

THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE AND THE END OF THE POST COLD WAR SECURITY DELUSIONS IN EUROPE

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Abstract

The ongoing Crisis in Ukraine has attracted extensive news coverage and political analysis, both in the US and Europe. Reading the political analysis regarding the crisis in Ukraine, one often gets the impression that the conflict in Ukraine consists of a game changing that shape a new political reality in the relations between Russia and the West (Europe and US). Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to examine how the crisis in Ukraine can change our perception and understanding of the strategic challenges in Europe. It will try also to address the main factors behind the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, the miscalculations and mistakes that lead towards the escalation of the crisis and what constructive initiatives are needed to be taken in order to avoid further instability in the region. Furthermore, measures in order to develop a

more stable relation with Russia are also going to be presented. Finally, this paper is also going to present a new strategic outlook for Europe.

The NATO Expansion and the Western Unilateralism

Following the peaceful end of the cold war and the demise of the Soviet Union, only one major military alliance was left in Europe, NATO. The initial Western plan for the post-cold war security architecture incorporated the will to establish a stable and mutually beneficial relationship between the US and Russia. There was a strong conviction among Americans and Europeans, that the implementation of a policy of isolation of Russia would have generated a new era of antagonism and conflicts. On the contrary, Russia was encouraged to build a democratic government, to reform its economic structures and to be transformed to a reliable partner, who would consist of an important support for the long-term process of creating the conditions for lasting peace.

Unfortunately, those initial declarations, were quickly put aside. NATO under the American leadership chose to follow an expansionist policy. It is vital at this point to mention that immediately after the end of the cold war most of the European states (with the exception of Germany) opposed a future expansion of NATO in ex communist states afraid that such a move may trigger a violent reaction from the Russian side and at the same time would undermine the so far peaceful transition of the eastern European countries from communism to western style democracy. (Waltz, 1997:27). Thus, the decision for NATO expansion in eastern ex-communist states, mostly advocated by the American government and especially the newly elected Clinton administration. The newly elected President wanted to demonstrate his determination in the foreign policy and to shape the new era according to the American ideals. NATO's expansion was the instrument by which the US would succeed its goals. (Waltz, 1997:27)

Since the decision for NATO to expand was made, the Western allies were divided on how this enlargement would take place. There were three predominate views on how NATO could expand into Eastern Europe. Firstly, there were those that supported a gradual enlargement with few Eastern European states, in order to avoid any reaction or provocation from Russia. Secondly, there were those that were pushing towards an automatic integration of all the Eastern European states, in order to avoid further political divisions and thirdly, there were those that were advocating that the only solution was the enlargement of NATO together with the European Union (Brown, 1997:35).

At the time that the previous political initiatives took place, few scholars criticized the Western course of action (Waltz, 1997:28). Analytically, Michael Brown argued that the NATO expansion should not have been a mechanized process, but on the contrary, it had to be linked to Russia's behavior. NATO should have declared that, it will integrate the Wisegrad states and the other six communist countries only if signs of Russian revisionism were present. By following

this strategy, the West would have had the opportunity to guide and influence the course of Russian policy toward its own preferences (Brown, 1997:36). Waltz also expressed his skepticism for the future consequences such a tactic may have.

Firstly, Waltz underlined that the NATO expansion, would have created new divisions in Europe and would not have had a logical stopping place West of Russia. Secondly, it would have weakened those Russians most inclined towards liberal democracy and market economy, and it would have strengthened parts of the country's political elite of opposite inclination.

Thirdly, it would have been the end of the effort to reduce the nuclear weaponry, since Russia due to its military weakness in comparison with NATO, would base its deterrence mostly on its nuclear arsenal.

Fourthly, and most importantly the NATO enlargement would have strengthened the necessity for the creation of a balancing coalition led by Russia. Thus, it would push Russia towards an alliance with China instead of drawing Russia towards Europe and the US. Russia feared that NATO will not only admit additional old members of the WTO, but also republics of the USSR. Therefore, Waltz added that Russia and China after the end of the cold war started coming closer and managed to overcome their important disagreements (border disputes), in order to balance US both in military and economic terms.(Waltz, 1997:36)

The previous objections posed by realist scholars were not supported by the political establishment in Washington and the gradual approach towards integrating Eastern Europe was decided. NATO's enlargement was interpreted by the Russian policy making elites as a hostile action that undermined the foundations for political consensus between the two sides. Russia skepticism towards the West's motives was also further strengthened after a series of unilateral interventions by NATO and the US took place in the following years (Kosovo 1999, Iraq 2003, Libya 2011).

