

UA: UKRAINE ANALYTICA

Issue 1 (1), 2015

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- CHANGE OF THE SECURITY PARADIGM
- NON-PROLIFERATION REGIME
- EUROPEAN SECURITY AND VALUES

The Change of Security Paradigm

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Publisher:

Published by NGO "Promotion of Intercultural
Cooperation" (Ukraine),
Centre of International Studies (Ukraine),
with the financial support of the
Representation of the Friedrich Ebert
Foundation in Ukraine.

UA: Ukraine Analytica is the first Ukrainian
academic/analytical journal in English
language on International Relations, Politics
and Economics. The journal is aimed for
experts, diplomats, academics, students
interested in the international relations and
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A WORLD IN DISORDER

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In this article, we argue that Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine generates far-reaching consequences for both regional and global security. On the one hand, Russia appears as a revisionist state, which is challenging the existing world order, incompatible with an Anschluss. On the other hand, Russia's capabilities of projecting power are limited mostly to its neighbourhood. Russia's neighbours will be destabilized most, while the European security architecture will undergo large-scale transformations. At the same time, Russian revisionism is also threatening normative and conceptual foundations of the global security arrangements. Principles of state sovereignty, non-use of force, as well as non-proliferation regime are damaged – and that will surely produce long-term consequences on the global scale.

Introduction

The Russian President Putin took a risky decision with massive distant fallout late at night on February 22, 2014, on the eve of the closing ceremony of the 22nd Winter Olympics, hosted by the Russian city of Sochi. It still remains to be seen whether he recalled Winston Churchill's words: "the statesman who yields to war fever must realize that... he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events."¹

That was a decision to openly intervene into a dramatic political crisis in Ukraine by annexing a part of a sovereign country's territory, something Europe hasn't seen since the times of World War 2. Putin's further steps included waging a hybrid war on Ukraine's territory, direct support for self-proclaimed puppet "republics" with the view to expand his power over the entire country, much in a way the USSR cemented its control over Eastern European states in the 1940-s. A success would have resulted in

reinstating Russia's sphere of influence over most of the post-Soviet space; while a failure would have seriously imperilled the Kremlin autocracy. The crossroad with no safe paths was constructed in Putin's mind, and this zero-sum perception has been playing an increasingly important role in degradation of the regional security system ever since. So far, Ukrainians have paid with thousands of lives, millions of refugees, and one fifth of the country's economy to protect their sovereignty. The price can still go higher.

For Europeans, all that may look a distant conflict with unclear or controversial narratives. Many of them believe Ukraine should find a way out by itself, while some consider Russia's bid for regional hegemony justified. Both former and latter are confident that there is no serious danger further to the West of Ukraine's border. They are wrong.

The key problem, which makes the Ukrainian crisis different from any other post-Soviet conflict, is that not only


¹ Winston Churchill. *My Early Life, 1874-1904*. – Scribner, 1996, 396 p.

Ukraine's sovereignty and freedom are at stake. By annexing a neighbouring territory, Russia undermined the whole European security architecture firmly established seven decades ago. Before 2014, the Kremlin pursued its policy towards Russia's neighbours within the assumed "game rules" of the world order. However, this has changed.

Regional Power with Global Outreach

President Obama labelled Russia "a regional power" during his speech at the Nuclear Security Summit in the Hague back in March 2014². This is a justified assessment. Russia's GDP in 2014 totalled USD1860 bln, accounting for only 2.3% of the world's economy³. The country's military budget was around USD 85 billion, eight times smaller than that of the US and comparable to Saudi Arabia's⁴. Finally, Russia's foreign policy has been heavily concentrated on neighbouring countries, the so-called "near abroad." Russia never got even close to the USSR's ability in projecting influence far beyond its borders, and by almost all standards was a regional power. There were two exceptions, though: its nuclear arsenal and the UN Security Council permanent membership. The former made Russia the other side in the still bipolar system of strategic armaments; while the latter enhanced Russia's institutional capacities, just as in cases of other regional players, such as Great Britain or France.

