russia disagree in their explanations of how we got here and tend to misinterpret the goals of the other. The question is

not only whether the EU understands Russia or not, but also whether Russia truly comprehends the EU. For years, Moscow has been insisting repeatedly on being treated as a *normal* partner/neighbour while constantly reiterating that Russia is a *special* actor. This self-perception clearly conflicts with the very rationale of the European project and explains why Russia couldn't even envisage being just one among others in a European Neighbourhood Policy.

The dominant perception among the European elites – somehow still under Gorbachev's idea of a *Common European Home* − is that the EU has pursued a genuine commitment to progressive integration with Russia through the promotion of a peaceful space of shared prosperity with trade at its core. In Moscow, by contrast, an increasing disappointment has governed the official interpretation of the relationship and terms like 'humiliation', 'deception' and 'betrayal' come forth recurrently. The landmarks of this perceived disloyalty are the NATO operation in Kosovo/Serbia, the expansions of the Alliance to include Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic in 1999 and the Baltic States in 2004, and finally the 'color revolutions' in the former Soviet space. The sum of it is what the influential Russian political scientist Sergey Karaganov calls a "Versailles with velvet gloves"[1].

While in the EU's eyes the Eastern Partnership is an instrument that does not include the prospect of joining the European Union, for Moscow it represents a first step towards rapid integration into the EU that will, it presumes, be accompanied by membership in NATO. Brussels, along with most member states, has great problems understanding the existential fear the EU's soft power in the post-Soviet space provokes in the Kremlin. From the Kremlin's perspective, the 'color revolutions' are no more than a Western instrument for carrying out "post-modern coups d'état" in such a way that the role of local actors and the domestic roots of

[1] S. Karaganov, "Europe and Russia: Preventing a New Cold War", *Russia in Global Affairs*, 7 June 2014, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Europe-and-Russia-Preventing-a-New-Cold-War-16701.

these phenomena are concealed. As Andrei Kortunov, the General Director of the Russian International Affairs Council, points out, "for Russia traditionally the term 'soft power' has had more bad connotations than good. For example, many see soft power as the West's attempts to undermine Russian interests in various regions of the world by organizing 'color revolutions'"[2]. Hence the wave of anti-government demonstrations in December 2011 and March 2012 in St. Petersburg and Bolotnaya Square in Moscow in response to electoral fraud in the parliamentary elections and the announcement of Putin's return to the Kremlin, could be interpreted by the Russian leader only as a challenge in both the internal and external dimensions.

From the Russian perspective therefore, the past fifteen years are nothing but a succession of Western interferences in the Eurasian space and contempt for Russia's attempts to seek a mutually satisfactory accommodation with the EU and NATO. Moscow's profound irritation is rooted in the perception that the West ignores its role as hegemonic regional power in the post-Soviet space. And, above all, the Kremlin is convinced that the West is implementing a strategy of regime change with geopolitical objectives that ultimately seek to usurp and break Russian power. These perceptions have led to the gradual hardening of Putin's regime both inward and outward. Since Putin has been in charge, the Russian narrative is about restoration of power not emergence.

The Charter of the United Nations states the principle of "sovereign equality of all its members", a principle endorsed by Russia. But when Moscow appeals to the "principle of security indivisibility", the implicit demand is the distinct recognition of its right to supervise and control its former Soviet neighbours as Russia's "*natural* area of influence". This use of the notion of 'natural', applied to the post-Soviet space as a ground for self-

[2] Russia Direct "For Russia, soft power doesn't have to mean being a softy", interview with Andrei Kortunov and Marina Lebedeva, 17 March 2014, http://www.russia-direct.org/qa/russia-soft-power-doesn%E2%80%99t-have-mean-being-softy.

explanatory legitimacy is recurrent in Russia's discourse: for instance, Evgeny Vinokurov, Director of the Centre for Integration Studies, Eurasian Development Bank, claims that Russia has a "natural leading role in its regional integration bloc"[3].

Thus the central question in the EU-Russia dialogue, although not explicit as such, is whether these former Soviet neighbours actually enjoy full freedom and sovereignty. Has Moscow the right to govern their strategic direction? Or are we back to Brezhnev's doctrine of "limited sovereignty"? Russian elites complain about the West lecturing them[4] but one would hardly find any self-criticism about Russia's arrogant attitudes towards the elites and the citizens of the former Soviet states which are supposed to be partners and peers... In many private conversations, Kyrgyz or Belarussian or Kazakh officials complain about Russian condescension when interacting with them.

Misinterpretation and misunderstandings can be a disputable matter. Yet some facts don't go away. Russia uses hard retaliation in its policy towards those of its former Soviet neighbours (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) that have annoyed the Kremlin: trade blockades, frozen conflicts, military occupation. But can anyone imagine the EU invading Armenia – or for that matter any other Eastern Partnership country – for not signing the Association Agreement in November 2013?

Respect and fear are two central and intertwined values in the Russian understanding of power. Illustrative, for instance, is how S. Karaganov exemplifies in a *Financial Times* article[5] the fact that "Russia is finding its place" in the world. Don't expect the case of a social or economic development achievement: just

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[3] E. Vinokurov, "EU-Russia Economic Relations: Looking Ten Years Ahead", *World Finance Review*, May 2014, pp. 12-13, http://www.worldfinancereview.com/2014/WFR_May_2014.pdf.

[4] F. Lukyanov, "The What-Not-To-Do List", *Berlin Policy Journal*, 27 April 2015, http://berlinpolicyjournal.com/the-what-not-to-do-list/.

[5] S. Karaganov, "Western delusions triggered conflict and Russians will not yield", *The Financial Times*, 14 September 2014, http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/05770494-3a93-11e4-bd08-00144feabdc0.html?siteedition=intl#axzz3DmKXi5G9.

"compare the Soviet armed forces, lumbering and expensive, with the nimble military of modern Russia". What else does the military parade in Moscow to commemorate on 9 May the World War II victory mean? What other message does Putin want to send to the world? *La grandeur* is back.

Ukraine and Russia have made their choice

The Ukrainian uprising is a product of home-grown developments and would have taken place mostly in the same way had the West supported it or not. Now Ukrainian citizens understand that their main fight is not military but political, the building of a sustainable democratic state. But the Kremlin's strategy consists precisely in preventing such an outcome from happening. The Russian president made this clear during his speech at the NATO summit in Bucharest (April 2008) when he put the focus on Georgia and Ukraine. He categorised the latter as a "complex state formation" whose move closer to the Atlantic organisation could, according to the Russian leader, "put the state on the verge of its existence".

None of the main foreign actors – the EU, the US and Russia – envisioned the scope and determination of the Ukrainian citizens' spontaneous mobilization. And in fact they have been quite slow to react. The EU had a few years of "Ukraine fatigue" albeit the signing of the association agreement in Vilnius was key due to the importance of Ukraine in the former Soviet Union and represented a milestone in a little buoyant neighbourhood policy. What the EU did not anticipate is the intensity of the Russian response. Meanwhile, for the United States, the task at that moment was to retreat from Europe and this crisis was not something that suited Washington. Neither for the US nor the EU, absorbed in their internal problems, has the Ukrainian crisis been timely.

Moscow could explain Maidan only by resorting to the action of an external factor, namely foreign interference (the European Union and the United States). In its viewpoint the events in Ukraine could not be the expression of any autonomous will of the

people: someone else had to be pulling the strings. The Kremlin's strategists managed to roll out a programme of disinformation that has gained traction even in the West. The three mantras of this strategy are: fascists and ultranationalists have carried out a coup d'état; this was achieved thanks to Western interference; and the rights, not to mention the physical safety, of Russian-speaking minorities are at risk. However the ultranationalists did not make their way to parliament, as the 2014 general elections showed, and the Russian language, which is also used by a large number of citizens who define themselves as Ukrainian, has never really been under threat in Ukraine. The glaring error of a proposal to derogate the 2012 law concerning the Russian language was reversed a few days later. In Ukraine, as in the majority of former Soviet states, Russian, Russian-speaking, and pro-Russian are three distinct realities that sometimes coincide, but often do not. As much as the Russian media and leadership may repeat it, the division in the country is neither ethnic nor linguistic, it is political.

Ukraine has been the testing ground of the Kremlin's resort to the Russian minorities in the former Soviet neighbourhood. Moscow considers all Russian speakers as their *compatriots*, a concept not included in the Russian Constitution[6]. But where it states that the Russian Federation "shall guarantee its citizens protection and patronage abroad" (Article 61.2), the Russian Foreign Policy Concept of February 2013[7] speaks of "Russian citizens and compatriots residing abroad" and of "Russia's approach to human right issues". The logic of this approach is thus *where my countrymen are I am in my right* and makes it possible to activate, when convenient, a mechanism supported by what Moscow defines as its "legitimate interests". On this foundation was built the strategy of the annexation of Crimea.

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[6] *The Constitution of the Russian Federation*, adopted on 12 December 1993, http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/articles/ConstMain.shtml.

[7] *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, Approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February 2013, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D.

The conflict with Ukraine is especially illustrative in this respect. None of the economic arguments put forward by the Kremlin regarding the harm that the signing of the DCFTA (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area) agreement by Kiev would imply for Russia actually have grounds, as many experts, even Russian, have substantiated. For example, Sergei Aleksashenko, a former Deputy Director of the Bank of Russia, explains that in fact "Ukraine could follow the example of Serbia, which is well on the way to becoming a member of the EU and has a free trade agreement with Russia. In reality, given a measure of political good will, the relationship between the DCFTA and CIS FTA can be adjusted to the benefit of both sides and especially of the three countries whose fortunes are most at stake in the tug of war between Russia and the EU"[8].

In an interview in November 2014, *Novaya Gazeta* asked Igor Yurgens whether there was any calculation of the consequences of

[8] S. Aleksashenko, *For Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia Free Trade with Europe and Russia is Possible*, 3 July 2014, http://carnegie.ru/eurasiaoutlook/?fa=56074.

the 'Crimea is ours' move and the interference in Ukrainian affairs and whether the economic price of such a move was considered. Yurgens, an influential policy adviser under Medvedev's presidency, answered with bitterness: "You asked me about the calculations? The calculation was as follows: "Pride is more important than bread". And so if we take Crimea then we will forget about the domestic problems, generate an upswing in public sentiment over the return of Crimea and Sevastopol – lands where Russian blood was spilled, where Tolstoj became Tolstoj and where Prince Vladimir was baptized. The calculations? Don't worry, we'll do them later, we have $500 billion in FX and gold reserves. Ukraine will fall apart. The West won't attack a nuclear superpower. We'll figure it out later"[9].

With Moscow's direct intervention in the war in Ukraine, Putin has managed to ensure that the latter's future lies, to a large extent, in his hands. But, by contrast, Russia's position in Ukraine and its strategic options in the rest of the post-Soviet space have been weakened. In Ukraine, the Kremlin seeks strategic control of the country or, at least, to secure the capacity to block its foreign policy in the case of an eventual coming together with the EU or NATO. In this sense, Donbas is just an instrument. The 'decentralisation' of Ukraine or the "national inclusive dialogue" arouses Putin's interest only because of this goal and not in terms of Ukrainian domestic policy. The Kremlin's ability to conceal its real objectives tends to profoundly distort the debates with and within the EU. The problem for Ukraine is that, until now, Donbas has been enough to force Kiev to accept the terms agreed in Minsk, but not to bend its will on maintaining its full sovereignty and freedom.

In fact, Moscow seems to be toying with the idea that Kiev's possible collapse, allied with Ukrainian disappointment at the lack of a solid deal with the EU, could end up changing the domestic political balance, leaving it more favourable to the Kremlin's

[9] I. Yurgens, "Развернуть страну назад невозможно" (It is impossible to turn the country back), *Novaya Gazeta*, 14 November 2014, http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/66099.html.

interests. But the Kremlin, conditioned by its cognitive biases, may be proven very wrong. In a foreseeable future, Ukraine is lost from the Eurasian Union project. In the eyes of a majority of Ukrainian citizens, the Russian military intervention has completely transformed the frame of reference of its relationship with Russia.

The EU's and Russia's inner weaknesses

The EU's main shortcoming lies in itself and more so within the member states, which have not been able to deploy a genuine Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and an EU energy policy. Thus much of the problem has come from its side since it has allowed Russia to take a reading very favourable to its own interests. The Kremlin, since Putin's arrival to power, has rightly understood that interdependence in the energy field tilts the balance in its favour and that it can count on the division of EU member states not only for weakening the EU as a global political power but also for offering Russia the possibility to legitimately reach the most convenient bilateral agreements. If member countries such as Germany or Italy are ready to play the game why should the EU criticize Russia for it?

Moreover, no issue has generated more divisions and controversy among and within the member states than Russia. For years – and in some cases up to now – some EU member states' political and economic elites didn't really shake off the inherited idea that Russia had special rights over Ukraine as elsewhere in the former Soviet area. This incapacity, of course, has not gone unnoticed in Moscow. The EU and its member states' reading of Russia have proven to be inaccurate. They remained in the comfort zone of a standard-shaped policy. They were too confident in the progressive 'Europeanization' of Russia through trade and cooperation relations while trying to annoy Moscow as little as possible on political and human rights issues. It is worth mentioning, for instance, that the Common Strategy of the

European Union on Russia[10], endorsed by the European Council in Cologne in June 1999, is the first initiative towards a third country that the EU launched after the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty. Tailoring for Russia the suit of a strategic partner without clearly addressing the substance that Moscow demanded has been nothing but a contribution to tying a Gordian knot.

The debates on Russia (and the Ukrainian crisis) within the EU are also affected by a great mix of interests, opposing visions, stereotypes and disinformation. In order to overhaul the EU's stance on Russia, there is a need for a better understanding of Moscow's objectives and strategic approaches as well as of its perceptions. But the very fact that the EU member states have been able – precisely in spite of their divisions and internal tussles – to adopt a strategy of sanctions despite being aware of the fact they would also hurt their economic interests is something that Moscow hardly expected.

Russia meanwhile is proud to be among the ascending stars of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) countries. But a growing number of economists, both Russian and foreign, considers that in terms of growth rate, productivity, and investment security, comparison with Brazil, India and China leaves Russia far behind. For instance, the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) figures of Russia's level of GDP per capita and productivity in 2014[11] show that it is below that of Greece, Portugal or Slovakia… Thus Russia's economic situation is far from what would be expected of a great power. The Western sanctions or the drop in oil prices are not – by far – the only explanation. They have only accelerated the deterioration. The main reason is structural and lies in the absence of a real structural reform of the economy.

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[10] Common Strategy of the European Union of 4 June 1999 on Russia (1999/414/CFSP), http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2003/november/tradoc_114137.pdf.

[11] OECD.StatExtracts, *Level of GDP per capita and productivity*, Data extracted on 10 May 2015, 10:13 UTC (GMT) from OECD.Stat, https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=PDB_LV.

A report by the Institute for Economic Forecasting of the Russian Academy of Sciences, published in June 2013, warned that a clear trend to plummeting rates of economic growth was recorded: the GDP grew by 1 per cent in the first quarter of 2013, well below the forecast of the Russian Ministry of Economic Development. It signalled further that

> over the past two decades production output grew mostly thanks to over-exploitation of existing enterprises rather than building new ones. As a result, "new capacities are often needed just to keep the existing production output and to prevent it falling down because of the accelerated depreciation of completely obsolete capital assets. […] In contemporary Russia conditions only high rates of production growth provide for modernization of and qualitative changes in the economy". Needed for these are massive innovations thirsty for large-scale and widespread investments which are practically unrealistic in a slowly growing transition economy[12].

In October 2014, the Russian Finance Minister warned about the impossibility of sustaining large military modernization plans[13]. Similarly, the highly respected Russian economist, Mikhail Dmitriyev, explains that 2014 "was the first year in the 21st century when the real incomes of Russians declined, and this trend will continue this year. January inflation was the highest since 1999" and "energy exports will continue to decline as a percentage of GDP"[14]. And he stressed how Putin's support defines itself in negative terms: "people can still approve of Putin, but the nature of the approval has shifted from positive motivation – approval of

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[12] Institute for Economic Forecasting, *The New Economic Policy – The Policy of Economic Growth*, Moscow 2013, http://russeurope.hypotheses.org/1411. Italics in the original.

[13] Reuters, *Finance minister warns Russia can't afford military spending plan*, 7 October 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/07/us-russia-economy-spending-defenceidUSKCN0HW1H420141007.

[14] M. Dmitriyev, "Predicting the Future with Russia's Economic Nostradamus", *The Moscow Times*, 18 March 2015, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/predicting-the-future-with-russias-economic-nostradamus/517659.html.

achievements – to negative: approval due to the perception of foreign threats".

The Russian economy stagnated in 2014 and the OECD predicts (January 2015) that in 2015 its GDP will contract by almost 5 per cent and the country will enter recession. Additionally the flight of capital ($151bn in 2014, far above 2013's $61bn) is the result of a climate of distrust and the European sanctions. The decrease in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the disruption of technology transfers should also be added to the mix. The improbable but necessary modernisation and diversification of the Russian economy will be even more difficult in a context of confrontation with the West.

The economic impact of the military intervention in Ukraine also raises the question of whether Putin's policy and actions are consistent with a clearly defined strategy. Having strong political will and firm convictions − Russia must be the hegemonic regional power and one of the leading poles in the global order − does not necessarily mean having a strategy − the adaptation of the means to achieve certain ends. Neither is it useful to confuse Putin's tactical ability for mastering the international political moment with a strategy − undoubtedly facilitated by his executive capacity (i.e., concentration of power) when compared with the complex European decision-making process.

The Kremlin's expectations of improving the economic situation seem now to rest on a turn towards China, symbolised by the bilateral agreement signed in May 2014. No doubt the strengthening of relations with China makes strategic sense. But the moment chosen, including the rush to close lengthy negotiations that had been underway for years, was due above all to Putin's interest in showing that he was not internationally isolated. In the best-case scenario, Russia/Gazprom will be exporting 38 billion cubic metres of gas a year to China by 2030. That is to say, about a third of what it exported to the European market in 2013 and, it is to be expected, at a notably lower price.

Another of Russia's structural weakness lies precisely in what appears to be its strength, which is the concentration of political

and economic power in the hands of the state and, in the last instance, in the hands of just one person and his inner circle. Putin's government has spawned a de-institutionalisation of the system which will end up undermining the country's ability to act within the complex structures of globalisation. Putin's era presents a discouraging balance: capitalism monopolized by a state that is not required to be accountable, institutions in name only – Justice in particular –, omnipresent corruption and a virtually feudal relationship between the ruler and the ruled. President Putin may now be at the acme of his popularity but how long will he be able to maintain this new national mobilization against the West if living standards deteriorate further?

What chances for coexistence

The EU engaging Russia through cooperation with the Eurasian Union (as Ivan Krastev and Mark Leonard suggest[15]) could be one good option, provided that the latter actually delivers and that internal conflicts among partners do not disrupt their integration process. Yet the chances for this to work out would be much stronger if Russia's main concern were actually grounded on economic development interests. But now, after Ukraine, this has to be proven and in the very first place to its own partners who have made evident that they are very sensitive about their own sovereignty, regardless of their similarities as political regimes.

The Eurasian Union project has been seriously weakened not only by the loss of Ukraine, but by the fears that Russian military intervention has raised in the other two key members, Belarus and Kazakhstan. According to the idea launched by Putin in October 2011, the project was inspired by other regional integration processes such as the European Union, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) or the Association of Southeast Asian

[15] I. Krastev, M. Leonard, *The New European Disorder*, European Council for Foreign Affairs, http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR117_TheNewEuropeanDisorder_ESSAY.pdf.

Nations (ASEAN) and aspired to be "an essential part of Greater Europe united by shared values of freedom, democracy, and market laws"[16]. However, in the light of the war in Ukraine, it has acquired a neo-imperialist, ethnic dimension that provokes uncertainty and a barely concealed fear in the other members. This largely explains the growing reluctance of Minsk and Astana to further deepen the process of integration and their rejection of any step that could include a political dimension. There is very serious concern in Minsk and Kazakhstan about the Kremlin's policy regarding territorial integrity and the use of the *russkiy mir* idea. Moreover it casts doubt on the validity of the formally recognised borders (1994 Memorandum of Budapest[17]). It is probably not by chance that the Belarussian president Lukashenko was not present at the main military parade in Moscow last 9 May.