Thus the previous unilateral Western policy, supported by the unprecedented American military and economic supremacy, gave the first incentives to Russia for the creation of the necessary political conditions in order to check the dominant superpower and its policies. The Russian government due to its profound weakness in comparison with the US, experienced a situation of complete helplessness, when it simply had to accept a series of *fait accompli* in many crucial issues of international politics without being able to bring its own considerations to bear (Thiele, 2014). Due to the existing conditions in the distribution of power in the international system, the advocates of Western interventionism and social engineering declared victory. Unfortunately, the consequences of such a policy were going to be felt some years later when the distribution of power was starting to change; and although for the policy makers of the time this change in the balance of power was emerging slowly, in historical perspective, it came in the a blink of an eye.(Waltz, 1997:26)

The Prelude of the Crisis

As it was analyzed previously, Western security policy after the end of the Cold war, led to the marginalization of Russia and to further tension between the two parties on many security issues. During the first decade of the new Century, the US and the EU continued their policy of expanding the western coalition eastwards.

A series of pro western uprisings took place in countries that were considered by Russia as vital for its own interests. The Rose revolution in Georgia, the Orange revolution in Ukraine and the Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan, were interpreted by the Russian leadership as a serious provocation for the country and a direct threat towards Russia's vital interest in its near abroad. (Kremlin, 2007) Moreover, the Western unconditional support towards such movements intensified the fear of the political regime in Moscow, that Russia was also a target and that a future uprising in the country was also possible. In order to avoid such a possibility, the Russian government from the beginning of the 21st century took an authoritarian turn on its approach to domestic politics with attempts to marginalize and expel opposition politicians and to crack down NGOs with overseas funding. (Wilson, 2004) Another initiative towards the containment of the Western penetration on the Commonwealth of Independent States was Russia's decision to actively support the interests of Russian minorities, that were left after the dissolution of the Soviet Union outside Russia's borders. Those populations would be used as political pressure to the neighboring countries in order to harmonize their foreign policy according to Russian preferences. (Freedman, 2014:16)

NATO and especially the US government did not comprehend at the time, that Russia's attitude towards the new wave of alliance expansion directed towards ex Soviet members (Georgia and Ukraine) would be addressed in a different way than the previous alliance enlargements. In the Bucharest NATO summit in 2008, the Bush administration was pressing for the admittance of Georgia and Ukraine into the alliance. The crisis was successfully averted, due to France and Germany's reaction to such an outcome. The outbreak of the conflict in Georgia in 2008 and Russia's military intervention should have dispelled any remaining doubts about Putin's determination to allow other countries vital to Russian interests to enter NATO. (Mearsheimer, 2014:2) In the past Russia lacked the power to react against Western initiatives in its periphery, with the invasion in Georgia, Putin showed that that was not the case anymore.

The same warning was directed against the EU as well. For Moscow, the enlargement of the EU can potentially be a far greater threat than NATO. Russian comprehends NATO and the power and influence that it possesses. However, there is the political aspect of the EU that Russia fears more, since it can be seen as a force for political and economic reforms that can challenge the existence of the political regime in Russia. (French, 2014)

On the contrary, the EU member states and officials ignored the political reality and launched the Eastern Partnership initiative in 2008. This initiative sends the signal to Russia, that the efforts to bring Ukraine and Georgia and other ex Soviet republics were not abandoned. A potential EU membership would have been the ‘antechamber’ for a future NATO enlargement as well. The Eastern partnership framework was constructed without careful consultation with Russia and by ignoring once again the country's strategic interests in the region. (Macfarlane and Menon, 2014:97)

