

From Obsolete Normative to Realpolitik in the EU and Russia Foreign Policy Relations

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Abstract: *Growing global and regional challenges in terms of security and prosperity call for cooperation and “new type of great power” relations. Yet, both the EU and Russia took a U-turn in terms of rejuvenation of the Cold War politics announcing an astonishing overt deviation to a binary ideology fueled zero-sum game. The EU failed to transpose Russia radical twist in foreign policy into a new design of the ENP and directly recalibrating the instruments managed to address the Eastern neighbourhood. The liberal functionalist approach would have been compatible assuming Russia had maintained its Western course; here, an exclusive design of the policy based on the normative matrix might have worked, although still at risk as it was excluding other regional power dynamics, the influences of the proximity of geography and the path-dependency that seems to reveal Cold War legacies. The Russia-Georgia war of 2008 and the annexation of Crimea were just a few of the outstanding signals that Russia’s assertiveness announced a reset of the power relations in the region. Hence, we reckon that it was a wrongly inspired policy choice for the EU to conclude prematurely enough that “Russia lacks the means of maintaining great-power status”², and consequently not predict state-like behaviour scenarios in response to a particular foreign policy pursued by the EU. In order to demonstrate the inappropriateness of the EU foreign policy design, we apply the concept of power and the regional security complex. Despite the fact that one of the pillars of the European Neighbourhood Policy is security for all, the EU has relied exclusively on policy stewardship built on a normative paradigm while miscalculating national security concerns of the Russian Federation.*

Keywords: *power politics, regional security complex, foreign policy*

Introduction

The ex-ante bewilderment that the EU leaders faced before the third Eastern Partnership Vilnius Summit, failing to bring Armenia to the table to sign the agreements on association and free trade and eventually its withdrawal from the Association Agreement (despite the

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² Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Russia between East and West*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005, p.X.

fact it completed negotiations!), and the last minute refusal of Ukraine to conclude the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) with the EU, represented a heavy blow for the EU flagship foreign policy initiative to the Eastern EU border and the lack of capacity to provide a tailor-made policy within an international subsystem of inter-state relations.

The EU hesitation to respond to the US call to impose sanctions on Russia and a still divisive standing among Member States in adopting a common EU position towards the crisis in Ukraine, augmented by distinct bilateral relations that few EU Member States pursue with Russia, are clear indications on the failure of the EU foreign policy to pursue a joint strategy to safeguard the interests of Member States and to achieve predictable goals within the international relations system.

Both the EU and Russia had quite an institutionalised relation up till late 2011 (summits every six months, with the Cooperation Council transformed in the Permanent Partnership Council, and in May 2003 adopting an integral framework of Four Common Spaces covering all the main sectorial directions, and two years later designing even roadmaps etc.). And yet, despite the cumulative and socializing stances, both Russia and the EU defaulted again. This time, power politics!

In the article we seek to answer a two-fold exploratory interrogation: how do we explain the causes of the tensed relation between the EU and Russia as well as the dynamics that radically transformed the status quo into a *nuovo modus operandi*? What are the circumstances that triggered “power shocks” for Russia to undertake an extreme position in managing international relations towards Ukraine and the EU?

In the end, we engage prospectively at least to answer one question and that is what sort of re-alignment, if any, both the EU and Russia may be engaged with?

In the analysis we look at the relations between Russia and the EU with a particular focus on the *power dynamics*. Due to the resources limitations, most of the data gathered relies on secondary conventional data sources, yet from reliable sources such as the EU, Russia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia Presidency, official statements from the top politicians and policy papers analysis. Therefore, interviews were conducted with scholars from Russia Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO) during the author’s research fellowship in the fall of 2014.

Essentially, we challenge the western wide spread caveat that the crisis in Ukraine is the sole fault of Russia’s imperialist quest to rebuild the Soviet Union and re-incorporate all the actual independent republics.

Our central argument is that the recent crisis in Ukraine has evolved due to the lack of policy congruence in between the EU regional integration policies, particularly the European Neighbourhood Policy and Russia foreign policy towards its “near abroad”.

In terms of content flow, we start by giving an overview to the EU institutional “advancement” to the Eastern border line pointing to the critical junctures that lead to a change in both EU’s and Russia’s foreign policy; we continue to develop the theoretical paradigm through the lens of which we filter our analysis on the causal chain that led to

the tensed relations between Russia and EU. Then, we argue that a patterned conduct in Russia's foreign policy could have been a clear indication of potential scenarios on Russia's responses towards the EU European Neighbourhood Policy and which turn the Russia-EU relation may take.

Facing the risk of developing a reductionist approach in explaining the *causes*, *chain-reaction attitude* and the *effects* of the EU – Russia foreign relations, we deliberately take a shallow causal exploration on other context based variables such as the *domestic* environment reflected in various stakeholders' actions (for instance NATO pursue of a certain policy towards Russia). Following on the same neorealist logic, no matter how neutral is the state bureaucracy it needs to take stock of changes and objectively embed that in the *core* policy realm. Hence, resorting to the *regional security complex*, we would argue that *domestic* and *inter-state relations* factors seem to be the missing explanatory fundament to account for a different state acting in the international system. In effect, we would then underline that *power* as the ultimate factor influencing state behaviour cannot be self-sufficient in explaining the state of art in the international relations system as states did act differently.

EU normative drive to the Eastern neighbourhood in a nutshell

Whereas the demise of the Cold War was expected to bring around the end of *ideological* battlefields with the prevalence of the unilateral Western hegemony, despite several good years of intense inter-institutionalization of the state relations, the EU and Russia seem to have reached a no-turning back point. The split, this time, stems from both a "civilizational" devise and a geopolitical deadlock that the European Union lacks an appropriate toolbox outside of the Euro-Atlantic framework.

