

Department of Political Science

International Relations

TITLE

NATO – RUSSIA RELATIONS, A BRIEF ANALYSIS

FROM THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE USSR TO CELTIC MANOR

ADVISOR

Prof. Raffaele Marchetti

CANDIDATE

Andrea Sollai Matr. 072072

ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/15

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor prof. Marchetti, whose competence and patience allowed me to work passionately and with great commitment on this dissertation.

I am particularly grateful to Adm. Di Paola, who always supported and inspired me with his unparalleled knowledge of the international relations and NATO.

I must also acknowledge the Department of Political Science of LUISS, which provided me with a stimulating academic environment and a great life experience during my years in Rome. I am thankful and proud to continue my studies at this university.

I sincerely thank my friends and brothers, particularly Giovanna for the precious time she has spent helping me with the editing of this thesis.

Last but not least, I hereby acknowledge my parents, my sisters and Anna, without whose unending love, encouragement, trust and faith this thesis would not be possible. I owe them unconditional gratitude for their unflagging support and understanding.

ABSTRACT

The following dissertation will explore how NATO has evolved through the Cold War and after the fall of the Soviet Union, explaining the reasons why a military alliance outlived the enemy it was founded to fight. The introduction will explain the development of the main assumption, aiming at emphasising the strong correlation between the life and death of the USSR – and now the Russian Federation – and NATO. The first chapter will provide an historical perspective upon the situation of the post WWII, analysing the grounds for the foundation of NATO and the evolution of the organization towards a more integrated community. It will then focus on the end of the Cold War, particularly on the disintegration of the USSR and the first steps of the relationship between the Russian Federation and the Alliance. The second chapter will provide a timeline of the Ukraine Crisis and its implications in terms of Russo-Atlantic relations, with a short analysis of the Celtic Manor 2014 NATO Summit and a description of the Russian perspective. The conclusion of this dissertation will give some possible future developments following the current scenario at the International Relation and Security Studies level.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Acknowledgements.....p.3
- Abstract.....p.4
- Introduction.....p.7
- 1. Historical background.....p.9
 - a. Foundation and evolution of NATO
 - b. End of the Cold War
 - c. Cooperation between NATO and Russia
- 2. The Ukraine Crisis and the Russian Perspective.....p.19
 - a. A brief timeline
 - b. The 2014 NATO Summit at Celtic Manor
 - c. Russian institutions
 - d. A threat to Russia
- 3. Conclusion and future developments..... p.31
- Bibliography.....p.35
- Annexp.37
- Précisp.39

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

INTRODUCTION

With the end of the Cold War and the age of a bipolarism, the world entered a new era. Within the borders of the once Warsaw Pact countries, new governments gave birth to countless reforms of the economic and political systems, to the point that in a very short time, those societies were deeply transformed. Peoples from Vladivostok to Pankow were pushing for the creation of fairly elected democratic governments. Europe in the 1990s experienced a rapid mutation whereby divisions were overcome and the Iron Curtain was dismantled. With the Maastricht Treaty and the NATO Open door policy, the political climate in Europe suddenly became more relaxed and the political and economic integration of the region ensured more than a quarter of a century of peace, civil rights and political freedom on European soil. Besides, the disintegration of the USSR would create a new political actor, the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation guided by Yeltsin inherited an ageing but gigantic military system, including around 35000 nuclear warheads and 6 aircraft carriers. The Russian Federation however was on the edge of a domestic social and economic disaster, and the Yeltsin presidency had to remain focused on a progressive liberalisation of the economy and the opening to the market of the Russian Federation.

The hypothesis of this dissertation is that in order to understand the North Atlantic Treaty Organization it is of central importance to understand the peculiar relationship between NATO and the Russian Federation. This began as soon as 1991, when it was clear that Russia had to be part of the picture when discussing a framework for the European security after the end of the Cold War. As this plot twist was happening, NATO too had to implement certain radical reforms, which would in turn lead to the Open Door Policy that made it possible to enlarge NATO particularly eastwards, granting membership to several of the former Soviet republics. The cooperation with the Russian Federation led to the foundation of the NATO-Russia Council after the 2002 Rome NATO Summit, which was formally suspended at the 2014 Celtic Manor NATO Summit as a consequence to the Russian occupation of the Ukrainian region of Crimea. Nowadays NATO can count on the membership of 28 countries, among which three nuclear powers. Its European borders roughly coincide with the European Union.

The history of NATO is strongly intertwined with Russia, since it was founded precisely to deter the Soviet threat to Europe. After the end of the ideological conflict, NATO did not disintegrate because it could transform itself, but with the return of a negative sentiment towards Russia, NATO might turn back to a more hard-power trim. The evolution of NATO remains subject to the influence of Russian behaviour, given that the Russian Federation wants to state its status as a great power if not a “former superpower” under Putin’s presidency. This thesis will provide a historical description of the relationship between the Eastern and the Western Blocs starting from the very foundation of NATO in the wake of the Second World War. Chapter 1 will explore the features of the Washington Treaty and the policy of NATO enlargement. This aspect of NATO is then discussed also for what concerned the global situation after the end of the Cold War, with a brief description of the military interventions in Kosovo and later in Afghanistan. In this regard, it will be highlighted the role of the first steps of the Russo-NATO relationship, which eventually led Russian Armed Forces to join a NATO military exercise for the first time in history, in 2011, as part of an antiterrorism exercise.

The enlargement of NATO led to a more difficult decision-making process within the Organization due to the increased number of Member States needed to formulate decisions by consensus. It is argued that this has been a process of mutation, which created the grounds for a more transparent and political international institution. The historical moment analysed posed fundamental questions to NATO, which was basically left without its original enemy. The strengthening of relations with the Russian Federation drove the two of them to the stipulation of a formal environment whereby a cooperation between NATO and Russia would take place on a regular basis. In the first chapter there will also be analysed the historical premises that brought Russia and NATO to the creation of the NATO-Russia Council, that would be a dramatic step for their international relations, with the aim of ensuring a peaceful environment for the European region.

The focus of the second chapter will be set on the behaviour of NATO acting as an international institution rather than resorting to the use of force while dealing with the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. As a matter of fact, the Member States had to deal with a highly controversial situation, that could have had severe repercussions on the political choices of the individual countries at home. The Ukraine conflict posed serious questions to the reactivity of NATO as a military alliance capable of immediate retaliation, and furthermore tried the stability of the European Union. The crisis highlighted several weak points of the European diplomacy, including the lack of a shared perspective towards Russia. The same chapter will clarify what kind of externalities a more heterogeneous NATO might bring in the case of a regional crisis involving hybrid warfare and contrasting political and economic interests. An analysis of the 2014 Wales NATO Summit will explain the implications of the unilateral suspension of the NATO-Russia Council in the relationship between the two actors.

The Russian perspective towards NATO after the Cold War is something hardly predictable and has a history of several misunderstandings, which eventually led to what the newspapers would describe as a return to the Cold War¹. The West political élites probably lack a common and cogent understanding of the Russian sentiment concerning the current affairs. The second chapter will also provide the author's personal reflection on the communication problems with Russia. The Russian political and economic difficulties exacerbated a swinging relationship with the European neighbours, to the point that NATO and all Europe with it would be considered a threat to Russia as much as Russia is commonly thought to be a possible threat to Europe. In order to have a better view of the Russian point it is also important to look into Russian institutions and try to understand its evolution and dramatic changes.

In conclusion, the impact of Russia will again play a major role in shaping the physiognomy of NATO, and the future prosperity of Russia is going to determine the path Russia will take towards Europe. In fact, a peaceful environment in Europe is the best outcome for both parties, but whether Europe is going to escape a multiple equilibria trap or fall in a prisoner's dilemma game will be due to the relations between NATO and the Russian Federation. Should Russia come to cordiality with the West again, it will need to work on national institutions and international priorities, as much as NATO will have to integrate its military strategic capabilities with the EU political consensus in order to craft a shared and neat approach to Russia, possibly avoiding Cold War nostalgia.

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/19/new-cold-war-back-to-bad-old-days-russia-west-putin-ukraine>
Accessed on 13/06/15

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Foundation and evolution of NATO

Explaining the reasons why NATO outlived the end of the Cold War and the last breath of its mortal enemy requires a closer look to the historical evolution of the alliance. Thus in order to understand what kind of institution NATO really was by the fall of the Berlin Wall, it is necessary to bear in mind that more than 40 years determined its path crisis after crisis, from the Korean War until the last enlargement came into being. The following chapter will try to grasp from the experience of the past and from the very founding treaty the reasons why it is still lasting.

“[NATO means] *to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.*”

Lord Hastings Ismay, 1st Secretary General of NATO

For the first time after two world wars, the USA finally abandoned isolationism in their international relations² and eventually committed to the safeguard of Europe in 1949 with the draft of the Washington Treaty, which established a military alliance that would in turn grant numerous decades of peace and prosperity to Europe. With the Monroe Doctrine establishing the complete autonomy of the USA over the American Continent, and with the declining European countries then left in ruins, the USA would project their hegemony to the war-torn European region. The realist and liberal schools of thought debate the reasons for this involvement, but there is a general agreement that a clear strategic divergence was impossible to fill between the USA and the Soviet Union. Such incompatibility was irreversible after Stalin's intentions to establish naval bases in Turkey and the eastern Mediterranean were followed by the deployment of the Sixth Fleet in that area by President Truman, as a reminder of the US post-war aims in Europe (Findlay & O'Rourke, 2009).

Therefore, after the Fascist threat, a new threat came from Russia and it bound the USA to the European cause, despite being the USA in a position of relative security. The USA were the only power in control of the atomic bomb, and suffered very small losses in terms of lives and economy during the war, but concerns were growing towards the expansionism of the Red Army, whose ultimate idea was the communist revolution worldwide.

The division of Berlin in spheres of influence set the layout of the Cold War, while the USSR was consolidating its power in Eastern Europe with the seizure of Poland, and the concerted mobilization of Communist Parties in Western Europe. In such a political vacuum, the allied nations responded to the call of creating an alliance that would halt the spread of communist ideology driven by Moscow. NATO seemed to represent an outpost of democratic and liberal values within an environment of utter political instability – an institution capable of countering the rapid military occupation of a significant portion of Europe.

² Before 1941 the USA refused to enter the European theatre of war, and after WWI, notwithstanding President Wilson's engagement in the European cause, the American Congress rejected the proposed membership to the League of Nations.

Contingently to the immediate need of securing European borders, the USA implemented a very ambitious investment plan, the Marshall Plan, which would push the European economic rebirth, considered a fundamental response to the stances of extremists in the long run. In a short time, the divided Berlin became an emblematic picture of the Western-Eastern conflict: while the DDR suffered the misery of post war, Western Germany was growing at a fast pace, becoming the promised land of countless Germans who died trying to escape the Iron Curtain.

Thus, NATO became an alliance of liberal democracies wary of the subversive communist extremists, which aligned Atlantic countries on the assumption that their values and their identity needed a solid shield against illiberal corruptors. Therefore, the twelve founding members signed the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington, on 4th April 1949, providing the Treaty with a preamble that gives the sense of the long-lasting life of the greatest organization of collective security of the contemporary history, the strength of the values and principles that each and every member shares and pursues.

“[The Parties to this Treaty] are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area.³”

The preamble of the NATO Founding Treaty explains by itself the deep links between those countries and people. They wrote the aim of an organization detaining a tremendous amount of nuclear warheads talking of the promotion of democracy and individual liberties. This makes NATO a great source of Western soft power. It was the backbone of an ideological war against a vision of the world distant from the European ideals of development and integration. This induced the Member States to commit to Western values, because they were indeed benefiting from the support of the USA, who would in turn commit to chip in for the safeguard of their European allies⁴. The preamble also includes the commitment of the Parties to the United Nations, considered of crucial importance for the maintenance of a global order, and aimed at strengthening both organizations.

Similarly, the articles 1 to 3 aim to strengthen the role of NATO within the individual Member States, working on the development of their economic and political institutions as well as their armies, which should resist a direct attack to their countries. Then, articles 4 to 6 include the provisions that indicate the features of collective defence of the Treaty. This Treaty was designed in such a fashion that would ensure the automatic retaliation of all Member States against whomever would infringe the Charter of the United Nations for what concerns the ban on the use of force for the settling of disputes against NATO Member States. NATO has been

³ Preamble to “*The North Atlantic Treaty*”, Washington D.C. – 4 April 1949. Available online at: http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/stock_publications/20120822_nato_treaty_en_light_2009.pdf Accessed on 13/06/15

⁴ This holds particularly true for Italy. Italy had the most important Communist Party in Western Europe, and was then subject to the influence of both the American and Russian intelligence, who would fight to the last drop to secure the Mediterranean country by their side. This is thought to be one of the underlying reasons that oriented Italian political élites towards low politics, refraining from conducting an independent and full range foreign policy.

an extremely efficient deterrent of the use of force towards Europe. For this reason, many scholars agree that the Cold War was in fact a rather peaceful period for Europe⁵.

When the Alliance settled, the organization as such was handled by President Eisenhower, who pushed for the institutionalisation of NATO, through the creation of Headquarters, strategic military bases and the NATO Defence College, with the aim of creating a net of communication that would make NATO independent also on academic contributions grounds. In a couple of years, NATO started the military integration and the interoperability of the allied armed forces, notably with the joint exercises that would simulate plausible counterattacks against a Russian first move in European soil.

With the war in Korea, NATO faced the importance of consolidating the Western political response to a situation similar to the attempted seizure of South Korea by the communists. Although NATO was not directly involved, most of the Member States backed the American intervention in the conflict as a proof of commitment to the UN Charter and the ideals stated in the preamble of NATO.

In 1955, the enlargement of NATO brought West Germany military under the full control of the Alliance, thus providing a political concerted response to the dilemma of the German rearmament. Germany was immediately beneficial to the collective security of Europe, because it allowed NATO to stay at sight with the Soviet border, in one of the diplomatic cores of the USSR in Western Europe. Moreover, the characteristics of Germany were by themselves a valuable asset for NATO and European strategy, given the restored health of the German economy and its undoubted potential capability.