Due to this political background, the crisis over Ukraine can be characterized as one of Europe’s most predictable flashpoint. Ukraine became the epicenter of a dangerous ‘tug of war’ between the two sides that could put the strategic environment in the continent in serious danger. Although both sides can be blamed for the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine, a close examination of previous events and on the way the crisis was managed at the present time, states that the ‘lion’s share’ of the responsibility falls on the Western alliance. Although the Russian intentions in the course of the years that followed after the end of the Cold War were not always constructive, Moscow was mostly on the defensive, avoiding initiatives that would provoke or change the status quo that was formed after the end of the Cold War. On the contrary, after 25 years of the West treating Russia as an enemy and a competitor, Moscow might have really become one. (Charap and Darden, 2014:7)

The Fallacies of the Western Crisis management in Ukraine

Following its independence in 1991, Ukraine inherited regions that have completely different historical backgrounds, with a plethora of unresolved ethnic, religious, social and economic conflicts. All those facts were creating an internal political scene that was for many years extremely polarized. Analytical Eastern and Southern Ukraine are predominantly Russian speaking with ethnic Russian majority in Crimea and strong minorities in Donbass, and the Central and Western Ukraine was consisted mainly of Ukrainian speakers. Such linguistic and cultural divisions appeared also in the political scene. East and South Ukraine was supporting the party of the regions an anti European political power, which supported that Ukraine, should maintain close relations with Russia; West and Central Ukraine were supporting political parties that were advocating the integration of the country in EU and NATO. Thus, during the time when the events in Maidan were taking place, Ukrainians were politically divided regarding the course that their country should choose in the future. Apart from the political difficulties, Ukraine has faced since its independence severe economic challenges. Analytically, during the first decades that followed the country’s independence, Ukraine suffered from economic stagnation. Half-hearted reforms, widespread corruption and crime, government structures that integrated private elements into justice, police armed forces, have all led to a complete dysfunctional system. Ukraine is the only country that did not achieve reaching the living standard of the Soviet period.(Thiele, 2014) Thus, the timeless incompetence of the Ukrainian

political system to improve the standard of living in the country and to make the economy more competitive, lead to the further weakening of the Ukrainian position vis a vis with Russia. Furthermore, any attempt to diversify the country's energy suppliers, or to substitute the use of natural gas with other energy sources, had also failed miserably. Thus, in the prelude of the crisis in Ukraine was a country with serious economic problems, and completely reliable on Russian energy supply. Therefore, the effectiveness of economic coercion in this case was not credited to Russian strength, but rather it is a reflection of the utter failure of the Ukrainian political elite to reform the country's economy. (Charap and Darden, 2014:8)

For Moscow the future orientation of Ukraine is where Russian history, strategy and people meet. For Russia, Ukraine the second most populous republic of the Soviet Union, and Crimea the base of the Black Sea Fleet, are an important aspect of its national security. The strategic importance of Ukraine was further increased, with the announcement of the President Putin initiative to create a Custom Union for the ex Soviet Republics that would lead to the creation of the Eurasian Union in 2015. The initiation of this new political project of economic integration would allow Russia to strengthen its position as a key player in the international scene.

Thus, for the realization of Putin's plan, Ukraine was the most vital potential member due to its size and the cultural ties with Russia. Moreover, the country should have been prevented from joining any other trading block in the future. (Freedman, 2014: 21)

Under such a tense political environment internally and externally, the cancellation by the Yanukovich government of the Ukrainian-European Union Association agreement was the spark that started the crisis. The decision of the government was the product of immense Russian pressure. The country's economic dependence on Russia gave Kremlin substantial leverage. Restriction on Ukrainian exports and at the same time proposals for the reduction of gas prices and a financial support of 15 million dollars was the prize for the Ukrainian defection from the Eastern partnership. (Macfarlane and Menon, 2014:98)

This controversial act sparked a series demonstration in all the main cities of the country. Although, the pro European opposition was further strengthened by the dissatisfaction of the Ukrainian citizens due to the widespread corruption and the bad economic conditions that they were experiencing under the Yanukovich regime, the opposition leaders manage to gain the political advantage only when the latter responded brutally against the demonstrators and the protesters. (Charap & Darden, 2014:9) This horrendous act, united many heterogeneous political groups with different political aspirations and ideas regarding the country's future orientation and organization. It is vital to clarify that, despite the EU flags in Maidan square and the dynamic reaction from the opposition against the signing of agreement with Custom Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, the country's public opinion was not in favor of a future integration of the Ukraine to the EU. In the country, the country continued to be politically divided between the Western part of the country, home of the vast majority of the protesters in

Maidan, which at the same time was openly supporting the integration of the Ukraine in Europe and the eastern Ukraine, whose population was skeptical towards in the uprising in Kiev and hostile towards a shift to the West. The important economic ties of the region with Russia and the presence of Russophones and ethnic Russian's in the region made the equation even worse. (Macfarlane and Menon, 2014:98).