Domestic political strategy, i.e. regime preservation, is the decisive factor for Putin's decisions – not rational choice, be it economic or security driven. While the nature of power in the Kremlin remains unchanged, the European Union must seriously revise its strategy towards Russia. What if a conflict arises between Belarus and Russia? What Dmitri Trenin wrote more than ten years ago still fully applies: "Russia's rapprochement with Europe is only in the second instance a foreign policy exercise. Its success or failure will primarily depend on the pace and depth of Russia's economic, political and societal transformation. Russia's 'entry into Europe' cannot be negotiated with Brussels. It has to be first 'made in Russia' itself"[18]. This will happen in the long run but this perspective should never be abandoned.

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16 Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, "A new integration project for Eurasia: The future in the making", *Izvestia*, 3 October 2011, http://www.russianmission.eu/en/news/article-prime-minister-vladimir-putin-new-integration-project-eurasia-future-making-izvestia-3-.

17 UN Document A/49/765, *Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/49/765.

18 D. Trenin, *A Russia within-Europe: Working towards a New Security Arrangement*, CEPS ESF Working Paper, no. 6, March 2002, http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=22252.

European unity, currently inseparable from the leadership of Chancellor Merkel, rests on fragile foundations and will be put to the test whether the Minsk truce fails or not. So within the framework of developing a new EU foreign policy strategy and the revision of the neighbourhood policy, including the Eastern Partnership, an in-depth discussion in Brussels on how to address relations with Russia and its neighbours becomes an urgent necessity. It would be wise not to repeat what in 1994 Peter van Hamm already identified as a serious mistake, namely the inclination of the Western governments to adopt a Moscow-centred approach and "with a few exceptions consider Soviet successor states in terms of those states' relations with Russia"[19].

A democratic Ukraine would be a denial of Putinism: it would demonstrate that there is no such thing as an Eastern Slavic specialness that endows with legitimacy a model of democracy specific to some Russian tradition. Hence supporting Ukraine in laying the ground for a functional and sustainable rule of law is also one of the more coherent ways to pave the ground for a democratic future for Russia and for a more stable European security order. The European Union has now acquired towards Ukraine a responsibility that was certainly not on its agenda, for all Russia's claims to the contrary. Business as usual is gone for a long time. Ukraine now is a key test for the EU's credibility in its European neighbourhood and for its ability to conceive a way to coexist and interact with contemporary Russia without losing its very *raison d'être*.

[19] P. van Ham, *Ukraine, Russia and European security: implications for Western policy*, Chaillot Paper, no. 13, 1 February 1994, http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/cp013e.pdf.

2. EU-Russia: What Went Wrong?

Aldo Ferrari

> According to the prevailing wisdom in the West, the Ukraine crisis can be blamed almost entirely on Russian aggression. […] But this account is wrong: the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis[1].

These words, written by a leading U.S. scholar, can be considered the necessary starting point for the resumption of relations between Russia and the West, particularly the EU. In fact the idea that the responsibility of the deterioration of these relations completely depends on Moscow appears largely groundless and affects not only the correct awareness of reality but above all the possibility of finding a way out. The resumption of political cooperation between Russia and the West (particularly the European Union) should begin with the understanding that the present-day Ukrainian crisis is the latest result of a deep and growing mutual misunderstanding. After the end of the USSR both Russia and the West have been disappointed in their hopes regarding the counterparty. Moscow expected that, after the ideological confrontation that characterized the Cold War, the West would have looked to Russia without suspicion, in a spirit of complete trust and strategic cooperation. Which is clearly not the case. On the other hand, Russia did not set itself on the path of

[1] J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin", Foreign Affairs, September/October 2004, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141769/john-j-mearsheimer/why-the-ukraine-crisis-is-the-wests-fault?cid=nlc-foreign_affairs_this_week-090414why_the_ukraine_crisis_is_the_5090414&sp_mid=46900441&sp_rid=YWxkby5mZXJyYXJpQHVuaXZlLml0S0.

effective Westernization of social and political life, remaining deeply affected by the Tsarist and Soviet legacy[2]. But, above all, the expansion of the European Union and NATO eastward occurred in stark contrast to the political will of Moscow[3], impacting very negatively on the development of relations between Russia and the West.

The EU and Russia after the collapse of the USSR

The idea proposed by Mikhail Gorbachev in the last years of the USSR of a "common European home" extended from the Atlantic to the Urals and based on the establishment of a new climate of trust soon proved illusory. In the early 1990s, under the leadership of President Yeltsin, the Russian Federation for a few years seemed to want a rapprochement with Western political and economic structures. Nevertheless the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, once regained their full sovereignty, were clearly wary of the post-Soviet Russia and firmly oriented towards the West. The EU and NATO supported this orientation and accepted them progressively between 1999 and 2004 (including the three Baltic States, which had been part of the USSR).

The pro-Western orientation was rapidly abandoned by Moscow, but produced some important steps. In particular, Russia intensified relations with Western countries and their organizations. In 1993 Russia developed with the EU the negotiations on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). This agreement was signed in June 1994, but came into force only in 1997. The agreement formalized regular political dialogue at various levels and promoted the legislative

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2 A. Moshes, *EU-Russia relations: unfortunate continuity*, Foundation Robert Schumann, European Issues, no. 129, 24 February 2009, http://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/questions-d-europe/qe-129-en.pdf.

3 And even with the promises, unwritten but explicit, made by Western leadership to Gorbachev at the end of the Soviet era. See S. Romano, *Ucraina, una crisi post-sovietica*, in A. Colombo, P. Magri (eds.), *In mezzo al guado. Scenari globali e l'Italia*, Rapporto ISPI 2015, http://www.ispionline.it/it/EBook/RapportoISPI2015.pdf, pp. 51-52.

convergence of Russia with the long-term goal of establishing a free trade area. In 2002 the EU recognized Russia the status of a 'market economy', a step that strengthened the candidacy of the country to the World Trade Organization (WTO)[4].

In this period, under the two consecutive presidencies of Vladimir Putin, Russia returned to play a leading role in the international system through the internal stabilization and consistent economic growth, however largely depending on the high price of oil. Moreover, economic integration and interdependence between Russia and the EU had grown considerably. Russia is currently the third largest trading partner of the EU after the United States and China.

According to data from the Russian Federal Statistics Service, in 2013 EU Member States accounted for 57 per cent of Russian exports and 46.5 per cent of Russian imports, making the Union by far Russia's most significant trading partner. In turn, Russia is the EU's third largest trading partner, accounting for 9.5 per cent of EU trade. A number of Europe's largest economies continue to have significant bilateral trade with Russia, with the Netherlands ($52.1bn), Germany ($46.7bn), and Italy ($34.3bn) reporting the largest trade volumes in the first half of 2014[5].

Therefore, the prospects of cooperation between the EU and Russia are extremely promising, but at the same time affected by elements of mutual distrust and misunderstanding.

The European expansion eastward

Despite a steady increase in economic cooperation, Russia and the EU have shown so far divergent political views, in particular with

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[4] S. Giusti, *Europa e Russia/1. Perché è così difficile capirsi*, in A. Ferrari (ed.), *Oltre la Crimea. Russia contro Europa?*, ISPI, Milano 2014, pp. 72-73, http://www.ispionline.it/it/EBook/OltreLaCrimea.pdf.

[5] House of Lords, European Union Committee 6th Report of Session 2014-15, *The EU and Russia: before and beyond the crisis in Ukraine*, Hl Paper 115, 20 February 2015, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201415/ldselect/ldeucom/115/115.pdf.

regard to the reorganization of the Eastern European and Southern Caucasus countries of the post-Soviet space. Since the end of the USSR, the European Union – in concert with the United States and NATO – has in fact pursued a policy of political and military expansion eastward that Moscow has always considered threatening and unjustified in light of the absence of the ideological and strategic danger previously constituted by the Communist system[6]. In fact, since the end of the USSR Western policy toward Russia has seen at the same time the establishment of forms of dialogue with the activation of a new containment strategy. A policy strongly influenced by the perception of the US strategic need to avoid "the reemergence of a Eurasian empire that could obstruct the American geostrategic goal"[7]. A decisive moment in this process was the enlargement in 2004, the largest single expansion of the European Union, which involved four countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) that had been members of the Warsaw Pac, as well as the three Baltic republics (Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia). All these countries (with Romania and Bulgaria) were already members of NATO, a military alliance created to deal with the Soviet Union and that Moscow perceives as a threat for its national security. We should not forget that the enlargement of the EU is closely linked with the expansion of NATO. And this not only in the Russian perception. As written by John Mearsheimer, "The taproot of the trouble is NATO enlargement, the central element of a larger strategy to move Ukraine out of Russia's orbit and integrate it into the West. At the same time, the EU's expansion eastward and the West's backing of the pro-democracy movement in Ukraine – beginning with the Orange Revolution in 2004 – were critical elements, too"[8]. Of course Mearsheimer's stance is not shared by the

[6] For the Russian interpretation of this expansion in the first post-Soviet decade see S. Rogov, M. Nossov, *La Russia e l'allargamento della NATO*, in M. de Leonardis (ed.), *La nuova NATO: i membri, le strutture, i compiti*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2001, pp. 183-202.
[7] Z. Brzeziński, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York 1997, p. 87.
[8] J. Mearsheimer (2004).

majority of Western observers, but his political realism is very appropriate in such a complicated situation.

Besides, after the great enlargement of 2004, the EU had stepped up its expansion in the post-Soviet space through the project of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). This project is born in 2004, with the strategic objective to unite under a single set the post-Soviet countries that have become 'new neighbors' of the EU (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus). The European Commission has always said it wants to develop the ENP in parallel with the strategic partnership with Moscow, but failed to persuade Russia. Also because of the start of the ENP coincided with the so-called 'color revolutions', which involved two of these countries, namely Georgia and Ukraine, and raised serious concerns in Russia[9]. Moscow, in fact, accused the West of the organization of these regime changes, fearing to be involved. Therefore, Russia began to vigorously confront the whole process of expansion eastward of the EU, considered as substantially aggressive. Moscow seemed completely unable to understand that its political and economic model appears scarcely attractive for many countries of former USSR, namely Moldova, Georgia and in a certain measure Ukraine. This is indeed the main obstacle for the Russian projects of reconstruction of post-Soviet space.

The following years saw then a progressive increase in political misunderstandings between Russia and the EU. The strengthening of the ENP through the so-called Eastern Partnership (EaP) has helped to deepen this misunderstanding. The EaP stems from a joint Polish-Swedish proposal of June 2008 to improve relations with the neighboring countries of Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Southern Mediterranean. Given the traditional anti-Russian stance of Poland and Sweden, Russian suspicions that EaP aims at definitively removing from Moscow the countries of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus cannot be considered groundless.

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[9] D. Ó Beacháin, A. Polese, *The Colour Revolutions in the Former Soviet Republics: Successes and failures*, Routledge, Oxford-New York, 2010.

As Mearsheimer noted,

> The EU, too, has been marching eastward. In May 2008, it unveiled its Eastern Partnership initiative, a program to foster prosperity in such countries as Ukraine and integrate them into the EU economy. Not surprisingly, Russian leaders view the plan as hostile to their country's interests. This past February, before Viktor Yanukovych was forced to flee, Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, accused the EU of trying to create a 'sphere of influence' in eastern Europe. In the eyes of Russian leaders, EU expansion is a Trojan horse for NATO expansion[10].

In 2008 the decision of some European countries (among them France, Great Britain, Germany and Italy) to recognize the independence of Kosovo was strongly opposed by Moscow, worried about the possible consequences on Caucasian secessionism. Then, at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008, the United States proposed, with the support of Poland and Great Britain, the opening of the Membership Action Plan to Ukraine and Georgia. Some major countries of 'old Europe' – especially Germany and France, but also Italy and Spain – succeeded in preventing this dangerous step.

In the aftermath of this summit Anatol Lieven observed that the Bush administration's push for an immediate offer of a NATO membership action plan to Georgia and Ukraine at the NATO summit in Bucharest has been blocked, which is good […] it is hard to see what conceivable rational calculation could support the extension of NATO membership to two new countries, one of them (Georgia) involved in unsolved civil war, and the other (Ukraine) with a population a large majority of which *opposes* NATO membership. And this is called 'spreading democracy'?[11].

The question of NATO expansion eastwards was aggravated by the fact that in 2008 Poland and the Czech Republic agreed to the request to host on their territories the US anti-missile system. The worst moment of the relationship between Russia and the EU (as

[10] J. Mearsheimer (2004).

[11] A. Lieven, "Three Faces of Infantilism: NATO's Bucharest Summit", in *National Interest*, 4 April 2008, http://www.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=17298.

well as the US) before today's Ukrainian crisis was reached in August 2008, with the short but dangerous Russian-Georgian war. At the end of the conflict, Russia recognized the breakaway republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, this way contradicting its previous policy of rejection of all forms of political separatism. The Russian-Georgian war of August was indeed "… the largest crisis to date in Russia's relationship with the West; some have even come to realize that the Georgian war of 2008 may be the most significant challenge to European Security since the Cold War's end"[12].

Russia and the post-Soviet space

From the Russian point of view, the key feature of the first post-Soviet decade has been the persistent and largely successful attempt by the United States and the European Union to penetrate inside the geopolitical vacuum created by the collapse of the USSR. At least since 1993, Moscow has consistently challenged this policy of western expansion, opposing a quite different vision, stating its specific interests and priorities, claiming in particular: a) the functions of peacekeeping and defense of national minorities, in particular Russian-speaking, throughout the so called 'near abroad'[13]; b) the maintenance of stability in the entire territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the formation of a band of security along the Russian borders; c) a special role within the CIS[14].

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12 S.E. Cornell, J. Popjanevski, N. Nilsson, *Russia's War in Georgia: Causes and Implications for Georgia and the World*, Policy Paper, August 2008, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Study Program, http://www.silkroadstudies.org/resources/pdf/SilkRoadPapers/2008_08_PP_CornellPopjanevski_Nilson_Russia-Georgia.pdf.

13 M. Rywkin, "Russia and the Near Abroad Under Putin", *American Foreign Policy Interests*, no. 25, 2003, pp. 3-12; A. Kortunov, *Russia and the Near Abroad: Looking for a Model Relationship*, National Defense University, 1999, http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Books/Books_1999/US Russian Partnership July 99/usrp7.html.

14 D. Danilov, *Russia's Search for an International Mandate in Transcaucasia*, in B. Coppetiers (ed.), *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, Bruxelles, 1995, http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/contents.htm.

During the first decade after the fall of USSR Russia could not, however, oppose the expansion eastwards of the EU and NATO, which led to the insertion in those structures of almost all the satellite countries of the former communist bloc and the three Baltic that had been part of the USSR. The economic and political strengthening under Putin's leadership did not change the strategic direction and the interests of Moscow, but Russia could become more assertive. The guiding principle of the Russian policy is the notion of a 'privileged sphere' of influence in the post-Soviet space, often called Eurasia. It is clear that the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe – Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus – but also the three South Caucasus republics (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), are the main object of geopolitical contention between Russia and the European Union, while those of Central Asia respond to other dynamics. According to Moscow the EaP is in fact a strategy to co-opt the ex-Soviet republics in the European area. This results in a real competition for control of the post-Soviet space between the European project and the Russian one.

Russia definitely intends to preserve its influence on the same countries where the EU wants to spread its system of values. Moscow has indeed a multipolar vision of the international system in which each pole should be able to lead the surrounding area both through the soft power (culture, language, common history) and coercive instruments up to armed intervention, as seen in Georgia in 2008[15].

Already in 2006, for example, the important analyst Vladimir Degoev had written:

> The West should know that Russia has and will always have some vital interests in the South Caucasus [...] There are also historical and geographical circumstances that do not allow Russia to be indifferent to what happens in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. In any case, the United States and Europe will understand of what we speak [...]. In principle, both Russia and the West have the same objective in the South Caucasus, namely the achievement of peace, stability and well-being [...]. However

[15] S. Giusti, *La Proiezione esterna della Federazione Russa*, Pisa, ETS, 2012, pp. 83-108.

> there is a paradox: if in the Caucasus Russia will have as southern neighbors the European Union and NATO, then in this region there will never be the hoped peace[16].

These words – brutal but clear, referring to the South Caucasus, but applicable to the whole Near Abroad – effectively show the very assertive attitude of Russia against the expansion eastwards of both NATO and EU. The Russian-Georgian war has clearly demonstrated that Moscow is ready to use force to maintain control over its sphere of influence. In this sense what happened in Ukraine was entirely predictable. The former Soviet space embodies for Russia a significant part of its historical identity and strategic perspective; therefore the conflict about the EaP appears inevitable. In fact post-Soviet Russia has been engaged for years in the creation of several organizations in part inspired by those of the West. This path of institutionalization began soon after the dissolution of the USSR with the creation of the CIS that in reality has always been less than effective. The formal involvement of the former Soviet republics in a common sphere of security is based on the Collective Security Treaty (1992), which was followed by the creation in 2002 of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which includes Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (since 2006). In the economic sphere the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) has been founded in 2000. As a matter of fact Moscow uses its weight to induce other post-Soviet countries to join these organizations on a certainly not egalitarian basis.

Between Georgia and Ukraine

After the serious crisis caused by the Russian-Georgian war, the tension between Brussels and Moscow seemed to diminish, also

[16] V. Degoev, *Rossija, Kavkaz i post-sovetskij mir* [*Russia, the Caucasus and Post-Soviet world*], Russkaja panorama, Moskva, 2006, pp. 245-246.

thanks to the so-called *reset* in the relations between the US and Russia following the election of Barack Obama[17].

In those years the Russian recognition of the responsibility of the Soviet Union in the Katyn massacre contributed to the partial improvement of relations with Poland, which has an important role in European policy towards Moscow. Moreover, the economic crisis pushed the EU to preserve the important ties with a strategic partner like Russia

Despite this partial improvement, some fundamental differences still remained in the years between the Georgian and Ukrainian crises. Russia sees EU as a largely disorganized political construction. For this reason Moscow continues to favor bilateral relations with individual EU member states and is accused of practicing against EU a classical policy of "divide and rule". It is a consideration at least partially correct, although in reality Moscow merely exploits the divisions existing among European member states.

To fully understand the evolution of relations between the EU and Russia we should also consider the growing distance in terms of values. In addition to the geopolitical contrast in recent years Russia is in fact becoming a kind of conservative pole opposed to most recent European social and legal developments.

Even before the crisis in Ukraine Putin had clearly indicated the gap with the West in terms of values while launching a conservative ideological campaign. Some observers have even referred to a 'cultural war' by Putin[18], which had an important point in the speech made by the Russian president on 19 September at the final plenary meeting of the Valdai Club, the international forum that brings together politicians, Russian analysts and civil society from Russia and abroad. On this occasion, as well as tackling a series of specifically political

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[17] M. Del Pero, *Usa-Russia: dal "reset" a una nuova Guerra fredda?*, in A. Ferrari (ed.), *Oltre la Crimea. Russia contro Europa?*, ISPI, Milano 2014, p. 72-73, http://www.ispionline.it/it/EBook/OltreLaCrimea.pdf.

[18] Cf. D. Clark, *Vladimir Putin's culture war*, 8 September 2013, http://www.russiafoundation.org/blog/blog/vladimir-putin%E2%80%99s-culture-war.

topics, Putin also spoke about themes with a social and even a moral dimension: "We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilisation. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious and even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan"[19].

Putin reiterated many similar arguments also in the speech to the Federal Assembly on 12 December 2013, which contains these significant words:

> We know that there are more and more people in the world who support our position on defending traditional values that have made up the spiritual and moral foundation of civilisation in every nation for thousands of years: the values of traditional families, real human life, including religious life, not just material existence but also spirituality, the values of humanism and global diversity. Of course, this is a conservative position. But speaking in the words of Nikolai Berdyaev, the point of conservatism is not that it prevents movement forward and upward, but that it prevents movement backward and downward, into chaotic darkness and a return to a primitive state[20].

On the basis of these indications the discussed Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky drafted a document entitled *Materials and proposals for a project of the bases of a cultural policy of the state*, which can be considered a kind of document of the new ideological orientation of Putin's Russia. This document rejects, for example, the western principles of multiculturalism and tolerance.