Notably, the European economic and social performances inspired the cooperation of other countries that joined NATO, among which Turkey in 1952, which represented the only Member State with significant differences on cultural grounds. Turkey was nevertheless welcomed in NATO due to its strategic position, and the possible conditions that could have made it the weakest link in the chain protecting Mediterranean Europe from Soviet expansion otherwise.

Some 25 years after the birth of NATO, however, the European scenario had changed dramatically, and the solidity of the Alliance contributed significantly to it. In the 70s' there was little if any dispute over borders, and the realist observers would describe the USSR and NATO as two rational players that had somehow defined a line that ought not to be crossed in Europe⁶. Worldwide, there was a partial relaxation of the relationships between the West and the East, which led for instance to the end of the War in Vietnam in 1973 and the signature of the Helsinki Agreement in 1975.

⁵ This however does not hold true for the rest of the world. After the decrease in total wars following the Second World War, contingently with the foundation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, from the end of the 1940s to the end of the Cold War, the total number of wars worldwide always increased at a good pace. (Held & McGrew, 2007, p. 43-47)

⁶ The Cold War was a war indeed, and the Warsaw Pact governments in the 1970s were involved in the drafting of a plan to invade Europe. In 1973 for instance, the Bucharest Summit of the Warsaw Pact would set the basis for an invasion of Europe starting from Italy. NATO in this regard developed a defence strategy including the use of nuclear warheads, but refrained from studying an invasion of the USSR, according to the former President of the Italian Republic, F. Cossiga. (Caracciolo, 2008, p. 17)

End of the Cold War

In the following years, the military escalation of the two superpowers came to an end during Gorbachev's secretariat, when the USSR agreed with the USA on the need to reduce the amount of nuclear warheads in Europe, and to limit its total number. This line of communication established the grounds for the end of the Cold War and for the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaties, while Russia was going through a difficult economic moment. The fatigue of the USSR was shown to the rest of the world while the same Gorbachev adopted the *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies.

NATO went through the Cold War gaining in political power, military power, and a considerable amount of experience and resilience. Tens of political leaders influenced NATO and the Council could sustain the weight of such a difficult historical moment. The Alliance managed to give a political union to Europe on the Western side of the Iron Curtain, while handling the question of nuclear proliferation on both the enemy and allied side. Founded with the purpose of committing States to immediate retaliation against the communist threat, it then evolved in a more sound institution with several different functions and scopes. NATO outlived the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union because it redefined itself into a system of collective interest safeguard in Europe and offshore. During the '90s it had to deal with the transition towards democracy of Eastern Europe, while investing a great deal of time on building ex novo relationships with the Russians that were experimenting democracy for the first time ever in their history.

The moment taken into analysis is certainly defined by the short but effective period of unipolarity in the world order. When the Russian Federation was established, only the USA was the true and recognized hegemon of the world, being NATO - at least partially - a projection of the American power in Europe. To this end, a realist argument would explain the durability of NATO after the Cold War as a mixture of American interest in Europe plus a high degree of bandwagoning by both the EU countries and the new Eastern European democracies. A liberal approach would at least add to the picture the importance of a new and vast democratic region open to the market and to interconnectedness of interests. While a social constructivist approach would emphasise the role of identity and the power of shared values that encourages democracies to join the only credible and capable outpost of Western values, there is little if any doubt on the importance of the USA.

As NATO was founded on the premise of keeping "the Americans in", a good example to this end is NATO's intervention in Kosovo. While in a first moment the crisis in Yugoslavia was out of reach for either the EU or the UN, a decisive impact was the decision of the then president Bill Clinton to define the Kosovar crisis as a matter of national security⁷ in 1998 that

⁷ Executive Order 13088 of June 9, 1998 available at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-1998-06-12/pdf/98-15888.pdf> Accessed on 13/06/15

"I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, find that the actions and policies of the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and the Republic of Serbia with respect to Kosovo, by promoting ethnic conflict and human suffering, threaten to destabilize countries of the region and to disrupt progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina in implementing the Dayton peace agreement, and therefore constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, and hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat."

induced a NATO reaction in the following months. President Clinton's opinion of the explosive situation in the Balkans laid on the condemnation of acts aimed at the promotion of "ethnic conflict and human suffering". This was the actual mandate for NATO in the Balkans, not a matter of geostrategic computation, but rather a tool to uphold Western values such as the respect of human rights and the rule of law. (Van Ham, 2001, p. 395)

The new-born Russian Federation has had a very enthusiastic approach towards liberal democracy and the Western partners, while coping with pressing social issues among which a situation of uncontrolled corruption and a tormented relationship with Chechen separatist groups. The Russian Federation's first ever fairly elected President was Boris Yeltsin, who was later succeeded by Vladimir Putin, the latter having distanced the Russian Federation from NATO and the European Union over the recent crises of Georgia and Ukraine.

This very complex situation evolved in the Russian Federation through a concerted effort by the Russian élites on the one hand and the Western partners on the other hand, based on the idea that the security of Europe was a matter of mutual trust between the solid liberal democracies of the European Community and Russia. The end of the Cold War brought with it a new wave of domestic agitations in ex-communist countries, first in the Balkans and later with the Colour Revolutions. Such changes in the neighbouring States were perceived as a threat to national integrity by the Russians, who would later define the overthrow of friendly regimes through the "technology of colour revolution" a form of war that Putin would call "controlled chaos" (Johnson, 2015).

Following the end of the Soviet Union, not only was the Cold War over, but also the Warsaw Pact ended with it. This led the Alliance to redefine its military presence in Europe, and let it confront the challenges to international security that would soon occur with the terrorist attacks inspired by Bin Laden, but it also led the Alliance to discuss its very borders. The question of rebuilding the political and institutional stability was a challenge that was soon faced by NATO, which would risk respectively a huge belt of instability in Europe and a lack of legitimacy, would it had not directly supported the establishment of its founding value of liberal democracy in ex-communist societies. NATO created a two-tier open door system, which included the mere NATO enlargement on the one hand, and the *Partnership for Peace* (PfP) program, which nowadays consists of 22 sovereign States.

In 1994 the PfP was launched with the aim of creating trust between the Alliance, the non-NATO European States and the ex-USSR, so as to include over the years 34 non-NATO countries of which 12 have now joined the Alliance⁸. With the PfP Russia and NATO began a process of confidence building that included joint military activities and exchange of security and defence information.

⁸ Besides the twelve ex-PfP countries that are now part of NATO, the PfP includes today twelve former republics of the Soviet Union (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan), four former republics of Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia), five EU Member States (Austria, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden) and Switzerland.

Cooperation between NATO and Russia

In the wake of the end of the Cold War, NATO and Russia came to the agreement that they would need each other to prevent any future conflict in Europe, and to this end they agreed to the Partnership for Peace program, creating the framework for a new chapter of the geopolitics of Europe. The enlargement of NATO shifted the borders of the Alliance eastwards, including the Baltic region in the north, and the Balkans and the Black Sea in the south. Thus, the role of border to the Alliance was transferred to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the north; to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in the east; to Romania and Bulgaria in the south.

The Open Door Policy according to art.10 of the Washington Treaty was given full power in stating that “any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area” shall be invited to accede the Alliance⁹. However, the Russian Federation was never seriously motivated to join the NATO in fact, and considering its role of great power, Russia was granted a special status of relations vis-à-vis the Alliance. The most significant challenges for PFP came respectively as early as 1999 in Kosovo (KFOR) and later in Afghanistan (ISAF). KFOR was the first peacekeeping operation that involved Russian personnel to work side by side with NATO. The Russian sent as many as 4000 troops for peacekeeping operations, but 18 non-NATO countries were involved in the operation. ISAF was too an important operation that was reportedly defined as “a driver not only of interoperability, but also of logistics synchronization, harmonization and coordination.” (Reisinger, 2013). In the occasion of ISAF, the Russian Federation participated as a partner for logistic support, including the transportation of non-military freight through its territory.

However, the intervention in Kosovo was not truly a matter of amusement for the Russian observers, who were sceptical on the intervention, as well as other NATO and non-NATO members. What was happening in the Balkans shook the public opinion in Russia, first and foremost for the historic, cultural and religious closeness with the Serbs, but also for grounded concerns over the *modus operandi* of NATO and the USA in the field of the exportation of democracy championed by the Clinton Doctrine¹⁰. Russian leaders witnessed a concerted armed intervention of NATO in a sovereign State, without a UN resolution in support for the air strikes, while the Russian military could not possibly sustain any possible military (nor diplomatic, actually) confrontation against the Alliance. In fact, the Russian Federation could not even project its military power elsewhere in the world, should NATO have decided to intervene against Russian interests or against Russia itself. At the same time, the ongoing talks between the Russian Federation and NATO were prioritized, as the Russian leadership ought to refrain from contrasting the US administration bearing in mind the vital economic support Russia needed following the financial crisis of 1998.

The very profile of NATO after the Cold War was ambiguous vis-à-vis the Russian Federation. On the one hand, it had to choose between the inclusion of new Eastern-European States, to the sacrifice of a more rapid decision-making process, or declining after the unipolar

⁹ “The North Atlantic Treaty”, Washington D.C. Art.10 – 4 April 1949. Available online at: http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/stock_publications/20120822_nato_treaty_en_light_2009.pdf

Accessed on 13/06/15

¹⁰ “A National Security Strategy for a New Century”: <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2000.pdf> Accessed on 13/06/15

advent of the USA in the global scene. On the other hand, it had to understand what its path was in the future in terms of its institutional architecture. NATO was a military alliance that was built with the purpose of fighting back a threat to its member states, and such threat could only be the Soviet Union. However, with the end of the USSR, NATO had the chance of transforming the military alliance into a system of collective defence with a wider scope and open to a greater participation of new parties.

The ambiguity lays in the fact that a system of collective defence for Europe could only be sustained with the joint effort and participation of the Russian Federation, or at least, it could not be done without the Russian Federation considering it a threat to its own interests. The other side of the coin is that countries like Poland, Hungary or the Czech Republic entered the Alliance with the specific aim of joining a coalition of States that could guarantee for their safety, in short: a traditional military alliance, and not a system of collective security. NATO's enlargement policy arguably benefited from this dilemma (possibly even a misunderstanding), because it put together those politicians who saw in NATO's role in the future that of a system of collective defence, and those who saw it as a traditional alliance. (Colombo, 2001, p. 232-236)

A proof to this argument is in fact the trend of popularity rating of NATO integration of Ukraine in Ukraine from 2008¹¹, 2012¹² to late 2014¹³. It is unsurprisingly clear that in a situation where Ukraine was left alone fighting back what was perceived to be a Russian invasion of Ukraine's territory, the Ukrainian people started looking with increased interest to a full NATO membership. In 2008 the surveys (see annex 1) show that NATO was perceived as a threat rather than something good for Ukraine, while a very low percentage (below 20%) would feel protected by NATO between 2008 and 2013. In a very short time, however, in late 2014, after the Russian breach of the Ukrainian sovereignty, the majority of Ukrainian people wanted to join NATO, with peaks in the order of the 80% in the Western part of Ukraine. This argument sheds light on the popularity of NATO in Ukraine nowadays, and explains that Ukrainians would participate in an old-fashioned military alliance rather than being party to a more institutional and to a certain extent "abstract" system of collective defence.

However, the convergence of interests between Russia and the Alliance came to formality with the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act and the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council. They were established *"to build increasing levels of trust, unity of purpose and habits of consultation and cooperation between NATO and Russia, in order to enhance each other's security and that of all nations in the Euro-Atlantic area and diminish the security of none."*¹⁴ In fact, the PJC would also provide Russia with a status of parity with respect to other NATO

¹¹ For surveys carried by "Gallup" between 2008 and 2013, see: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/167927/crisis-ukrainians-likely-nato-threat.aspx> and http://www.gallup.com/poll/127094/Ukrainians-Likely-Support-Move-Away-NATO.aspx?utm_source=NATO%20Ukraine&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=tiles Accessed on 13/06/15

¹² For a survey carried by the "Democratic Initiative Foundation" in April 2012, see (in Russian): http://24tv.ua/news/showNews.do?opituvannya_tilki_15_gromadyan_ukrayini_bachat_svoyu_krayinu_v_nato&objectId=218979 Accessed on 13/06/15

¹³ For a survey carried by the "Rating" Institute in November 2014, see pag. 18-19 (in Russian): http://ratinggroup.com.ua/upload/files/RG_East_112014.pdf Accessed on 13/06/15

¹⁴ Mechanism for Consultation and Cooperation, the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council, Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France, 27 May 1997. Available online at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm Accessed on 13/06/15

countries, and it would be a common platform to consult, communicate and possibly decide and act jointly in matter of common concern. The PJC was founded with the aim of building trust on the principles of reciprocity and transparency, meaning that should there be any external security-related matter of common concern, or any change in the asset of each military or doctrine of security strategy, the PJC would meet and share information under the auspice of cooperation and transparency. The preamble to the Founding Act also stated the shared view of the contracting parties on the importance of Western liberal institutions such as the market open economy, democracy, *jus cogens* and so forth. The whole concept behind the NATO-Russia Founding Act was to bring Russia towards the Euro-American standards of society and overcome those structural deficiencies and gaps that persist today.

The Permanent Joint Council also established that the parties would refrain from the threat or use of force for the settlement of disputes, and protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the parties and third countries, in compliance with the Charter of the UN, the provisions of the OSCE and the auspices of the Helsinki Final Act. This represented a ground of conflict between the parties in the Kosovo conflict, whereby NATO intervened in the Balkans without the accordance of the Security Council, which would only authorize the implementation of KFOR as a peacekeeping activity. The then Secretary General of the United Nations (and later 2001 Nobel Prize Laureate) Kofi Annan would express his deep concerns about the use of force of the NATO coalition against Milošević. He had a twofold perspective over the NATO intervention, describing it as necessary to bring about peace and halt ethnic cleansing in ex-Yugoslavia on the one hand, and worried that “*unless the Security Council is restored to its preeminent position as the sole source of legitimacy on the use of force, we are on a dangerous path to anarchy*” (Annan, 1999).