As the crisis continued its upward spiral, the protests reached a climax during the mid-February 2014. On 18th of February, the worst clashes between the riot police and protesters broke out after the government decided to reject the opposition's proposal to reform the constitution in its pre-2004 form where the Presidential powers were limited. Police and protesters fired at each other in Maidan and in other areas of Kiev. During the night hostilities between the riot police and the demonstrators climaxed after the brutal assault, which security forces launched in Maidan in order to reoccupy the area. As the number of the dead and wounded was dangerously rising the government and the opposition finally came to a temporary agreement on the 21st of the same month. Yanukovich would remain president of the country until the elections that would take place on March 2014. This temporary solution was saluted both by Russia and the West, thus it created the expectation of a potential de-escalation of the crisis in the country. Unfortunately, the agreement fell apart a few hours after its implementation, under the pressure of the opposition, which threatened to go into armed conflict if the Ukrainian president did not resign by 10.00 A.M. Subsequently, the riot police retreated and Yanukovich and many other high government officials fled the country. Protesters gained control of the presidential administration and Yanukovich's private estate. The next day, the parliament controlled by the pro-European forces started the procedure for the impeachment of Yanukovich, and replaced his government with a pro-European one. In addition to that, the new government ordered that, Yulia Tymoshenko an anti-Russian politician, be released from prison.

Immediately EU and the US declared their support for the new regime, violating the agreement that was signed a few days ago. (Mearsheimer, 2014:4) The Western governments immediately recognized the new status quo in the Ukrainian political scene, although its legitimacy was questioned. Such a move triggered suspicions in the Russian side that the overthrow of Yanukovich was orchestrated by the West. Therefore, the political support that the West offered to the new Ukrainian government was the culminating point of the crisis. Europe and the US found themselves supporting the overthrowing of a democratically elected leader. At the same time, the new regime in Ukraine, took a series of anti-Russian measures (abolishing the use of Russian in the public sector, prosecutions against pro-Russian politicians etc).

Furthermore, three of its members could be linked to the far right neo-Nazi parties. A severe Russian reaction to such an outcome must have been expected. From the Russian side the breakdown of the 21st of February agreement was interpreted as a western plot to install a loyal government in Kiev. (Charap and Darden, 2014:13) Moreover, the Kremlin wanted to avoid the

precedent of coercive removal of a sitting government, particularly in cases in which the West was involved.

Hence, Kremlin retaliated by integrating Crimea and its Citadel Sevastopol, the home of the Russian Black fleet. The return of the peninsula under Russian jurisdiction was a more than welcome event for the Russian society. However, the emotional bond that Russian people have with Crimea was not the main reason behind Putin's decision to annex the former Ukrainian peninsula. The integration of Crimea was part of a larger goal to create the necessary conditions for a 'counter-revolution' movement against the new government in the south and east Ukraine, areas with significant Russian and Russophone population. The Kremlin wanted to demonstrate to the new government in Kiev, that without Russia's consensus and security guarantees, the country's territorial integrity cannot be considered a given. (Freedman, 2014:24)