The latest proposal³ coming from 13 EU Member States to allow for "differentiation" and "smart use of conditionality" signals a swap in the foreign policy partly for fear that Russia's Eurasia integration project highly politicized mixed with traditional conditionality would eventually prove more traction for states targeted by the Eastern Partnership in the shared neighbourhood. The EU – Russia diplomatic relations turned for a short period into a binary type one underlying full contingency and the risk of a second cold war evolving that in return would fire back to both strategic policy interests of the EU and Russia. Both the EU and Russia have played cat-and-mouse in the shared neighbourhood with heavy foreign policy outcomes by designing "disputed areas" or "grey zones" where neither of them took decisive steps until Russia's intervention in Crimea.

Currently, the EU rhetoric on the rule of law and human rights does not hold any strategic move while Russia plays realpolitik and the US expresses frustration towards the EU for the lack of coherence and direction in solving political turmoil in the EU neighbourhood.

Since its inception stage in 2004, the European Neighbourhood Policy (henceforth throughout the article referred to as ENP) has been the main instrument designed by the

³ 20 Points on the Eastern Partnership post-Vilnius; Non-Paper document, discussed by the Council of the EU on 10 February, not published officially.

European Union to manage the Eastern neighbourhood once the last wave of enlargement would be completed.

Started as a privileged relation favouring Russia vanity of major power in the framework of Four EU-Russian Common Spaces, the politics of the European Union, expressed rather vague in the European Neighbourhood Policy back in 2003-2004, did not pose any challenge to Russia dominance. It was only in 2004-2005 with the Orange revolution in Ukraine when Russia projected a reformed policy towards its satellite countries. So far looked upon as two distinct economic projects, the ENP of the EU and the Single economic space initiated by Russia, failure to control societal dynamics in Ukraine transformed a rather neutral position of Russia into a *competitive one* raising geopolitics back at the core of its foreign policy.

As initially Russia was quite sceptical on the EU capacity to influence its Western flank, gradually it dragged itself into a forceful race against its immediate traditional allies provoking economic blockages determined exclusively by its energy and trade policies.

Once the ENP was launched, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov harshly articulated that the Eastern Partnership is nothing else but “[...] an attempt to extend the EU’s sphere of influence, including to Belarus”⁴.

John Mearsheimer insisted on the fact that both NATO enlargement and EU expansion eastwards coupled with ostensive supportive position towards the coloured revolutions in both Ukraine and Georgia would trigger from Russia a “no surprise response” as “the West had been moving into Russia’s backyard and threatening its core strategic interests”.⁵

Taking into account the initial aim of the policy to avoid “the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and our neighbours”, and with not much of an analytical effort, one could agree that the evolution of the economic, social and political dynamics both in the Eastern part (Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus and to a lesser extent in Armenia and Moldova), but also in the Southern border of the EU (particularly in Libya, Palestine, Syria, Egypt) would contradict at least in terms of policy impact.

Initially constructed as a bilateral policy between the EU and partner countries individually, as it has attracted much criticism as being a too much of a “vague” policy, the ENP was supplemented by multilateral regional approaches such as the Eastern Partnership (launched in Prague in May 2009), the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, formerly known as the Barcelona Process, re-launched in Paris in July 2008), and the Black Sea Synergy (launched in Kiev in February 2008).

At once defined as mimetically borrowing from the Enlargement *acquis*, the core normative framework of the ENP reunited traditional values such as democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development as the bedrock foundation for “stability, prosperity and security for all”.

⁴ EU Observer, EU expanding its ‘sphere of influence,’ Russia says, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/27827>, retrieved on October 1, 2014.

⁵ John J. Mearsheimer, Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin, in *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014, retrieved on October 9, 2014.

The approximation of the EU standards has been ensured by means of *action plans* (or *Association Agendas*) individually negotiated for each partner country which are meant to support economic and political reforming, but also to get each country institutionally harmonized with the EU Internal Market code of procedures.

In 2010-2011, being under pressure to make differentiation in terms of pace and scope of its bilateral relations, the EU recalibrated its ENP policy unveiling the “more for more” principle. On a different note, in December 2011, during the Polish Presidency, the EU launched the European Endowment for Democracy (proposed in May 2011 in the review of the ENP “A new response to a changing Neighbourhood”) as an instrument to support the democratization in transition countries with an initial focus (but not exclusive) on the European Neighbourhood.

The Third Eastern Partnership Summit held in Vilnius, Lithuania on 28-29 November 2013 marked a milestone in defining the code of relations between the EU and Russia, determined largely by the crisis in Ukraine which definitely brought about a shift in gears and content for the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Given the inappropriateness of the policy toolbox to handle the latest intercourses in Ukraine, on the 27th of March 2014, in a joint communication, the Commission acknowledges the emergence of a “rapidly changing and complex geostrategic environment” and it calls on the Member States to “enable the EU to better react to developments in its neighbourhood”⁶.

Challenging from the very outset, both in terms of institutional design, having a double hat accountability (both the European External Action Service and DG Enlargement being involved), and instruments employed as well, few would argue that the ENP is nothing more than the Enlargement conditionality matrix reloaded. Yet, with the crisis in Ukraine, the European Neighbourhood Policy has gained *political* momentum as it trespasses the limits of being a mere bureaucratic tool for common policy development.

Hence, on the one side of the paradigm, the ENP closely followed on Article 8 of the EU Treaty “an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union”, while on the other side the ENP is limited by policy design and the pace of societal transformations in the states targeted. In effect, fault lines have been emerging between the EU and Russia; and that raises further competitive stakes and inadequate responses rather than bringing strategically the two players into joint efforts in order to maintain stability and security in Europe and the immediate vicinity.