This was a major concern for the Russian élites, also given the ongoing conflict in Chechnya. That was presented by the Russians as antiterrorist measures notwithstanding the documented breach of human rights committed by the Russian authorities in Chechnya, that the Human Right Watch would define “very serious violations of the human rights” and “collective punishment of the civilian population” (Blagov, 2001). The Russian authorities thought that Chechnya might represent a perfect “Kosovo 2.0” if the respect of the UN Charter would not hold for NATO. Thus, the Chechen issue was not brought before the PJC, and Russia would label it an issue of the domain of internal affairs. Nevertheless, the Russian Federation would not put at stake its institutional commitment towards the Alliance. The newly elected President Putin visited the United States of America, and would later be the first world leader to express support and solidarity to his American counterpart after the terrorist attacks against the WTC in 2001¹⁵. As the intra-European conflicts were sedated and the Russian Federation was strengthening its economy, the War on Terror was allowing a major Russian stake in the relations with the West and NATO. This impetus led to the formulation of a renewed goodwill on NATO-Russia relations, namely the NATO-Russia Council, signed in Rome in May 2002, which granted NATO equality with NATO members in the decision-making process of common issues.

The wave of fundamentalist terrorism in the first years of 2000s that began with 9/11 also interested Russian cities (particularly Moscow and St. Petersburg (Ratti, 2013, p. 259)), and

¹⁵ Dmitry Suslov, *Russia-U.S. relations: Missed chances and future opportunities* - 2011. Available online at: <http://valdaiclub.com/usa/32000.html> Accessed on 13/06/15

stimulated cooperation between the parties especially in matters of the domain of counterterrorism. The works of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) would continue with ups and downs, with particular concerns expressed by NATO during the management of the South Ossetia Crisis by the Russians in 2008. When the Russian Federation recognized the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia in 2008, the Secretary General of NATO, Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer was worried that the Russian Federation was calling “*into question Russia’s commitment to peace and security in the Caucasus*”¹⁶. Russian actions were condemned on the grounds of the inconsistency with UNSC resolutions regarding Georgian territorial integrity and the OSCE provisions signed by the Russian Federation¹⁷.

However, the Russian President Medvedev reportedly stated that if the Russian army had not intervened in Georgia, NATO would have further expanded eastwards – which was an unfortunate possibility to the Russian ruling élites, since several ex-Soviet Republics were then NATO members – giving voice to popular thoughts among the Russian leadership¹⁸. The then Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Putin, declared that whomever sided Georgian claims over Abkhazia and South Ossetia was indeed a Stalinist, hinting at the Georgian dictator’s decision to give the two regions to the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. Putin also suspected a covert US operation in Georgia, one that might have started the hostilities between Georgia, South Ossetia, and Russia (Putin, 2008).

The question of the frozen conflicts always was a matter of debate and disagreement between the two parties. Russia as already mentioned wanted to halt the NATO airstrike campaign in the Balkans holding certain interpretations of the international law jurisprudence in support of their stance. Russian leadership was indeed worried of the situation that could easily escalate in the Caucasus should Kosovo be granted with formal recognition before the international community. In fact, Kosovar independence was proclaimed in February 2008 and that caused harsh debate in the international community, to the point that Serbia (which Kosovo used to belong to) at the United Nations obtained to forward the doubts on the legality of the Kosovar independence to the International Court of Justice. The ICJ eventually ruled the legitimacy of the Kosovar independence in July 2010 (ICJ, 2010).

Following the independence of Kosovo, and the war in South Ossetia, NATO and Russian cooperation had taken a direction of little trust and mutual reliance, for a number of reasons. Russia’s new National Security Concept (NSC)–amended by Putin in his first term as President of the Russian Federation after the Kosovar conflict – saw NATO’s eastward expansionism as well as the military presence of the US in the Caucasus as the principal concern for Russia’s strategic interests. The former Russian Ambassador to NATO Gen. Totskiy declared in 2003 that Russia was concerned that several new members of the Alliance had not enhanced the military capability of the Alliance, but rather expanded NATO along the Russian borders (especially the Baltic States). This undermined Russian confidence towards NATO, also bearing in mind political divergence over unresolved issues with such Baltic States that clash against Russian interests (General Totskiy, 2003).

¹⁶ Statement by the Secretary General of NATO on the Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia – 26/08/2008 available online at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-107e.html> Accessed on 13/06/15

¹⁷ Statement by the North Atlantic Council on the Russian recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia – 27/08/2008 available online at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-108e.html> Accessed on 13/06/15

¹⁸ Russia’s 2008 war with Georgia prevented NATO growth – Medvedev – 21/11/2011 available online at: <http://sptnkne.ws/tyV> Accessed on 13/06/15

The new NSC also established two priorities for the Russian Federation that would cause tense political debate at the international level over the legitimacy of certain measures. Under the auspices of the NSC, the Russian military might be involved for the safeguard of Russian citizens resident abroad, as has happened in South Ossetia and more recently in the Donbass. The interests of Russia also include the right of Russia to exert its traditional role of great power worldwide and among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This argument is indeed adverse to NATO's principles, and the repeated implementation of such assertive policies by the Russian government would lead to the – temporary – suspension of the works of the NRC after the Ukraine Crisis in 2014.

The cooperation between Russia and NATO to date is extremely limited. When the Russian Armed Forces intervened and annexed a portion of Ukraine's territory in breach of the international law, the West imposed economic sanctions to the Russian Federation trying to isolate it politically. The European Union and the USA precluded free movement of Russian capitals and certain Russian persons allegedly crucial for the destabilization of Ukraine. The economic pressure put on Russia evolved in issues of energy security and financial volatility of the Russian economy. The Russian rouble fell dramatically while a gigantic share of capitals left Russia after the annexation of Crimea and the EU-USA sanctions. It is useful to add to the picture the downfall of OPEC oil prices that further cut Russian revenues from its most profitable sector, the export of fossil fuel and crude oil. Notwithstanding the recession, Putin's popularity reached unparalleled peaks and after less than a year, the dimension of the crisis seems more modest than the forecasts.

The political isolation of Russia has had repercussions also on foreign economies and politics, giving birth to growing doubts vis-à-vis the economic sanctions against Russia even among EU Member States. While the Western route has been precluded to Putin's foreign policy, being Russia cut from G8 and NRC, the Russian Federation had recently focused its interests towards China as a possible partner in assertive power politics and commercial exchange. In addition, Turkey has been involved in talks regarding a revised version of the South Stream due to its low profile towards Russian policies as a member of NATO, and being external to the European Union. Russian strategy however seems to have earned little credibility internationally, and the future of Russia seems intertwined to the fate of its President Putin.

However, NATO Secretary General Mr. Jens Stoltenberg met the Russian Foreign Minister Mr. Sergey Lavrov on 19th May 2015 and declared that NATO has regular political and diplomatic contacts with the Russian authorities. Stoltenberg underlined the importance of transparency and predictability between Russia and NATO especially in the Donbass region, and remarked that NATO and the Russian authorities are cooperating to keep military lines of communication open in order “*to contribute to predictability and avoid misunderstanding.*”¹⁹

¹⁹Statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov – 19/05/2015 available online at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_119871.htm?selectedLocale=en Accessed on 13/06/15

2. THE UKRAINE CRISIS AND THE RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE

A Brief Timeline

The crisis in Ukraine that began in Kyiv under the name *Euromaidan* and then spread to the Eastern part of the country giving way to the separatist movements in the Donbass has its roots in the last months of 2013. Ukraine was – and still is – a country torn by bad governance and impressive levels of corruption, despite being geopolitically landlocked between the Russian Federation and the European Union. The Ukrainian government, then headed by President Yanukovich sustained an ambiguous relation vis-à-vis the two neighbouring partners. It had a problem of energy security further deepened by the disastrous situation of the country's balance that led it to entertain closer relations with Russia, while it was on track to further a political convergence with the European Union in order to benefit from the Eastern Partnership²⁰. Yanukovich however refrained from signing the Association Agreement with Ukraine²¹, one that would have created a comprehensive free trade area between Ukraine and the European Union, and that would have brought the parties together also for political matters including governance and collective security issues. Yanukovich had to deal with a difficult economic situation and an unavoidable energy dependency from Russian resources; therefore, he rejected the Association Agreement under Russian pressures in order to obtain a reduction of the gas price and try to avoid State default.

The stop to the political process that would have brought Ukraine and the EU closer ignited the protests in Kyiv the 21st November 2013, which would continue until Mr. Yanukovich announced constitutional reforms that would limit presidential powers as demanded by the protesters, in late January 2014. However, the promises made by Viktor Yanukovich were not kept and Ukraine was on the brink of civil war when by 20th February 2014 as many as 77 people had died already²². The following day Yanukovich signed a pact with the opposition that included the reduction of presidential powers, his own resignation from the presidential post and early presidential elections. Contingently the Russian Federation had pending loans agreement with Yanukovich, and refused to give the promised money to Ukraine before the settlement of the contrasts between the Ukrainian President and the opposition²³.

On the 21st February 2014 Yanukovich and the opposition signed a deal with the cooperation of the French, German and Polish Foreign Ministers and a Russian envoy – former

²⁰ The EU Eastern Partnership is a project of the European Union launched in 2009 in order to further cooperation with Eastern European Countries such as Ukraine inter alia. The program is a formulation of the “Brussels Consensus”, where the European Union demands structural reforms in the political and market field in exchange with economic support and commercial partnership with the Eastern neighbours.

²¹ The succeeding President of Ukraine Mr. Poroshenko signed the Association Agreement in his first month as President, the 27th of June 2014. The full text is available online at: http://eeas.europa.eu/ukraine/docs/association_agreement_ukraine_2014_en.pdf Accessed on 14/06/15

²² Ukraine bloodshed: Kiev death toll jumps to 77 – 20/02/2014 available online at: <http://rt.com/news/ukraine-kiev-death-toll-955/> Accessed on 14/06/15

²³ The allocation of the \$2bn to Ukraine is not resolved yet – 21/02/2014 available online (in Russian) at: <http://tass.ru/ekonomika/991186> Accessed on 14/06/15

Russian Ambassador to the USA Mr. Vladimir Lukin –²⁴, that would lead the Ukrainian Parliament to dismiss the current 2010 constitution in favour of the 2004 constitution. The Parliament during the same day ruled to release the former Orange Revolution leader Mrs. Yulia Tymoshenko, who was allegedly arrested for political reasons, and to dismiss the Yanukovich Interior Minister Mr. Zakharchenko due to his responsibility over the bloodshed generated in Ukraine during the protests²⁵. The opposition at the Independence Square of Kyiv further requested that the President Yanukovich deliver his resignation letter by 10AM of the following day, but the same night Viktor Yanukovich left Kyiv and moved towards the Russian border. On the 23rd of February the Parliament dismissed Yanukovich and appointed his spokesman Mr. Turchinov as acting President, while issuing an arrest warrant against Yanukovich and several of his administration's State men considered to be responsible of "mass murder of peaceful citizens"²⁶

The first moments of the Ukraine Crisis actually benefited from an initial cooperation between the Russian Federation and its Western counterparts, committed at finding a peaceful resolution to the crisis. While the EU and the USA sanctioned certain Ukrainian persons allegedly responsible for the bloodshed in Ukraine, the Russian President Mr. Vladimir Putin and his American counterpart Mr. Barack Obama had a "constructive" phone call of over one hour on the developments of the Ukraine Crisis. However, as Yanukovich fled Ukraine hours later, the newly established government was labelled by the Russian high ranks as responsible of a coup d'état engineered by the West that would put at risk the safety of the Russian citizens²⁷ living in Ukraine and –by extension – of the Russian Federation. This phase of the Ukraine Crisis already involved the tensions in Eastern Ukraine, where separatist groups were seizing several Ukrainian cities.

The change of government in Ukraine was seen in Moscow's perspective as an illegal action aimed at destabilising the existing relationships between the pro-Russian president Yanukovich and Russia, as Russian Prime Minister Mr. Medvedev declared on 24th of February. *"If people crossing Kiev in black masks and Kalashnikov rifles are considered a government, it will be difficult for us to work with such a government. [...] Some of our foreign, western partners think otherwise, considering them to be legitimate authorities. I do not know which constitution, which laws, they were reading, but it seems to me it is an aberration of perception when something that is essentially the result of a mutiny is called legitimate."* (Amos, Walker, & Siddique, 2014)

²⁴ The Russian delegate contributed to the development of the deal, but did not sign the deal as the European Foreign Ministers had, because Russia reportedly refrained from "meddling into the internal affairs of this country". BBC reporter Mr. Daniel Sandford quoted Polish Foreign Minister Mr. Sikorski who said: "The Russian representative, in certain moments, as an experienced diplomat, effectively eased the negotiations". <https://twitter.com/BBCDanielS/status/436943082844872704> Accessed on 14/06/15

²⁵ "Interior minister sacked for 'violence' against protesters" 21/02/2014 – available online at: <http://www.itv.com/news/update/2014-02-21/interior-minister-sacked-for-violence-against-protesters/> Accessed on 14/06/15

²⁶ "Ukraine arrest warrant for fugitive Viktor Yanukovich" 24/02/2014 – available online at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26320004> Accessed on 14/06/15

²⁷ The issuance of Russian passports to Ukrainian citizens (as well as Moldovan, Georgian, Lithuanian and so on) is seen in the West as an exploitation and possibly as a mere pretext used by the Russian Federation to appeal to the protection of Russian citizenship abroad. Refraining from commenting such action, it is important to know the different understanding of citizenship held by many people raised in the former USSR.