> Without denying the right of any nation to preserve its ethnographic identity, we consider unacceptable the imposition of values alien to the Russian society. No reference to 'creative freedom' and 'national identity' cannot justify a behavior

[19] Vladimir Putin Meets with Members the Valdai International Discussion Club. Transcript of the Speech and Beginning of the Meeting, http://valdaiclub.com/politics/62880.html.
[20] http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/19825.

> unacceptable from the point of view of Russian traditional values. [...] At the same time, the term 'tolerance' in its modern sense does not allow a clear separation between the racial, ethnic and religious intolerance and intolerance to social phenomena that are alien and dangerous from the point of view of Russian society and its inherent values, which leads to inappropriate use of the term 'tolerance' for the purposes of state cultural policy[21].

This ideological line is not shared by a large part of Russian public opinion[22] and puts Russia in growing contrast with Europe and the United States, as demonstrated by the decision of many Western leaders to boycott the Sochi Winter Olympic Games took place in early February 2014.

As a matter of fact, such a conservative evolution increased the gap between Russia and the European Union, but the contrast on the political evolution of the post-Soviet countries remains the more controversial issue. The EaP has continued to develop with ever more ambitious goals, in particular as far as concerns the creation of a free trade area through an Association Agreement. This project, is clearly not welcome by Moscow. Already during the press conference at the conclusion of the EU-Russia Summit in Khabarovsk (May 2009) Russian President, Dmitrij Medvedev, made clear his doubts: "But, frankly speaking, what embarrasses me is the fact that some states view this partnership as a partnership against Russia […] I don't mean, of course, the EU leadership and our partners that sit at this table. I am talking about other states, but we don't want the Eastern Partnership to turn into a partnership against Russia"[23].

But, above all, in the years of his third term as president Putin has stepped up very assertive efforts to re-composition of the post-Soviet space. This economic and political reconstruction shaping

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21 http://stdrf.ru/media/cms_page_media/127/kultpolitika.pdf.

22 L. Ševcova, *Valdajskaja doktrina Putina* [*Putin's Valdai Doctrine*], http://carnegie.ru/2013/09/23/go3d; A. Ferrari, *A New Struggle Between Power and Culture in Russia*, ISPI Analysis no. 231, February 2014, http://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/new-struggle-between-power-and-culture-russia-9758.

23 A. Lobjakas, At EU-Russia Summit, Signs Of Strategic Division, Not Strategic Partnership, 22 May 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/At_EURussia_Summit_Signs_Of_Strategic_Division_Not_Strategic_Partnership/1737474.html.

is based primarily on the Eurasian Customs Union (EACU), established in 2010 by Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus[24]. Behind the Eurasian Customs Union is foreshadowed a more ambitious project, which aims not only to strengthen economic ties between the members, but also to promote a future political integration. In fact, the link between economics and politics is very strong in the projects of Eurasian reconstruction and in recent years Moscow has exerted strong pressure on other countries to get them to participate. Because of its delicate geopolitical situation Armenia agreed to join the Eurasian Customs Union already in September 2013[25]. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are also subjected to similar pressure, but just like Armenia they have a relative political and economic importance. The decisive match for the success of the Eurasian project was played instead in Ukraine. Without this country the European dimension of this project would be insufficient. Ukraine is in fact the main bone of contention between the EU and Russia in their respective political projection.

The pressure to extend the Eurasian Customs Union to Ukraine were exercised from Moscow just at the moment when the EU offered this country the Association Agreement. Therefore, the Ukrainian crisis was perfectly predictable and could have been avoided with a more prudent policy. As noted by Henry Kissinger,

> The West must understand that, to Russia, Ukraine can never be just a foreign country. Russian history began in what was called Kievan-Rus. The Russian religion spread from there. Ukraine has been part of Russia for centuries, and their histories were intertwined before then. Some of the most important battles for Russian freedom, starting with the Battle of Poltava in 1709, were fought on Ukrainian soil. The Black Sea Fleet – Russia's means of projecting power in the Mediterranean – is based by long-term lease in Sevastopol, in Crimea. Even such famed dissidents as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Joseph Brodsky

[24] A. Ferrari, L'Unione Eurasiatica. Slogan o progetto strategico?, ISPI Analisys no. 149, January 2013, http://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/analysis_149_2013.pdf.

[25] Cf. N. Gegelashvili, The Vilnius Summit: Armenian Dimension, 17 December 2013, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=2859#top.

> insisted that Ukraine was an integral part of Russian history and, indeed, of Russia[26].

Although it is doubtful that the subordination to the domestic politics can be considered the main basis of the EU stance towards Ukraine, Kissinger's demand for more realistic and concrete priorities certainly looks sharable.

Conclusion and policy implications

For over twenty years Russia and the European Union have had very different and substantially conflicting strategies towards the post-Soviet Eastern Europe and South Caucasus countries. The European vision of its own non-aggressive expansion eastwards is not shared by Moscow, while Europe does not accept the Russian will to maintain some form of control over the post-Soviet territories. The different assessment of the 'color revolutions', the contrast on the missile installations in Eastern Europe, the Russian-Georgian conflict in August 2008, the opposing political project regarding post-Soviet states gradually strengthened a sharp contrast that exploded at the end of 2013 in Ukraine.

Despite the growing economic interdependence, the EU and Russia have not so far been able to find lasting forms of political understanding based on the real acceptance of differences in interests and values. The competition for the post-Soviet space represents the most serious threat to the further development of the partnership between Brussels and Moscow, which is of paramount importance to both. As a matter of fact the severity of the Ukraine crisis imposes a profound rethinking of the relationship between the EU and Russia.

The future of the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus should be defined with a much more shared involvement of all the interested actors. In particular, the EU

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[26] "Henry Kissinger: To settle the Ukraine crisis, start at the end", *The Washington Post*, 5 March 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/henry-kissinger-to-settle-the-ukraine-crisis-start-at-the-end/2014/03/05/46dad868-a496-11e3-8466-d34c451760b9_story.html.

should take a deep reflection on its strategy towards the Eastern Partnership and consider more carefully the consequences of some delicate political decisions. In the post-Soviet countries the weight of history and the determination of Russia to defend its interests must be seriously taken into account.

On the other hand, despite the strategic relevance of the acquisition of the Crimea and the high internal consensus, Russia should feel strongly motivated to get out of this situation of political isolation and progressive economic decline. As a matter of fact Moscow needs to recover and expand its partnership with Europe and the West. The Eastern alternative is in fact dangerous for the Russians, no less than for us.

Therefore, however hard it may seem, the European political project and the Russian one must be complementary, not opposed. For the good of the involved countries, but also for the recovery and consolidation of the Russian-European strategic relations.

3. After Maidan: Re-Starting NATO-Russia Relations

Luca Ratti

This chapter discusses NATO-Russia relations in the wider context of the post-Cold War European security debate. While evaluating the causes of their progressive deterioration, it also sets out a few basic suggestions towards an improvement in mutual understanding. The chapter argues that, while as a result of the 2013 Euromaidan revolution, relations between the alliance and Moscow reached their post-Cold War nadir, the current dispute is only the latest chapter of a crisis that began in the early 2000s, when calls for NATO's enlargement to former Soviet bloc states and the 'color revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan exposed unresolved strategic differences between the West and Moscow. Nonetheless, its more distant origins have to be found in the nature of the 1989-1990 East-West settlement that left unclarified the role of the Soviet Union and of its successor states, thus generating reciprocal diffidence and conflicting perceptions of the post-Cold War European security architecture.

The tension between the Atlantic Alliance and Russia that was triggered by the Maidan demonstrations in Kiev is the latest outburst of a protracted strategic dispute between the West and Moscow. The causes of this dispute can be found in the former Soviet space's unresolved collocation in the European security architecture. This issue was not addressed in the settlement that between 1989 and 1990 brought the Cold War to an end: while following the demise of the East-West division the alliance called for the creation of a Europe that is 'whole and free' and attempted to engage Moscow, those efforts were not backed by a

comprehensive clarification of the former Soviet space's collocation within the European security order, giving NATO-Russia relations a schizophrenic character. Although the descent into a new Cold War is not a foregone conclusion, the current crisis proves that, without a solution to this fundamental issue, the alliance and Moscow might continue to drift apart. While the European Union appears unable to play any meaningful role in the current strategic setting, the alliance retains a powerful incentive to rediscover the mantra of the 1967 Harmel Report and to engage Moscow in comprehensive negotiations about a shattered post-Cold War security architecture.

The roots of NATO-Russia grievances (1989-1991)

Relations between NATO and Russia plummeted in the aftermath of the 2013 Euromaidan revolution in Kiev with the Russian Federation rapidly securing control of Crimea and a violent armed conflict between Russian-backed separatists and the new Ukrainian government erupting in the mineral-rich Donbass region. Although after the collapse of the first Minsk protocol of September 2014, the second Minsk agreement of February 2015 temporarily succeeded in bringing hostilities in Eastern Ukraine to an end, Moscow's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and increasing support for separatist forces in the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics during the spring and the summer confirmed that the former Soviet space's collocation in the European political order has become a fundamental source of contention between the alliance and the Kremlin to enforce conflicting strategic visions on issues that were left unresolved after the demise of the East-West division. More specifically, these events are the latest manifestations of an underlying tension which first erupted in the early 2000s, when a wave of protests in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, together with Washington's calls for NATO's ongoing enlargement to the former Soviet space, were viewed in Moscow as a betrayal of commitments that the West had undertaken in 1989-1990.

Then, as the Federal Republic of Germany pressed with American support for a fast-track towards unification – following chancellor Helmut Kohl's abrupt announcement at the end of November 1989 of a ten-point programme towards the creation of confederative structures in Germany – Soviet leaders called for the establishment of new European institutions from the Atlantic to the Urals and for the creation of a "common European home" that would overcome the continent's division, while containing a reunited German state[1]. While striking a chord with Britain and France and with part of the West German government, particularly Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher, the Kremlin's proposals were rejected by the United States, which perceived a pan-European institution as too preponderant for securing a multilateral governance of Germany and the preservation of the transatlantic link. By contrast, Washington, with the Federal government's support, demanded Moscow's consent to a united Germany's unrestricted membership in NATO, while providing the Kremlin with vague assurances that the alliance's jurisdiction would not be shifted eastward from its present position[2]. As

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[1] On Moscow's common European vision see N. Malcolm, "The 'Common European Home' and Soviet European Policy", *International Affairs*, vol. 65, no. 4, Autumn 1989, pp. 659-676. See also H. Adomeit, "*East Germany: NATO's First Eastward Enlargement*", in A. Bebler (ed.), *NATO at 60: The Post-Cold War Enlargement and the Alliance's Future*, Fairfax, IOS Press, 2010, p. 17; R.T. Gray, S. Wilke (eds.), *German Unification and Its Discontents: Documents from the Peaceful Revolution*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1996, p. xlvii.

[2] M.E. Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 107-111, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/30/opinion/30sarotte.html?pagewanted=all. Of the same author see also "Not One Inch Eastward? Bush, Baker, Kohl, Genscher, Gorbachev, and the Origin of Russian Resentment toward NATO Enlargement in February 1990", *Diplomatic History*, vol. 34, no. 1, January 2010, pp. 119-140; "A Broken Promise? What the West Told Moscow About NATO Expansion in 1990", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 5, September/October 2014, pp. 90-97; and "Enlarging NATO, Expanding Confusion", *The New York Times*, 30 November 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/30/opinion/30sarotte.html?pagewanted=all. For a similar account see J.M. Goldgeier, *Not Whether But when: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO,* Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 1999, p. 15. See also P.K. Hämäläinen, *Uniting Germany: Actions and Reactions,* Boulder, Co., Westview Press, 1994, pp. 114-116. See also G.H.W. Bush, B. Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1998, pp. 240-242.

suggested by then NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner, Germany would remain a full member of the alliance and of its military structure, while a special military status would be granted to the former GDR's territory without leading to its neutralization or demilitarization[3]. Whereas between February and July 1990 American and Soviet diplomacy endeavored to strike a difficult compromise about Germany's international collocation, neither the United States nor the other members of the Atlantic Alliance ever undertook legally binding commitments not to invite new members; nonetheless, the negotiations held between February and July 1990 – more specifically the talks between U.S. Secretary of State James Baker III and Kohl with the Soviet leadership in Moscow in February 1990, Baker's second visit to Moscow in May, the meetings between President George H.W. Bush and Michael Gorbachev in Washington and Camp David between the end of May and early June, and Kohl's visit to Moscow and Stavropol in July 1990 – were ripe with mixed messages and diplomatic ambiguities. Soviet leaders were induced to believe that the alliance would not expand eastward, although they repeatedly failed to secure a written commitment from the United States, the West German government, and the other NATO members[4]. As the alliance embraced enlargement in the early 1990s, the volatile nature of those agreements planted the seeds of mutual grievances, reinforcing conflicting perceptions of the events leading up to the demise of the East-West division and of the post-Cold War European order. Since then, Russian leaders have held the view that the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its 380,000 troops from the GDR and allowed Germany to unify in return for a clear Western pledge that the alliance would not expand eastwards, while the West claims that the settlement of 1989-1990 only addressed Germany's role within the alliance and

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[3] P. Zelikov, C. Rice, *Germany Unified* and *Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 176-177, 180-184, 186-187, and 195-196.

[4] In May 1990, while Gorbachev told Baker that in the case of the alliance's radical transformation Moscow would propose to join NATO, the foreign secretary replied dismissively that a pan-European security institution was "an excellent dream, but only a dream". Quoted in M.E. Sarotte (2009), p. 164.

did not extend to the countries of Eastern Europe and former Soviet republics or involve their formal commitment to remain outside of NATO. As Taubman and Savranskaya have pointed out, the tragic outcome of those negotiations was German unification within NATO and the deepening of a 'common European home' with no place for the Soviet Union or its successor[5].

The missed opportunities for reconciliation (1992-2002)

As a result of the settlement that unified Germany and terminated the Cold War, during the 1990s efforts at revitalizing NATO and asserting its post-Cold War relevance were perceived in Russia, with a few exceptions, as endeavours that would perpetuate fault lines in Europe. Whereas in 1993 then Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev stated that Russia sees NATO members as natural friends and future allies and although NATO undertook a number of initiatives to assuage the Kremlin's concerns, such as Moscow's inclusion in the Partnership for Peace Program (PFP) in 1994, those endeavours failed to overcome Russian misgivings[6]. By contrast, Russian elites viewed with suspicion the alliance's eastern enlargement and in the early 1990s attempted to preserve a degree of influence on the former Soviet space through the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Furthermore,

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[5] W. Taubman, S. Savranskaya, "If a Wall Fell in Berlin, and Moscow Hardly Noticed, Would it Still Make a Noise?", in J.A. Engel (ed.), *The Fall of the Berlin Wall: The Revolutionary Legacy of 1989*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 69-95. For an extensive account of Gorbachev's pan-European vision see also S. Savranskaya, "The Logic of 1989: The Soviet Peaceful Withdrawal from Eastern Europe", in *S*. Savranskaya, T. Blanton, V. Zubok (eds.), *Masterpieces of History: The Soviet Peaceful Withdrawal from Eastern Europe, 1989*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2009, pp. 1-47.

[6] A. Kozyrev, "The new Russia and the Atlantic Alliance", *NATO Review*, vol. 41, no. 1, February 1993, pp. 3-6. In his message to the first meeting of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992, Kozyrev had stated: "we do not want to raise the problem of Russia's accession to NATO but we are ready to look into this as a long-term political goal". A. Kozyrev, "A Tranformed Russia", *International Affairs* (Moskva), vol. 39, no.4, 1992, p. 86.

Moscow's engagement with the alliance remained half-hearted, while Russian leaders displayed little interest, or indeed capacity in undertaking defense reforms in accordance with NATO norms, or in developing interoperability with alliance's forces[7]. The European Union, undermined by its inability to provide a concerted response to the Bosnian war in the aftermath of the signing of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, could also do little to bridge the gap in mutual perceptions. In light of persisting uncertainty about the post-Soviet space's collocation in the new European security order cooperation was established in a number of areas, while fundamental strategic differences remained unresolved. The outcome was that throughout the 1990s NATO-Russia relations displayed a schizophrenic character: although Russian troops participated in the alliance's peacekeeping involvement in Bosnia, the Kremlin feared that the main U.S. objective remained crippling Russia's strategic potential and ensuring it could not recover quickly. As a result, Moscow questioned its partnership with the alliance – equating its association with the Western security community with a renunciation of its great power status – and attempted to promote OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) as an alternative to NATO's premier role in Europe. Successive attempts to re-discuss the post-Cold War settlement, such as the 1997 Founding Act on Mutual Relations and the creation of the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC), failed to resolve mutual differences, continuing to leave un-clarified the former Soviet space's collocation within the post-Cold War European security architecture[8]. The eruption of the Kosovo crisis in 1999 crudely exposed the limits of the settlement reached ten years earlier: the Kremlin opposed NATO's military campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and, although the Rambouillet agreement that the alliance negotiated with the Serbian leadership

[7] T. Forsberg, G. Herd, "Russia and NATO: From Windows of Opportunities to Closed Doors", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, vol. 23, no.1, 2015, p. 44.

[8] The text of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act is available at http://www.nato.int/nrc-website/media/59451/1997_nato_russia_founding_act.pdf.

allowed for the participation of Russian forces in the KFOR (Kosovo Force) mission, an escalation of the crisis was barely avoided when Russian troops suddenly gained control of Pristina airport in June 1999 ahead of the alliance[9]. While the airport standoff was emblematic of the schizophrenic character of NATO-Russia relations – with Moscow cooperating with the alliance after supporting the Milosevic regime – the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, shifting Western security concerns outside of the Euro-Atlantic area, temporarily strengthened NATO's incentive to cooperate with Moscow and to give it an institutional character[10]. The Kremlin, too, had its own reasons for deepening relations with the alliance. Two costly counterinsurgency campaigns in Chechnya, continuing instability along its Caucasian and Central Asian borders, and Russia's own experiences with Islamic terrorism – particularly the wave of attacks on major Russian cities that began in 2002 and culminated in the Beslan school hostage crisis in 2004 – reinforced Moscow's interest in cooperation with NATO[11]. While continuing to antagonize the alliance, Russia displayed a readiness to cooperate in areas of mutual interest and sought legitimacy for counter-insurgency operations in the Caucasus: although remaining wary of NATO's open door policy, the Kremlin allowed American forces to use Russian air space for operations in Afghanistan and tolerated the creation of U.S. bases in Central Asia. In May 2002, following President Vladimir Putin's visit in November 2001 to Washington and Crawford, Russia was rewarded with formal association with the alliance through the signing of the Pratica di Mare agreements, which established the NATO-Russia Council (NRC). The NRC replaced the PJC, envisaging a mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision and action, where

[9] R. Brannon, *Russian Civil-Military Relations*, Burlington, Ashgate, 2009, pp. 73-98.
[10] L. Ratti, "NATO-Russia Relations after 9/11: New Challenges, Old Issues", in E. Hallams, L. Ratti, B. Zyla (eds.), *NATO beyond 9/11: The Transformation of the Atlantic Alliance*, Basingstoke, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 259.
[11] D. Lynch, "'The enemy is at the gate': Russia after Beslan", *International Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 1, January 2005, p. 141.

NATO members and Russia would work as equal partners on a wide spectrum of security issues[12]. Counterterrorism was identified as a major terrain of cooperation, together with the development of joint initiatives, including crisis management, peacekeeping, air defense, joint exercises, and search-and-rescue operations[13]. The NRC organized unprecedented joint assessments of the terrorist threat and peacekeeping operations in the Balkans[14]; it allowed Russia to contribute to Operation "Active Endeavour" in the Mediterranean, while at the NATO Istanbul summit in 2004 the alliance and Moscow agreed on the development of a Joint Action Plan on Terrorism. The results of these engagements led, at one point, to then Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov's proposal to rename the NRC the "New Anti-Terrorist Organization"[15].