Since the new Ukrainian government held back against Russian coercive strategy, the Kremlin started to escalate its effort to destabilize the new Ukrainian government. Gradually, a wave of protestors mainly on the Donbass region occupied large areas and government administration buildings. The protestors consisted of both armed militants and peaceful demonstrators. When the Ukrainian government reacted by sending anti-terrorist forces in Donbass, the uprising was transformed into an open armed struggle. Moscow provided the insurgents with military advisors, supplies and diplomatic support. At the same time Russia concentrated a large army on the Ukrainian borders, in order to put pressure on the government in Kiev not to crack down on the rebels. Even during the end of August 2014, according to Western sources, the Russian army intervened in the hostilities in order to change the turn of events on the ground and to stop government forces advancing into east Ukraine. (Mearsheimer, 2014:8) Finally, the new Ukrainian president Porosenko declared that a military victory in Donbass against the insurgents was not possible. The negotiation between the two belligerents, the OSCE and the Russian delegation lead to the formation of the Minsk protocol that was signed on the 5th of September 2014. Although the agreement failed to completely stop the fighting in Donbass, it managed to create some channels of communication between the two sides and to terminate large scale military operations from both sides. It is easy to observe that Putin, in the case of Ukraine, is playing hardball in order to cancel the efforts of creating a Western stronghold on the Russian doorstep. The reason behind such a political behavior can be easily explained through the prism of power politics analysis; many times weaker actors have the ability to prevail against stronger adversaries when they need to determine vital interests for their security and prosperity. In the case of Ukraine, the reason why Russia is able to deter and balance the West, an adversary stronger than itself, can be accredited to the fact that, it has more vital interests at risk in the region and therefore, it is ready to pay a higher price in order to protect them. (Walt, 2014)

Another factor that favors Moscow, in the case of the Crisis in Ukraine is the strategic advantage of geographic proximity. During the previous crisis in Georgia and the ongoing confrontation in Ukraine, Russia's regional military superiority vis a vis with its neighboring countries was the

decisive factor that helped Moscow to fulfill its strategic goals. Although Russian army faces important problems such as the lack of new sophisticated technological equipment (Worchester, 2014:3), in the case of Ukraine with the rapid occupation of strategic installations in Crimea, the performance of the Russian military, and especially the special forces, proved that, they were neither inadequate nor close to ruin as some western analysts believed. On the contrary, Russian armed forces demonstrated that they were in a position to serve efficiently the country's strategic goals. (Renz, 2014:67)

Finally, the imposing of economic sanctions on Russia will probably not alter Putin's course in the handling of the Crisis in Ukraine. By following historical examples of previous cases, states that were targeted by economic sanctions managed to absorb enormous amounts of punishment in order to protect their core strategy interests.(Pape, 1997:106) Modern states possess the ability to adjust and to minimize their vulnerability to economic sanctions through conservation, substitution and other more efficient methods of allocating products and tools. Characteristically, if the Iraqi government during the Saddam Hussein reign was able to overcome the most extreme sanction imposed in history, then it is more than obvious that the Russia a state much stronger than Iraq will not be coerced by such a policy. Furthermore, external pressure even in the weakest and most fragile states is more likely to enhance the nationalist legitimacy of rulers rather than to undermine it. (Pape, 1997:106) In addition to that, the different economic interests among the Europeans may gradually undermine its effectiveness. (Szabo, 2014:120)

To conclude, in order to overcome the political deadlock in the case of Ukraine the Western allies need to construct a way out strategy that would help both sides to return in normality regarding their relations.

A Way out Strategy

The need to find a solution to the crisis in Ukraine is more than eminent, one year after the beginning of the demonstrations in Maidan square. New dangerous threats (ISIS, Middle East) have appeared in the international scene, which requires a level of cooperation between the main actors of the international system. Therefore the de-escalation of the crisis would benefit all members involved. The keyword toward such an outcome is compromised. Dialogue and diplomacy should serve to mark the vital interests of all the parties involved in the crisis. The US and the EU should comprehend that a long-standing peace in Ukraine can only be achieved if Russia is involved. (Petro, 2014) Thus, the West and Russia should work closely together in order to create stability in the region and avoid any further escalation of the violence. It is obvious that without Russia's consent Ukraine cannot be pacified. Thus, the Western allies should try progressively to make Putin a part of a potential solution to the crisis in Ukraine. Without the Russian president's support in a future solution plan the Russian separatist in Ukraine will not accept any ceasefire agreement. At the same time the government in Kiev needs to respect and protect the rights of the Russian minority, and to ban any restriction on the use of