Yet, a closer look at the very first documents produced by the European Commission, the geostrategic dimension ENP is revealing Ukraine as a key partner of the EU given that “some 80% of EU imports of Russian gas pass through Ukrainian pipeline infrastructure”

⁶ European Commission, *Neighbourhood at the Crossroads: Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2013* (Brussels, 27.3.2014 JOIN (2014)), pp.16-17.

and as a transit country for “transportation of oil and merchandise trade between the EU and the Black Sea and Caspian regions.”⁷

Covertly projected as an instrument for geopolitics, the ENP dragged the European Union into power politics that it has not been prepared to play due to the lack of coherent external policy and to the political and economic turmoil that swamped the EU since 2008. And yet, Member States as the main drivers of the Common Foreign and Security Policy have ostensibly resorted to foreign policy to respond to their national interests detrimentally opposing a single standing on the EU foreign affairs priorities.

Since 1997, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed by the EU and Russia has produced a rapid growth of trade and investment relations amongst the two making the EU the first trading partner and the most important investor in Russia (up to 75% of Foreign Direct Investment stocks in Russia come from the EU Member States). The new EU-Russia Agreement currently under negotiations was halted in 2010 mainly because of the announced EU Eastern Partnership and the Common Economic Space promoted by Russia and intentions to set up a Eurasian Economic Union, both sides pointing at the other for pushing into defining *spheres of influence*.

According to Directorate-General for Trade statistics⁸, if Ukraine stood as the third Russian trading partner in 2012, when it comes to the EU trade with the world Ukraine does not even come amongst the top 10.

Hence, there is no surprise that the Association Agreement proposed by the EU was perceived as heavily impinging upon Russia’s national interests, the situation around Ukraine being described by a Russian government source as a “textbook example of a trade war”. The proposed trade and economic roadmap architected by the EU technocrats in Brussels looked very much as ascribing an overt function to the Ukrainian market, such as of a “Trojan horse”⁹ to break into the Russian economic system. That in return triggered forced counter measures from Russia and turned Ukraine into a proxy battle field.

Analytical frameworks to explore the EU and Russia foreign policies

Our analysis dwells on the theoretical foundation that it is the structure of the post-Cold War international system translated at the subsystem tier in Europe that has influenced both the EU and Russia foreign policy drive.

The international order vacuum left behind by the end up of the Cold War, in Europe, was expected to be filled up successfully by the Council of Europe and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) which all member states committed to endorse. Yet, all regimes emerging seemed to have inclined forcefully towards a Western-like order

⁷ European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy – UKRAINE, MEMO/08/215, Brussels, 3 April 2008, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-08-215_en.htm?locale=en, retrieved on October 7, 2014.

⁸ European Commission, *European Union, Trade in Goods with Russia*, 2013, pp.9-10.

⁹ A. Gabuev, E. Surnacheva and S. Sidorenko, “Who influenced the Kremlin’s policy in Ukraine?”, *Russia Direct*, 4 March 2014, <http://www.russia-direct.org/content/who-influenced-kremlins-policy-ukraine>, retrieved on March 6, 2014.

which even Russia apparently in the early 1990s showed an interest to adhere to and even prompt. Others described the new international order as “a diffuse New World Order, where contradictory forces such as globalization, regionalism and US unilateralism seem to reign.”¹⁰

Richard Sakwa argues that the great failure of the post-Cold War international system lies in the inability to sustain the Helsinki approach apparently favouring an emerging trend of “the politics of Yalta”¹¹ in tandem with a marginalization of the OSCE.

Given the fact that the ENP lies at the intersection of the EU enlargement and foreign policy (even though institutionally it links more to the foreign policy), there is a challenge in its own conceptual build up, albeit for the policy makers to operationalize it. Thus, it is argued that ENP is “neither conceptually complete nor operationally stable”, and it is likely to remain this way for some time”.¹²

Despite the fact that most of the theoretical interpretations of the ENP derive from the traditional theories of European integration, we tend to conduct our analysis in the causal framework of the EU foreign policy, which is to say that we depart from the classical paradigm of the EU as a *normative transformative power* in affecting domestic economic, social and political changes in various states, either in the neighbourhood and/or further away. Instead, we shift our focus onto the foreign policy as a coherent pragmatic framework that enables the EU to get engaged in *state-like* relations to pursue policy objectives as they were settled by the constitutive parts, in our case, by the Member States.

Hence, assessing the first pillar of the ENP one needs to look more inwardly at partner states domestic transformations and provide an overview of the evolutionary path towards democracy and market economy.

Nonetheless, our endeavour is to explore new concepts that could be explanatory for the state of art of the relation between the EU and Russia conditioned by the ENP contribution to an “area of security and good neighbourliness” as mandated by the Member States.

Consequently, as the *normative* framework has been the streamline in analysing the ENP, our paper will be looking more into an analysis focused on the second pillar of the ENP which is *security*.

As both the EU and Russia resorted to *sanctions* (EU), and to *military force* and *economic sanctions* (Russia), in order to be able to deconstruct theoretically the crisis between the two, we objectively employ two key concepts to apply in our empirical analysis: *power* and the *regional security complex*.

In terms of theoretical explanations, resorting to the International Relations classical concepts of *power* and *security* would avail us the argumentative stances to interpret and put the EU and Russia reactions in the very contemporary context and also to contribute to a scenario build up based on patterned predictability.

¹⁰ Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Russia between East and West*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005, p.X.

¹¹ Richard Sakwa, Putin’s Foreign Policy: Transforming ‘the East’, in Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Russia between East and West*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005, p.180

¹² Barbara Lippert (2007), ‘The EU Neighbourhood Policy – Profile, Potential, Perspective’, *Intereconomics* (July/August), p.180.

We dismissed intentionally other theories of International Relations such as liberalism and constructivism as we predetermine their paradigms as being futile in explaining the downplay of the EU and Russia relationship as, eventually, both parties have undertaken foreign policies responding more to strategic interests rather than resorting to third party institutions to intervene while predicating on norms and legal orders. Therefore, this is not to minimize the explanatory grounds of other theories as it is more on streamlining demonstrative opportunities. For the clarity of concepts, we take privilege of the works of Kenneth Waltz who describes power as the sum of “size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence”¹³ and John Mearsheimer that refers to dimensions of power as being the ability to influence and/or actual acts of influencing and as being latent or manifest¹⁴ which means pursuing an *independent* foreign policy. For both authors, great power politics stands as a critical variable that is important to conceptually gain an in depth analysis of the conflict dynamic between states.