Nonetheless, while bridging mutual differences and institutionalizing a degree of cooperation, the NRC represented – after the agreement leading to the PJC – another missed opportunity towards a comprehensive resolution of those issues that had been left unresolved by the 1989-1990 settlement. Certainly, both sides had their own share of responsibilities for this failure. NATO was unwilling to make the concessions (such as Moscow's deeper involvement in its decision-making process, together with an explicit assurance of no further enlargement) that would have been necessary to accommodate Russian grievances – dreading the prospect of empowering the Kremlin with veto power on the alliance's decisions – and conceived the NRC as a token gift. Although the agreement had a large symbolic significance, the difference between the PJC and the NRC was more apparent than substantial; as emphasised by former NATO Secretary

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[12] "NATO-Russia relations: a new quality", Declaration by Heads of State and Government of NATO Member States and the Russian Federation, available at http://www.nato.int/cps/ar/natohq/official_texts_19572.htm.

[13] "NATO Factsheet on Terrorism" is available at http://www.nato.int/terrorism/factsheet.htm.

[14] See the NATO-Russia Council Practical Cooperation Fact Sheet at http://www.nato.int/nrc-website/media/104666/nato-russia_council_factsheet_final_2013-11-07_trilingual.pdf.

[15] S. Ivanov, "Russia-NATO", speech given at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 13 July 2004. Quoted by D. Lynch (2005), p. 151.

General Lord Robertson, it had "more to do with chemistry than arithmetic". Russia did not obtain a veto on NATO's decisions; if NRC meetings failed to reach a consensus, the alliance could always return to the format of '19'[16]. For its part, the Kremlin did not resign itself to accepting junior partner status and continued to call publicly for the alliance's transformation into a true Pan-European institution that would overcome fault lines in Europe and welcome the Russian Federation as an equal member[17]. Moscow also displayed a deep-seated desire to base its NATO relationship on the principle of 'equality', 'reciprocity' and 'parity', in which Russia's status as a great power and influence over the post-Soviet space was acknowledged – a vision firmly embedded in President Putin's 2005 statement to the Russian parliament that the collapse of the Soviet Union was one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century and in the 'spheres of influences' concept of Stalinist memory[18]. With NATO members lacking appetite for a revision of the post-Cold War settlement and unable to reach a consensus on relations with Moscow, domestic politics in Russia, centred on authoritarian modernization, and the Kremlin's attempt to reinforce its authority and tighten its hold on society, did not facilitate closer interaction with the West[19]. As a result, NATO-Russia relations continued to be based on occasional and mainly *ad hoc* arrangements; while both sides had their own pragmatic motivations for expanding cooperation, the alliance's members remained reluctant to entrust Moscow with decision-making prerogatives in areas of mutual interests, including the fight against terrorism. Without a vision to overcome long-standing diffidence and unwilling to consider marriage, the West offered Moscow cohabitation arrangements, that served useful functions without, however, providing satisfactory long-term solutions, while Russia displayed little practical interest in

[16] T. Forsberg, G. Herd (2015), pp. 47-48.

[17] L. Ratti, "Resetting NATO-Russia Relations: A Realist Appraisal Two Decades after the end of the Cold War", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2013, p. 144.

[18] E.B. Rumer, A. Stent, "Russia and the West", *Survival*, vol. 51, no. 2, April-May 2009, p. 94.

[19] W. Safire, "Putin's 'Creeping Coup", *The New York Times*, 9 February 2004.

regular cooperation with NATO or in becoming a full member in the absence of a radical transformation of the alliance[20]. Hence, the NRC did not fulfil its initial promise and never became the platform of discussion that was initially envisioned; rather, as Trenin argued, it was "turned into a mostly technical workshop – useful, but extremely narrow in scope"[21]. Cooperation between NATO and Russia remained based largely on the personal connection between George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin – displaying a responsive and pragmatic rather than a purposeful and normative character – while the NRC failed to resolve the underlying tensions of the post-Cold War settlement.

The return of tensions and the failure of the 'reset' (2002-2012)

With the NRC failing to settle unresolved issues and to dissipate reciprocal diffidence, un-defused tension between the alliance and Moscow erupted in the early 2000s following Washington's withdrawal from the Anti Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty in 2002, NATO's invitation at its Prague summit to seven new members, including former Soviet republics of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, and open support for the Rose, Orange and Tulip Revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, in 2003, 2004, and 2005 respectively[22]. While offering use of its territory for shipments of supplies to NATO forces deployed in Afghanistan through the northern distribution network, Moscow responded to a perceived Western encirclement by supporting Russian minorities abroad and exerting economic and political pressure on nearby

[20] J.A. Baker III, "Russia in NATO?", *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2002, p. 95.

[21] D. Trenin, "NATO and Russia: Partnership or Peril?", *Current History*, vol. 108, no. 720, October 2009, p. 300.

[22] A. Kelin, "Attitude to NATO Expansion: Calmly Negative", *International Affairs,* Moscow, vol. 50, no. 1, 2004, pp. 17-25; C. Fairbanks, "Georgia's Rose Revolution", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 15, no. 2, April 2004, pp. 110-124.

republics with pro-Western aspirations[23]. The Kremlin also cast itself as the protective centre for the entire Russian-speaking cultural community, endeavouring to regain a position of strength in the former Soviet region from which it could forcibly renegotiate the post-Cold War international settlement. Following NATO's second round of enlargement, which for the first time led to the inclusion in the alliance of former Soviet republics, Moscow expected specific assurances and requested that the Baltic States join the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty; a demand that was rebuffed by the alliance which linked their accession to the withdrawal of remaining Russian forces from Georgia and from the Moldovan breakaway region of Transnistria[24]. Western support for the 'color revolutions' and U.S. missile defense plans were the cause of further Russian anxiety and accelerated a progressive deterioration in relations between the alliance and Moscow. Denouncing Western policy as a menace for Russian national security, in 2007 the Kremlin first declared that the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty no longer served Moscow's interests; it then suspended the application of the CFE treaty as a reaction to the non-accession of the Baltic States[25]. At the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008 consideration of the preparatory Membership Action Plan (MAP) programme – a roadmap towards NATO membership – for Georgia and Ukraine met with firm resistance from Russia. Tension exploded in August 2008 when then Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili's attempt to regain full control of South Ossetia provided Moscow with a pretext for drawing a line in the sand through military action. The Kremlin distilled its own Putin doctrine, claiming a right to

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[23] L. Ratti, "Back to the Future? International Relations Theory and NATO-Russia relations since the end of the Cold War", *International Journal*, Spring 2009, p. 415.

[24] R.H. Donaldson, J.L. Nogee, V. Nadkarni, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, Armonk, NY, M.E. Sharpe, 2008, p. 190.

[25] Decree "On Suspending the Russian Federation's Participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and Related International Agreements", President of Russia, Official Web Portal, http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2007/07/137839.shtml. See also A.E. Kramer, T. Shanker, "Russia suspends Arms Agreement Over U.S. Shield", *The New York Times*, 15 July 2007.

intervene militarily in former Soviet republics to settle, with military force if necessary, territorial and ethnic disputes, keep oil and gas pipelines running, and continue "the civilizing role of Russia on the Eurasian continent"[26]. The war against Georgia exposed the NRC's limits; the alliance reacted by establishing a NATO-Georgia Commission, *de facto* suspending the NRC, endorsing the signing of a bilateral U.S.-Polish missile agreement, relocating a U.S. Patriot missile battery from Germany to Poland, and starting defense planning for the Baltic States. Nonetheless, with the United States bogged down in Afghanistan and Iraq and with France and Germany lacking any appetite for a military confrontation, the West proved incapable of deterring Russian action or of effective intervention. While making a firm point that further eastern encroachment by NATO and the EU would be resisted, Moscow complained that its request to discuss Georgian 'aggression' at the NRC had been obstructed by the alliance, undermining the Council's very purpose[27]. In the same year, the Kremlin announced an 'active response' to the Bush administration's revival of missile defense, warning that Russia might target European components of the planned shield and deploy nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad[28]. Faced with the worst deterioration in relations since the Cold War, after taking office in January 2009 the Obama administration promised a 'reset' in relations, resuming diplomatic contacts and limited cooperation with Moscow. In early 2009 Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, agreed with President Obama and then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, to work together on a number of issues, such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation and Afghanistan; informal meetings of the NRC were also resumed. The most notable achievements of the Democratic administration's attempt to

[26] D. Trenin, "Pirouettes and Priorities: Distilling a Putin Doctrine", *The National Interest*, no. 74, Winter, 2003/2004, pp. 76-83; see also V. Frolov, "A new Post-Soviet Doctrine", *The Moscow Times*, 20 May 2005.

[27] J. Kulhanek, "Russia's uncertain rapprochement with NATO", *The RUSI Journal*, vol. 156, no. 1, 2011, p. 41.

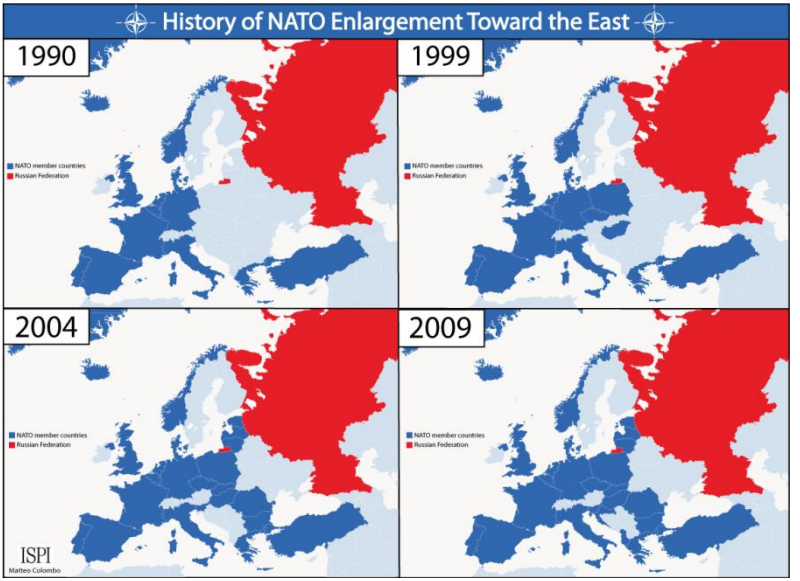
[28] L. Ratti (2009), p. 415.

engage Moscow were a revitalization of the NRC, then Russian President Vladimir Medvedev's attendance at the alliance's 2010 Lisbon summit, and the inclusion in NATO's new Strategic Concept of a section on relations with Russia[29]. Nonetheless, even the 'reset' turned out to be an inadequate remedy that could not revive an institution that had been decisively undermined by the conflicting strategic priorities of its most powerful members; as such, it represented another missed opportunity for a clarification of the former Soviet space's collocation in the post-Cold War European order. While bringing about a number of results in low-profile areas, such as Russia's ratification of the Status of Forces Agreement, which paved the way for joint military exercises on Russian territory, and the inauguration of the Cooperative Airspace Initiative, which brought together Russia and NATO to pool air traffic data to combat air-based terrorism, the 'reset' failed to assuage the Kremlin's grievances that the current architecture marginalizes Russia and produces a bifurcation of security on the continent. Whereas Washington confirmed its determination to pursue missile defense, criticized Russian plans to establish permanent military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and condemned measures taken by the Kremlin to quell domestic opposition, Moscow continued to campaign for the establishment of an 'all inclusive' Pan-European security – from Vancouver to Vladivostok or Helsinki Plus – architecture, to prevent any further alliance enlargement, and to seek the West's implicit acceptance of the post-Soviet space as an area of 'privileged interests', as proven by Medvedev's 2008 proposal for a new Pan-European security treaty that would limit troop deployments in Eastern Europe, and by successive requests for the establishment of a formal dialogue between NATO and the Russian-engineered Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)[30]. While the

[29] At Lisbon, Russian officials reiterated an interest in carrying out a joint review of common security challenges, acknowledging the need for shared initiatives on Afghanistan, terrorism, piracy, weapons of mass destruction, and natural and man-made disasters. J. Kulhanek (2011), p. 43.

[30] Medvedev's proposal, which was advanced at the World Policy Forum in Evian in October 2008, is available at the following web site:

alliance stopped short of making Russia a full partner, in the absence of a comprehensive re-discussion of the 1989-1990 settlement hopes that the 'reset' could resolve persisting tension and overcome reciprocal diffidence rapidly proved misplaced.



The 2013 crisis and its consequences: which way forward?

While the 'reset' proved an inadequate remedy to reverse confrontational dynamics, the Euromaidan protest dramatically worsened relations between the alliance and Moscow. As in the

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http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/afet/dv/201/20100 6/20100622_russianprop_en.pdf. See also M. Menkiszak, "Russian Policy Towards NATO in a Broader European Security Context", in R.N. McDermott, B. Nygren, C. Vendil Pallin (eds.), *The Russian Armed Forces in Transition: Economic, Geopolitical and Institutional Uncertainties*, London and New York, Routledge, 2011, pp. 73-92; M. De Haas, *Russia's Foreign Security Policy in the 21st Century: Putin, Medvedev and Beyond*, London and New York, Routledge, 2010.

early 2000s, when the 'color revolutions' sparked deeply conflicting reactions, events in Ukraine were viewed in the West and Russia in almost opposite images. Although in his inaugural speech new NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg noted that NATO does not seek confrontation with Moscow[31]; the Kremlin perceived Western support for the Euromaidan demonstrators as a threat to its endeavors to regain a grip on former Soviet republics through Eurasian integration projects, while the alliance viewed it as an opportunity to hammer a further nail in the coffin of Russian hegemonic ambitions over the post-Soviet space. Whereas Moscow accused the West of masterminding the Euromaidan 'coup d'état' – as the Kremlin termed it –, it rapidly secured control of the Crimean peninsula, where the Russian Black Sea Fleet was based, on the grounds of protecting Crimea's largely Russian population – a move that for many Russians was simply the rectification of a Soviet-era internal border and one that carried the overwhelming endorsement of the people of the peninsula[32]. The Kremlin also provided vital support to the separatist revolts in the Donbass region, asserting Russia's historical ties to the area and referring to Eastern Ukrainian districts north of the Black Sea, including the towns of Donetsk, Luhansk, Odessa and Dnipropetrovsk, as 'Novorossiya' or 'New Russia'[33]. As an immediate reaction to the 'Russian aggression', in April 2014 NATO decided to suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation with Moscow, although the dialogue in the NRC

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[31] http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_113488.htm. Also Andres Fogh Rasmussen had confirmed, on his first speech as secretary general at the Carnegie Endowment in Brussels, that relations with Russia remain a priority for the alliance. See A.F. Rasmussen, "NATO and Russia: A new Beginning", http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_57640.htm.

[32] "What next in Russia's 'near abroad'?", *The Quarterly Review*, April 2015, http://www.quarterly-review.org/?p=4084. At the end of March 2014 Moscow unilaterally terminated the 2010 Kharkiv agreements with Ukraine that extended the status of its naval facilities in Crimea until 2042. See "State Duma approves denunciation of Russian-Ukrainian agreements on Black Sea Fleet", http://tass.ru/en/russia/725964.

[33] A. Taylor, "'Novorossiya', the latest historical concept to worry about in Ukraine", *The Washington Post*, 18 April 2014.

continued at the ambassadorial level. Furthermore, while in December 2014 the Ukrainian parliament dropped the country's non-aligned status and renewed its bid for NATO membership, in February 2015 the alliance announced the creation of a 'spearhead force' to provide a rapid response to emerging crises in the eastern or southern countries of the alliance[34]. Following Moscow's 2013 deployment of Iskander missiles to the Western military district, including the Kaliningrad oblast, Russia's westernmost point, the alliance also deepened cooperation with the Scandinavian countries: at its Newport Wales summit in September 2014 Finland – whose neutrality is vital for Russian maritime traffic to and from Kaliningrad – and Sweden signed 'Host Nation' agreements with NATO to establish policy and procedures for operational and logistic support sites[35]. Moscow's response was a new military doctrine approved in December 2014, which brandishes NATO's buildup near its border as a chief threat to Russian security, and its withdrawal in the following March from the Joint Consultative Group on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) – the only consultative forum that Russia continued to attend – on the grounds that the agreement had become pointless from political and practical viewpoints[36].

After the 'color revolutions' in the early 2000s, the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, and the dispute over missile defense, the Ukrainian crisis has therefore become the latest indication that, if the uncertainty over the former Soviet space's collocation in the European security architecture is not resolved, there is a considerable risk that Russia and the West might continue to drift apart. Although cooperation at the practical level continues in a

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[34] See http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49755.htm.

[35] See http://www.aco.nato.int/finland-and-sweden-signing-a-memorandum-of-understanding-with-nato-for-operational-and-logistic-support.aspx.

[36] The Baltic States, which joined NATO in 2004, were not covered either by the initial agreement, signed in 1990 or by the updated version of 1999, although at the moment of accession the alliance indicated that it would exercise restraint in making conventional deployments on the new members' territory. F. Möller, *Thinking Peaceful Change: Baltic Security Policies and Security Community Building*, Syracuse (N.Y.), Syracuse University Press, 2007, p. 72-77.

number of issue areas and the Kremlin maintains its diplomatic mission to NATO, it might become difficult to restore any meaningful interaction without a comprehensive re-discussion of the roots of current grievances, leaving a number of former Soviet regions in an apparently 'frozen' but potentially explosive scenario. Are there any remedies or is a descent into a new Cold War a foregone conclusion? The question may indeed be a false one: NATO-Russia tensions, rather than the outcome of insurmountable divergences, are the consequence of conflicting strategic priorities that were inherited by current elites from the agreements that more than two decades ago brought the Cold War to an end[37]. While it is difficult to see how relations between Russia and the alliance might break this confrontational cycle without a comprehensive revision of that settlement, in the present circumstances it is unlikely that Moscow would seriously risk armed conflict with NATO over the fate, for example, of the Baltic States or of Eastern Ukraine[38]. Although significantly revitalized by the reform of 2008 and with no regional power capable of matching their might, the Russian armed forces continue to be plagued by serious organizational, logistical, and technical deficiencies and might be hard put to stand up to a full alliance engagement. Furthermore, the broader geopolitical and economic prospects for Russia remain uncertain. The Russian economy continues to rely heavily on the energy sector, which is responsible for two-thirds of export earnings and half of all tax revenue; in the current climate of depressed oil prices, Russia seems increasingly vulnerable. Despite the Kremlin's rhetoric, at the beginning of 2015 the Russian economy appeared to be in free-fall, battered by the impact of Western sanctions, with the value of the ruble collapsing, rocketing interest rates, and worrying falls in energy revenues[39]. As President Putin remarked

[37] M. De Leonardis, "La NATO dopo il vertice di Newport: ritorno al passato?", presented to the conference "La NATO da 'vigilant and prepared' a 'deployed out of area': un viaggio andata e ritorno", Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, 21 April 2015, unpublished.
[38] "What next in Russia's 'near abroad'?" (2015).
[39] *Ibid.*

in April 2015, despite persisting strategic differences, Russia continues to share with the West a number of fundamental interests, ranging from the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to fighting organized crime and terrorism, and tackling poverty[40]. Whereas the descent into a new Cold War could prove particularly costly for Moscow, the West could gain by acknowledging that there might be some substance to Russian grievances[41]; while Ukraine's association agreement with the EU was one of the triggers of the current crisis, Germany, in light of its role in the inception of the post-Cold War settlement and its influence within the bloc of 28, has gradually taken centre stage, making it clear that it will not ship arms to Kiev[42]. Berlin's problem, however, is that it does not appear to have a comprehensive solution to bring the crisis to an end, while the structure of the EU's common security and defense policy is no help[43]. Having deep-seated interests in ending the conflict, preserving Ukraine's territorial integrity and restoring meaningful cooperation with Moscow, Germany and other members of the European Union should lobby with the United States and their Eastern European partners to adopt a policy that recognizes Russia's security interests and minority rights, while upholding the territorial integrity of Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. As negotiations with Iran have recently proved, good relations with Russia are essential for the West to deal with a number of pressing issues, including the conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, an increasing terrorist threat, and eventually with the rise of China's political and military prowess. While in the current scenario the assumption of any significant role by the EU – for example through a joint EU-Russian crisis management operation in Eastern Ukraine with the participation of OSCE

[40] http://www.russianews.net/index.php/sid/232073445.

[41] M.E. Sarotte (2009).