During the night between the 25th and the 26th of February, the Russian Armed Forces started a military exercise in the Black Sea and the area of the Russian military base in Crimea of Sevastopol. The following day, pro-Russian separatists and armed militias without insignia –dubbed *little green men* or *polite men* – seized the Crimean Parliament and hoisted a Russian flag in the place of the Ukrainian. The rebels also occupied the Simferopol Airport and several Ukrainian military bases. The Russian Federation excluded any affiliation with the rebels or covert operations being held in Crimea at first. In the following months however, President Putin acknowledged the *polite men* as members of the Russian Special Forces, declaring that they “acted appropriately but professionally” in the interest of the Crimean population so as to make it possible to hold a fair and peaceful referendum on the future of the Crimean region²⁸. Said referendum was held on 16th March 2014 and Crimea was concomitantly annexed to the Russian Federation. However, the international community still does not recognize the referendum nor the annexation, since that was allegedly held in violation of the Ukrainian constitution.

On 1st of March the Russian Duma accorded the President the legitimacy to the use of force on Ukrainian territory in the case of an emergency, until the settlement of the political turmoil. The Russian Federation has been excluded from the Group of 8 and the European Union sanctioned 21 persons (of which 13 Russians) regarded as responsible of actions that threatened or damaged Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity (2014/145/CFSP, 2014). The USA and Japan also imposed restrictions on Russian officials and halted bilateral talks with the Russian Federation. NATO denounced the illegitimacy of the Crimean referendum and OCSE stated that the actions of the Russian Federation infringed the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the international law. On the 1st of April NATO decided to suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia, the latter having “gravely breached the trust upon which our cooperation must be based”²⁹. NATO also committed to strengthen the self-defence of the Baltic States members of NATO, the former being deeply concerned with the assertiveness of Russia in its western borders.

Following the escalation of tensions between the Russian Federation and the other parties, Ukraine suffered economic pressure from Russian company Gazprom, which announced an appreciation of gas which the *ad interim* Prime Minister of Ukraine Mr. Yatseniuk would label an “economic aggression”³⁰. Moreover, in the following weeks the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk under the control of pro-Russian separatists (and backed by the Russian military) declared themselves independent republics, and later confederated on 24th of May 2014. Even though the Russian authorities excluded their support to the rebel cities, NATO started a “counter-propaganda” campaign, spreading official pictures as a proof of the Russian involvement in the rebels’ activities on 10th of April. The aforementioned counter-propaganda campaign by NATO was dismissed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, that defined the campaign as an attempt to “lay the blame for the crisis in Europe

²⁸ “Putin acknowledges Russian military servicemen were in Crimea” 17/04/2014 – available online at: <http://rt.com/news/crimea-defense-russian-soldiers-108/> Accessed on 14/06/15

²⁹ “Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers” 01/04/2014 – available online at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_108501.htm Accessed on 14/06/15

³⁰“Ukraine threatens to take Russia to court over gas” 05/04/2014 – available online at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/ukraine-threatens-to-take-russia-to-court-over-gas/> Accessed on 14/06/15

on Russia”³¹. However, the “*Russia’s accusations - setting the record straight*”³² NATO factsheet was updated until July 2014, and contained a wide range of counter-interpretations of the alleged “myths” being circulated by either Russian State officials or mass media.

The following months did not ease the situation in the Donbass region, and the international deadlock remained. Further sanctions were applied against Russian persons; further Russian pressure was put on Ukraine over energy security issues and the failure of talks at national and international level represents the freeze of political dialogue between the parties. At the end of May however, the Russian Armed Forces partially withdrew from Ukrainian borders and the Ukrainian Parliament called back the Ukrainian military from the territories controlled by the secessionist forces. On 29th of May a Ukrainian oligarch, Mr. Petro Poroshenko took the post as 5th President of Ukraine. His election was a result of his determination to continue the process of decentralization of power in Ukraine while remaining firm on the Crimean issue and EU partnership. Poroshenko also proposed a referendum to clarify Ukrainian people’s intentions regarding NATO partnership.

On 2nd June 2014, following the last meeting of the NATO-Russia Council, NATO Secretary General Mr. Rasmussen stated NATO’s position on the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Rasmussen declared: “*All the measures that NATO is taking are defensive, moderate, proportionate, transparent, and fully compliant with our international commitments, including the Founding Act. They are not a threat to Russia - and NATO is not a threat to Russia. We want to improve the climate, but to do that Russia must show that it is prepared to play by the same rules as everybody else.*”³³ Nevertheless, the crisis kept escalating as the Poroshenko’s plan for Eastern Ukraine was considered insufficient by Russia, and Gazprom halted the gas flow to Ukraine the 16th of June.

The fighting in the Donbass will continue despite the various attempts (even unilateral Ukraine’s attempts) of ceasefire and peace talks at any level. NATO-Russia relations hit a historical low, and after Russia allegedly ignored its international obligations and provoked the Alliance’s reaction, the NATO Summit held at Newport, Wales on 4th September 2014 will formally suspend the partnership. To date, the NRC is suspended and NATO is looking forward to strengthening its presence in Eastern Europe, including in those countries that used to be part of the USSR³⁴. This sort of defence program might go beyond the auspices of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act and might therefore contribute to the complexity of the current state of affairs between the Russian Federation and the Alliance.

³¹ “NATO attacks Russia with propaganda factsheet – Foreign Ministry” 17/04/2014 – available online at: <http://rt.com/politics/russia-nato-ukraine-statement-160/> Accessed on 14/06/15

³² “Factsheet: Russia’s accusations - setting the record straight” last updated 12/07/2014 – available online at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_111767.htm Accessed on 14/06/15

³³ “Secretary General sets out NATO’s position on Russia-Ukraine crisis” 02/06/2014 – available online at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_110643.htm Accessed on 14/06/15

³⁴ “U.S. plans to store heavy arms in Baltic, Eastern Europe” 14/06/2015 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/14/us-usa-military-europe-idUSKBN00T0TR20150614> Accessed 14/06/15

The 2014 NATO Summit at Celtic Manor

From the 4th to the 5th September 2014, the NATO Heads of State met at the Celtic Manor Resort in Wales, for the annual NATO Summit. The UK Summit saw the participation of the Ukrainian President on the first day, and it produced the Joint Statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission³⁵. The Joint Statement restated the call for Russia to comply with international obligations, along with the condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and the Russian military activity at the Ukrainian border and their support to the separatist groups. “[...] *the Heads of State and Government of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, stand united in our support of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We strongly condemn Russia’s illegal and illegitimate self-declared “annexation” of Crimea and its continued and deliberate destabilization of eastern Ukraine in violation of international law.*”³⁶

The Alliance leaders also emphasized the role of the President of Ukraine and encouraged the Ukrainian people to continue through the democratic path, and the consolidation of Ukraine-Europe ties. The Joint Statement mentions the signature of the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement, which “*testifies to the consolidation of Ukraine’s democracy and its European aspirations*”³⁷. The Joint Statement also reaffirmed the central role of Ukraine – and the safeguard of its democratic institutions – for the maintenance of peace and security in Europe, and expressed NATO’s readiness to support the governmental action of Kyiv for the sake of Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. NATO committed to continue its technical and advisory support to Ukraine via its NATO offices in Kyiv and bilateral additional support by allied States.

During the Celtic Manor session, the NATO Heads of State drafted the “Wales Summit Declaration³⁸” that further condemns Russian actions in Ukraine defined as “illegitimate” and “fomenting”, and calls Russia to use its influence with the separatists in order to allow a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the crisis. The Wales Declaration formally shuts down the NATO-Russia Council, based on the acknowledgment that Russia changed its attitude thus precluding a shared vision of Europe as a whole, peaceful and in compliance with the democratic principles expressed in the Founding Act. The Wales Declaration also supports the role of other international institutions such as the European Council, the G7 and OSCE, and so supports their decision to sanction certain crucial sectors of the Russian economy and Russian ability to obtain technological advanced military equipment. However, NATO Heads of State decided to leave political channels open with the auspices to meet a political solution to the benefit of all parties.

³⁵ “U.S. plans to store heavy arms in Baltic, Eastern Europe” 14/06/2015
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/14/us-usa-military-europe-idUSKBN00T0TR20150614> Accessed 14/06/15

[ent/publications/nato-summit-2014-joint-statement-of-the-nato-ukraine-commission/joint-statement-of-the-nato-ukraine-commission](http://publications.nato-summit-2014-joint-statement-of-the-nato-ukraine-commission/joint-statement-of-the-nato-ukraine-commission) Accessed on 15/06/15

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Wales Summit Declaration” 05/09/2014 – available online at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/351406/Wales_Summit_Declaration.pdf Accessed on 15/06/15

The Wales Summit testified the Alliance's resilience, and gave proof that NATO was then more important – and needed – than ever. The Alliance might have suffered some fatigue after more than 65 years of activity and very demanding missions such as ISAF, but with the NATO enlargement and a new wave of international threats, it stood as one of the rare solid institutions to the benefit of the liberal democracies in Europe. The Wales Summit did not focus exclusively on the Russia-Ukraine crisis, but also dealt with the growing concerns about ISIL and the threats posed by cyber-attacks for the first time in its history. The Alliance also reaffirmed its strong partnership with the European Union, also in the light of the relative disengagement of the USA in the security of Europe. The current affairs show that a healthy NATO is important for European institutions as much as a healthy European Union and the other NATO allies are vital for the solidity and resiliency of NATO.

The Alliance's political direction is the result of the consensus of the political leaders of the Member States, each of which share the principles expressed in the Washington Treaty, regardless of the political background of said leaders. The vision of NATO encompasses the whole Europe and its ambition is to achieve a united and pacified Europe regardless of the domestic policies, religion or economy of the countries involved. The spirit of NATO was explained by the then NATO Secretary General Mr. Anders Fogh Rasmussen who, talking about Ukraine declared: *“An independent, sovereign and stable Ukraine, firmly committed to democracy and the rule of law, is key to Euro-Atlantic security. We stand united in our support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. And we uphold the right of every country to choose its own future free from outside interference.”*³⁹

³⁹ “Opening remarks by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission at the level of Heads of State and Government during the NATO Summit held in Newport” 04/09/2014 – available online at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_112482.htm Accessed on 15/06/15

Russian Institutions

In order to understand the behaviour of the Russian Federation, it is important to acknowledge the radically different development of its institutions. Russia was never a true Western liberal democracy, but it has the legacy of a glorious empire and a superpower that exerted its influence over a gigantic portion of the world. When the Soviet Union collapsed and the liberal democratic institutions were applied to Russia, the situation in the Federation was disastrous and the economic crisis of 1998 demonstrated the fragility of the Russian State. Democracy resisted in Russia, but in the recent years, we witness a deterioration of the Russian democratic institutions and a relative return to a centralized and vertical architecture of the State, which puts much of the reins of the State in the hands of the President.

Russia clearly is not easy to administer. It is a federation of 85 federal subjects, its territory covers one tenth of the World landmass and it is by far the biggest country in the world, in Asia and in Europe. The enormous perimeter of the Russian Federation makes it a constant concern to develop an effective military strategy of defence and deterrence. From the end of the USSR, the Russian Federation signed various partnership treaties such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, which ensured strong ties between Russia and many of the ex-Soviet Republics. To this end, Russian authorities always exercised political pressure on neighbouring countries driven by the concern that such states could exit the Russian “sphere of influence” thus exposing the Russian borders to substantial threats such as NATO bases.

For what concerns the bilateral relations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, for instance, it is important to mention the 1997 (updated in 2010) agreement between the two States on the constitution of the naval bases used by the Russian Black Sea Fleet, which granted the Russian Federation the use of the Ukrainian territory in exchange for discounted gas prices⁴⁰. The said agreement was indeed part of a wider strategy carried by the new-born Russian Federation, a “Near Abroad Strategy” that was intended to re-establish Russian influence over the former Soviet Republics. This strategy was dubbed the “Kozyrev Doctrine” (Golz, 1994) or the “*Monroesky Doctrine*” (The Associated Press, 1994) after Andrei Kozyrev, former Foreign Minister of the Yeltsin government. The strategy was an attempt to earn a *droit de regard* in the ex-Soviet territory with the aim of pacifying the area and support pro-Russian government there. The Black Sea Fleet example however demonstrated the little efficiency of such “Monroe” approach to Eurasia, as the soft power carried by the Russian troops was not enough to extend Russian sovereignty in the near abroad as shown by the forceful occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014.

Another tool for the projection of the Russian hegemony was indeed the economic integration of the CIS, which was formulated formally in 2011 between the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kirghizstan and Uzbekistan and gave Russia a lever to put pressure if not exclude former USSR States to entertain economic integration policies with other States. However, both Ukraine, Armenia, Belarus and Moldova participate in the Eastern Partnership sponsored by the European Commission, which led to

⁴⁰ “Russia, Ukraine agree on naval-base-for-gas deal” 21/04/2010 available online at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/europe/04/21/russia.ukraine/index.html?hpt=T2> Accessed on 15/06/15

hard criticism from Moscow, which denounced the violation of the treaty and the backlash on the Russian economy.

Another peculiarity of the Russian strategy vis-à-vis the neighbouring countries is the extension of Russian sovereignty for the protection of the Russian population living abroad. This controversial interpretation of national security (inconsistent with the international law) has shaped Russian foreign policy and still does nowadays. For what concerns the previous example about the naval base in Sevastopol, the protection of Russian citizens abroad escalated and the Russian military interfered with the local authorities before annexing the Crimean peninsula. The presence of the Russian military abroad created a buffer zone for Russian national interests, and the rhetoric of the protection of Russian citizenship abroad might have encouraged separatist movements that interpreted such action as a chance to join the Russian Federation. Empirical evidence shows that separatist movements in various theatres in former Soviet States including some of the so-called “frozen conflicts” in the GUAM area (namely in Donbas, Crimea, Abkhazia, Transnistria and South Ossetia) are or have been backed by the Russian Federation either politically or with military support.