In 1993, E. H. Carr underlined that it should not take anyone by surprise if “dissatisfied Powers” declare war on the “sentimental and dishonest platitudinizing of satisfied Powers”.¹⁵ In relating to the “appetite for power”, Morgenthau would explain states behaviour in international relations as being determined by three types of foreign policy: “of the status quo”, “of imperialism” and “of prestige”¹⁶ that is for a state in quest of demonstrating its power. On the contrary, Schweller argues that states become revisionist and revolutionary and challenge the status quo due to a degree of (in) satisfaction with “the prestige, resources, and principles of the system.”¹⁷ Yet, for neo realists, revisionism is the state of art amongst powerful states.

Therefore, in our paper, we take *power* as the expression of *influence* either through direct use or just threat of force (be it military and/or economic sanctioning) and not in terms of nominal capabilities. Hence, we assume that power manifestations have acted as determinants of the conflict between the EU and Russia as Waltz would argue that “the most important events in international politics are explained by differences in the capabilities of states”¹⁸ or Mearsheimer “the causes of war and peace are mainly a function of the balance of power”¹⁹.

Mearsheimer’s five assumptions on the structure of the international system would constitute the postulates of the current article. Here, we would state that Russia acted according to an *anarchic* international system where states are the main *rational* actors, relying on some *offensive military capability* due to the *uncertainty* of strategic moves of the others that could have malign intentions, and following as goal *survival* as its highest thrive. Continuously, Russia justified its state behaviour in response to “external threats” to its own national security.

¹³ Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. New York: McGraw-Hill, p.131.

¹⁴ Mearsheimer, John J. 2001. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton.

¹⁵ Carr, Edward H. (1946) *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939*. London: Macmillan, pp.83-84.

¹⁶ Morgenthau, Hans J. (1948) *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Knopf.

¹⁷ Randall L. Schweller, “Hitler’s Tripolar Strategy for World Conquest”, in Jack Snyder y Robert Jervis (eds.), *Coping with Complexity in the International System*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1993, p. 211.

¹⁸ Waltz, Kenneth N. 2000. “Globalization and American Power.” *National Interest* 59:46-56, p.52.

¹⁹ Mearsheimer, John. 1995. “The False Promise of International Institutions.” *International Security* 19(3):5-49, p.13.

Russia commitment to defend its position in the “near abroad” brings it “in the same situation as the USA is in the Americas, not wanting to give up its unilateralism”²⁰ and in the case of the EU and NATO entering in competition for being a regional security hegemon, Russia reacted as being in a “self-help system”, where it does not help relying on “the others”.

As Waltz insists, the anarchic nature of the international system determines states to be in a continuous *competition*²¹ for power and resources.

Here, we claim that Russia aggressively opposed Ukraine largely by the necessity to strengthen its *economic* power recognized by realists²² as important in building the status of a great power in the international system and secondly, to preserve its *security* as Ukraine plays the role of a buffer zone²³.

In other words, why would not Russia want to have its own variant of the Monroe doctrine and avoid any external threat to its national interests?

Hence, after the end of the Cold War by early 2000 Russia was much into being recognized as a great power by the West, consequently deriving its foreign policy from that. Buzan notes that besides military might and “victory in war”, to gain a great power status there was the need (in the period up till the beginning of the Cold War) of “formal status recognition by the peer group at the top table.”²⁴

The Soviet Union dismantling brought back on the scholars and politicians’ discourse the question of Russia identity, otherwise called “crisis of identity”²⁵ (a matter of history and philosophy) and Russia’s role in the world (a matter of geopolitics) exposing a “complex nature of Russian state and its policy”²⁶ but also long debate whether “Russia is a European or an Asian power”. Ivanov would argue that Russia Foreign policy was then still under the “euphoria of change that overwhelmed the national consciousness”²⁷ and that made Russia shift from confrontation to *rapprochement* that failed to trigger the “far-reaching” feedback from the West. The ideological domestic debate pertained also through the foreign policy particularly around the idea of “model Europe” as the *integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures* was a top priority. Ivanov would call that as “gambling on unrealistic goals”.

²⁰ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver 2003, *Regions and Powers The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, p.411.

²¹ Waltz, Kenneth (1979), *Theory of International Politics*. New York: Random House, p.88–93.

²² Gilpin, Robert (1981), *War and Change in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.33-34.

²³ Mearsheimer, John J. (13 March 2014). “Getting Ukraine Wrong” New York Times. “Washington has a deep-seated interest in ending this conflict and maintaining Ukraine as a sovereign buffer state between Russia and NATO”, retrieved on October 2, 2014.

²⁴ Buzan, Barry. (2004), *The United States and the Great Powers: World Politics in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, p.47.

²⁵ Shakleina T. *Russia between West and East* [Электронный ресурс] // Режим доступа: http://www.allacademic.com/one/isa/isa06/index.php?click_key=2, p.1, accessed on September 23, 2014.

²⁶ Idem.

²⁷ Igor Ivanov, “*Russian Foreign Policy on the Eve of the 21st Century: Problems of Formation, Development and Continuity*” (2000), Russian foreign policy in transition : concepts and realities -1st ed., Central European University Press, p. 239

Russia's foreign policy has been constantly driven by the concept of being a "great power"²⁸, yet, the intensity and position fluctuated over time. Besides the classical *identity* factor that it has been always made recourse to when justifying projection of its *greatness* at the global level, there are few hard core elements that still preserve the primacy of Russia amongst the global leading powers: (i) *military almighty*; Russia still possess the second largest stock of nuclear power weaponry and has been topping the list amongst the highest investors in military that in addition keeps Russia on par with the other nuclear super power, US; (ii) *economic clout*; Russia reserves of hydrocarbons/carbon fuels facilitate its place amongst the global players. As energy becomes increasingly a matter of national security in any state, Russia capability to influence increases exponentially; (iii) *geography position*; the very status of "heartland" enables Russia to be a partner in any geopolitical reshuffling that a power would design.