the Russian Language and culture. By following this policy, confidence among Ukrainians will be restored and the political polarization will be minimized. The ceasefire agreement in September in Minsk can be the base upon which a stronger resolution of the crisis can be built. (Petro, 2014) The territorial integrity of the country must also be preserved, and any scenarios that lead towards the independence of the Donbass region should be abandoned. Considering the political orientation of Ukraine, the solution can be the political neutrality of the country. (Mearsheimer, 20014:11) In this new political compromise, the goal should be a sovereign Ukraine that falls neither under Russian nor under Western influence. The country would be able to sign and simultaneously develop close economic ties both with the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union currently under construction. Therefore Kiev will not be a point of division between the two main sides, but it can decisively help to enrich further mutual understanding between the two sides. Furthermore a public declaration of the US and the EU that both rule out NATO's expansion into Georgia, and at the same time a Russian commitment to respect the political decisions of states that already have made the decision to enter the Western Alliance and the EU, would rebuild the mutual understanding between Russia and the Western partners.(Mearsheimer, 20014:11) Some may argue that changing the policy towards Ukraine would seriously damage the prestige and credibility of the NATO and EU around the world. Although there may be short-term costs for the Western partners, in the long term the strategic benefits will be very important both for NATO and the EU.

Firstly, NATO can increase its credibility by implementing a new counter strategy against military operations like the ones in Crimea. The deployment of small but well-trained and equipped armed forces in NATO member states (Baltic States, Poland) which share borders with Russia or have great strategic importance, can be the antidote towards the limited war policy that Kremlin is using. Those small forces would delay the infiltrators at the early stage of the mission, increase the cost of the effort and avoid the creation of a political fait accompli in the target region. (Grygiel and Mitchell, 2014) Moreover, by such a move the Atlantic alliance will play down the fears of its Eastern European members for a future aggressive action from Russia that would target territories with substantial Russian minorities.

For the Europeans, a normalization of the relations would help the Union to avoid a costly confrontation and to devote its resources to economic growth and stability. (Tunsjo, 2013: 92) By rejuvenating the European economy, the EU can safeguard its internal cohesion which has been severely traumatized during the European debt crisis. A future collapse of Ukraine may be a destabilizing event that could influence Eastern Europe as a whole and to challenge the stability that is achieved in the region since the end of the Cold war. A further deterioration of the political situation in Ukraine would bring the EU and Russia in a Zero sum game conflict that would lead both Brussels and Moscow to escalate the sanction and countermeasures against each other. At this time, with the eurosceptic parties on the rise, security challenges like the previous ones would likely shatter the fragile unity the EU managed to hold in 2014 and expose all too

brutally the Europeans inability to manage major foreign policy crises. (Janning, 2014) Moreover, the EU would also have the time to build the necessary political consensus in order to construct a more cohesive strategic culture. The political confrontation in Ukraine can be the spark that would mobilize a set of events towards the direction of forming a more 'realistic' European strategic outlook.

Towards a new European strategic outlook

The crisis in Ukraine and the events that followed were a bitter reminder that hard power never quite goes away and that, as much as many scholars or practitioners of international politics want to undermine this fact, the role of force remains formidable when it comes to setting borders, changing regimes and safeguarding vital interests. Furthermore the events in Ukraine highlighted the limitation of the 'normative' power approach that the EU is using in order to achieve its foreign policy goals and the weakness of the EU crisis management mechanism. This weakness can be attributed to the prism under which international politics are perceived and analyzed by the European leaders. Within that context, the Ukrainian crisis may be the starting point of a process that would lead to the strategic maturation of the European foreign policy. Therefore the European political elites need to learn from their mistakes made during and before the crisis in Ukraine. Analytically, the first mistake that Europeans must learn from, is that Europe must analyze 'others' intentions not based upon its own norms and postmodern values, where states use, only the so called soft power as the main instrument of foreign policy, but it must try to analyze their next step, according to their own system of values. (Kunz, 2014: 3) In the case of Russia, Europe should have foreseen Kremlin's willingness and readiness to use force in order to protect, what it was considered by its policy makers as a vital national interest. The Russian government's coercive measures against Ukraine in 2014, have contravened many western norms and values together with a clear violation of the international law, but these measures have been characteristic of the way other great powers have responded in analogous situations. Most analysts that are close to the policy making circles in Moscow, were already since the end of the 90s, ardent supporters of the political realism paradigm. This supremacy of the political realist thinking is also present in numerous statements and documents regarding the Russian foreign policy. Most of the Russian scholars recognize the supremacy of the US, but at the same time the underline a trend in which the American power is in a process of diminishing and at the same time it can be balanced by other great powers. (Bogaturov, 1994: 33) Regarding the relations between Russia and EU, Russian scholars and policy making circles advocate towards a more pragmatic to a point that can be characterized as cynical approach. Kremlin should not treat Europe as a single bloc, but on the contrary, it must intensify its efforts to develop economic and political ties with the member state that are willing to cooperate and stand up for their promises. At the same time Moscow should try to build its own economic community, in order to strengthen the country's voice and importance in the international distribution of power. (Romanova& Pavlova, 2012: 236) Therefore, the previous reasoning