[42] S. Braun, "Waffen für Kiew? Merkel ist 'da sehr zweifelnd'", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7 February 2015, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/muenchner-sicherheitskonferenz-waffen-fuer-kiew-merkel-ist-da-sehr-zweifelnd-1.2340946.

[43] See J.J. Mearsheimer, "Don't Arm Ukraine", The New York Times, 8 February 2015.

observers – remains a remote prospect, a renewed NATO engagement with the Kremlin in the spirit of the 1967 Harmel Report, providing a balanced mix of deterrence and strategic reassurances for Moscow, might offer a first breakthrough[44].

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the crisis between the alliance and Russia that was triggered by the Euromaidan revolt marks the latest episode of a progressive deterioration in relations, whose origin can be found in the volatile nature of the East-West settlement which brought the Cold War to an end. With the agreements of 1989-1990 failing to clarify the former Soviet space's collocation in the new European security architecture, NATO has incorporated the Baltic States and maintained an open door policy towards Georgia and Ukraine, while Moscow has sought a coordinated revision of the current Pan-European order, endeavoring to win the West's recognition of Russia's sphere of special interests and to establish a new security belt along its frontiers. Since the inviolability of national borders is a fundamental pillar of a Europe that is 'whole and free', the West should rediscover the mantra of the 1967 Harmel Report, remaining vigilant about Russian moves but also endeavoring to engage the Kremlin in talks about a clarification of the former Soviet space's collocation within the current European security structure. While, as Polish President, Bronislaw Komorowski, remarked in a speech to the Ukrainian Rada in April, there might not be a stable Europe without a free Ukraine[45]; there will certainly not be a secure continent without a comprehensive reconciliation with Russia.

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[44] The text of the Harmel Report is available at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/80991.htm.

[45] See the official website of the President of the Republic of Poland, http://www.president.pl/en/news/news/art,808,poland-extends-its-hand-to-ukraine.html.

4. Russia, Poland and the "New Europe": Inevitable Clash?

Stefan Bielański

The Russia-Poland relationship has never been ordinary. Rivalry and mistrust have been generally predominant. This attitude did not change during the Cold War, when Poland was integrated into the so-called 'Soviet Bloc'. Quite the contrary, this historical experience fuelled new suspicions, adding ideological divergences to traditional Moscow-Warsaw geopolitical competition. From this standpoint the Russia-Poland relationship presents undeniable specificities, clearly different from relations with the other regional countries. Therefore the very concept of "New Europe", elaborated after 1989, could be misleading, unfit to embrace the wider set of different geopolitical interests and attitudes towards Russia in the region. The Baltic States, with a large Russian-speaking population, and Poland have traditionally had strong anti-Russian sentiments, fearing the revival of Russia's imperialistic ambitions. At the same time, statements by Hungarian and Czech Republic leaders show that their foreign policy vector is changing toward closer relations with Russia, mainly motivated by their energy security issues and the economic concessions that Russia is ready to offer in exchange for their formal loyalty.

With a view to analysing the dynamics of these relations, and better understanding the origins of major unresolved issues between Russia and Eastern Europe, it is key to start from a historical prospective, thus highlighting the roots to the current situation.

At the roots of the confrontation

The Central and Eastern Europe 1945 post-war borders were progressively demarcated by leaders of the anti-German alliance during the conferences in Teheran (1943), Yalta and Potsdam (1945). Despite the fact that Poland formally belonged to the victorious countries of World War II, its eastern border was also changed in accordance with the so-called Curzon line or along the river Bug. Thus the eastern territories, with the city of Wilno (in Lithuanian Vilnius) and Lwów (in Ukraine called Lviv) were excluded from Polish borders.

Therefore, after 1945 post-war Poland was faced with the challenges of rebuilding the country in a situation of border changes, massive material and population losses, and radical political and geopolitical changes. Moreover, international politics strongly affected Poland's internal dimension, as clearly testified to by its participation in the Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968). Therefore during the 1950s and 1960s Polish foreign policy was characterized by its ideological, political and military dependency on the Soviet Union. At the same time, the issue of its western borders largely regulated through the Federal Republic of Germany's recognition (in 1970) of the Oder-Neisse line had important impact as well.

The international situation changed substantially in the late 1970s and 1980s with the election of Pope Cardinal Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II), the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979) and the rise of the "Solidarność" movement (1980). Despite attempts to maintain the Communist system (including a military coup by Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski in Poland on 13 December 1981, but also attempts to reform the system under the "perestroika" of Gorbachev), the 1980s brought about the fall of communist ideology and the collapse of the Soviet power system. In Poland on 4 June 1989 the first free (though not fully democratic) parliamentary elections in post-war Poland were held, bringing victory to "Solidarność", and marking the symbolic end of Moscow's domination of Poland.

The changes in Central and Eastern Europe that had began in Poland in 1989 led to the dissolution of the Soviet bloc and became one of the causes of the USSR's dissolution in 1991. Russia was turned into the Russian Federation and a number of newly independent states (Baltic States, Ukraine, Belarus) became Poland's neighbours. The Russian Federation shares a border (on the northeast) with Poland: it is the so-called enclave of Kaliningrad. Since 2004, the eastern border of Poland has also become an important part of the new eastern borders of the European Union.

It is interesting to note that the first country to recognize the independence of Ukraine was Poland (in 1991). The Polish policy of reconciling Ukraine with Europe and the Euro-Atlantic alliance (in the 1990s we also had hopes of including Belarus, already ruled by Aleksandr Lukashenko, into this process) was no doubt influenced by the concepts of a Polish *emigré* magazine called *Kultura*, published in Paris and directed by Jerzy Giedroyc, but also by the ideas of Professor Zbigniew Brzeziński, sovietologist and an American of Polish descent. According to these conceptions an independent Ukraine was to ensure the independence of Poland.

In the 1990s and the early years of the XXI century, Poland established a policy of supporting the sovereignty of countries detaching from the USSR, including Ukraine (the Orange Revolution) and Georgia (the period of Mikhail Saakashvili's presidency). Moscow has always opposed Polish policies of supporting the independence and development of democracy in countries like Ukraine or Georgia and for this reason from the early 1990s until today the relations between Poland and Russia have been tense and conflicting (except for short periods of thaw tests).

The government of Donald Tusk – who was Prime Minister of Poland in the period 2007-2014 – from 2010 to 2013 tried to adopt the policy of 'thaw' or 'reset' in relations with Russia (being, however, strongly opposed by President Lech Kaczyński and the leader of the main opposition party, the president's brother,

Jarosław Kaczyński). It should be recalled that President Lech Kaczyński (tragically died in the Smolensk air disaster on Russian territory in April 2010) became famous for delivering "a geopolitical prophecy" during a meeting in Tbilisi in 2008 in the course of the Russian-Georgian war. Regarding the aggressive policy of Putin's Russia, he argued that Georgia was its first victim, but that later on Russian tanks could appear – in order of succession – in Ukraine, the Baltic States and finally in Poland.

From Warsaw to Moscow: today's confrontation

Besides the aversion Polish politicians had towards the 'thaw' in relations with Russia, there have been and still remain objective geopolitical reasons for conflict between Poland and Russia. These reasons particularly include the historical complexities linking Poland, Ukraine and Russia, but also the issue of energy security, and finally the role of Poland in its preparation for and active membership in the EU and NATO. This list has recently been increased by the support Poland gave Ukraine during the "Maidan Revolution", as well as after the fall of Viktor Yanukovych's regime. Additionally, Poland provided Ukrainians with political support in the context of the Russian occupation of Crimea and the military conflict with the so-called 'pro-Russian rebels' in the southeast of Ukraine.

It should be emphasized that the "Maidan Revolution" (2013-14) caused a fairly radical change in the attitudes of the Polish government, including Prime Minister Donald Tusk and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Radosław Sikorski, towards Putin's Russia. Mutual accusations and the use of language typical of the Cold War were heard in both Moscow and Warsaw.

The decision made at the 2014 summit in Brussels to appoint Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk to the position of President of the European Council is important and seemed to signal the EU's firm stand against Moscow. It should also be remembered that during that same meeting of EU Heads of State and Government a line of 'geopolitical balance' was confirmed, urging the two

shores of the European continent (the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean) to complement each other instead of compete.

Poland as a member of the EU and of NATO clearly gave its support to the new Ukrainian leadership (President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arsenij Yatsenyuk) that emerged after the "Maidan Revolution". The Polish government did not accept the annexation of Crimea and even the Polish press and television, reporting on the ongoing war in Ukraine, denounced – especially during the summer of 2014 – the Russian military presence in the southeast of the Ukrainian state and its support for the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk Republics during the war that was supposed to be concluded with a cease-fire agreed upon in Minsk through the mediation of the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko. In particular, during the negotiations started in Minsk the so-called 'Normandy Format' was used. In fact, the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Allied landing in Normandy in 1944 offered the chance to involve France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine in the discussion of possible solutions to the crisis.

At this point it is necessary to examine the objectives of Russian policy that had become bitterly anti-Western by the at the end of 2013 and even more so in 2014, Evidences of this dynamic relate to the so-called Eurasian Union, a project that is strongly supported by the Putin entourage. With this union Russia would not be a simple regional power but a world superpower, as in the days of the USSR. It should be added that from the viewpoint of Putin's ideological line such an outlook is very close to the nationalist view, and symbolized by the Kremlin's alliance with the Orthodox Church – seemingly a geopolitical attempt at reconstruction of "Greater Russia" in such a way that one might sense the inheritance of both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union.

The new policy and military actions of President Putin's Russia were put into practice in 2014 in Crimea. Through clever military operations (with Russian special forces that acted in full anonymity), politics (a referendum with 95 per cent in favour of reunification with 'motherland Russia') and finally propaganda

(with Russian television being in the 'front line') Putin's Russia made the annexation – in March 2014 – of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, thereby consolidating its geostrategic position on the Black Sea.

It should be borne in mind that the ultimate goal of Putin's policy is a radical change in the current territorial system of Central and Eastern Europe, with the intention of regaining direct or indirect influence over some former Soviet territories. Putin himself has repeatedly said that the dissolution of the USSR (by which he also means the fall of Russian domination) was "the largest geopolitical catastrophe" of the XX century. Putin's wars, from Georgia to Ukraine, have a territorial and geopolitical character. The Russian annexation of Crimea and *de facto* domination over the Donbas region means – in particular regarding Crimea – a serious violation of international law and a dangerous precedent for possible territorial changes in Europe.

Nevertheless it is important to point out that some Eastern and Central European countries show attitudes that differ from that of Warsaw. Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, has recently met Vladimir Putin signing an important energy agreement. The Czech Republic's President, Miloš Zeman, in his interview with a Russian radio station said that his dream is to see Russia as a member of the European Union. Nevertheless, these positions do not derive from a pro-Russian policy, but are motivated by the political, economic and military opportunities that such cooperation can provide.

No room for historical reconciliation?

The current Russian 'historical narrative' on Polish-Russian relations and the assessment of Polish politics is clearly negative. However, it should be noted that in the first decade of the twenty-first century attempts to understand the complexity of these relationships were made – a noble effort, considering it took place under the most difficult circumstances in the entire history of Polish-Russian relations throughout the twentieth century. As a

result of research conducted both by Polish and Russian historians, a work (of nearly 900 pages) was published in 2010, edited through Adam D. Rotfeld and Anatoly W. Torkunov's joint effort and titled *White stains - black stains. Difficult issues in Polish-Russian relations, 1918-2008* (Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, 2010)[1].

Only five years ago, in 2010, it seemed that there was a possibility of agreement between Poland and Russia even on the most sensitive issues, symbolized for decades by the Soviet denial, maintained also in the new Russia, of one of the cruellest crimes of Stalinism – the massacre of prisoners of war, Polish officers, which took place in 1940 in Katyń. But despite the fact that Russian leaders have accepted the true course of events of the 1940s – which was in itself an important breakthrough – a shadow was cast over the celebrations at Katyń in 2010 by the plane crash over Smolensk, in which the then Polish president, Lech Kaczyński, and 95 representatives of the Polish political elite perished. And so at the beginning of the second decade of the XXI century, in the specific context of the Ukrainian crisis initiated by the pro-European "Maidan Revolution" in 2013, Russia officially and in a decisive manner denied any attempts to open – in terms of historical policy – to Polish postulates, returning to the traditional interpretation of Polish-Russian relations that marked Soviet times. Jan Rydel points to Polish attempts to maintain dialog with regard to a jointly acknowledged historical policy, stressing that *the so-called reset in Polish-Russian relations was also to include historical policy*. The Polish scholar recalls that in 2009 a successful Polish-Russian-German conference on the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact was held. During the same year Vladimir Putin was the guest of honour at the Polish celebrations of the 70th anniversary of outbreak of World War II, and in 2011 the Polish Parliament decided to create a Center for Polish-Russian Dialog and Understanding. Finally – trying to repeat the formula of

[1] A.D. Rotfeld, A.W. Torkunow (eds.), *Białe plamy – czarne plamy. Sprawy trudne w polsko-rosyjskich stosunkach 1918-2008,* Warszawa, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2010.

"forgive and ask for forgiveness" – the chairman of the Polish Episcopal Conference, Archbishop Józef Michalik, and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow in 2012 signed a joint *Message to the Polish and Russian nations*. Despite these attempts at reconciliation – especially with respect to a common, difficult history – current political events, situating Poland and Russia on opposite sides of geopolitical disputes, led *de facto* to the cancellation of all joint activities of this kind. Moreover, according to Rydel: "the objective was not achieved, as the aforesaid religious act was prepared according to an explicitly political order, and the 'Message' was signed in circumstances more fit for an international agreement than an act of goodwill and reflex conscience"[2].

A sign of collapse of the joint historical policy based on the principle of Polish-Russian reconciliation and forgiveness was, among others, the return of Russia to the traditional – i.e. Soviet or even Stalinist – geopolitical interpretation of the origins and consequences of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 23 August 1939, which resulted in a Soviet alliance with the Third Reich (1939-1941), and for the Poles meant the invasion of the Red Army on 17 September 1939 and a 'fourth partition' of Polish territories, leaving the Polish East under Soviet control. While Western Europe, but also Poland, does not negate the USSR's contribution to the victory over the Third Reich, the interpretation of the origins of the world conflict, especially the issue of the current Russian view of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, encounters debate and sometimes firm opposition. In March 2015 Polish historians decisively criticized the wording of a joint German-Russian history textbook about the XXI century, which upheld the former Soviet thesis on the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact stating that in 1939 Stalin "had no choice and was forced to enter into a pact with Hitler". A critical opinion of the Russian stance on this was expressed on the Polish side by Łukasz Kamiński, President of the

[2] J. Rydel, *Polish historical policy towards Central and Eastern Europe*, International Scientific Conference "Italy, Poland and a new Eastern Europe", Pedagogical University in Kraków, 2015.

Institute of National Remembrance, stating for the portal Interia.pl that: "attempts at falsifying facts of this kind are very worrying"[3]. In this context it seems important to cite Timothy Snyder, who argued that Russia's 'historical policy' is directly linked to its foreign policy, aimed at destabilization of the international order[4].

Energy security issue in bilateral relations

A general evaluation of Polish-Soviet economic relations is not easy, all the more so that it cannot be detached from ideological or geopolitical disputes. There is no doubt that a number of economic links – especially in the energy sector – have survived the collapse of the Soviet system and still affect, often negatively, contemporary economic relations between Poland and Russia.

For contemporary Poland an issue of considerable economic, but also geostrategic and geopolitical, importance is energy security. It is widely viewed as being both internal – aimed at diversifying the sourcing of energy and power development as a strategic sector of the economy, but also external – aimed at attracting economic partners in mining and the transport and distribution of energy resources.

Energy security is one of the major issues in the relations between Russia and Eastern Europe. The Eastern European countries have traditionally been more dependent on Russian oil and gas than their Western neighbours. The Baltic States import their entire gas supply from Russia. Russian gas amounts to 99 per cent of the Czech Republic's imports and to 89 per cent of

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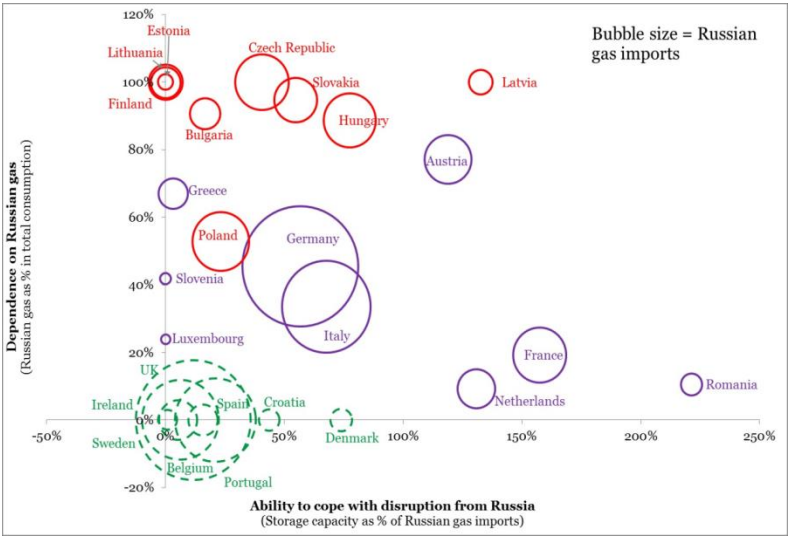
[3] *Historycy oburzeni niemiecko-rosyjskim podręcznikiem do historii* [*Historical overview on German-Russian History Books*], www.interia.pl, 15 March 2005, and A. Kazimierczuk, "Niemiecko-rosyjski podręcznik historii: spór o pakt Ribbentrop-Mołotow" [German-Russia history book: Discussion on Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact], *Rzeczpospolita*, 11 March 2015.

[4] T. Snyder in the Conference organized by the EEP Group in the European Parliament, "War and Peace 1945-2015", 6 May 2015. Russia's position has been reconfirmed by president Putin during his press-conference after the meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on 10 May 2015.

Hungarian consumption. Last year Poland imported as much as 60 per cent of its gas consumption from Russia, while it is starting to become much better at looking after its energy needs.

All the pipelines built by the Soviet Union to supply gas to its satellites were designed to operate in one direction only, from Russia westward. Promoted by Donald Tusk, the European Energy Union fostered some important initiatives with the aim to achieve energy independence, such as regasification projects. And so since 1st April, Poland is able to import significantly more gas from Germany, thanks to the expansion of a pumping station at Mallnow on the border. The gas in the Yamal pipeline, which brings Russian gas to Germany (via Belarus and Poland), can, for the first time, be pumped from west to east. Moreover, a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal is under construction at the moment. This will start importing gas on tankers from Qatar next year. Accordingly, Poland can meet its own gas needs entirely thanks to these initiatives. Nevertheless, importing gas from Russia is still cheaper than the existing alternatives and Poland is still bound by a long-term gas supply from Russia that expires only in 2022.



Source: Radio Free Europe

As a consequence, among the most important factors shaping Polish energy security policy are its relations with Russia. It is through this perspective that we must analyse the importance of Moscow's so-called energy policy, especially with regard to possible, but politically conditioned, supplies of natural gas to Europe. An illustrative example of this policy was the construction – in particular with the aid of German financing – of the so-called "North European Gas Pipeline", located at the bottom of the Baltic Sea, bypassing Poland and other transit countries. The strategic objectives of the Russian Federation are as follows: a) Russia's acquisition of decisive or full control of energy supplies to the European Union; b) the acquisition of partial or full control over energy distributors in EU countries; c) partial dependence of the EU on the Russian energy sector. In contrast, Poland's goals are diametrically opposed, namely: building its own transport systems for oil, natural gas and electricity and its own energy infrastructure. An important element of the so-called diversification plan would be the search for new energy sources (particularly in the area of renewable energy, or exploration and then exploitation of shale gas). Despite many official declarations, Poland still has a huge problem with energy independence[5], and it comes as no surprise that it is trying hard to initiate a common European energy policy. At the same time Jakub M. Godzimirski, expert of The Polish Institute of International Affairs, points to the current geopolitical context and states:

> Russian actions in Ukraine have […] challenged the very basic norms promoted by the EU, and have gravely undermined the existing international order. Russia has breached international law and invaded a neighbouring country to punish it for its pro-Western choice. Russia's violation of international norms in Ukraine has had consequences for the EU's thinking about energy cooperation with Russia. The Russian-Ukrainian crisis has also made the EU more aware of the risks to which its

[5] In March 2014, exactly when Russia was annexing Crimea, Poland was importing 70 per cent gas and 93 per cent oil from Russia. Cfr. A. Kublik, "Europa i Polska mocno uzależnione od gazu i ropy z Rosji" [Europe and Poland's heavy dependence on Russian oil and gas], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24 March 2014.