Despite the recent dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has decisively established its position as the "regional node" in the Eurasia. To put it very simply, Russia access to markets, transportation routes and the ability to project naval power across continents makes it envied by other big powers. That needs to be taken into account when formulating Russia foreign policy as it "dictates an equal need for Russia to cultivate its cooperation with the nations of West and East, as well as South and North."²⁹

In explaining the sources of Russia foreign conduct we need to take into account also *domestic factors* such as the "social- political institutions"³⁰ and the "national situation"³¹ where history and geography also plays its role as throughout the last two decades Russia constantly has made recourse to its historical position and glory that require a particular standing in the international system.

Assuming that both the structure of the international system as much as states' influence the foreign conduct either balancing and/or offensively pursuing relative and/or absolute gains, one could refer to Kissinger arguing that "[...] while powers appear to outsiders as factors in a security arrangement, they appear domestically as expressions of a historical existence".³²

The motivation used by Russia political establishment has been built on the narrative of *state survival* and *historical legacies* that entitle Russia to claim a global position. That is why the apprehension of Crimea may have a double explanation- the stationing of the Russian fleet and an exit gate to the Mediterranean, both are strategic objectives to ensure survival and the need to "correct history" which is a typical behaviour of an offensive power pushing to revision the status quo of the balance of power in a quest for influence and not merely survival.

²⁸ Nikolas Gvosdev, "Because It Is": Russia, The Existential Great Power, Editor, *The National Interest*.

²⁹ Igor Ivanov "Russian Foreign Policy on the Eve of the 21st Century: Problems of Formation, Development and Continuity" (2000), Russian foreign policy in transition : concepts and realities -1st ed., Central European University Press, p. 243

³⁰ Waltz, Kenneth H. (1959) *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. New York:Columbia University Press, pp. 40-41.

³¹ Hoffmann, Stanley (1966) "Obstinate or Obsolete: The Fate of the Nation-State and the Case of Western Europe", *Daedalus*, summer.

³² Kissinger, Henry A. (1957) *A World Restored: The Politics of Conservatism in a Revolutionary Era*. London: Gollancz., p.147.

Yet, when it comes to the security regime in Europe increasingly geopolitical tension has been unfolding from the West and the East. On the one side NATO aggressive enlargement and the EU “has been marching eastward”³³, on the other hand, from within, Russia’s own security policy was further complicated by the foreign policy diversification amongst the former Soviet Union satellites, particularly with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova; let aside the least successful CIS and other lagging behind regional organizations that Russia promoted.

The US has been no stranger from the situation as even though in declarative terms was supportive to Russia “while doing all in its power politically to isolate Russia and to push it out of its traditional sphere of influence in the Caucasus and central Asia. Ukraine was a willing accomplice, and indeed instrument, of this strategy.”³⁴

And that was further aggravated by “the fallacies of the Western policies, which not only fail to address Russian sensitivities but also perpetuate enduring preconceived ideas and prevent the Cold War from being brought to a genuine end.”³⁵

Russia has gone through successive “shocks” of power loss starting with the fall of the Soviet Union and continuing with the membership of former satellite states to the EU and NATO which was naturally translated as a loss of spheres of influence.

In order to supplement the *system* view of the security and inter-state relations and as we rely too much on the assumption that states are unitary actors and they pursue independent foreign policy, disregarding other actors and levels of analysis, we appeal to Buzan theory of the *regional security complex*.

Buzan introduces the regional security complex as a conceptual frame that may capture the redefinition of the architecture of the international security whose novelty is mainly given by the increasing assertiveness of regions as subsystems in between the states and the global system.

Hence, the region becomes the “relevant strategic setting”³⁶ where states’ security is projected in “clusters of close security interdependence” from each other mainly on the basis of security *functional* relations. Yet, patterns of conflict cannot be predicted solely by looking at the distribution of power as the very triggers of states behaviour such as *fear* and *survival* are further constructed by the contextual geographic and historic elements.

While states remain the central actor in securitization and de-securitization processes, in 1998 Buzan and Wæver enlarged the concept to encompass other units and sectors of security. In fact, the underlying causal chain is even further becoming more self-explanatory for the intensity and scope of the inter-linkages endorsing national security policies for states under “the pressures of local geographical proximity”³⁷.

³³ John J. Mearsheimer, *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*, in *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014, retrieved on October 9, 2014.

³⁴ Richard Sakwa, *Putin’s Foreign Policy: Transforming ‘the East’*, in Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Russia between East and West*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005, p.181

³⁵ Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Russia between East and West*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005, p.XIV.

³⁶ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver 2003, *Regions and Powers The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, p.41.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p.45.

In effect, the regional security complex both as an explanatory framework and as a theory helps to underscore in our case the deficit of foresight for the EU to tailor made its ENP in such a way as to avoid collision with Russia and eventually contain security threats on both side to manageable diplomatic interstate relation.

Moreover, Buzan and Wæver propose a four level analysis³⁸ in order to determine the security constellation that in return may unveil a particular pursue of a state security policy. Here, they propose an insights into the *domestic vulnerabilities* that states within a region have as these would influence the kind of security fear it has. Assuming that the regional security complex has been mainly shaped by an *intra-regional* power, in our case Russia, identifying its main domestic security concerns would give an indication of the sort of security state-to-state relations it may be up to. Despite the fact that Russia has embraced the narrative of democracy and market economy in all its state programmatic documents, no matter on foreign relations or on security, Russia underlines the necessity to have a strong state build up as the source for the country posture and influence worldwide.