President Putin, however, had a different perception. Emphasizing Russia's "unique role" in the world turned into the Kremlin's



The Weimar's syndrome surfaced in almost every strategic choice Russia has made in its foreign policy.

rhetoric's distinctive feature⁵. Moscow openly regretted the collapse of the USSR and aimed at restoring its influence over neighbouring countries to enjoy a status of a great power as one of the centres of the multipolar world. Energy supplies and soft power – in a way the latter has been understood in Moscow – were designed as key instruments in fulfilling the task. Formally, the Kremlin's influence has been ensured through a number of integration projects. Although comparing the Eurasian Economic Union to the European Union is a commonplace in the Russian political discourse, these are two fundamentally different institutions, given their basic principles, decision-making procedures, and balance of interdependence. At the same time, Moscow's contradistinction to the EU made further deepening of the Union's cooperation with Ukraine a geopolitical challenge to Russia's extensive revisionist intentions.

The Weimar's syndrome⁶ surfaced in almost every strategic choice Russia has made in its foreign policy. New developments in Ukraine's foreign policy have become a severe test for Moscow's self-awareness. Negotiations over the Association Agreement with the European Union were already finalized in 2013, with the document ready to be signed. That signing would

² <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/25/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-weakness-idUSBREA2019J20140325>

³ World Bank Database. Gross Domestic Product 2014 // <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf>

⁴ SIPRI Fact Sheet, Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2014. April 2015 // <http://books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1504.pdf>

⁵ Vladimir Putin. Rossiya i menyauschisysya mir (Russia and the World that Changes) // Moskovskie Novosti, February 27, 2012. // <http://www.mn.ru/politics/20120227/312306749.html>

⁶ Weimar's syndrome refers to peculiarities of foreign policy of Germany under and after Weimar Republic (1919-1933), largely influenced by a perceived feeling of unfair world order and a resulting revanchism.

have put an end to Russia's large-scale geopolitical projects of reintegrating post-Soviet countries under Kremlin's influence. In turn, that would have meant, in Moscow's view, a serious blow to Russia's regional, let alone global, status.

Inability to control its immediate neighbourhood drove the Kremlin strategists more risk-taking. In attempts to get Ukraine back into the fold, Russia crossed a number of red lines. The way it struggles to retain its regional power status is now undermining foundations of the global order: the Kremlin's regional aspirations brought about global consequences.

By heating escalation in the Eastern regions of Ukraine, controlled by Russian-backed separatists, Moscow is revealing its long-term strategy. It is about "Transnistriazation" of European politics. Two decades ago, the Moldovan region of Transnistria claimed its independence unrecognized so far. Backed by Moscow, its authoritarian regime has been used to block Moldova's intentions to join the EU. Gradually, Transnistria became one of Europe's most depressed and corrupted regions while still being totally economically dependent on Russia. Later, the same fate was awaiting South Ossetia and Abkhazia, two territories torn away from Georgia as a result of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008. By utilizing neighbouring states' weaknesses and actively exploiting their Russian-speaking minorities, the Kremlin is turning manipulations with territories into hands-on "diplomacy." With extra revenues from oil and gas trade exhausting, economic sanctions gradually taking effect, and international isolation tightening, the Russian President's final choice seems to fall back to the good old Stalinist bet on hard power and direct control over annexed territories.

This option carries both an immediate danger for Russia's neighbourhood and a long-term challenge for the international order. The first is mostly about vulnerability to a direct military threat from a much more powerful adversary. Russia's neighbours, and especially the ones that are not members to NATO, now find themselves in a classical security dilemma and have to proceed from the worst-case scenarios. Such expectations will quickly turn regional politics into a very "realistic" endeavour, implying mistrust, suspicion, and growing tensions. Long-term challenges are mostly resulting from violations of Ukraine's territorial integrity and risks to a number of international regimes and regulations.