The Russian security concept is thus characterized by the attention to the near abroad and a constant fear of being encircled by foreign threats to Russia. The main sources of those worries come from NATO along the south-western border, and from China due to the old myth of the “yellow penetration” of Siberia (Pellicciari, 2014). This constant anxiety somehow pushed the Russian people to find their own strong leader, one who can work for the security of Russia even at the price of dismissing the government and the Parliament, or imposing the martial law if he urges so⁴¹.

However, as the last General Secretary of the Soviet Union Mr. Gorbachev declared in 1986, “there is no democracy, nor can there be, without *glasnost*. And there is no present-day socialism, nor can there be, without democracy”. The famous sentence explains the steep path that Russia had to walk to obtain the democratic institutions it now – partially – has, through radical reforms of the economic sector, the State architecture and the society itself. The first president of the Russian Federation, Mr. Boris Yeltsin, started an ambitious economic reform dubbed the “*shock therapy*” that included massive privatizations and a strong decrease in military spending inter alia. The fragility of the Russian structure became clear when the backlash of 1998 hit its economy and led to the Russian default. In 2000, Putin was elected as President of the Russian Federation. Under his mandates Russia progressed tremendously, but to date, the Russian Federation still has serious transition problems such as a high level of inequality, low life expectancy and one of the worst degrees of corruption in the world. The distribution of power is limited, the press is not entirely independent and few oligarchs control the main sources of the State revenues. Russia can be defined as a hybrid regime if not an authoritarian regime (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014).

The Russian Federation is a semi-presidential republic and the Head of State is the President of the Russian Federation. The President’s term lasts for six years during which he or she is given immunity before the law. “*The President of the Russian Federation shall be guarantor of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, of the rights and freedoms of man and citizen. According to the rules fixed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, he shall*

⁴¹“The Constitution of the Russian Federation: Chapter 4. The President of the Russian Federation” available online at: <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-05.htm> Accessed on 15/06/15

*adopt measures to protect the sovereignty of the Russian Federation, its independence and state integrity, ensure coordinated functioning and interaction of all the bodies of state power*⁴². The President is entitled to dismiss the Government or the State Duma, to conduct Russian foreign policy and to chair the National Security Council of the Russian Federation as Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

The Government of the Russian Federation exercises the executive power and is appointed by the President, who selects its Chairman (the Prime Minister) and the rest of the Cabinet; the State Duma issues a confidence vote on the President's proposal. The Government shall submit the federal budget to the State Duma, and shall *"ensure the implementation in the Russian Federation of a single state policy in the sphere of culture, science, education, health protection, social security and ecology"*⁴³.

The legislative power is vested in the Federal Assembly, which consists of the Federal Council and the State Duma. The State Duma consists of 450 deputies elected every five years. It has jurisdiction over matters including the consent to the appointment of the Government, and the advancement of the impeachment procedure against the President of the Russian Federation. Two members expressed by each Federal Subject compose the Federal Council. It has jurisdiction over matters including the deployment of the Armed Forces abroad; the appointment of judges of the Constitution Court of the Russian Federation, of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, of the Higher Arbitration Court of the Russian Federation; the impeachment of the President of the Russian Federation. Each member of the Federal Assembly has immunity during his or her service⁴⁴.

The judicial power is vested in the judges who exercise it in courts. The judges are appointed by the Federal Assembly.⁴⁵

The Russian institutions are the result of various struggles inherited by the Soviet system and various amendments that gradually centralized the political power in the hands of the President. Under Putin's presidency, Russia continued the process of liberalization of the economy at the expense of the democratization of the country. However, Putin's political ability and the high popularity he enjoys are granting Russia stability.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "The Constitution of the Russian Federation: Chapter 6. The Government of the Russian Federation" available online at: <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-07.htm> Accessed on 15/06/15

⁴⁴ "The Constitution of the Russian Federation: Chapter 5. The Federal Assembly" available online at: <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-06.htm> Accessed on 15/06/15

⁴⁵ "The Constitution of the Russian Federation: Chapter 7. Judicial Power" available online at: <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-08.htm> Accessed on 15/06/15

A Threat to Russia

Among the most important documents issued during Putin's presidencies, there is the 2000 version of the National Security Concept, which defined the medium-term strategy of the Russian Federation in pursuing the objectives relevant to the achievement of the national interest and national security. An updated version issued during Medvedev's presidency (in 2009) does not change much the scope of such strategy until the year 2020. The NSC, amended by Putin after the NATO campaign in Kosovo in 1999, and also the "Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020" describe a "multipolar world" in which the Russian Federation intends to play as an equal and independent actor of the international relations.

Russia feels mostly threatened by the proliferation of high-tech weaponry close to its borders, by the militarization of space, and by the "technology" of coloured revolutions, that could ignite social revolts aimed at destabilize the country and possibly subvert its regime. Among the domestic challenges to the security of the Russian Federation are separatism, nationalism, xenophobia and religious extremism. One of the focal points of the document is unsurprisingly the relationship with the Western States and NATO, whose further expansion may jeopardize the peaceful cooperation between Russia and Europe (Manutscharjan, 2009).

The concept of the threat to Russia is a complex and wide mix of Cold War rhetoric and actual realist thinking. The Russian Federation is a great power, and as such feels threatened by divergent developments in the neighbouring countries, as much as the European Union feels threatened by the instability in Northern Africa. A major concern for the Russian authorities is that Russia might be marginalized in the shaping of European stability, NATO and the European Union being the drivers of such transformation. Since its initial post-Cold War enlargement, NATO was perceived as an antagonistic power that was challenging Russian power in its backyard.

In this regard, NATO and the European Union are considered as the political tools of the USA to project their hegemony to the border of Russia. The spread of democracy that these institutions provoke is not a bad thing in itself, but the dynamics of such democratization worries Russia because that might involve civil wars and jeopardize Russian interests. Those include indeed a neutral (if not explicitly pro-Russian) belt of States along its borders, and the economic integration with the neighbouring countries needed to exercise its influence in Europe and sustain a strong economic development.

This thesis does not intend to provide judgment over NATO's or Russia's decisions and behaviours, because the author maintains that focusing on what is right or wrong might pose an ideological bias to the analysis of the contemporary international affairs. Quite evident in this regard, is that the Alliance (and the European Union) and the Russian Federation have been employing different tools to manage international relations. "Putin and his compatriots have been thinking and acting according to realist dictates, whereas their Western counterparts have been adhering to liberal ideas about international politics. (Mearsheimer, 2014)"

The liberal view that a democratic –and possibly committed to Western institutions – Eastern Europe was key to European peace clashed with the Russian realist approach that saw the enlargement of NATO and the EU as a strategy of the West to weaken Russia and benefit from its decay. The proof to this explanation lays in the events that interested the Russian

“backyard” after the end of the Cold War, which became Western objectives in the eyes of Moscow. The NATO campaign in the Balkans paved the way for NATO and EU enlargement; the coloured revolutions have weakened Russian influence in many ex-Soviet Republics; the – brutal – Georgian aggression to South Ossetia was backed if not encouraged by the Western institutions that later envisaged stronger cooperation with Georgia.

The Ukraine case is the last of a longer list, and it too was to some extent predictable given the firm Russian position on a further enlargement of either NATO or the European Union. Here again the different interpretations of the same event: the EU Eastern Partnership is clearly not an instrument of war but rather a tool to further interconnectedness between liberal democracies which in turn leads to peaceful relations, as so dictates the liberal ideology adopted by the West. In the Western perspective, this was not meant to be a threat to Russian interest, as much as the Eurasian Economic Union does not represent one to the EU or NATO. However, it is not NATO or the EU who decides what is a threat to Russia, and in the realist eyes the military, economic and institutional expansion of Europe counts as a threat.

It is important to bear in mind that a further enlargement of such institutions was opposed since the end of the Cold War by the Russian Federation, which only recently had achieved the possibility to play more assertively in the interest of its foreign policy. According to the realist approach, a united Europe that includes Ukraine and Georgia might easily turn into a complex of military bases, and Moscow would be within their range. This might seem a surrealistic scenario, but in the long-run, having a strong and determined neighbour could influence the independence in the field of international relations to which Russia aspires. The “contagion” even by tools of hybrid warfare (as the colour revolutions are seen in this fashion in Moscow) of Western institutions to the benefit of Western interests would represent a concrete threat, and a challenge to the actual State architecture and division of powers and income distribution in Russia.

It is not the first time that Russia faces such a threat, given the Russian anxiety about an inescapable Chinese invasion of Eastern Russia. There is an old funny story reported by Pellicciari (2014) in which Breznev had a nightmare where he travelled in the future and first of all he asks about the Iron Curtain, his own obsession. They promptly reassured him saying that the Iron Curtain was alright – but on the Sino-German frontier. The Russians have reasons to be concerned on the Eastern border which is under the pressure of an exploding Chinese – mostly male – population while Siberia on the other side is largely uninhabited and with a majority of women.

Paradoxically, the crisis with the West pushed Russian foreign policy to strengthen its ties precisely with China, considered to be a valuable and reliable commercial and to some extent political partner. The turning point of such Sino-Russian rapprochement is the signature on 21st May 2014 of the gas deal project negotiated between Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, which includes an extensive pipeline laying and modernization in Siberia, with the aim to supply the highly demanding Chinese development.

The Russian people’s attitude however is not much of a neutral and moderate approach to the international relations of their country. Propaganda and the charisma of the Russian leadership highly influence the popular feeling about the current affairs. As mentioned above, Russian press is not completely independent and free from political interference, and in a period of economic crisis, one of the few sectors that benefited from increasing public spending is the

mass media, among which are channels declaredly aimed at challenging the so-called “anti-Russian bias” of the international mainstream media⁴⁶. Indeed the deterioration of democracy and the backwardness of the economy released xenophobia, nationalism, anti-Western and anti-democratic feelings in Russia. This phenomenon (if not strategy) was interpreted by Putin, who could expand his popularity among various sectors of the Russian society. He was able to manage the enormous challenges to the stability of Russia coming both domestically and internationally. He modernized the Armed Forces and has now a strong and respected stance in the international relations.

An interesting feature of Putin’s presidency is the use of his rhetoric that draws from the traditions and history of the Russian people. The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly for instance, exhibited the Christian roots of Russia, recalling the emotional ties of Mother Russia and Crimea⁴⁷. In such Presidential Address, he said that Russians “*have become aware of the indivisibility and integrity of the thousand-year long history of our country [...] because Crimea is where our people live, and the peninsula is of strategic importance for Russia as the spiritual source of the development of a multifaceted but solid Russian nation and a centralised Russian state. It was in Crimea, in the ancient city of Chersonesus or Korsun, as ancient Russian chroniclers called it, that Grand Prince Vladimir was baptized before bringing Christianity to Rus.[...] Crimea, the ancient Korsun or Chersonesus, and Sevastopol have invaluable civilisational and even sacral importance for Russia, like the Temple Mount in Jerusalem for the followers of Islam and Judaism.*”⁴⁸. In fact, Putin’s Russia is home to Orthodox Christianity, while traditionalism and religious conservatism entered Putin’s rhetoric also in the international relations.

President Putin has increased his popularity and now the future of Russia seems tied to his decisions. In numbers, a recent poll issued by the Levada Institute shows that only 13% of the Russian population wants a Western-like democracy, while over the 55% finds it desirable to have a democratic government that corresponds to the “specific Russian national traditions” (Caracciolo, 2015). Another Levada Institute poll tested Putin’s approval rating in February 2015 – when Russian economy was suffering very harsh backlash also due to the concerted economic sanctions imposed upon Russia by the Western Countries, and the Russian rouble was falling – indicates a 86% approval rate for the President of the Russian Federation⁴⁹. However, it is misleading to rely too much on such polling, because Russia does not have a free press. Domestically he has a weak opposition but high pressure from the Oligarchs who benefited the most from the privatizations during the Yeltsin presidency. This poses doubts on the future of the Russian Federation after the actual President, and adds to the degree of unpredictability of Russia.

⁴⁶ “Russia Today goes mad – Airwaves wobbly” 06/07/2010 available online at: http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2010/07/russia_today_goes_mad Accessed on 15/06/15

⁴⁷ Annual Address of Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, to the Federal Assembly, Moscow, The Kremlin, December 4, 2014, available online at: http://mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/700C486B493CF735C3257DA4005392CA Accessed on 16/06/15

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁴⁹“Vladimir Putin's approval rating? Now at a whopping 86%” 26/02/2015 available online at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/26/europe/vladimir-putin-popularity/> Accessed on 15/06/15

3. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The Ukraine Crisis coincides with the worst and most dangerous moment in European international relations since the end of the Cold War. The misunderstandings between Russia and the West had serious repercussions on their relationship and their mutual development. Another critical misunderstanding, however, is within the West. The USA, the EU and NATO all had different approaches and interests with Russia, and all of them reacted differently. For instance the USA did not prioritize the NATO-Russia relations because it was focused on the “hot” (if not “burning”) Chinese Sea and did not really consider the possibility of a revanchist Russia or a new arms race in Europe.

The EU is so heterogeneous every Member State had a different approach to the crisis. Italy for instance is exposed with Russia due to the high energy dependence and the high profitability of Italian companies exporting food stuff to Russia. Other countries like Germany had indeed a privileged relation with Russia with the “North Stream” and around 300.000 German jobs dependent on commercial relations with Russia (Kundnani & Rogers, 2014, p. 162). Within the EU are also countries like Bulgaria fully dependent of Russian energy supply, and other States such as the Baltic that had a much tougher reaction against the Russian “invasion” amid fears that it could potentially escalate and expose their citizens. The economic sanctions against the Russian Federation decided in Brussels represented a mere “lowest common denominator” that enabled the EU to do “something” and do it together.