Here, one could read the substantial EU enlargement too far into the former Soviet influence zone, and now, pursuing a conditional policy on market liberalization and democratic societal transformations right at the backyard of Russia as further threats to internal stability by “interference in the Russian Federation’s internal affairs”³⁹.

The second level of analysis, the *state-to-state* relations would definitely describe a dense interdependence of Russia and Ukraine including all sectors from culture to economy and security. With a solid trade flow making Russia the first trading partner for Ukraine, a particular strategic geography of Ukraine given its transitory role for the gas pipelines ensuring supply for a large number of EU states and critically conditioning Russia’s own energy security as a prime source of its own economic stability, all of these carefully examined would have unveiled to policy makers in the EU that the inter-state relation between Russia and Ukraine is no commonplace to deal with. Apart from the economic inter-dependency, Ukraine is the host of a large Russian minority which Russia did insist that it is an element of national security and that any “suppression of the rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of citizens of the Russian Federation in foreign states”⁴⁰ stands as an external threat to Russia itself.

The inter-state relation between Russia and Ukraine has been further strengthened by the military security component. The geographical position of Ukraine as the ultimate frontier between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic alliance, the deployment of the Russian Black Sea fleet as a large operational and strategic command in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea since late 18th century makes Ukraine a strategic extension of Russia territory for combat operations. Temporarily, Russia regional position in the security complex was challenged by the establishment of the GUUAM cooperation that was short-lived, yet, one would notice the attempt to redirect the *intra-regional* security complex towards a more diffused

³⁸ Ibidem, p.51.

³⁹ The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, *Approved by Presidential Decree No. 24 of 10 January 2000*.

⁴⁰ The Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation adopted by edict No. 1833 of the president of the Russian Federation, dated 2 November 1993.

leadership structure, possible with a slight perspective for Ukraine to take over as a second regional head.

The third level of analysis, that is the *region's interaction with the neighbouring regions*, we would call readers' attention only to the geography covered by the European Union and not make any reference to implications for North Africa, South Asia and North Asia. Buzan and Wæver defined such a level of analysis as becoming critical when "gross asymmetries" in terms of security rapport emerge and the pattern of security interdependence changes. For our case, we argue that this level of analysis needs to be coupled with the further one which is the *role of a global power in the region*. Hence, the continuous aggressive positioning of the United States of America, through NATO alliance in Europe has exerted incremental pressure to alter the *security constellation* in the region, disrupting the balance of power between the EU and Russia, hence breeding a long enduring stifled conflict, in relation to which Russia has described it as "attempts to ignore (infringe) the Russian Federation's interests in resolving international security problems, and to oppose its strengthening as one influential centre in a multipolar world"⁴¹. The move of military infrastructure to the borders of Russian Federation has been assessed as external threat to its own national security and the unilateral US resolution to install anti-missile defence systems in the EU Member States (former Soviet Union satellite countries) as undermining the regional security stability and as blatant evidence that the EU would embrace such foreign policy definition as well.

We argue that Russia has been keen on maintaining the status quo of the regional security complex and less interested into a genuine change in the pattern of amity as heralded by the attraction of Ukraine by the transformative power of the EU that might have eventually distorted the social and ideological foundation with knock on effects on Russia itself. On the other hand, both the EU and United States looked at reconfiguring the *external borders* of the regional security complex dominated by the Russian Federation.

We further note that the entire security dynamic of the regional security complex defined as a *centred*⁴² one has been dominated by the Russian Federation. Given the preferential status of great powers in the global security system, Buzan and Wæver insists on the fact that great power regional security complexes need to be treated differently as their "dynamics directly affect balancing calculations at the global level" and that "one would expect wider spill over into adjacent regions, in other words, a higher intensity of interregional interaction"⁴³.

Hence, our claim is that Russia and Ukraine are by far more interdependent in the security realm, no matter that is military or socially, economically and environmentally constructed. Failing to recognize the security regional complex demarcated by Russia and its near abroad, equals denial of the intensity of inter-state relations and the balance of power within the regional geography that is also pre-determined to a large extent by the "durable patterns of amity and enmity" solidly embedded in

⁴¹ The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, *Approved by Presidential Decree No. 24 of 10 January 2000*.

⁴² Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver 2003, *Regions and Powers The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, p.55.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p.59.

historical factors and/or “the common cultural embrace of a civilizational area”⁴⁴. And these are the elements that Russia have extensively referred to in all foreign policy documents warning of trespassing zones of strategic interest and security concerns. Moreover, in all military doctrines introduced by Russia since 1993 up till 2010, clear references are made to the expansion of military blocs and alliances as being interpreted as *external threats* for Russia. The provocative attempts by “a show of military force [...] in the course of exercises on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation or its allies” has been referred to as drastically damaging the military and political situation for the inter-state relations and that would further breed “the creation of the conditions for the utilization of military force”⁴⁵. The “contiguous” character of the inter-state security relations and the status of great power for Russia has made Ukraine, and other states in the immediate vicinity of Russia, to become “captive” or “locked in” a regional security complex.

The efforts to “align” Ukraine both in terms of politics and economics (forced by the EU ENP) and in the military area (by NATO) by announcing potential expansion of the alliance, have been drastically refuted by Russia as being a quest to reverse the regional balance of power on the borders of Russia and to “penetrate”⁴⁶ the regional complex of security. Russia aggressively pinpointed to “plans to extend (NATO) the alliance’s military infrastructure to Russia’s borders “as being “unacceptable to Russia”⁴⁷.

On numerous occasions Russia asserted its status as a great power heavily involved in redefining the international relation order oriented toward multi-polarity, drastically expressing dissatisfaction with the current unilateral drive of the international security architecture that “does not ensure equal security for all states”⁴⁸.

In an explanatory reference, we could use Buzan and Wæver argument that “the regional level is crucial in shaping both the options for, and consequences of, projecting their influences and rivalries into the rest of the system.”⁴⁹

Hence, referring constantly to the *near abroad*, how could one expect Russia not to intervene at one point to demarcate strategically its zones of influence? Putin first visit as president in office in 2000 was made to London via Minsk and back via Kiev- wouldn’t that be a clear indication of the geopolitical drive?