> energy security is exposed, partly due to the lack of diversification of suppliers and supply routes, and even more so because of its increasing dependence on imports from Russia. However, more action is needed to translate those new ideas into an efficient energy policy towards Russia, which is re-emerging as a power in Europe[6].

Conclusion

Trying to answer the title question: that is, whether long-term, peaceful cooperation between Poland and Russia is possible, or whether these countries are doomed to 'eternal conflict', we should consider the following factors:

1. The importance of geopolitics in contemporary Russia and Poland.
2. Complicated geopolitical relations between the Poles, Ukrainians and Russians.
3. The international context with special emphasis on the role of the European Union, NATO and Russian projects for a Eurasian Union.

Even a brief overview of Polish-Russian relations, referring to both the past and the present, shows their complexity and ambiguity. These relationships also seem to be burdened with an element of unpredictability, and perhaps even some fatalism. It is characteristic for short periods of 'reconciliation' or 'thaw' to be followed by much longer periods of non-cooperation, resentment, hatred, and armed conflicts. Undoubtedly, the most important factors negatively defining contemporary Polish-Russian relations should be attributed to geopolitics. Therefore, assessing contemporary geopolitical concepts, the Polish researcher Leszek Moczulski points to the importance of the Eurasian trend in current Kremlin policy, noting that: "The breakdown of the Soviet Union pushed Russia back to its former geopolitical location. A

[6] J.M. Godzimirski, *European Energy Security in the Wake of the Russian-Ukraine Crisis*, PISM, Strategic File, vol. 63, no. 27, December 2014, p. 5.

sentiment towards lost imperialism favours attitudes directed against the West and its civilization". In this context he recalls the concepts of Dugin and Zhirinovsky; however, as Moczulski continues:

> It would be wrong to assume that only extreme factions adopt these views. Such geopolitical thinking is becoming as common in Russia as was the concept of 'natural borders' in France a hundred years ago. Serious politicians postulate building a lasting stability in Europe based on two integration processes: the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian [...]. The geopolitical imperative for Russia should be achieving control over the entire Asian continent[7].

Moczulski emphasizes the importance of the so-called 'Russian Idea', which is in his opinion a "synthesis of various Russian doctrines: autocracy, a state Orthodox church, slavophilism, panslavism, eurasianism and Marxism-Leninism. It is a doctrine openly opposed to occidentalism, which comprises a pro-Western doctrine, calling for the Europeanization of the country"[8]. Russian geopolitical convictions undoubtedly legitimize the expansionist policies of the Kremlin, implemented through methods ranging from influencing local elites up to the use of armed force as in Georgia or Ukraine. On these grounds a dispute with Poland, trying to realize its objective of 'Ostpolitik' (but along Euro-Atlantic lines) seems inevitable – especially after it became a member of NATO (1999) and the EU (2004). Thus, for Poland "one of the key problems connected with the subject of further extension of the Euro-Atlantic structures to the East is the overall relations between Russia and the United States and the European Union, with special consideration for the ex-satellite countries of the Soviet Union"[9]. In this context, Poland's active stand on the

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[7] L. Moczulski, Geopolityka. Potęga w czasie i przestrzeni [Geopolitics. The power of time and space], Warszawa, Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, 1999, pp. 511-512.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 514-515.

[9] S. Bielański, "Poland in NATO (1999-2009): between Historical Memory and challenges of the Future", in A. Carati, C. Frappi (eds.), *NATO in the 60th Anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty. Challenges and strategic divergences from national perspectives*, Milano, FrancoAngeli-ISPI, 2009, p. 155.

events in Ukraine, in particular its negative assessment of Russia's actions in Crimea and Donbas is not surprising. The events in Ukraine are not perceived in Poland as part of NATO's strategy aimed at the 'disintegration of Russia'. On the contrary, in Poland the conflict is strongly viewed as an indication of Russian expansionism, and the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula as an unprecedented forced change to borderlines set in Europe after 1945. Despite the best intentions of those circles in Poland and Russia that would like to improve their mutual relations, despite the appreciation of the importance of Russia as a great state with a unique identity as well as a significant cultural heritage, the contemporary realities cannot lead to positive conclusions, especially in the context of the dispute over Ukraine in the years 2014-2015. The reality is that the relationship between Poland and Russia has in fact deteriorated significantly, thus:

> Polish-Russian relations suffer under persistently difficult ambiguities. They concern the 'deregulation' of activeness of both countries within the post-Soviet sphere (with special emphasis on Ukraine and Belarus), but also the precise definition of the scope of economic cooperation, and finally the defining of objective differences on key issues such as energy security. To this should be added that controversial issues in relations with Russia should be solved within the framework of 'Ostpolitik', not only that of Poland, but implemented as part of the policy of the whole European Union[10].

There are still a lot of unresolved historical issues that seem to hinder normalization of the relations with some countries, like Poland, at least in the short term. However, it is hard to depict Eastern Europe as a homogeneous entity in its relations towards Russia, since each country has its own national policy determined by its economic and political priorities.

[10] S. Bielański, "La Polonia tra Europa e Russia", *Quaderni di Relazioni Internazionali*, no. 13, Milano, ISPI, 2010, pp. 66-67.

5. Seen from Moscow: Greater Europe at Risk

Ivan Timofeev

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the idea of a Greater Europe is not recent. Already in the 1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev introduced this concept referring to the existence of a "Common European Home". Later on, Boris Yeltsin further developed it and since 2001 Vladimir Putin has again championed this project, stressing the need and the importance to create an integrated common space from Lisbon to Vladivostok. To this aim, Russia's Eurasian vocation as a bridge between Europe and Asia has played a crucial role. Recently, it partially came true with the launch of the Eurasian Economic Union on 1st January 2015. Indeed, the Eurasian Union is supposed to become an integral part of the projected Common European space. This would finally realize Russia's Eurasian goal as Putin stated it in *Izvestiya* in 2011:

> Russia and the EU agreed to form a common economic space and coordinate economic regulations without the establishment of supranational structures back in 2003. In line with this idea, we proposed setting up a harmonized community of economies stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok, a free trade zone and even employing more sophisticated integration patterns. We also proposed pursuing coordinated policies in industry, technology, the energy sector, education, science, and also to eventually scrap visas. These proposals have not been left hanging in midair; our European colleagues are discussing them in detail. Soon the Customs Union, and later the Eurasian Union, will join the dialogue with the EU. As a result, apart from bringing direct

> economic benefits, accession to the Eurasian Union will also help countries integrate into Europe sooner and from a stronger position[1].

A better understanding of the potential positive outcomes of this geopolitical and geo-economic dynamic is not only analytically relevant, but could also help European countries and Russia to elaborate more effective strategies to develop a more cooperative relationship both among themselves and with other countries of the region.

Obstacles on the way to Greater Europe

For over 20 years the idea of building a Greater Europe has been a significant landmark along the way to cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic region. However, its concrete fulfillment faces at least three fundamental problems.

The first one concerns security issues. How best to resolve the 'security dilemma' between Russia and NATO, as well as that between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community as a whole? How to build a common security space? The answers to these questions require solving a whole bunch of problems, including the enlargement of NATO, ways to settle local conflicts, control over nuclear and conventional weapons, the missile defense issue and many others. The second one is of an economic kind. It pertains to the measures to be taken to align the economic potential of the EU, Russia, and the post-Soviet states. These are key to achieving a mutually interdependent economy in Greater Europe as well as to creating a common humanitarian space with the participation of Russia and other post-Soviet states. The third one relates to the post-Soviet space itself and deals with reconciliation of Russia's strategic interests in the post-Soviet

[1] Article by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin "A new integration project for Eurasia: The future in the making", *Izvestia*, 3 October 2011, http://www.russianmission.eu/en/news/article-prime-minister-vladimir-putin-new-integration-project-eurasia-future-making-izvestia-3-.

space with EU and NATO enlargement plans as well as the sovereign choices of certain post-communist countries.

The end of the Cold War brought down the curtain on bloc confrontation. Nevertheless, it did not guarantee the solution of the aforesaid problems. On the contrary, the collapse of the Soviet Union has seriously exacerbated them. For twenty years we have seen a consistent narrowing of the window of opportunity to address these issues. The narrowness of this window became apparent by the late 2000s, even before the Ukrainian crisis and the stagnation of Russia's relations with both NATO and the EU. Success stories have been few and far between, and their cumulative effect could not deliver a qualitative breakthrough.

Indeed, virtually no issues in the security sphere have been solved. NATO's consistent enlargement ignored Russia's concern, at least as it is viewed from Moscow. Initiatives in the field of conventional arms control have reached deadlock. Local conflicts have not been settled by joint effort and, at best, they currently remain frozen. The strategic stability system is worsening (missile defense, prompt global strike initiatives, etc.) and nuclear deterrence remains the key guarantor of security (at least, for Russia). Indeed, post-Soviet states have become an arena for competition, rather than cooperation.

The situation in the economic and humanitarian spheres is better, but progress in this area has also largely been exhausted. Therefore, it is true that economic and humanitarian integration achieved certain results, but it has generally failed to deliver. This has been due to EU enlargement, the problem of multi-speed European integration and asymmetrical economic cooperation. Finally, energy cooperation seems politicized (i.e. 3rd Energy Package, transit routes).

At the same time, the fundamental issue of harmonizing post-Soviet states' integration plans has not been resolved. The post-Soviet space has become an arena of cutting the ties that bind along new dividing lines. In most cases, it has involved a clear-cut choice between Western and nominal Russian projects. Institutions and formats that could harmonize these processes have

failed to materialize. The principle of new states' sovereignty, which is undoubtedly correct from a formal standpoint, has *de facto* ignored the great number of obvious and hidden problems in post-Soviet states, including economic development, good governance, ethnic divisions, and open and latent conflicts. Formal sovereignty came under heavy pressure from internal problems and increased competition from major players.

All these problems had emerged before early 2014. However, the situation in Ukraine has led to their dramatic and cumulative aggravation. For the first time in 25 years, a local crisis in one country has shattered the whole system of relations between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community.

What remains to be lost

The tragedy is that even the theoretical options to solve at least some of the above-mentioned issues risk being quickly and irreversibly extinguished. There is a rapid radicalization of relations, which affects even those areas where cooperation seemed to be at hand. A year and a half ago the window of opportunity was narrow, but at least it was open. Now it seems to be closed indefinitely. In this regard, it is worthwhile highlighting some of the problems and missed opportunities in key fields.

Security

Europe and Russia should work together on reducing the risks of a nuclear conflict. In the short and medium terms increasing nuclear deterrence, information transparency, confidence-building measures are unlikely to see any positive development. In the worst-case scenario, a number of basic agreements will be reduced to nothing. The Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty (INF) is particularly at risk. One of the most alarming tendencies is the construction of a direct and formal connection between the conflict over Ukraine and the INF. This has never been a problem

before. There has been an on-going discussion between Russia and the U.S. on implementation of the treaty, but the INF itself has been treated as a separate track. It has not been correlated with other issues. However the U.S. Ukraine Freedom Support Act establishes such a link (section 10 of the Act). The danger is that Russia may be subjected to sanctions if it is suspected of violating the treaty. The mechanism of sanctions is not clearly stated in the Act in regard to INF. But the very spirit of the Act and the fact that INF has become a part of Ukrainian affairs is a matter of tremendous concern. This may undermine the treaty, which has been a fundamental achievement in Russia-West relations. Consequently, it will make Europe much less secure, promoting the arms race in a very sensitive sphere.

In particular, the dialogue on missile defense should be continued. Worsening relations with Russia could trigger the deployment of missile defenses in Europe as well as Russia's response to neutralize the potential threat to its nuclear forces. If earlier the parties managed to find a compromise, now the situation may result in an arms race, and the absence of any interaction. There is a risk that missile defense will be approached as a means to contain Russia. This justifies Russia's old fears and suspicions about the 'real aims' of the program and undermines trust, which is already close to zero. Tentative ideas on joint institutions to manage and operate missile defense as a measure of trust will hardly get back on the agenda in the foreseeable future.

Russia and NATO relations represent another crucial issue. Institutional mechanisms are phased out. The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) raised many questions and aroused censure. But it left open the possibility to exchange views and coordinate positions. This platform is now frozen indefinitely. Meanwhile, this could be a mechanism to reduce the risk of a political escalation, caused by unintended accidents between Russia and NATO arms forces.

At the same time the dialogue on Conventional Forces in Europe is mired in deadlock. In the short and mid-term perspective, we are likely to witness a conventional arms race and

local manifestations in the form of military aid from Russia and the West to the parties involved in the conflict in Ukraine. We will also witness a military build-up on both sides, which will negatively affect European security. Needless to say, such a trend will result in growing military expenditures and an ensuing shift of scarce resources from a development to a security agenda. This is harmful for Ukraine, Russia, the EU and the U.S. as well.

Similarly, the issue of U.S. Conventional Prompt Global Strike (CPGS) is likely to go beyond discussion. It may now be considered a mechanism to contain Russia via the prospect of retaliation. Russia cannot counterbalance the challenge with equivalent means. But Russian military doctrine implies that this challenge can be responded to by means of nuclear weapons if an attack using conventional forces against Russia threatens its existence as a state. No doubt, the development of global strike capabilities as well as Russian nuclear forces under conditions of zero-trust will severely undermine Euro-Atlantic security. In fact, it may revive the idea of limited nuclear strikes both in Russia and in the West. It is noteworthy that during the Cold War these ideas were carefully analyzed by both sides. They were rejected as suicidal due to the high probability of quick escalation to a large-scale nuclear conflict. Whether this conclusion will be made again is a matter of question.

Moreover, the interaction on cyber-security issues also faces some serious problems. The digital environment has been transforming into a field of bitter rivalry. Regulation initiatives, in the current situation, are unlikely to see any development. At the same time, cyberspace is becoming more and more crucial for national security. Russia, the EU and the U.S. remain vulnerable in terms of cyber threats. The absence of cooperation will increase this vulnerability. Moreover, cyberspace may become a field of hidden rivalry between them.

As far as cooperation in space is concerned, we are likely to witness a new wave of militarization and scaling down of multilateral cooperation. There is the possibility of reviving satellite interception programs and other programs involving the

militarization of near-earth orbit. Cooperation in space – one of the achievements of the late 1980s and beyond – may be halted in the future. Paradoxically, this may damage the most developed armed forces, due to their increased dependence on space navigation and opportunities, provided by space.

The local booms in the arms race, which are likely to take place in the Black Sea and Baltic regions, are also a possible threat. They will be determined by the dynamics of the Ukrainian crisis in the Black Sea region, and the mutual aggravation of the situation by Baltic NATO member states and Russia in the Baltic region. The key danger is the risk of escalating local arms races into regional ones. If this scenario will come true, any military training in these areas will be politicized by both sides. This will further increase fear, undermining trust. These dynamics can also contribute to 'freezing' and aggravating the local conflicts. Prospects for the multilateral settlement of the conflict in Ukraine are becoming more remote. A new round of hostilities is quite likely. This likelihood increases if the sides of the conflict will be actively armed, trained and supplied. The Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistrian conflicts could escalate along with the Ukrainian.

Consequently even the cooperation in solving non-regional problems achieved in the past years, where Russia and Europe can boast some positive and important results, is proceeding at a slower pace. The probability of successful multilateral action to address common problems and counter common threats, as with interaction on Afghanistan, the Syrian chemical weapons issue and others, is reduced. The Ukrainian crisis has even affected cooperation in the Arctic, where international interactions have been more or less depoliticized. Meanwhile, the problems, which need joint action, will not just fade away by themselves. They will be accumulating to explode one day or another.

Economic and humanitarian cooperation

Divergence in the economic trajectories of Russia, the EU and other European countries is unlikely to strengthen their global competitiveness. This is particularly true for Russia whose

economy is not sufficiently diversified. But it is also important for a stagnating EU that is losing the Russian market. Interregional cooperation is likely to suffer, affecting the feasibility of the "Europe of Regions" concept. Interregional relations may well suffer from the sharp deterioration of the political situation. Sanctions imposed by both sides are a key negative factor, which undermines the economic interdependence of Russia, the EU and other countries in the region. Sanctions will curtail interaction or substantially increase transaction costs. More specifically, financial sanctions will negatively affect the Russian economy. However, they will damage the EU economy too, also due to the connection of EU exports to Russia with Russia's access to the EU financial market. Due to sanctions, Russia will not have access to a large number of European technologies and investments, thereby losing one growth source. The European Union and other countries in the region are already confronted with losing markets, lack of key impetus for their industrial growth and reduction of their export potential. Finally, the process of harmonizing Russian and European standards in various fields, albeit very uneven in the past, may be at risk of a slowdown.

One of the major fields is no doubt energy security. Europe's energy security is undermined. Transit routes through Ukraine will become an object of constant political manipulation. The collapse of the South Stream gas pipeline project increases instability. Russia will gradually lose the European gas market. The EU will lose Russia as a traditionally reliable partner.

Similarly, the humanitarian field, specifically educational and scientific cooperation, can also be affected by political conflicts and economic sanctions. At the very least, we should expect a decrease in funding for multilateral programs and projects by the EU and individual European countries on the one hand and by Russia on the other.

The issue of liberalizing the visa regime between Russia and the EU will, at best, be frozen. At worst, both sides will impose travel restrictions. This will deal a blow to close social and human relations that create the living fabric of the future Greater Europe.

Reducing travel and exchanges will only exacerbate reciprocal stereotyping and hostility. Liberalizing the visa regime for Ukrainians will aggravate the situation, widen the gap, intensify polarization and deepen dividing lines. The ability to exert joint control over migration flows will also be badly hit. The Ukrainian crisis engenders the problem of refugees and illegal migration, hitting both sides. The lack of cooperation in this sphere will, finally, increase the price of resolving this problem.

More generally, in terms of European perception, Russia is regaining the status of a 'significant other' ("Russia is not Europe"). A similar process will gain momentum in Russia. This gap will be maintained and widened by the media, the education system and other institutions, making the split long-term. It is noteworthy that a similar tendency is also occurring with Turkey (though due to different reasons). Indeed, Ankara seems to be rethinking its 'European' vocation as well.

Interaction in the post-Soviet space

Only multilateral cooperation can solve important regional issues. Russia, the EU, the U.S., and other actors are unlikely to help the post-Soviet countries in resolving existing conflicts and contradictions single-handedly. Such unilateral efforts are sure to be opposed by one of the parties, and this is particularly true for the conflict in Ukraine.

While major transparency would help provide better integration, the dividing lines in the post-Soviet space – restricting, in particular, freedom of movement – will damage labor and student migration. This will lead to economic losses and the general degradation of human resources. This may be the case for Ukraine.

It goes without saying that instability in the post-Soviet space will prevent the formation of full-fledged sovereign states. By 'sovereignty' we mean here the ability to pursue an independent political course, to govern one's own territory efficiently, and to be self-supporting. Ukraine again offers an illustrative example. After the collapse of the Soviet Union that country had a unique

development opportunity. Free from the diverse cumbersome problems that Russia faced, the country was large and developed enough to play its own economic and political role. This unique opportunity was missed.

That is why measures need to be taken in order to strengthen cooperation between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union. The interaction between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Community loses many of its prospects if the political differences between Russia and the European Union continue to gain momentum. The project of Eurasian economic integration is often treated as a "geo-political project of Moscow". Such an approach obscures opportunities of economic collaboration with this emerging regional project for all the actors that could be involved.

Finally, it is necessary to work out a common strategy in resolving issues in the former Soviet countries in order to maintain economic ties and stability. Rivalry in the post-Soviet space is fraught with the risk of incurring expenses in most countries, and particularly Ukraine. The consistent severance of ties with the Russian market deprives Ukraine of an important source of growth. Russia also pays a price, as it is forced to spend resources to substitute Ukrainian imports. The European Union will probably have to pay an even greater price to protect Ukraine from financial and economic collapse. Severing economic ties with Russia deprives other countries in the post-Soviet space of sources of growth. Though the Russian economy faces recession, its market is still an opportunity for the post-Soviet states.