For what concerns NATO, there is a clear cut among the Member States. Quite evidently, nobody wants to die (or even fight) for Kyiv in Europe except the Ukrainian Government. This is a plot twist that the Ukrainian people probably did not realize when they expressed the ambition to join NATO. However, while the Southern European States had little interest in a confrontation against Russia (be that military or commercial), the Northern Eastern States were of different advice. Thus, on 4th March 2014 Poland appealed to Art.4 of the Washington Treaty and obtained an extraordinary meeting of the Atlantic Council, because it felt threatened by the ongoing military movements in Eastern Ukraine⁵⁰.

The UK Joint Expeditionary Force that is going to be full operative by 2018 is building a Baltic Force with the aim of deterring more effectively a possible Russian ambition over the area⁵¹. The UK-led coalition will grow more assertive and will compensate the low engagement of most other European States for the purpose of the Atlantic security, given by the ever-lower military spending in European States’ budgets. From such “northern” perspective, the Russian expansion is seen in a Cold War fashion, and the goal of the JEF is to contain Russia just like during the Cold War.

Of the same advice are indeed the USA. The relative victory of the US foreign policy in taking away Kyiv from the Russian sphere of influence does not ease the American assertiveness in Europe. Since March 2014, the USA is more present in Europe, with constant

⁵⁰ “Atlantic Council to meet following Poland's request for Article 4 consultations” 03/03/2014 available online at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_107711.htm Accessed on 16/06/15

⁵¹ “Royal United Services Institute - Speech by General Sir David Richards, Chief of the Defence Staff.” 17/12/2012 available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chief-of-the-defence-staff-general-sir-david-richards-speech-to-the-royal-united-services-institute-rusi-17-december-2012> Accessed on 16/06/15

naval presence in the Black Sea and lately with plans of deployment of American troops and artillery in the Baltic States⁵² as a sign of commitment to the allied security. The USA are supporting the sanctions regime and at the same time, they are prone to honour their NATO commitment in Europe.

NATO is thus rather divided after the Ukraine Crisis, but once again, the US hegemony might overcome the low cooperation. However, most importantly NATO lacks a common view and a common understanding of Russian behaviour. For this reason still holds the famous Kissinger dilemma of whose telephone number should be called to talk with NATO, with Putin saying *“our American friends are always influencing Russia’s relations with its neighbours [...] Sometimes it is even unclear whom to talk to: to the governments of certain countries or directly with their American patrons and sponsors”*⁵³.

This is in fact a European problem, because neither at NATO nor in Brussels the European States are able to find a shared understanding on Russia. Arguably, the European States might also lack a common understanding of both NATO and the EU. The NATO and EU enlargement was carried on with a certain degree of post-war euphoria, and was seen by some observers (particularly in the UK and the USA) as the victory of the West that would cut out Russia forever from the European scenario and decision-making. The Russian counterpart however felt humiliated by the deprivation of its European land, and the Russian passions have not cooled down while the Russian enthusiasm towards the West has.

This major crisis is very difficult to understand, and history might offer a limited help to this aim. The current situation is probably best comparable to the Second World War, where an initial small annexation led to higher and unsustainable territorial claims, which later caused the World War. However, today’s conflict also shares some characteristics with the Cold War, whereby a number of proxy wars increase tensions and lead to military escalation. The two sides above all do not understand each other, while they flex their muscles and play hardball knowing that is not the way to deal with the crisis.

There are two possible main developments of the actual crisis in the light of the relationship between NATO and Russia. The escalation and the armed conflict or the diplomatic settlement of the dispute. The first option is clearly undesirable for each side, while the latter is the preferred solution. More than actual options, these two are “directions”, and the coordinates that the Russian and Alliance leaderships will follow will give the outcome of the present days.

Recently Europe is witnessing a classic military escalation amid fears of a Russian invasion on the one hand, and a further NATO (and thus EU) enlargement on the other hand. A massive media campaign is fomenting Russophobia on one side, and anti-Western feelings on the other side, with a Russian propaganda particularly far from objectivity and press neutrality. The Russian annexation of Crimea is part of what President Putin defines “national interests”, and a matter of Russian sovereignty “absolutely necessary for survival”, because Russia stands as a sovereign nation or “we dissolve without a trace and lose our identity”⁵⁴. The “coup d’état” that was a Western plan to take Kyiv away from the interest zone of Russia had a dramatic

⁵² See note 34

⁵³ Annual Address of Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, to the Federal Assembly, Moscow, The Kremlin, December 4, 2014, available online at: http://mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/700C486B493CF735C3257DA4005392CA Accessed on 16/06/15

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

backlash on Russian foreign policy. Russians felt humiliated by the alleged Western interference in the Yanukovich Government, and they will not tolerate any other interference that could question their preferred relation over their neighbours.

Needless to say, the friction between the Russian Federation and the rest of Europe is the product of a systematic marginalization of Russia from the decision-making process of the European affairs. A strategy that may well fit the principles stated in the preambles of Western liberal institutions, but that does not necessarily apply to reality. The Russian Federation has always asserted its implied jurisdiction upon the ex-Soviet countries, and the Western enlargement had become a concrete threat to the conservation of Russia as a prestigious nation if not empire.

Another example in support of this – rather realist – theory is the actual situation in the Chinese Sea, whereby the Chinese conflicting interests in the area question the legitimacy of the law of the sea. There will be clashes that will impose by force (hopefully not by the use of military force) the interpretation of the law of the sea and settle the dispute in the Chinese Sea region.

Today the Russian leadership laid a red line along the borders of its sphere of influence, and a breach of such red line might provoke an eschatological retaliation, a Russian “intifada” against the Western world that could not respect its ancient values. Nevertheless, the Russian Army does not shoot bullets filled with passion and culture, and the economic constraints imposed on Russia by Western sanction will at least reduce the growth of the Russian economy, at the high sacrifice of the European economy, which benefits significantly by the vast Russian market, and from its affordable raw materials.

A military confrontation between the West and Russia might occur as a result of an incident, which may involve the crash between the two armies in international territory for instance. This eventuality is not much desirable because notwithstanding its fatigue and economic constraints, Russia is still a nuclear power (it is estimated to detain around 8000 warheads) and so is NATO. A nuclear war is difficult to imagine, let alone describing it in this dissertation. In case of land occupation, the Russian Armed Forces will put pressure on the weaker parts of Europe – such as the Black Sea region and the Balkans – in the Russian exclave in Poland and in the bordering Baltic region, where the Lithuanian government just reintroduced compulsory conscription after having intercepted Russian jets in the Baltic waters⁵⁵. This scenario however is not much realistic, and it is arguably impossible for Russia to deploy a concerted attack against NATO. Moreover, such campaign would be devastating for the Russian economy, which is severely hit by sanctions and low oil prices, already.

A more “affordable” solution for Moscow it would be to seize the Donbass region, Novorossiia to the utmost. Novorossiia extends to Odessa and the Moldavian-Ukrainian border and comprises the area around Kharkov, Lugansk and Donetsk: it is in fact around one third of the entire Ukrainian territory. Along the (actual) Russian border, the potential support of the establishment and population would make it feasible for Russia to intervene militarily in the Donbass area, but much more complex it would be to penetrate Southern Ukraine and reach

⁵⁵ “Lithuania Reintroduces Military Conscription Amid Concern Over Russia” 19/03/2015 available online at: <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/lithuania-reintroduces-military-conscription-amid-concern-over-russia/517746.html> Accessed on 18/06/15

Odessa, even though the Moldavian-Ukrainian frontier is de facto under Russian control, which makes Odessa nearer indeed.

A more reasonable path would need the concerted effort of the West and Russia in order to drop the guns and write a common agenda bearing in mind the interests of each party. A peaceful resolution, one that could put again Russia and NATO on the same track, would need a tremendous diplomatic effort, one that would need to overcome all the obstacles set by the rhetoric, the passions and feelings that the conflict caused. First of all, the West will have to recognize the Crimean annexation, and NATO would need to abandon the open door doctrine, which has been pushed too far in fact. Needless to say, Russia would claim a recognized *droit de regard* over buffer States zone around its borders; pace Ukraine.

The European Union, too would have to abandon further enlargement (except in the Balkans), but may benefit from a greater economic integration of Russia (and the Eurasian Economic Union) at the price of including Russia in any negotiation with those States that historically have always belonged to Russia. A “liberal” peace would be a blessing for Russia, too, whose economy is in great difficulty, and whose social problems are tremendous. A flourishing Russian economy would benefit everyone in Europe, and with it a more transparent and possibly democratic Russia would benefit both the economy and the security of the European-Caucasian region.

Clearly, Russia has the steepest path ahead, with a fragile institutional system that is dominated by the power of military élites and corrupted tycoons. The future of Putin does not look obvious either, and in times of economic crises, the political power might be challenged from within the State. Should Russia decide to come to round tables with the West again, it would need to change attitude towards the international law and in respect of the use of force. Once it is proved that Russia infringed the rule of law countless times (Sciso, 2014), such behaviour might not be tolerated again in the future.

Between the two directions however, there is a third one. It is arguably the most probable outcome, at least in the short run, a regime of frozen conflicts in the Caucasus as well as in Europe, certainly in Ukraine. It would be similar to the Cold War, but with a less rigid “temperature” thanks to the globalization that inevitably overcomes the frontiers, and allows people from different (even antagonist) countries to have a contact with the *other*, understand and know each other, which is clearly something the actual leaders do not have today.

Whether Russia and NATO will seat at the same table again is something that depends at least to some extent on luck. In game theory this highly complicated situation may well fall into the categories of lack of cooperation, cheating problems, mistrusts and asymmetry of information, which determine the equilibria of the games. Russia and NATO have had an impact on European security and they shall have one on the international security, as they already demonstrated during the war on terror. Russia is an asset for Europe and so is Europe for Russia, also bearing in mind the very difficult challenges that such “old” Eurasian powers will face regarding the emerging economies and all the tensions that naturally arise in a multipolar world.

Bearing a true and deep respect for the ancient societies of Eurasia, these people should unite their efforts if they want their countries to enter the next decades and centuries as influential powers, with a significant stake in the global decision-making process.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

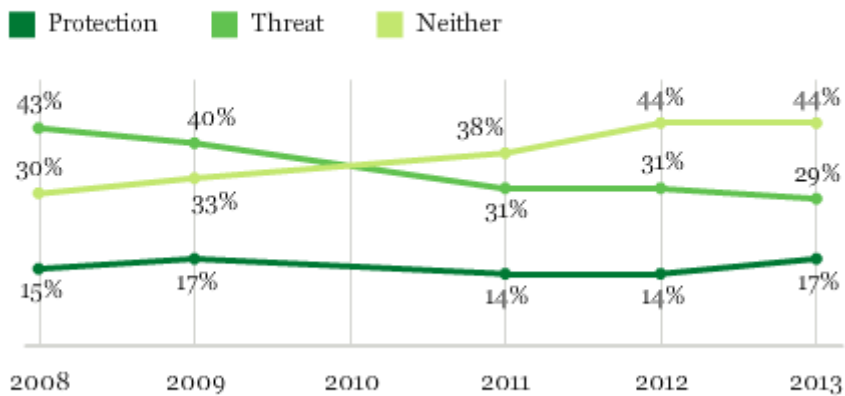
- Accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence, 2010/25 (International Court of Justice July 22, 2010). Retrieved from <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/141/16012.pdf?PHPSESSID=b0b24a6135eaf2347d5b0a0badec77ff>
- Amos, H., Walker, S., & Siddique, H. e. (2014, February 24). Ukraine's new government is not legitimate – Dmitry Medvedev. *The Guardian*. Retrieved 06 14, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/24/ukraine-viktor-yanukovych-arrest-warrant>
- Annan, K. (1999, May 18). SECRETARY-GENERAL SAYS RENEWAL OF EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE OF SECURITY COUNCIL MUST BE CORNERSTONE OF EFFORTS TO PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL PEACE IN NEXT CENTURY. *Press Release*.
- Blagov, S. (2001, October 11). Putin's Chechen spin has rights groups in a whirl. *AsiaTimes Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.atimes.com/c-asia/CJ11Ag02.html>
- Caracciolo, L. (2008). Perché contiamo poco. *Limes*, 17.
- Caracciolo, L. (2015, March 7). Democrazia, il cuore antico del regime di Putin. *La Repubblica*. Tratto il giorno June 15, 2015 da <http://www.limesonline.com/rubrica/democrazia-il-cuore-antico-del-regime-di-putin>
- Colombo, A. (2001). *La lunga alleanza - La Nato tra consolidamento, supremazia e crisi*. Milano: FrancoAngeli s.r.l.
- Council Decision concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, 2014/145/CFSP (THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION March 17, 2014).
- Economist Intelligence Unit. (2014). *Democracy Index*. London: The Economist.
- Findlay, R., & O'Rourke, K. H. (2009). *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- General Totskiy, K. V. (2003). General Totskiy: Russian Ambassador to NATO. (NATO, Intervistatore) Tratto da <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2003/NATO-Strategic-Partners/General-Totskiy-Russian-Ambassador-NATO/EN/index.htm>
- Golz, A. (1994, January 27). The 'Kozyrev Doctrine'. *The Moscow Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/the-kozyrev-doctrine/215523.html>
- Held, D., & McGrew, A. (2007). *Globalization/ Anti-Globalization, Beyond the Great Divide*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Johnson, D. (2015). *Russia's Approach to Conflict - Implications for NATO's Deterrence and Defence*. NATO Defence College, Research Division. Rome: DEd'A srl.
- Kundnani, H., & Rogers, J. (2014). La Lega del Nord: Il Progetto di Londra che Agita Berlino. (F. Petroni, A cura di) *Limes*, 157-164.
- Manutscharjan, A. (2009). RUSSIA' S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY UNTIL 2020. *Auslandsinformationen - Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*, 159-162. Tratto il giorno June 15, 2015 da http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_17407-544-2-30.pdf
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014, September/October). Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. *Foreign Affairs*. Tratto il giorno June 15, 2015 da <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault>
- Pellicciari, I. (2014). Repubblica Popolare VS Repubblica Spopolata. *Limes*, 31-42.
- Putin, V. V. (2008, August 29). CNN interview with Vladimir Putin. (M. Chance, Interviewer) CNN. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/08/29/putin.transcript/>
- Ratti, L. (2013). NATO–Russia Relations after 9/11:New Challenges, Old Issues. In E. Hallams, L. Ratti, & B. Zyla, *NATO Beyond 9/11* (p. 258–277). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Reisinger, H. (2013). *Not only "Containerspotting" - NATO's Redeployment from Landlocked Afghanistan*. NATO Defence College, Research Division. Rome: DEd's srl.
- Sciso, E. (2014). La crisi ucraina e l'intervento russo: profili di diritto internazionale. In G. Dioguardi, L. Monti, E. Sciso, H. Shelest, P. Sellari, & L. Zannier, *La Crisi Ucraina e i Problemi di Sicurezza in Europa* (p. 9-51). Roma: LUISS University Press.
- The Associated Press. (1994, September 28). Yeltsin doctrine brings 'muffled' U.S. response. *The News*, p. 20. Tratto il giorno June 15, 2015 da <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1290&dat=19940928&id=syFUAAAAIBA J&sjid=PY0DAAAIBA J&pg=6261,6891416&hl=it>
- Van Ham, P. (2001). Security and Culture, or, Why NATO Won't Last. In *Security Dialogue* (p. 393-406). Sage Publications.