regarding the analysis of a Russian policy was implemented; European would have in a better position to understand the Kremlins rationale at the shape the Union political response in a more productive way. The second mistake directly follows the last one since European leaders failed to understand that the EU and NATO expansion may be interpreted by Moscow in pure geopolitical terms. Simply explaining Russian foreign policy in Ukraine by ‘Putin’s irrationality; is a vague and superficial analysis that needs further investigation. Europeans need to come to terms with one of the enduring features of international relations is that some states are more equal than others.(Kunz, 2014:4) Great powers stand a much better chance of committing transgressions with impunity. Thus, great powers are more eager to use violence in order to protect what is perceived by them as their vital interests.

Therefore, the Union needs to familiarize itself with the new existing conditions in the international political scene. Since the era of US unipolarity is over and the pivot to Asia a strategic reality, Europe needs to implement a security policy that would safeguard its interests in the neighboring regions. (Biscop, 2014) Thus, in order for the Union to achieve its very demanding goals, it needs to prioritize its political goals and to avoid spending its limited resources in operations that are not vital for its security and its core interests. Politics such as Social engineering and the tendency to expand liberal values were the moving force behind many foreign policy decisions taken by the Europeans. The decision for the eastern expansion of NATO and EU, the need to export Democracy in Afghanistan the military intervention in Libya in order to overthrow the dictatorship in 2011, where political decision motivated from this specific political reasoning. Hence, although Western values are very appealing, a close examination of the events during the past two decades suggests that basing a great power's foreign policy primarily on liberal ideals is mostly a recipe for costly failures. (Walt, 2014) Europeans need to create a strategic culture compatible with the political conditions that they are going to face in a multipolar international system.

The first consequence of the multipolar international system is that Europe must be transformed from a consumer of security to security provider. Thus, on the one hand EU needs to modernize its military capabilities in order to be in the position to successfully project power in its periphery; in order to protect the vital sea lines of communications, and to tackle any potential security threat. On the other hand, the Union needs to avoid the strategic over-extension. The new European grand strategy should maintain minimum security commitments abroad and only in cases where the most vital strategic interests are at stake. European policy makers should overcome crucial obstacles towards the creation of a reliable strategic context. Those obstacles consist of the EU financial and budget problems, the rise of new global players, and the growing war-weariness of the European people. Thus, EU in the future will need to avoid costly and pointless confrontation, and it should invest its resources in cases that are offering important political tradeoffs. Therefore the prioritization of the Union’s foreign policy goals is a necessary procedure in order for Europe to maintain its credibility as an important global power. A

careless security policy that dissipates Europe's resources and political capital to strategically unimportant confrontations, can only lead to a serious loss of credibility of the European power; and as the credibility of European power declines, so does its diplomatic leverage, together with the Union's ability to shape the political environment according to its preferences.

To sum up, Europe's foreign policy under multipolarity should be influenced mostly by power politics considerations than to be relied upon a series of abstract principles. This does of course not mean that the European Union should stop promoting its values. Promoting values cannot be a starting point is the starting point for strategic analysis in a progressively unstable international environment. Only by following a pragmatic foreign policy, can Europe safeguard its security and prosperity on the one hand and on the other hand to be a reliable and considerable international actor.

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