Conclusion

The further deepening of the dividing lines is sure to inflict serious damage on all interested parties. The European Union, Russia and post-Soviet states are bound to suffer, as are other regional actors such as Turkey. Despite increasing political tension, we should revive the idea of building a Greater Europe.

At the moment the idea of a Greater Europe may seem utopian for many. However, without values and ideological guidelines,

any rational pragmatism and realism will hang suspended. Without such guidelines, any pragmatic activity carried out by a country resembles "rats in the garbage" – i.e. the shortsighted use of available opportunities without any long-term thinking.

In contrast, the presence of a common unifying idea makes pragmatism meaningful and focused on attaining common long-term goals.

What exactly can be done to realize the idea of a Greater Europe and avoid taking situation-based, chaotic and hostile steps? The minimum required steps seem to be as follows.

In the field of security it is necessary to refrain from provoking actions in the military sphere, namely the build-up of military forces, dangerous approaches by military aircraft, warships, etc. It is also important to carry out military exercises and maneuvers in contact zones between Russian and NATO forces in a mutually predictable way.

Russia and the U.S. should separate the Ukrainian crisis from other security issues and existing treaties like INF.

All the sides concerned should spare no effort in achieving a cease-fire in Ukraine, promoting negotiations between the conflicting parties and reaching a long-term solution to the conflict by re-shaping the country's territorial structure, or by other means acceptable to the parties to the conflict. Under the current conditions, it implies the multilateral support and promotion of the Minsk agreements.

To this aim, it would be wise to establish a mechanism of regular multilateral consultations (contact groups) on the crisis in Europe. It is crucially important to have a regular format for Euro-Atlantic leaders' interaction to manage the existing crisis.

The issue of the Treaty on European Security, as well as the reform of the OSCE should be put back on the agenda. The very fact of discussion may help to rebuild at least some level of trust.

The work of the NATO-Russia Council should be resumed and in addition to its use for Ukraine it should serve again as a discussion forum to address issues of common threats and challenges.

In the field of economic and humanitarian cooperation a joint program of humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian regions in need of it should be developed and launched (possibly under the auspices of the OSCE). At the same time, the EU and Russia should work out a mechanism for joint action on economic aid to Ukraine, addressing the consequences of the current financial and economic crisis.

Mutual visa discrimination and the extension of political controversies to cooperation in education, science and other areas of cultural interaction should be vigorously opposed. Similarly, systemic discussion of 'controversial issues' in relations between Russia, the EU and certain European states at the level of universities, research centers and the national councils on foreign relations should be launched (Track 2 and Track 1.5).

In the field of interaction in the post-Soviet space a dialogue on multilateral security guarantees for post-Soviet states should be reestablished at least at Track 2 level. Discussion of the topic on the political level is hardly possible now. But experts should have a longer-sighted view compared to politicians.

The issue of multilateral rapid response mechanisms to crises in the post-Soviet space should be taken into consideration.

Finally, an inventory of political, economic and humanitarian projects in Russia, the EU and other countries in the post-Soviet space should be drawn up. It is necessary to determine the points of contact and synchronize them, putting some of these projects in a multilateral mode whenever possible.

In practical terms, it seems necessary to run a detailed study of these and other proposals by leading think tanks in the countries concerned.

6. The Logic of U.S. Engagement: Talking to Russia - and European Allies in the Lead

Sean Kay

The continuing crisis in Ukraine raises fundamental questions about how best for the United States to engage with adversaries and allies. This chapter examines the American approach to engaging Russia before and during the Ukraine crisis. It shows that Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea has added greater cohesion to the West while accelerating a rebalancing of responsibility sharing between the United States and Europe. The United States has calibrated its approach towards Russia so as to sustain engagement while putting capable allies in lead diplomatic, economic, and military roles. A careful mix of political and economic punishment, diplomatic engagement, and symbolic reassurance of NATO members provides a framework for limiting the damage done by Russia's irresponsible behavior. At the same time, as the 2013 crisis over Syria's use of chemical weapons and the 2015 Iran nuclear bargaining showed, America works with Moscow when interests align. Meanwhile, as the United States continues with its 'Asia Pivot', the need for European allies to assume an even greater role will accelerate – not with more spending on defense, but with pooling of military capabilities.

The benefits of talking with adversaries

The United States has often sought to isolate governments not adhering to international norms. At the same time, however, America diplomatically engaged the Soviet Union, and then Russia, as common national interests meant talking. For example, the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis demonstrates the benefits of engagement and bargaining. John F. Kennedy took a tough stance against the Soviet Union's delivery of nuclear missiles to Cuba, declaring that an attack from Cuba would be considered as if it were an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States. But, he also ruled out an invasion and negotiated a deal: the United States would not invade Cuba, would remove its own missiles from Turkey, and the Soviet Union withdrew its missiles from Cuba. Subsequently, Richard M. Nixon opened the door to communist China which changed Cold War geopolitics by dividing Moscow and Beijing. Ronald Reagan negotiated with the Soviet Union to wind down the Cold War. Bill Clinton worked to enlarge NATO but also to bring Russia into the European security framework, offering Moscow concessions it never would have merited on its own, like joining the G8. Bill Clinton remained engaged with Boris Yeltsin even as his regime embraced a military doctrine supporting intervention in the 'near abroad' to protect the rights of some 22 million Russian minorities living outside of Russia; leveled Chechnya; became autocratic; applied loose rhetoric about the use of nuclear weapons; and elevated Vladimir Putin to Russia's leadership. George W. Bush quickly returned to normal relations with Russia after it invaded the Republic of Georgia. Barack Obama set out to 'reset' U.S.-Russian relations, which paid dividends over sanctions on Iran's nuclear program[1]. Despite the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea in early 2014, the Western allies have maintained diplomatic engagement and calibrated political and economic responses while ruling out a military solution. The clear objective of the U.S. and its European

1. See D. Nexon, "The 'Failure of the Reset': Obama's Great Mistake, or Putin's", *The Washington Post*, 4 March 2014.

allies has been de-escalation and offering 'off-ramps' to Russia from which it could turn away from its new pariah status in world affairs.

In the American context making concessions to adversaries, even when done from a position of strength, has become politically difficult. Often anything short of complete isolation or capitulation has been politically equated with appeasement, alluding to concessions made to Hitler before World War II. America had historically never previously considered places like Eastern Europe as important, let alone vital, national interests. Yet, in 1996 the Clinton Administration embarked on a new strategy of spreading Western visions of democracy and multilateral cooperation. The 1996 national security strategy declared: "While democracy will not soon take hold everywhere, it is in our interest to do all that we can to enlarge the community of free and open societies, especially in areas of greatest strategic interest, as in Central and Eastern Europe and the new independent states of the former Soviet Union"[2]. Spreading democracy via a military alliance into what Russia perceived as its sphere of influence was a major change in America's strategic concept. The United States did not intervene to help pro-western uprisings in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in Poland in 1981. Even before Mikhail Gorbachev reformed the Soviet Union, Ronald Reagan believed in the engagement and reassurance of Moscow. He wrote in his private diary in 1983, after a Soviet scare over NATO nuclear exercises that: "I feel the Soviets are so defense minded, so paranoid about being attacked that without being in any way soft on them we ought to tell them that no one here has any intention of doing anything like that. What the h–l have they got that anyone would want"[3].

Both liberal internationalists in the Clinton administration and neoconservatives in the George W. Bush administration embraced a new narrative of American power and leadership via NATO

[2] Details are available at http://www.fas .orgspp/military/docops/national/1996stra.htl.
[3] D. Birtch, "The USSR and the US Came Closer to Nuclear War Than We Thought", *The Atlantic*, 28 May 2013.

enlargement. Alternative approaches to consolidating stability in Central and Eastern Europe, like the compromise Partnership for Peace (which created a process of affiliation with the alliance), were characterized as appeasement even though at the time the Soviet Union had collapsed and Russia's economy and military were in free-fall. The Partnership for Peace was described by a senior Polish leader saying: "We've gone from Chamberlain's umbrella to Clinton's saxophone"[4]. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright labeled those who opposed NATO's enlargement as reflecting 'echoes of Munich' and she suggested support for policies like NATO enlargement were a 'litmus test' for whether America would "remain internationalist […] or retreat into isolationism"[5]. As Vice-President, Richard Cheney took this thinking a step further, saying in 2003: "I have been charged by the President with making sure that none of the tyrannies in the world are negotiated with […] we don't negotiate with evil; we defeat it"[6].

This vision, as seen from NATO's view, reflected a benign desire to use multilateral cooperation to enhance stability in post-Cold War Europe. With time, however, average Russians internalized a belief that the West failed to respect Russia's legitimate concerns regarding their immediate neighborhood. For many Russians there is a little difference between their vision and America's approach to the Western Hemisphere via the Monroe Doctrine. Still, Senator John McCain said, (speaking in Munich) in early 2015, of America's closest allies' effort to advance a cease-fire in eastern Ukraine: "History shows us that dictators will always take more if you let them […] They will not be dissuaded from their brutal behavior when you fly to meet them to Moscow

[4] S. Kay, *NATO and the Future of European Security*, Lanham, MD., Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, pp. 71-72.
[5] D. Broder, "Some NATO Expansion Arguments are Disturbing", *The Washington Post*, 19 July 1997.
[6] L.H. Gelb, "In the End, Every President Talks to the Bad Guys", *The Washington Post*, 27 April 2008.

– just as leaders once flew to this city"[7]. At the same time, as Henry Kissinger said in February 2015: "I'm uneasy about beginning a process of military engagement without knowing where it will lead us and what we'll do to sustain it […] I believe we should avoid taking incremental steps before we know how far we are willing to go… This is a territory 300 miles from Moscow, and therefore has special security implications"[8]. Political scientist John J. Mearsheimer put it succinctly: "Such a step is especially dangerous because Russia has thousands of nuclear weapons and is seeking to defend a vital strategic interest"[9].

The strategy of Western victory and adversarial defeat in diplomacy came to a breaking point over the 2013 Syria crisis. Syria used chemical weapons to kill about 1,300 civilians including hundreds of children. After the British Parliament rejected participation in a U.S. cruise missile attack to punish Syria, a window opened in which diplomatic engagement with Russia led to a better outcome. The United States and Russia negotiated an intrusive international inspection regime to successfully remove all declared chemical weapons from Syria. The prospects for an even modest success of weapons inspections were more substantial than the utility of a limited cruise missile strike (as had been the announced plan). As military historian Edward Luttwack wrote, weapons inspectors "might miss quite a few chemical warheads and bombs if they are hidden well enough. But that's no less true of any attempt to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons by bombing depots and bases – some are bound to escape detection and destruction, not to mention the potential for a dangerous dispersal of chemical agents in a strike". Moreover, Luttwack concluded: "Tehran's greatest fear is American and Russian cooperation. Especially now that economic sanctions have actually been effective, Iranian leaders might finally accept real

[7] J. Huggler, "Ukraine Crisis: U.S. Officials Compare Peace Efforts to Appeasing Hitler", *The Telegraph*, 8 February 2015.

[8] "Henry Kissinger, Mikhail Gorbachev Separately Warn about Ukraine Crisis Blowing Out of Control", *National Post*, 30 January 2015.

[9] J.J. Mearsheimer, "Don't Arm Ukraine", *New York Times*, 8 February 2015.

limits on their nuclear activities once they see Americans and Russians cooperating effectively in Syria"[10]. The Syria events are indicative of a broader dilemma. In terms of escalation, Moscow has tactical dominance and multiple options to retaliate against the U.S. and Europe. Russian gas flows into Europe, constraining the extent to which the allies wish to escalate, given the ongoing Eurozone crisis. Meanwhile, there is most likely no outcome favorable to the United States in places like North Korea, Afghanistan, Iran, and Syria that does not involve Russian cooperation.

The Ukraine crisis and the West

As the West pursued enlargement of integrative institutions like NATO and the European Union, Russian elites and the public increasingly came to a perception that America had broken a pledge that, once Germany was united in NATO, there would be no further expansion of the alliance[11]. As Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry write: " […] much of this souring is the result of American policies […] American foreign policy, so successful at the moment of settlement, has pursued goals contrary to the settlement's principles. This occurred through the administrations of both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush as the United States pursued short-term and secondary aims at the expense of more fundamental interests"[12]. The American approach to post-Cold War order-building in Europe offered a mixed record. NATO membership, for example, did help to consolidate stability in Poland as a geopolitical bridge between a rising Germany and declining Russia. The first round of NATO enlargement (which included Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) produced

[10] E. Luttwack, "Take It and Like It", *Foreign Policy*, 10 September 2013.

[11] See J.R. Shifrinson, "Put it in Writing: How the West Broke It's Promise to Moscow", *Foreign Affairs*, 29 October 2014, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142310/joshua-r-itzkowitz-shifrinson/put-it-in-writing.

[12] D. Duedney, G.J. Ikenberry, "The Unravelling of the Cold War Settlement", *Survival*, vol. 51, issue 6, 2009, p. 49.

gains for Russia as it received commitments of no permanent large-scale allied conventional or nuclear deployments in new NATO members; a NATO-Russia Founding Act created opportunities for deeper engagement with the West; and Russia was invited to join the G8 group of leading industrial powers. The second round of NATO enlargement (which included Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia) also did not produce a major backlash in Russia, and offered Moscow further gains with the creation of a permanent NATO-Russia Council. Now, with Russia's actions in Ukraine, Moscow lost its role in the G8 and NATO-Russia cooperation was suspended. Vladimir Putin is thus doing great damage to average Russians' desire to be seen with respect in the world. Nevertheless it is also the case that, over a twenty-year period, a deeply negative view of the West came to exist in Russia, heightened by classic Russian elite manipulation of existential external threats for domestic political gains. By 2015, Russians had a 42 per cent favorable view of China, and just a 6 and 4 per cent favorable view of Europe and the United States respectively[13].

Some American officials note that because Ukrainian membership in NATO was not on the agenda in the years prior to 2014, it could not have been a causal factor. However, many serious outside observers see it as the tap root of the crisis[14]. External actions can have internal political effects – in this case, heightening views among Russians that NATO is an existential threat. For example, American officials point to legalisms to show that the West did not break a promise to Mikhail Gorbachev that, once Germany was unified, there would be no further enlargement of NATO. However, what the NATO members think of that is not really relevant to how most Russians feel about the issue and thus

[13] J. Ray, N. Esipova, "Russia Approval of Putin Soars to Highest Level in Years", http://www.gallup.com/poll/173597/russian-approval-putin-soars-highest-level-years.aspx.

[14] For a key debate over this issue, see M. McFaul, J.J. Mearsheimer, S. Sestanovich, "Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?", *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2014, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142260/michael-mcfaul-stephen-sestanovich-john-j-mearsheimer/faulty-powers.

how they define their interests[15]. NATO officials have not helped in terms of providing clarity over Ukraine. Officials from member states, especially Germany, have made clear that Ukraine will not be joining NATO. Yet the 2008 Ukraine and Georgia declaration remains official alliance policy. Ukraine officially declared NATO membership its goal in 2014, breaking a prior commitment to neutrality. In spring 2014, NATO Deputy Secretary General, Alexander Vershbow, said in a speech in Vilnius that: "NATO enlargement has not exhausted itself. It has been a resounding success, it has made Europe – including Russia – more secure, and it remains a central pillar of NATO's future". In spring 2015, Vershbow visited Tbilisi, Georgia and tweeted, "All tools in place to help #Georgia move from #NATO partnership to membership. W/ necessary political commitment, I'm sure it will happen". When asked on Twitter how this could be if the NATO allies were not in consensus, Vershbow responded that the decision was made in Budapest in 2008.

Yet in Ukraine there is little popular support for a confrontational approach towards Russia or for alignment with Western institutions. As pollster Stephen Kull summarized a series of early 2015 public opinion data points in Ukraine: "The movement toward the EU, supported by Ukrainians in the Western and Northern parts of the country, has provoked a reaction in the Eastern part of the country that Russia has effectively exploited". Kull adds that 63 per cent of Ukrainians favored a neutral position between Europe and Russia, only 48 per cent of Ukrainians favored using military force to retake ground lost to Russian-backed rebels in eastern Ukraine, and only 4 out of 10 Ukrainians favored aspirations to join NATO[16]. Meanwhile, Ukraine is not remotely close to NATO membership criteria, in particular that requiring the settlement of border disputes. Keeping eastern Ukraine unstable enough so as to shape Ukraine's foreign policy

[15] See J.R. Shifrinson, (2014).

[16] "Ukraine Poll: Majorities Do Not Want to Move Closer to EU or Russia", 9 March 2015, http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/ukraine-poll-majorities-do-not-want-to-move-closer-to-eu-or-russia-300047151.html.

directions, while keeping NATO divided on the issue, is a likely Russian goal. Since the NATO allies have no intention of actually having Ukraine join NATO, they illogically risked incurring unnecessary costs by holding on to an ideal of Ukrainian NATO membership. Worse, they signaled dangerous false promises to the Ukrainian people.

A preference for spheres of influence and buffer zones in Ukraine was a clear redline for the Russians, which NATO policy drove right over with the alliance's 2008 declaration that Ukraine and Georgia would eventually become NATO members[17]. Advocates of the NATO open door for a democratic Ukraine did so out of an idealist-based moral goal that is laudable. But, as former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, wrote in his 2014 Memoir *Duty*:

> Getting Gorbachev to acquiesce to a unified Germany as a member of NATO had been a huge accomplishment. But moving so quickly after the collapse of the Soviet Union to incorporate so many of its formerly subjugated states into NATO was a mistake. Quickly including the Baltic states, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary was the right thing to do, but I believe the process should then have slowed […] Trying to bring Georgia and Ukraine into NATO was truly overreaching. The roots of the Russian Empire trace back to Kiev in the ninth century, so that was an especially monumental provocation. Were the Europeans, much less the Americans, willing to send their sons and daughters to defend Ukraine or Georgia? Hardly [...] NATO expansion was a political act, not a carefully considered military commitment, thus undermining the purpose of the alliance and recklessly ignoring what the Russians considered their own vital national interests[18].

Meanwhile, the United States had long believed it was important that the enlargement of the European Union was an additional key ingredient to order-building alongside NATO. Russia too had seemingly taken a less assertive tone towards the European Union.

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[17] "NATO Bucharest Summit Declaration", 3 April 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm.
[18] R. Gates, *Duty*, New York, Alfred Knopf, 2014, p. 157.

Nevertheless, in late 2013, it was the European Union, via a trade negotiation with Ukraine, which was at the heart of the crisis. America clearly felt that the EU was not taking a sufficiently strategic view towards Ukraine by pushing too hard a line over its deep economic liabilities. "F*** the EU", was the rather undiplomatic language used by American Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland[19]. When the existing pro-Russian government in Kiev opted instead to turn towards Moscow in late 2013, rather than towards the European Union, the Maidan protests and revolution accelerated.

The U.S. and Europe: a new burdensharing

This dismissive attitude towards the European Union was a legacy of America's sense of primacy and its strong preference that, after the Cold War, NATO should remain the primary European security institution. The idea of building a European-only military capacity was resisted strongly by the United States. This was, however, a paradox because the United States also wanted more burdensharing contributions from its allies. American policy, beginning in the 1990s, was to encourage the European members of NATO to develop "separable, but not separate" capabilities. The unintended result, however, was a steep decline in European defense investment, while deepening the dependence on U.S.-led architectures for military operations. As political scientist Barry Posen observes, while the United States was (by 2013) spending about 4.6 per cent of its gross domestic product on defense, the Europeans were spending collectively 1.6 per cent. Posen writes: "With their high per capita GDPs, these allies can afford to devote more money to their militaries, and yet they have no incentive to do so. And while the U.S. government considers draconian cuts in social spending to restore the United States' fiscal health, it continues to subsidize the security of Germany […] This is

[19] "F*** the EU", *The Guardian*, 7 February 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2014/feb/07/eu-us-diplomat-victoria-nuland-phonecall-leaked-video.

welfare for the rich"[20]. Nevertheless, the United States has, at the same time, been unwilling to change the incentive basis for European investment in defense and broader strategic engagement.