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p.45.

⁴⁵ The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation Approved by Russian Federation Presidential Edict on 5 February 2010.

⁴⁶ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver 2003, *Regions and Powers The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, p.46.

⁴⁷ Russia’s National Security Strategy to 2020, Approved By Decree of the President Of the Russian Federation 12 May 2009 No. 537.

⁴⁸ The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation Approved by Russian Federation Presidential Edict on 5 February 2010.

⁴⁹ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver 2003, *Regions and Powers The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, p.47.

Prospects for Russia and EU relations - the state of art

Despite several proposals put forth by Russia to further regional integration (both economic and military one), the recent frictions between the EU and Russia would prevent “business as usual” in their relation as none of them are engaged in any substantial joint policy initiatives at the moment; furthermore, it is not expected that *one regional coherent security complex* may be developed having a *double-centred* structure. Yet, the intervention of the EU and US into the crisis in Ukraine, at least at the inception of the crisis (meanwhile both the EU and US have backed down slowly from taking a firm stand) has proved that the old “power balancing”⁵⁰ is decisively being revised and accepted by all sides as contradictory positions have become more consistent in scale, scope and intensity in the recent years.

The opportunity to project a single regional security complex is further complicated by deeply institutionalized and “consistent and systematic” involvement of the US in Europe (as member of NATO and OSCE) which makes it a “European power”⁵¹.

Judging by Russia establishment political discourse, by the domestic policy orientation but very much given the outstanding popular support that both the Russian government and the president enjoy, one should further expect Russia orientation towards a *national consolidation* project where the *statehood* and the *nationness* strengthening and revival stay high on the agenda as they represent the core pillars to further fuel Russia ascension as a great power at the global level and gain traction for other CIS member states as to the regional economic integration project.

In a recent survey⁵² (Table 1) conducted by the Research Centre recognized by the West as being independent from the Russian political establishment, posing the same question for more than two decades, one should notice a positive steady increase in the popular support for the foreign and domestic policy pursued consistently ever since 2000 when Russia shifted its course in international relations and reaffirmed a catching up in domestic economic and social stability as the engines for empowering the *great status* of the Russian Federation. Paradoxically, if while ago such a dichotomy succeeded in polarizing the Russia society, currently, following on Russia activity in Ukraine and a continuous economic downturn, the pools results are an indication of the ideological foundation radically shifting under a more *nationalist* taken on both domestic and foreign affairs. And that is a strong premise that both liberals and the core of Russian societal drive towards revisionism and autarchic state come to converge!

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p.343.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p.344.

⁵² Levada Center, Approval and Trust, 29.09.2014, <http://www.levada.ru/eng/approval-and-trust>, retrieved on October 2, 2014.

Table 1: “Is the country today moving in the right direction, or is the country heading down the wrong path?”

		The country is moving in the right direction	The country is heading down the wrong path	It is difficult to say
2014	19-22 Sep.	62	22	17
	22-25 Aug.	64	22	14
	1-4 Aug.	66	19	15
	Jul.	55	26	19
	Jun.	62	22	17
	May	60	23	17
	Apr.	58	26	16
	21-24 Mar.	60	26	15
	7-10 Mar.	51	30	18
	Feb.	47	37	16
	Jan.	43	41	17

The EU blame for interference in domestic affairs in the very near abroad of Russia still raises security concerns and the perception is there to stay now due to the social, economic and security turmoil in Ukraine. The Levada Centre also unveils (Table 2) a continuous decrease of the percentage of population supporting a Russia policy to strive to become a member of the European Union in the future. Hence, the “return to Europe”, once even coined as the “return to civilization” is traded in favour of a “national revival” one.

Table 2: “You think that Russia should strive to become a member of the European Union in the future?”

	Sep 99	Aug 00	Oct 01	Dec 04	Nov 05	Nov 06	Nov 07	Apr 09	Oct 10	Jun 11	Jun 12	Sep 14
Definitely yes	35	23	23	26	19	19	23	14	20	14	8	3
Most likely yes	30	31	35	33	34	36	29	39	36	37	35	13
Most likely no	12	19	12	14	16	15	16	15	16	21	24	34
Definitely no	5	6	7	6	8	9	7	10	7	8	8	30
It is difficult to say	19	22	24	21	22	22	26	21	22	20	25	21

Following on the latest security and foreign policy programmatic documents, the securitization agenda of Russia is almost exclusively dominated by the external military threats that we may group into the following categories: (i) threats triggered by the

inappropriateness of the international normative system incapable to project and ensure a global *security architecture* equal for all states, (ii) the escalation of military build-up of innovative weaponry closer to the borders of the Russian Federation, (iii) the drift away of NATO alliance towards using military force and not abide by the UN Security Council resolutions and UN Charter, (iv) the EU Europeanization process that further destabilize the situation in Russia neighbouring countries. All that included in an analytical matrix, one could easily identify a Russia foreign policy that is both defensive and offensive in nature, and not into permitting an agenda for its close neighbourhood jointly development at least with the EU.

Buzan and Wæver argue that despite the fact the Europe has played a historical role for Russia quest for identity, “the *global* arena is today much more important than Europe for Russia’s attempts both to secure a larger role outside its region and to legitimize its regional empire”⁵³ rather than to expect a Russia that is more focused on Europe as the “lack of a respectable international role”⁵⁴ is still perceived as a threat to Russian state identity.

The EU centred regional security complex remain “*partly penetrated*”⁵⁵ with the US that would remain a key active actor and under the security dominance of France and United Kingdom (not keen on giving up their permanent UN Security Council seats) where there are “further complications” stemming from, while Germany would express a tendency towards further gaining international assertiveness.