Status quo Challenger

The power transition theory defines states as powers satisfied with *status quo* and dissatisfied challengers⁷. As long as the former are much stronger than the latter, the system is stable in a sense that no major military conflict is probable. Behind this simple scheme, there is a rational choice model, according to which challenging powers calculate risks and chances of an attempt to modify the existing rules and refrain from any aggression if the odds are not in their favour. The calculation is not always accurate. Authoritarian and totalitarian leaders, for instance, tend to take more risky decisions than their democratic counterparts. Decision-makers overestimate their resources while underestimating their opponents' resolve. All leaders face difficulties in calculating the allies' commitments. Some resources are profoundly difficult to measure. Altogether, it is difficult to calculate the balance of power.

⁷ Organski A.F.K. *The War Ledger* / A.F.K. Organski, J. Kugler. – Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1980. – 299 p.

According to the power transition theory, instability rises as the power balance approaches equilibrium. A rising challenger tends to overestimate his power while underestimating the *status quo* holders' alliances. They are most likely to launch preventive wars before being taken over. Moments of rough equilibrium are dangerous, as the uncertainty level dramatically increases. In other words, major conflicts occur when a challenger is close to overtaking a *status quo* power.

By annexing a part of a neighbouring state's territory, Russia made a desperate attempt to change the existing *status quo* – but only in Europe. The *status quo* that existed before March 2014 had been perceived by the Kremlin as rather uncomfortable. In two decades, it brought a series of EU and NATO enlargements, which Moscow saw as significantly encroaching on Russia's sphere of influence. Following that perception, Russia felt compelled to compete with the European Union under quite unfavourable conditions. Since Vladimir Putin was elected President for the third time in 2012, Russia's foreign policy has been concentrated on neighbouring states in an attempt to establish an alternative center of gravity in Europe. However, the Kremlin's initiatives to launch several Eurasian integration projects failed to get anywhere near the EU's impact and influence. Ukraine's intention to sign the Association Agreement with the EU was seen in Moscow as a devastating blow to any further attempts to reinstate its sphere of influence.

Following the events of Euromaidan in Kyiv it became clear Ukraine would not participate in Russia's integration projects. That meant a geopolitical defeat for Moscow, a defeat suffered within the European *status quo*, mostly based on non-use of force, soft power, and economic interdependence.

The Kremlin opted to challenge it. Turning European politics back to military force, annexations, blackmail – in other words to *Realpolitik* as it is perceived in the Kremlin – that was the essence of Moscow's all-in gambling. By annexing Crimea, Russia not only violated Ukraine's territorial integrity, but also forced putting revision of all key principles of the European security on the agenda. Betting on its military might, Russia is trying to turn Europe back to competitive bipolarity and cement its own sphere of influence – just as the Soviet Union did seven decades ago.

However, global consequences can't be avoided.

World Order Damaged

While pursuing its regional goals, Russia is further undermining the world order, already significantly damaged in 2014. The key elements of this order have been accepted by the international community as following:

1. States are sovereign.
2. States are free to choose their foreign policy, alliances, and commitments.
3. Security is indivisible and broad.
4. Using military power is costly.
5. Acquiring nuclear weapons is extremely costly.
6. Using nuclear weapons is beyond any political rationality.

These, for the most part implicit, assumptions have been *modus operandi* for the international system since the end of the Cold War and earlier: some of them were laid down more than three centuries ago.

State sovereignty is an old principle. It goes back to the Peace of Westphalia signed in 1648. Since then, the world politics is mostly about relations between states and state-controlled agents. State sovereignty

implies that states are formally equal and exercise power over their territories by themselves. That does not exclude attempts of interference as well as policies of limiting sovereignty of others. However, these attempts implied a challenge to an accepted norm of international relations – a challenge, which proved to become more and more costly.



Under the current world order, states are sovereign not so much in the meaning of “independent”, but in regard to their agency in the world politics.

By now, state sovereignty remains a cornerstone of the world politics. An old principle of non-interference has transformed into a state's freedom to choose partners, ways and forms of engagement as well as depth of cooperation. Under the current world order, states are sovereign not so much in the meaning of “independent”, but in regard to their agency in the world politics. Will, interests, and relative freedom of dozens of states that form the current anarchical international system, are what makes it different from historic examples of imperial rule.