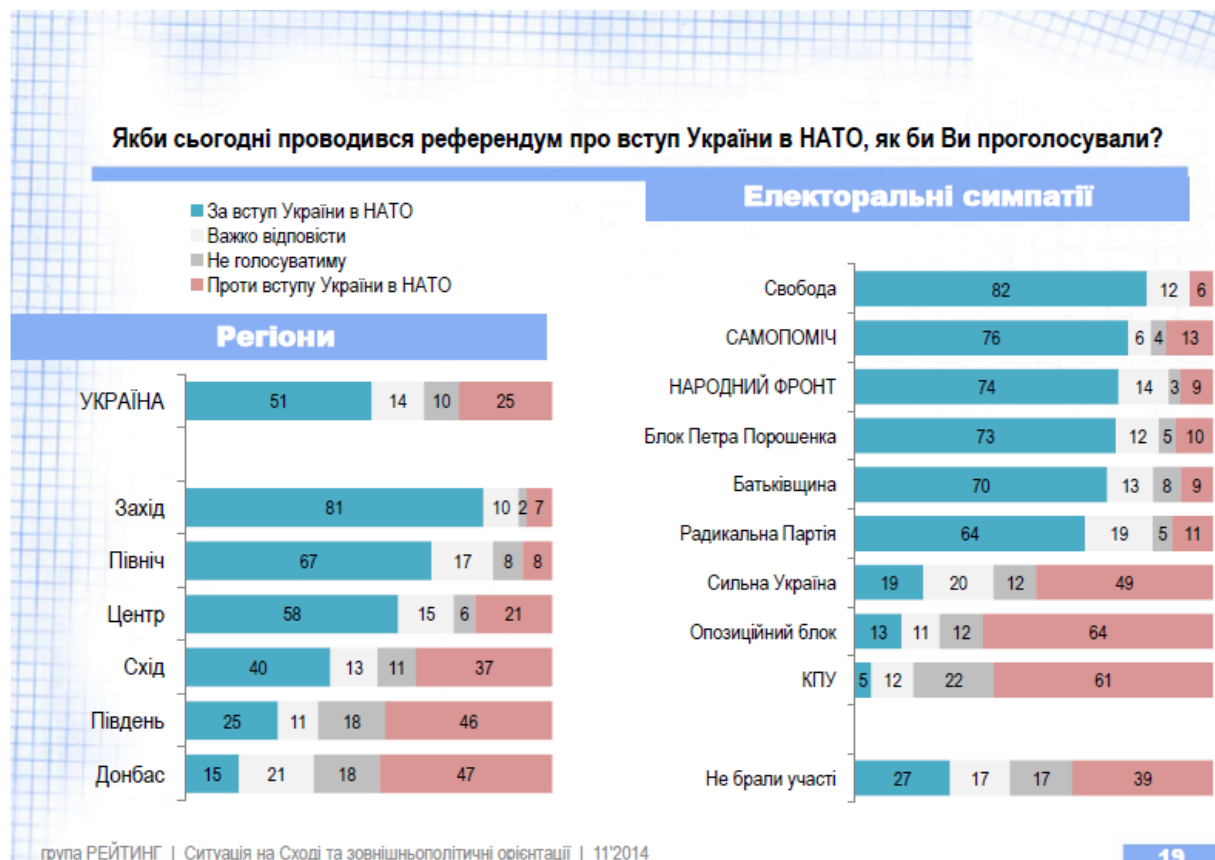
ANNEX

Ukrainians More Likely to View NATO as a Threat

Do you associate NATO with the protection of your country, as a threat to your country, or do you see it as neither protection, nor threat?



GALLUP®



THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

PRECIS

In seguito alla fine della Guerra Fredda e dell'epoca del bipolarismo, il mondo è entrato in una nuova epoca. All'interno dei confini dei paesi di quello che un tempo era il Patto di Varsavia, nuovi governi hanno dato vita a numerosissime riforme dei sistemi economici e politici, al punto che in un breve lasso di tempo, quelle stesse società erano fortemente mutate. I popoli da Vladivostok a Pankow stavano spingendo per la creazione di governi eletti democraticamente. Negli anni '90 l'Europa stava subendo una rapida trasformazione dove vecchie divisioni erano state superate e la Cortina di Ferro veniva smantellata. Con il Trattato di Maastricht e la politica *Open Door* della NATO, il clima politico in Europa improvvisamente era più disteso, e l'integrazione politico-economica della regione ha portato oltre un quarto di secolo di pace sul suolo europeo. Inoltre, la disintegrazione dell'URRS ha creato un nuovo "attore" politico, la Federazione Russa. La Federazione Russa guidata da Yeltsin aveva ereditato un apparato militare invecchiato ma gigantesco, che comprendeva circa 35000 testate nucleari e 6 navi portaerei. La Federazione Russa era nondimeno sull'orlo di un disastro sociale ed economico, così la presidenza Yeltsin dovette concentrarsi su una progressiva liberalizzazione dell'economia e all'apertura al mercato della Russia.

L'ipotesi di questa tesi è che per capire l'Organizzazione del Trattato dell'Atlantico del Nord, è di cruciale importanza comprendere la particolare relazione tra la NATO e la Russia. Questa cominciò nella forma di cooperazione pacifica nel 1991, quando era chiaro che la Russia avrebbe necessariamente dovuto prendere parte alle discussioni per un piano strutturale per la sicurezza europea dopo la fine della guerra fredda. Mentre questo ribaltamento degli equilibri stava prendendo piede, anche la NATO ha dovuto implementare certe riforme radicali, che avrebbero portato alla politica di *Open Door* che ha reso possibile l'allargamento della NATO in particolare verso est, accordando la condizione di membro a molte delle ex repubbliche sovietiche. La cooperazione con la Federazione ha portato alla fondazione del Consiglio NATO-Russia in seguito al Summit della NATO di Roma nel 2002, che è stato formalmente sospeso al Summit della NATO tenutosi al "Celtic Manor" nel settembre 2014 conseguentemente all'occupazione russa della regione ucraina della Crimea. Ad oggi la NATO si basa sulla partecipazione di 28 paesi tra cui tre potenze militari. I suoi confini europei grossomodo coincidono con quelli dell'Unione Europea.

La storia della NATO è quindi fortemente legata alla Russia, poiché la ragione stessa della sua fondazione è stata quella di dissuadere la minaccia sovietica all'Europa. Dopo la conclusione del conflitto ideologico, la NATO non si è dissolta poiché ha saputo trasformarsi, ma col ritorno di un sentimento negativo rispetto alla Russia, la NATO potrebbe ritornare ad assumere un assetto più risoluto nei confronti della Russia, e all'impiego del cosiddetto *hard power*. L'evoluzione della NATO rimane soggetta all'influenza del comportamento russo, in quanto la Federazione Russa sotto la presidenza di Putin è decisa ad affermare il suo status di grande potenza regionale se non di "ex superpotenza".

Questa tesi fornirà una descrizione dei rapporti tra i blocchi Occidentale e Orientale in chiave storica, partendo dalla fondazione stessa della NATO nella scia della seconda guerra mondiale. Il primo capitolo esplorerà le caratteristiche del Trattato di Washington e la politica dell'allargamento della NATO. Questo aspetto della NATO è inoltre discusso nel contesto della situazione globale dopo la fine della Guerra Fredda, con una breve descrizione degli interventi militari in Kosovo e dopo in Afghanistan. In questo senso, sarà evidenziato il ruolo dei primi passi della relazione NATO-Russia, che infine ha portato per la prima volta nella storia, nel 2011, ad esercitazioni militari compartecipati dalle forze armate russe, come parte di un'esercitazione di antiterrorismo.

L'allargamento della NATO ha portato a un processo decisionale più difficile all'interno dell'organizzazione per via del maggior numero di Stati Membri necessari ad adottare le decisioni per consenso. Verrà discusso che questo è stato un processo di mutazione, il quale ha preparato il terreno per una istituzione internazionale politica e trasparente. Il momento storico in analisi ha posto diverse domande esistenziali alla NATO, che del resto era stata privata del proprio nemico originale. Il rafforzamento delle relazioni con la Federazione Russa ha portato i due soggetti alla creazione di un ambiente formale ove la cooperazione tra la NATO e la Russia avrebbe avuto luogo regolarmente. Nel primo capitolo verranno inoltre analizzate le premesse storiche che hanno portato la Russia e la NATO alla creazione del Consiglio NATO-Russia, il quale ha rappresentato un passo essenziale per le loro relazioni internazionali, con il fine ultimo di garantire un ambiente pacifico nella regione europea.

Il punto focale del secondo capitolo è stato posto sul comportamento della NATO che ha agito maggiormente nella sua configurazione da istituzione internazionale anziché basarsi sull'uso della forza nei confronti dell'annessione russa della Crimea nel 2014. Evidentemente, gli Stati Membri hanno dovuto confrontarsi con una situazione molto controversa, che ha potuto portare con sé gravi ripercussioni nelle scelte politiche dei singoli paesi a casa. Il conflitto ucraino ha posto seri dubbi sulla reattività della NATO come alleanza militare capace, in teoria, di reagire immediatamente, e inoltre ha messo alla prova la stabilità dell'Unione Europea. La crisi ha evidenziato molti punti deboli della diplomazia europea, ivi inclusa la mancanza di una prospettiva comune sulla Russia. Lo stesso capitolo chiarirà che tipo di esternalità potrebbe causare una NATO più eterogenea nel caso di una crisi regionale che abbia a che fare con sistemi di "guerra ibrida" e interessi politici ed economici contrastanti. Un'analisi del Summit della NATO tenuto nel Galles nel 2014 spiegherà le conseguenze della sospensione unilaterale del Consiglio NATO-Russia nelle relazioni tra i due attori.

La prospettiva Russa nei confronti della NATO dopo la Guerra Fredda è una materia di studio molto complicata per via del basso livello di prevedibilità e perché intrisa di numerosi fraintendimenti, i quali alla fine hanno portato a ciò che i giornali hanno descritto "il ritorno alla Guerra Fredda"⁵⁶. Le élite politiche dell'Ovest probabilmente non possiedono una comprensione comune e cogente dei sentimenti russi riguardo alla situazione attuale. Il secondo capitolo ha fornito una riflessione personale dell'autore sui problemi di comunicazione con la Russia. Le difficoltà politiche ed economiche della Russia hanno esacerbato la relazione altalenante con i vicini europei, fino al punto che la NATO e l'Europa tutta possono essere considerate una minaccia alla Russia come la Russia è comunemente pensata come una

⁵⁶<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/19/new-cold-war-back-to-bad-old-days-russia-west-putin-ukraine> Ultimo accesso 13/06/15

possibile minaccia per l'Europa. Per avere una migliore comprensione dell'argomentazione russa, è stato importante osservare le istituzioni russe e cercare di comprenderne l'evoluzione e i forti cambiamenti che le caratterizzano.

L'impatto della Russia continuerà a giocare un ruolo determinante nel modellamento della fisionomia della NATO, e un'eventuale futuro di prosperità della Russia determinerà il percorso che la Russia prenderà nei confronti dell'Europa. Evidentemente, un ambiente pacifico in Europa è auspicabile da entrambe le parti, però sarà a causa delle relazioni tra la NATO e la Federazione Russa se l'Europa eviterà la trappola degli equilibri multipli o se invece cadrà nel gioco del dilemma del prigioniero. Se la Russia tornerà alle buone maniere con l'Occidente, dovrà lavorare sulle istituzioni nazionali e sulla propria agenda internazionale, e allo stesso modo la NATO dovrà integrare le sue capacità strategico-militari con il consenso politico dell'UE se vorrà arrivare a un approccio netto e condiviso verso la Russia, possibilmente evitando la trappola della nostalgia da Guerra Fredda.

La crisi ucraina coincide con il momento peggiore e forse più pericoloso in Europa dalla fine della Guerra Fredda. Tutti i fraintendimenti tra Russia e Occidente hanno avuto gravi ripercussioni sulle loro relazioni e il loro sviluppo reciproco. Un altro caso di grave fraintendimento però, ha luogo proprio all'interno dell'Occidente. Gli USA, l'UE e la NATO hanno avuto tutti diversi approcci e diversi interessi con la Russia, e ognuno di loro ha reagito in maniera diversa. Per esempio, gli Stati Uniti non hanno dato priorità alle relazioni NATO-Russia poiché sono stati focalizzati sulla situazione esplosiva nel Mar Cinese, e non hanno veramente tenuto in considerazione un atteggiamento revanscista della Russia, o una nuova corsa agli armamenti in Europa.