On the other hand, *inter-regionally*, the EU is prone to interactions with the Post – Soviet space and Russia in particular due to unsettled border issues, as the relation with Russia “is deemed important due to both positive and – especially – negative potentialities”⁵⁶.

The “near abroad” still occupies a strategic place in Russia foreign and security policy as “one always has to give highest priority to the inner circles because their health is the precondition for that of the next circle outward”⁵⁷.

Hence, denying a special status for a country still having the largest stock of nuclear and biological weapons in the world, once called the “Heartland” of the “World Ocean”⁵⁸, covering a vast territory from Europe to Asia, exerting a powerful dynamic of geo-economy as part of its foreign policy toolbox, controlling over a hotbed of frozen conflicts at the margins of the European Union, a lever in ensuring a coordinated approach to terrorism and instability in the Middle East, and not accommodating a strategically long-term policy design in relation to Russia would hardly bear any sense full explanatory ground.

Squeezed in between the loss of Empire-like global position and troublesome domestic affairs due to the low performing economy, Russia foreign policy has been always performing

⁵³ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver 2003, *Regions and Powers The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, p.397.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p.405.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p.373.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p.374.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p.406.

⁵⁸ Mackinder, H.J., “*The Geographical Pivot of History*”, *The Geographical Society*, Vol. 23, No.4, (April 1904), 421-437.

under the aegis of a Great Power and the “near abroad” have always been “the focal point of its national interests”.⁵⁹

Hence it is our neorealist based argument that following closely on Russia foreign policy paradigm one could have predicted Russia potential moves, not being neutral while its strategic “neighbour turned into a Western bastion”⁶⁰. A *cumulative effect* could have been foreseen as potentially having unexpected extreme statecraft from Russia as it did happen in several instances since 1999 when it first marched its troops to occupy the airport in Pristina even before NATO’s K-For peacekeepers prepared to enter the province on 12 June, and were on the brink of “starting World War III”⁶¹.

The very fact that Russia’s recurrent calls for multilateralism soon gave way to a new standing on *multi-polarity*, we anticipate the shift from the manifestation not of single *concerted* order between the big powers as it is much about the *singularity* in constructed *geographically* bounded orders and thus to compose stability in the larger international system.

Conclusions

The *character* of the international system for some time to come is deemed to remain that of a polycentric order whereas an increasing tendency towards regionalization manifests both in Asia and in Europe, further power centres being in the making.

As an immediate consequence, the international system *per se* stays anarchic with rising powers and established ones competing for spheres of influence to further strengthen their state capacity and, at least for the great powers, to maintain their global posture. That would narrow down the scope for cooperation and for collective responsibility as to preserving and delivering on the global public goods. And that is a scenario we would expect also to unfold in Europe.

Russia’s geographic position turns it into a geostrategic actor that any alliance that may be forged either to curb terrorism, migration, sea piracy, containment of states depository of nuclear weapons would need to associate Russia. Hence, Russia would continue to balance its multi-vector foreign policy towards other strong states, including the European Union.

To acquire further power Russia would not stop from taking any measure, military if need, “Under conditions of competition for resources, it is not excluded that arising problems may be resolved using military force [...]”⁶² in order to block any further encroachment around its near abroad”.

In terms of asserting itself and promoting its interests, particularly the economic and security ones, Russia is up scaling efforts in sustaining the Eurasia Economic Union integration project within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States

⁵⁹ Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Russia between East and West*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005, p.XI.

⁶⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*, in *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014, retrieved on October 9, 2014.

⁶¹ BBC, BBC (March 9, 2000), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/671495.stm>, retrieved on October 2, 2014.

⁶² Russia’s National Security Strategy to 2020, approved By Decree of the President Of the Russian Federation 12 May 2009 No. 537.

and beyond. Russia would further not hesitate to resort to “pipeline diplomacy” to exert any pressure required to preserve its power position amongst any states no matter its position downstream or upstream. In addition, Russia is aggressively seeking to buy assets downstream in the EU countries so that it can control an entire chain of production and supply, and as a consequence consolidating its leverage power that it has used several times in pressuring beneficiary states to adopt a certain position.

Yet, there are a few fundamental areas that make Russia the “indispensable” nation for the EU and that is for some time to stay. Due to the increasing domestic consumption in the EU, the energy inter-dependence between the EU and Russia is clearly expected to strengthen.

Secondly, as Russia badly needs to continue the modernization of its economy, foreign direct investment coming from the EU would be mostly welcomed and “for Russia, the Old World is sure to remain the basis, even in view of its growing focus on the Asia Pacific region.”⁶³ Hence, the Partnership for Modernization signed in 2010 needs just to be reloaded.

We subscribe to Alexey Gromyko’s proposal to have all *integration* project from Lisbon to Vladivostok into “a harmonious mechanism to solve the Old World’s common external and internal problems” as both Russia and the EU are “the two key Eurasian actors bound to shape Europe’s transition to a genuinely powerful and stable globally important political entity of the new century”.⁶⁴

The encouragement to engage with Russia in a more substantial way in order to discuss frankly integration processes in Europe seems to cast a wise tone on the re-set of Russia and EU relations following the conflict in Ukraine.

As on scenario build up, Russia and the EU can progress from a security system defined as a “weak super-complex” and challenged by the existence of an EU-dominated regional security complex and of a Russia-centred complex to a “merger between the two complexes”⁶⁵.

As for an accurate foreign policy analysis, for great powers security relations, both the neo-realist perspective and the regional security complex provide sufficient methodological and analytical frameworks so that policy makers would be able to project tailor-made foreign policy taking into account the balance of power in the international system made of anarchic inter-state relations but also with a close view of the regional factors that become constitutive in the security subsystems.

⁶³ Alexey Gromyko, *Russia and the European Union: The Dynamics of the Relationship* in I.M. Busygina et al., *Russia–European Union: Potential for Partnership*, RIAC. – M.: Spetskniga, 2013, p.14.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p.5.

⁶⁵ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver 2003, *Regions and Powers The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, p.438.

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