In such a system, security becomes a result of complex strategic interactions, not one's unilateral actions. It goes beyond the military realm and encompasses a wide range of dimensions. Moreover, it becomes indivisible – in a sense that no single international actor can significantly enhance its security by undermining security or the others.

Such a complex vision of security creates a specific environment for states' foreign policies. Starting from the 20th century, it is no longer possible to bet on superiority in any particular field, even military. Often,

possessing weapons makes a state less secure in the end. Arms races, military alliances, aggression, containment are all subject to a strategic logic of security. As a result, using military power proves to be costly. The high price for violence has been a characteristic feature of the world order, a stabilizer of the system, and a preventer of major armed disputes. Following the same logic, nuclear weapons have been too expensive to possess, both in financial and political senses. Rules of the game discouraged possessing weapons of mass destruction, providing cheaper and easier ways to protect a country's sovereignty.

The strategic nature of security, high cost for violence, and agency of nation-states have been the essence of the status quo after the Cold War. This status quo is under challenge, and each of these principles has been more or less severely damaged as a result of Russia's risk-taking policy. The Kremlin's political goal is to limit Ukraine's sovereignty in a way that Kyiv is no longer able to choose and manage its international commitments. Neither Ukraine's NATO membership, nor its closer association with the EU is acceptable to Russia. The events during and after the Euromaidan in Kyiv demonstrated how far Moscow is ready to go to deny Ukraine's right to pursue its own independent foreign policy. Earlier on, Russia used limited internal “frozen conflicts” to do the same with Moldova and Georgia, but in case of Ukraine, it went beyond the world order's red lines by directly applying military force.



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Annexation of Crimea violated Ukraine's territorial integrity. That was not the first loss of territory by a state under the current world order, which, by and large, favours creation of new states. However, this was the first direct annexation of a neighbouring country's territory since the end of World War 2. In this sense, the Crimean Anschluss is incompatible with the rules of the game and is not only the issue of bilateral relations, but also a challenge to the global security arrangements. Left unchecked, the Russian aggression will surely create a dangerous precedent.

The same is true for the use of force. As long as it is expensive, risky, and difficult from the procedural point of view, the current world order could be maintained. Otherwise, the world politics would deteriorate to *Realpolitik*. Russia's use of force in Ukraine has surely been a risky enterprise. However, it should also become as expensive as possible. The higher price imposed on Russia, the less the damage inflicted on the existing rules. If political, economic, and reputational losses are not large enough, decision-makers around the world will surely reevaluate the use of military force, especially against weaker opponents. For the same reason, Crimea should not become Moscow's prize for denying the founding principles of international politics.

Down this line of argument, we arrive to a nuclear issue. If the value of military force rises while costs for its misuse fall, states would be willing to possess and control as much arms as possible. Acquiring and developing nuclear weapons and strategic armaments would become the most rational way to ensure national security. If Ukraine – a country, which voluntarily gave up the world's third largest nuclear arsenal in return for security guarantees, – ends up losing its sovereignty and parts of its territory, the non-proliferation regime would be undermined.

The cumulative effect of Russia's revisionism is significantly stronger than one could expect, given the country's modest share in the world economy and military expenditures. As it often happens, a revisionist state overestimates its capabilities and takes unreasonably high risks. However, even with almost no chances to win, it could damage or ruin the existing world order.

Paradigm Changed?

International politics is not only about resources, but also about ideas and perceptions. Dominant paradigms within the realm of international security shape threats, expectations, risks, and opportunities. Shifting the balance of hard power may take time, while transformation of the ways international actors perceive each other may happen much faster. International security is based upon these perceptions. Countries build up, develop, and use power in accordance with the views they hold about how the international system operates.