When taken together, the European members of NATO have two nuclear powers and over 2 million people collectively in uniform. Still, while the U.S. was spending 31 per cent of its defense budget on capability investments, the European allies spent a combined 22 per cent. Most European defense spending was national and not coordinated to allow for specialization and thus lower costs[21]. In 2013, for example, France sent 2,400 ground troops in an intervention into the African country Mali to combat radical Islamic militias with links to al-Qaeda. The French force was small – but the remaining total collective European contribution was just 450 troops – and limited to a post-crisis training mission. France could not sustain the operation alone and had to turn to Washington to provide enabling forces. The absence of European capability underscored growing costs to the United States even when an ally tried to lead. For example, the C-17 cargo plane, which the U.S. contributed to move French troops and equipment cost about $225 million per plane to procure. This cost the U.S. about $4.5 billion in terms of new planes and existing maintenance of procurements and about $12,000 per hour to fly. Personnel costs run about $385,000 per service member associated with each plane – which grow higher with training costs for pilots and do not account for retirement and other associated long-term benefits[22].

Former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, had warned in 2011 that NATO faced a "dim, if not dismal future" and that "there will be a dwindling appetite and patience in the U.S. Congress – and in the American body politic writ large – to expend increasingly precious funds on behalf of nations that are

[20] B. Posen, "Pull Back: The Case for a Less Activist Foreign Policy", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 92, no. 1, January/February 2013, p. 121.
[21] J. Dempsey, "How Much Are Americans Willing to Spend to Defend Europe", *International Herald Tribune*, 7 January 2013.
[22] This data is compiled by P. Carter, "The French Connection", *Foreign Policy*, 23 January 2013.

apparently unwilling to devote the necessary resources or make the necessary changes to be serious and capable partners in their own defense". Gates added that some allies are "apparently willing and eager for American taxpayers to assume the growing security burden left by reductions in European defense budgets"[23]. These problems of European dependence on American power projection were especially pronounced in areas of enabling forces (transport, intelligence, command and control, etc.) for even relatively small operations, like the French-led incursion into Mali. Meanwhile, European contributions became more and more limited – from robust engagement in the Balkan conflicts to just a handful of countries in the Libyan war in 2011. This dependence was especially problematic given America's strategic plans to pivot to Asia. The Asia pivot requires America to reduce its military footprint in other regions while Asia remains steady or growing in American diplomatic, trade, and military considerations. Given the capacity of allies in Europe to invest in their own defense needs, this pivot requires the Persian Gulf to be the second major emphasis, and Europe would be third among major priorities for important American geopolitical considerations. Meanwhile, fiscal realities also require the United States to liberate costly overseas military deployments so as to invest in the domestic foundations of power.

There is acute uncertainty among the new NATO allies closer to Russia who are nervous about the viability of NATO's collective defense commitments. Secretary of State, John Kerry, said in April 2014 that: " […] together we have to make it absolutely clear to the Kremlin that NATO territory is inviolable. We will defend every single piece of it […] Article V of the NATO treaty must mean something, and our allies on the frontline need and deserve no less"[24]. This statement was a re-interpretation both of the NATO treaty and existing NATO defense plans. The

[23] T. Shanker, "Defense Secretary Warns NATO of 'Dim Future'", *New York Times*, 10 June 2011.
[24] D. Brunnstrom, "Kerry: NATO Territory Inviolable", *Reuters*, 29 April 2014.

NATO treaty is worth re-reading because it is frequently interpreted well beyond what Article V actually says:

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area[25].

This language was intentionally left ambiguous to ensure flexibility, promising only to consider an attack on one as an attack on all, and consultation over how best to respond[26]. Credibly in the Cold War this was achieved with large forward deployed ground forces and nuclear weapons. Today, the promise is based on reinforcement of a threatened ally, which would depend on all NATO members agreeing to implement. This raises understandable concerns about whether NATO processes could inhibit reinforcement of a threatened ally. As the Polish Prime Minister said in August 2008, regarding reluctance in NATO to back Georgia against Russia: "Poland and the Poles do not want to be in alliances in which assistance comes at some point later – it is no good when assistance comes to dead people"[27]. At the same time, for many European allies, the problems of Ukraine – even the Baltics – are a distant worry. Italy, for example, was expected to gain 200,000 immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East in 2015. In April 2015, columnist Jim Hoagland spelled out the dilemma for NATO. He cited a long-time Italian NATO hand saying, a week after 900 North African refugees drowned trying to

[25] "The North Atlantic Treaty", Washington, D.C., 4 April 1949.
[26] See L.S. Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance*, Boston, MA, Twaynes Publishers, 1994.
[27] T. Shanker, N. Kulish, "Russia Lashes Out on Missile Deal", *New York Times*, 15 August 2008.

get to Italy: "For us, the biggest threat comes from the South […] Our nightmares are not about Russian tanks invading from the east. They are about the terrorists a short boat ride away in Libya". Hoagland also quotes a hawkish French member of parliament saying: "Nobody in France is debating about arming Ukraine […] We are debating how much national surveillance we need to spot terrorists returning from war zones in Syria and Iraq, and how to stop Africa from completely imploding"[28].

The Asia Pivot and European security

The Ukraine crisis initially appeared to give weight to those who long opposed the Asia pivot, preferring instead that Europe remain an equal priority for the United States. Columnist Roger Cohen said: "Certainly, pivot to Asia does not look like such a great idea right now"[29]. It was crucial to stand up to Russia in eastern Ukraine, in part because if aggression was not challenged there, then China might believe that it could get away with similar actions in the Asia-Pacific. Still, in places like the Asia-Pacific, what matters is the actual balance of power, and availability of forces in the event of a conflict. In that sense, America being continually dragged into conflicts like eastern Ukraine was also likely to signal a vacuum or opening in Asia. Thus Poland's Defense Minister hurt his own cause after meeting with U.S. Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, in April 2014. The U.S. would not, as Poland wanted, be permanently stationing troops in that country or the territory of the three Baltic countries. Instead, there would be very small, rotational exercises, numbering in the hundreds. The Polish official nevertheless criticized American strategic priorities and instead said that: "Events show that what is needed is a re-pivot, and that Europe was safe and secure because

[28] J. Hoagland, "Challenges to the South for NATO", *The Washington Post*, 24 April 2015.

[29] Roger Cohen, comments at CSIS conference, 20 March 2014, https://archive.org/details/CSPAN2_20140320_163000_Key_Capitol_Hill_Hearings#start/4313/end/4343.

America was in Europe"[30]. In reality, the U.S. is continuing with the Asia pivot, and the Ukraine crisis makes it all the more urgent that the European allies, via both NATO and the European Union, be able to stand on their own, without the United States if necessary. The *New York Times* reported in spring 2014 at the height of the crisis over Crimea that:

> […] Mr. Obama next month will head back to Asia, and aides said he would again promote his policy of pivoting toward the region he believes represents the future for America's strategic priorities. One goal then for Mr. Obama, aides said, is to challenge Europe to take more of a leadership role itself, a familiar theme from Washington but one infused with a new urgency by the Ukraine crisis[31].

The Asia pivot was long mischaracterized by its opponents as a retrenchment or abandonment of long-standing American allies. This was never the case. The core assumption – driven by overstretch abroad and economic crisis at home – is that to meet new challenges posed by the rise of China, the United States needs to hand over lead responsibility to capable allies for their immediate security while being supported by the United States. Europe was in a particularly good position to find ways to better pool resources. The Eurozone crisis remained (through 2015) the primary challenge affecting European stability, not eastern Ukraine. Combined with deep austerity, this meant that European nations had little incentive to increase defense spending. However, they are incentivized to better pool their capabilities and to coordinate effectively on major European diplomatic initiatives. There were several core elements of the allied response to Russia within this broader strategic context: signaling strong and united political isolation of Russia for its illegal annexation over Crimea; gradually raising economic pain via sanctions which, combined with capital flight and dropping oil and gas prices, had a

[30] F. Hiatt, "U.S. Ground Troops Going to Poland, Defense Minister Says", *The Washington Post*, 18 April 2014.
[31] M.D. Shear, P. Baker, "Obama Renewing U.S. Commitment to NATO Alliance", *New York Times*, 26 March 2014.

significant impact on the Russian economy; symbolic but important reassurance of new NATO allies in a way that puts Europeans in the lead; and encouraging European-led diplomacy, in particular that pursued by German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and French President, Francois Holland.

Meanwhile, clear signals were sent to Russia that the West would work with it where it could. Just after terrorist attacks in France in January 2015, NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, said: "That's the reason why we still strive for a more cooperative and constructive relationship with Russia" – reflecting on the benefits of working with Russia on counter-terrorism[32]. The balance of power overwhelmingly favors the Western alliance and thus restraint and engagement was a strategic advantage relative to the complexity of the Ukraine crisis. The NATO allies collectively spend over $1 trillion a year on defense versus about $80 billion for Russia. Russia made tactical gains in eastern Ukraine – but Moscow was, overall, playing a weak hand. NATO did not need to diminish the prospects for de-escalation of the crisis or discourage some kind of negotiated settlement about Ukraine's future status[33].

In terms of military actions, the United States and the European allies focused mainly on how to provide low-level, but symbolically important, reassurance to new NATO members nearest to Russia. NATO sustained rotational deployments via exercises into allied countries concerned about Russia. This was done in ways that could be ratcheted up or down depending on Moscow's behavior. NATO opted against permanent deployments so as not to give Vladimir Putin justification for even more aggression, i.e. via a claim that it was the allies who violated the NATO-Russia Founding Act. NATO's approach to collective defense has, since it began enlargement in the mid-1990s, made its new members nervous because it is built upon reinforcing a member that is attacked, rather than on forward defense of

[32] A. Delfs, "NATO Head Says Russian Anti-Terror Cooperation Important", *Bloomberg News*, 8 January 2015.
[33] J. Rovner, "Putin's Crimea Blunder", *The National Interest Online*, 6 March 2014, http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/putins-crimea-blunder-10006.

territory. That is not the automatic security guarantee countries like Poland hoped to get on joining NATO. In particular, it requires consensus among all NATO allies to implement any decision to reinforce one of its member states. The allies sought to address this in military terms at a summit meeting in Wales in September 2014. They created a new 'spearhead' force that can move rapidly to reinforce an ally in a crisis within forty-eight hours. The force-planning concept was relatively small – just up to 5,000 in total – but, crucially, it was to be all-European in its makeup.

The NATO spearhead force for rapid deployment in an Article V scenario is an important development as it does not require American ground forces to implement. There are, nonetheless, significant hurdles in terms of force structure, size, and costs. If one or two key contributing allies do not participate, the entire operational concept could unravel. This spearhead force, meanwhile, was not anticipated to even be deployable until 2016 – and, when available, it would only take one NATO ally to block consensus on its activation. Still, the model of building new force structures without the United States was important. Britain stepped forward early, offering 1,000 operational troops and an additional 3,500 for exercises and pre-deployment of equipment to facilitate its use. Prime Minister David Cameron said at the Wales summit: "No one will leave here with any doubt that our collective security is as strong as it has ever been. The Alliance is firmly committed to providing ongoing reassurance to our eastern Allies"[34]. Nonetheless, sustaining readiness for rapid deployment will be expensive even for such a small grouping. Who else would contribute and pay these costs was unclear when NATO planners met in November 2014 to review progress on the force structure. For example, would non-contributing allies offset the costs of the force? Consequently, an interim force was to be set up including

[34] N. Morris, "Ukraine Crisis: NATO Agrees Major Troop Deployment to Guard Against Russian Aggression", *The Independent*, 5 September 2014.

contributions from Germany, the Netherlands, and Norway[35]. Considerable work remains to fill the collective gaps so that the United States could facilitate European-only operations in the future. There was a new urgency to this rebalancing brought on by the Ukraine crisis because if the United States had to rush forces towards a much more strategically significant challenge in Asia, and Europe was unable to stand alone, a greater crisis might ensue.

Conclusion. Towards a new transatlantic architecture

Rather than force a rethink of major strategic priorities, like the Asia pivot, the United States has responded effectively to the Russia crisis by not playing into Moscow's narrative and putting capable allies in the diplomatic, economic, and military lead. The United States has coordinated transatlantic consensus to apply painful political and economic costs on Russia without putting at risk cooperation on areas of mutual interest. It has creatively backed Germany and France as they took diplomatic leads in negotiating a significant cease-fire in Ukraine in early 2015. Working with its allies, it has developed within NATO an European-led spearhead response force, while also offering symbolic rotational exercises to demonstrate its commitment to reassure allies nearest to Russia. It has also worked to anchor the vital transatlantic relationship with Europe by investing in ongoing negotiations over a U.S.-EU trade deal. The United States has done this while sustaining its pivot towards Asia. Looking ahead, the United States and its allies will likely need to make a tough choice to revoke their promise of Ukrainian membership in NATO as there is not likely any solution to the crisis that includes that outcome. Additionally, the United States and its European allies must now make a direct and sustained commitment to work together to better consolidate and pool European capabilities. America's European allies can provide the main tripwire forces for

[35] See S. Fidler, "NATO Struggles to Muster 'Spearhead' Force to Counter Russia", *Wall Street Journal*, 1 December 2014.

collective defense operations and can have plans and capacity to project pooled military capabilities to conduct a Balkans or Libya-style peace enforcement operation without (or supported by) the United States. If the transatlantic burdensharing relationship is successfully realigned, then the United States will be positioned to lead the transatlantic relationship into a durable and lasting architecture for the 21st century.

Conclusions.
What Policy Actions for the EU?

Aldo Ferrari

After the Ukraine crisis, relations between the EU and Russia hit rock bottom, the lowest point from the end of the Cold War. To make things worse, today's dispute is nothing but the latest chapter of an already long story of misunderstandings and conflicting strategies on the post-Soviet states of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus. The further deepening of this cleavage may inflict serious damage on all interested parties: the EU, Russia and several post-Soviet states. Therefore it is crucially important to overcome a scenario which may recreate the atmosphere of confrontation that marked the Cold War. It will not be an easy mission because of the very different aims of the involved actors. As Carmen Claudín and Nicolás de Pedro put it in chapter 1, "the centrality of the Ukrainian question for Russia lies in the fact that it is not simply a foreign affairs issue – like Iran or China is. Ukraine is at the heart of Russia's national interests and essentialist narrative. On the contrary, for the EU, Ukraine was an issue of mere foreign policy – with no perspective at all of an institutional integration - but now it has become a matter of self-assertion and inner coherence of its own values".

Although the Russian proposal of the idea of a 'Greater Europe' – from Lisbon to Vladivostok (see Timofeev's chapter 5) – appears scarcely feasible in the present day scenario, the gravity of the Ukraine crisis imposes a profound rethinking of the relationship between the EU and Russia. The competition for post-Soviet space represents the most serious threat to the partnership between Brussels and Moscow. Indeed, relations with Russia are

essential for the EU – and the whole West – to deal with many pressing issues, including the conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, the increasing terrorist threat, and eventually with a rise of the political and military prowess of China. Russia and the European Union have various and good reasons to enhance their cooperation, starting from Ukraine. Besides, establishing effective Euro-Russian cooperation on Ukraine may let the United States focus on the issues more relevant to its own security and economic interests.

Against this background, some policy recommendations may be conveyed to the EU. Indeed, most of them may equally apply to Moscow too despite its deeply different political stance.

The time is ripe to reset Eastern Partnership

In order to build a new and more solid relationship with Moscow, the European Union should adopt a consistent and largely innovative policy matching its own interests with Russia's security interests, while upholding the independence of Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. No matter how well-founded the Russian argument is, the EU cannot help but acknowledge that Moscow perceives the EaP as an antagonistic partnership. This preliminary acknowledgement is key because, from the Russian viewpoint, the eastwards expansion of the EU is nothing but a Trojan Horse for NATO enlargement. This holds true also when it comes to other Western countries. As Sean Key puts it in chapter 6 "looking ahead, the United States and its allies will likely need to make a tough choice to revoke their promise of Ukrainian membership in NATO as there is not likely any solution to the crisis that includes that outcome".

The first necessary step to reset the relationship between Brussels and Moscow is – as much as possible – a search for all possible links between the EU's project of political integration of post-Soviet countries with Russia's. Unfortunately, there has been no serious and systemic dialogue between the two sides for almost twenty-five years. The establishment of a frank discussion on this

issue would help rebuild at least some level of trust. In a nutshell, as Luca Ratti maintains in chapter 3 "… there will certainly not be a secure continent without a comprehensive reconciliation with Russia".

Such a comprehensive reconciliation must inevitably take into account the historical sensitivity of Eastern European countries towards Russia – with special attention to Poland's, as highlighted by Stepan Bielanski in chapter 4 – but without jeopardizing the necessary strategic cooperation with Moscow. In the last two years, indeed, a kind of unofficial coalition including not only Poland and the Baltic States, but also Russoskeptics in Britain, Sweden, and other countries has influenced the EU's attitude toward Russia. However Germany too, and consequently other states of "Old Europe", have taken a tougher stance vis à vis Moscow. A more balanced approach is probably needed to support the EU's economic and strategic interests.

On the other hand, despite the strategic importance of acquiring the Crimea and great domestic support for it, Putin too should feel strongly motivated to get out of today's trap of political isolation and the progressive economic decline of his country. One should note that this economic decline does not primarily stem from the Western sanctions or the recent fall of oil prices. Russia's economy is overly dependent on exports of raw materials and still awaits deep structural reform. It is vital for Moscow to restart and invest in the partnership with Europe and the West, also with the view to modernizing its economy.

Clearly, the current crisis between Russia and the West has wide-ranging geopolitical implications. Faced with political and economic pressures from the US and the EU, Russia is increasingly tilting towards China. However, as the balance of power between China and Russia continues to shift in favor of the former, Moscow risks becoming a junior partner of Beijing.

A deep and long-term alienation from Russia may turn out to be dangerous for both the US and the EU. Indeed, Sino-Russian economic integration and political alignment may force the EU to

face a rival economic space stretching from St. Petersburg to Shanghai.

European interests come first

The establishment of renewed cooperation between the EU and Russia should be primarily based on European interests, which do not completely coincide with those of the US. It would suffice to note that bilateral trade between Russia and the EU amounted to $401 billion in 2013, while Russia-US total trade amounted for just $22 billion. Furthermore, the bulk of the EU-Russia trade is made of strategically important goods: energy product. To this aim, one should recall that even today almost 40 per cent of the EU gas imports come from Russia. Such percentage reaches a full 100 per cent for some Eastern European countries, starting from the Baltic republics. The Russia-EU relationship is therefore basically different than the one between Russia and the US, not only because of geographic proximity.

From both an economic and strategic point of view the Ukraine crisis and the reshaping of the relationship with Moscow are substantially European problems. Therefore the EU should definitively assume the leading role on those issues.

Moving Ukraine from a battlefield to a cooperation field

Ukraine and other former Soviet countries should no longer be considered a battlefield between European – or Western – interests and Russian ones, but as a space of necessary and feasible cooperation between them. Once more, this objective will not be easy to achieve, but it is the only possible path towards the stabilization of Ukraine and the normalization of the relationship between the EU and Russia.

The EU should encourage Russia to definitively recognize the independence of post-Soviet states in a context of partnership, not of exclusion. To accomplish this a mechanism of regular bilateral

consultations is needed not only to manage the Ukraine crisis but also to prevent the emergence of new ones in the post-Soviet space. The issue of the Treaty on European Security, as well as reform of the OSCE should be put back on the agenda. At the same time the work of the NATO-Russia Council should be resumed as a discussion forum to address common threats and challenges, not only on the European continent. The Ukrainian membership in NATO should be excluded or, at least, postponed.

The use of force to resolve Ukraine's internal conflicts should be completely excluded as well as the supply of heavy weapons to the Ukrainian government and all measures that might encourage military escalation. Such efforts in the security and military field should go hand in hand with a joint EU-Russia initiative aimed at providing economic support to Ukraine. By the same token, it is crucial to promote rounds of negotiations with a view to removing the incompatibility between the European Free Trade Agreements and the Eurasian Customs Union. In addition, the EU should try hard to support Ukraine by laying the groundwork for functional and sustainable rule of law.

Last but not least, the stabilization of a historically and culturally heterogeneous country like Ukraine might also require a process of federalization. Crimea could be included in such a process, too.

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