Until recently, European security has been maintained comparatively effectively under the neoliberal paradigm. High level of economic development and trade have generated strong interdependence, while raising the cost for violence. Repeated mutually beneficial cooperation produced stable networks and international regimes. States were following rather absolute than relative gains and maintained a high level of trust to each other, not least due to common values and norms. EU's gradual enlargement expanded its area of security to most of Central and Eastern Europe. The continent enjoyed decades of stability and prosperity, experiencing few or none militarized international disputes in recent years.

This neoliberal paradise influenced the way European states approached security issues. In most European countries,

military expenditures have been steadily decreasing in recent years⁸. The European Union's security instruments were primarily addressing soft threats. The hard power politics has been replaced with application of the normative power. The EU bet on influencing internal developments in the neighbouring countries with a firm belief that stable democracies would make a better security environment for the Union. Exploiting an interconnection between internal and foreign policies is a very neoliberal approach. According to it, security in Europe would be best achieved through promoting democratic norms, strengthening international regimes, enhancing integration and interdependence, and deepening international cooperation.

Russia is imposing a totally different vision of how European politics should operate. Geopolitical games, so popular in the Kremlin, generate a highly competitive and distrustful environment. Even if Kremlin's attempts to restore its greatness through oppressing neighbours fail, there is a danger of a paradigm shift, which will completely transform the way Europeans think of security.



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What Moscow is offering is a well-known *realism*. It is about state-centrism, egoistic policies, principles of self-help and anarchy. States competing for security, primarily with hard power assets, form a hostile environment, where the level of trust is low and states proceed from worst-case scenarios. Such logic, applied by everyone, generates security dilemmas, when states

have to build up military capacities and engage in preventive conflicts. Realism replaces common norms and mechanisms of interdependence with balance of power and military coalitions as primary tools for maintaining international security.

Regional arms races, suspicion, zero-sum thinking, and excessive use of military force are likely to become visible consequences of a security paradigm change.

Conclusion

Russian revisionism is a challenge at both conceptual and political level.

An adequate response to this challenge would include: 1) raising diplomatic, political, and economic pressure on the Kremlin; and 2) modifying criteria for NATO membership in such a way that contested territories can no longer prevent a country from joining the Alliance. Such combination will deprive Russia's strategy of most of its rationale and further increase its costs. In both cases, Ukraine can be an important solution.

Obviously, decision-makers in the Kremlin believe that the military backing of a puppet government in Transnistria in 1992, the aggression against Georgia in 2008, or annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 work well to keep Russia's influence in the region and block these countries from joining NATO. Although, we never know for sure whether destabilization of Georgia and Ukraine was a cause or a consequence of both countries' failure to join NATO, it is strongly believed in Moscow that such a card-playing is key for preserving Russia's sphere of interests. What does it mean for Europe?

First and foremost, it is ruining the European security arrangements, which for quite long have been pillared by non-use of force, freedom of choice, and normative

power. With Russian revisionism on the rise, none of these is any longer so. Transnistria's "frozen conflict" has been largely an exception to the European security system, but by now it is becoming commonplace. After succeeding in annexation of territories and creating quasi-states out of nowhere, Russia will not only further destabilize Eastern Europe, but also undermine the European security's key principles, which have been in place since the end of World War 2. In this case, Europe will face security risks, including secessionism, terrorism, and hybrid warfare multiplied.

For quite some time, the EU's attempts to construct a common foreign and security policy have been based on democratic values, economic and financial capabilities, and attractiveness of the way of life – what is shortly called "soft power". Inability to curtail the Russian challenge will result in a quick depreciation of all that. Arms races, military build-ups, suspicion, and mistrust will form a new system of axes in Europe. It is already taking place, although on a smaller scale. New realities in security arrangements are being tested in the East of Ukraine, and the experiment is going to demonstrate the most likely ways of further development.

Russia's immediate neighbourhood faces even higher risks. Countries like Georgia and Ukraine have already suffered loss of territories. Others are defenceless, and their security depends mostly not on their actions or choice, but on Russia's intentions. That is a poor foundation for any regional security system. If a new reality imposed by the Kremlin comes into force, Europe as a whole will become a much more dangerous place.

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