L'UE è così eterogeneo che quasi ogni Stato Membro ha avuto un approccio diverso alla crisi. Ad esempio l'Italia è particolarmente esposta nei confronti della Russia per via dell'alta dipendenza energetica e dell'alta profittabilità delle compagnie italiane che commerciano –soprattutto generi alimentari– con la Russia. La Germania ha invece sviluppato negli anni un rapporto in un certo senso privilegiato con la Russia tramite il “North Stream”, e circa 300000 posti di lavoro tedeschi collegati con le relazioni commerciali con la Russia (Kundnani & Rogers, 2014, p.162). All'interno dell'UE ci sono inoltre paesi come la Bulgaria, quasi interamente dipendenti dall'energia russa, e altri Stati tra cui le repubbliche baltiche che hanno invece avuto una reazione molto più decisa contro la “invasione” russa, per paura che il conflitto potesse portare ad un'escalation militare che avrebbe potuto esporre i loro cittadini. Le sanzioni economiche contro la Federazione Russa decise da Bruxelles hanno rappresentato un mero “minimo comun denominatore” che ha permesso all'UE di fare qualcosa e di farlo assieme, almeno formalmente.

Per quanto riguarda la NATO, è andata delineandosi una spaccatura tra gli Stati Membri. Evidentemente, nessuno in Europa vuole dare la vita (ma neanche imbracciare i fucili) per Kiev eccetto il governo ucraino. Questo colpo di scena che il popolo ucraino probabilmente non ha colto quando ha espresso la volontà di entrare nella NATO. Ad ogni modo, mentre gli Stati dell'Europa meridionale hanno poco interesse nell'intraprendere un conflitto contro la Russia (militare o commerciale che sia), gli Stati settentrionali sono di diverso avviso. Infatti, il 4 marzo 2014, la Polonia si è appellata all'Art.4 del Trattato di Washington e ha ottenuto una

riunione straordinaria del Consiglio Atlantico, poiché si è sentita minacciata dai continui movimenti militari nell'Ucraina dell'est⁵⁷.

La coalizione a guida Regno Unito *UK Joint Expeditionary Force* che andrà a pieno regime entro il 2018 sta costruendo una Forza Baltica è pensato per avere un ruolo di deterrenza più efficace nei confronti di possibili pretese russe nell'area. La coalizione baltico-scandinava crescerà in assertività e compenserà gli effetti dello scarso coinvolgimento di buona parte dei paesi europei per la sicurezza atlantica, dimostrata dalla continua riduzione dei budget degli eserciti europei. Da questa prospettiva “nordica”, l'espansionismo russo è inteso con le lenti della Guerra Fredda, e lo scopo della “JEF” è di contenere la Russia, proprio come la NATO faceva durante la Guerra Fredda.

Dello stesso avviso sono certamente gli USA. La – magra – vittoria diplomatica statunitense nel portare Kiev fuori dalla sfera di influenza russa, non distende l'assertività americana in Europa. Da Marzo 2014, gli Stati Uniti sono più presenti in Europa, con una costante presenza navale nel Mar Nero, e più tardi con dei piani per portare truppe e artiglieria americane negli Stati baltici⁵⁸ come segno di *commitment* alla sicurezza degli alleati. Gli USA stanno supportando e proponendo il regime sanzionatorio, e allo stesso momento si dimostrano disposti a onorare gli impegni NATO in Europa.

La NATO è quindi piuttosto divisa dalla Crisi Ucraina, ma nuovamente, l'egemonia statunitense potrebbe risolvere il problema della scarsa cooperazione. Soprattutto, la NATO ancora non ha una comprensione globale e unitaria del comportamento russo. Per questo motivo rimane ancora valido il famoso dilemma di Kissinger, su quale numero di telefono si debba digitare per parlare con la NATO, con Putin che afferma “*i nostri amici americani stanno sempre influenzando le relazioni russe con i suoi vicini [...] Alle volte non è neanche chiaro con chi si debba parlare: con i governi di certe nazioni o direttamente con i loro patron e sponsor americani*”⁵⁹.

Questo è chiaramente un problema europeo, perché né alla NATO né a Bruxelles gli Stati europei riescono a trovare una visione condivisa sulla Russia. Per certi versi, gli Stati europei potrebbero avere difficoltà anche ad avere una visione comune sia della NATO che dell'UE. L'allargamento della NATO e dell'UE è stato portato avanti con un certo livello di euforia da post-guerra, ed è stata vista da certi osservatori (soprattutto nel Regno Unito e negli Stati Uniti) come la vittoria dell'Occidente che avrebbe tagliato fuori la Russia per sempre dallo scenario europeo strategico e decisionale. La controparte russa tuttavia si è sentita umiliata dalla privazione della sua terra europea, e le “passioni” russe non si sono raffreddate mentre si è raffreddato e di molto l'entusiasmo russo verso l'Occidente.

Questa grande crisi è veramente difficile da comprendere, e la storia offre un aiuto limitato per questo fine. La situazione odierna è probabilmente comparabile con il preludio della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, quando una piccola iniziale annessione ha portato a maggiori e insostenibili pretese territoriali, che in seguito hanno causato lo scoppio della guerra. Però, il

⁵⁷ “Atlantic Council to meet following Poland's request for Article 4 consultations” 03/03/2014 disponibile online at sito: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_107711.htm Ultimo accesso 16/06/15

⁵⁸ Vedi nota 34

⁵⁹ Annual Address of Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, to the Federal Assembly, Moscow, The Kremlin, December 4, 2014, disponibile online al sito: http://mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/700C486B493CF735C3257DA4005392CA Ultimo accesso 16/06/15

conflitto di oggi condive alcune caratteristiche anche con la Guerra Fredda, laddove molte *proxy wars* aumentano le tensioni e portano a un'escalation militare. Le due parti soprattutto non riescono a comprendersi l'un l'altro, mentre flettono i muscoli pur sapendo che così non risolveranno la crisi.

Ci sono due possibili sviluppi principali della crisi attuale, alla luce della relazione tra NATO e Russia. L'escalation e il conflitto armato, o la risoluzione diplomatica del confronto. La prima opzione è chiaramente indesiderata per entrambi, mentre l'altra è quella auspicabile. Più che vere e proprie "decisioni", queste due sarebbero da intendersi delle "direzioni", e le coordinate che le leadership russe e alleate seguiranno, sortiranno il risultato delle scelte odierne.

Di recente, l'Europa sta testimoniando una classica escalation militare, con la paura dell'invasione russa da una parte, e di una ulteriore espansione della NATO (e quindi anche dell'UE) dall'altra. Una massiccia campagna mediatica sta fomentando la russofobia da un lato, e sentimenti antioccidentali dall'altro, con una vera e propria propaganda russa chiaramente lontana da principi come la neutralità della stampa e l'obiettività. L'annessione russa della Crimea fa parte di ciò che il Presidente Putin definisce "interessi nazionali", e una questione di sovranità russa "assolutamente necessari alla sopravvivenza", poiché la Russia o resta una nazione sovrana e unita oppure "ci dissolviamo senza lasciare tracce e perdiamo la nostra identità"⁶⁰. Il "colpo di Stato" che è frutto delle macchinazioni occidentali per portare Kiev fuori dalla zona di interesse russa, ha avuto un drammatico colpo di coda nella politica estera della Russia. I russi si sono sentiti umiliati e offesi dalla presunta interferenza occidentale nel governo Yanukovich, e non tollereranno più nessun'altra interferenza che possa mettere a rischio la loro relazione preferenziale con i loro vicini.

Ovviamente, la frizione tra la Federazione Russa e il resto dell'Europa è il risultato di una sistematica marginalizzazione della Russia dal processo decisionale degli affari europei. Una strategia che potrebbe essere concepita secondo i preamboli delle istituzioni liberali occidentali, ma che non si applicano necessariamente alla realtà dei fatti. La Federazione Russa ha sempre asserito la sua naturale giurisdizione sugli stati ex-sovietici, e l'espansione occidentale è diventata una minaccia concreta alla conservazione della Russia come una nazione prestigiosa, se non un impero.

Un ulteriore esempio di questa teoria per certi versi realista, è l'attuale situazione nel Mare Cinese, dove gli interessi cinesi nell'area mettono in discussione la legittimità del diritto del mare. Ci saranno scontri che imporranno con la forza (possibilmente non con l'uso della forza militare) una certa interpretazione del diritto del mare, e decideranno le dispute nella regione del Mare Cinese.

Oggi la leadership russa ha tracciato una linea rossa lungo i confini della sua sfera d'influenza, e oltrepassare tale linea rossa potrebbe provocare una risposta escatologica, una sorta di "intifada" russa contro l'Occidente che non rispetta i suoi antichi valori. Ciononostante, l'esercito russo non esplosa proiettili fatti di cultura o ideologia, e le ristrettezze economiche imposte alla Russia dalle sanzioni occidentali quantomeno ridurranno la crescita dell'economia russa, anche se a grande sacrificio dell'economia europea, la quale beneficerebbe (e di fatto beneficia) del vasto mercato russo e delle sue risorse energetiche a buon prezzo.

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

Un confronto militare tra l'Occidente e la Russia potrebbe accadere in seguito a un incidente, che potrebbe riguardare ad esempio lo scontro tra veicoli militari delle due forze in acque internazionali. Questa eventualità non è desiderabile sotto ogni aspetto, anche perché nonostante le difficoltà economiche e sociali la Russia è una forza nucleare (si stima un arsenale di circa 8000 testate nucleari) e così la NATO. Una guerra nucleare è difficile da immaginare, e questa tesi non ha avuto l'ambizione di speculare a riguardo. Nel caso di un'occupazione militare dei territori, le forze armate russe eserciterebbero pressione sui punti deboli dell'Europa – come i Balcani e il Mar Nero –, nell'exclave russo in Polonia e nella regione baltica, dove tra l'altro il governo lituano ha reintrodotto il servizio militare obbligatorio dopo aver intercettato aerei da guerra russi nel Mar Baltico⁶¹. Questo scenario tuttavia non è molto realistico, e sulla carta sembrerebbe impossibile per la Russia portare avanti un attacco coordinato contro la NATO. Oltretutto, una campagna militare di questo genere sarebbe una tragedia per l'economia russa, che è già gravemente danneggiata dalle sanzioni e dal basso prezzo del petrolio.

Una soluzione nelle capacità di Mosca potrebbe essere quella di occupare la regione del Donbass, o al Massimo della Novorossiya. La Novorossiya (Nuova Russia) si estende fino a Odessa e il confine moldavo-ucraino, e comprende l'area intorno a Kharkiv, Lugansk e Donetsk: rappresenta circa un terzo dell'intero territorio dell'Ucraina. Lungo il confine (odierno) russo, il possibile supporto della popolazione e dell'establishment renderebbe fattibile un intervento militare russo nell'area del Donbass, ma sarebbe molto più complesso penetrare nell'Ucraina meridionale e arrivare a Odessa, anche se la frontiera moldava-ucraina è *de facto* sotto il controllo russo, il che rende Odessa più vicina all'orbita russa.

Un percorso più ragionevole chiaramente avrebbe bisogno dello sforzo congiunto dell'Occidente e della Russia, per lasciare le armi e stilare un'agenda comune tenendo seriamente a mente gli interessi delle parti. Una risoluzione pacifica, che potrebbe rimettere la Russia e la NATO sulla stessa traiettoria, avrebbe bisogno di un incredibile lavoro diplomatico, che avrebbe bisogno di superare tutti i numerosi ostacoli posizionati dalla retorica, dagli ideali e dai pregiudizi che il conflitto ha causato. Innanzi tutto, l'Occidente dovrà riconoscere l'annessione crimeana, e la NATO dovrà abbandonare la dottrina dell'Open Door, di cui si è chiaramente abusato. Ovviamente, la Russia chiederà di farsi riconoscere una sorte di *droit de regard* sugli Stati cuscinetto intorno ai suoi confini, con buona pace dell'Ucraina.

Anche l'Unione Europea dovrà abbandonare ogni piano di ulteriori allargamenti (eccetto nei Balcani), ma potrebbe beneficiare da una maggiore integrazione della Russia (e l'Unione Economica Eurasiatica) a condizione di includere la Russia in qualsiasi negoziato con quegli Stati che storicamente sono sempre stati parte della Russia. Una pace "liberale" sarebbe una grazia anche per la Russia, la quale economia è in grande difficoltà, e i quali problemi sociali sono tragici. Una fiorente economia russa sarebbe positiva per tutti in Europa, e allo stesso modo una Russia più trasparente e possibilmente democratica sarebbe ottimale sia per l'economia che per la sicurezza della regione europea e caucasica.

Chiaramente, la Russia deve affrontare il sentiero più tortuoso e ripido, con un sistema istituzionale particolarmente fragile e dominato dallo strapotere di élite militari e da oligarchi

⁶¹ "Lithuania Reintroduces Military Conscription Amid Concern Over Russia" 19/03/2015 disponibile online al sito: <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/lithuania-reintroduces-military-conscription-amid-concern-over-russia/517746.html> ultimo accesso 18/06/15

corrotti. Nemmeno il futuro di Putin non è da darsi scontato, e in un periodo di crisi economiche, il potere politico può essere messo in questione pure dall'interno dello Stato. Se la Russia tornerà alle tavole rotonde con l'Occidente, avrà bisogno di cambiare attitudine rispetto al diritto internazionale, e riguardo all'uso della forza. Ora che è stato provato che la Russia ha infranto le leggi del diritto internazionale innumerevoli volte (Sciso, 2014), questo comportamento potrebbe non essere più tollerato in futuro.

Tra le due direzioni comunque, ne esiste una terza. Sembrerebbe essere la soluzione più probabile, quantomeno nel breve periodo, un regime di conflitti "congelati" nel Caucaso come in Europa, sicuramente in Ucraina. Sarebbe simile alla Guerra Fredda, ma con una "temperatura" meno rigida, anche grazie al potere della globalizzazione, la quale scavalca inevitabilmente le frontiere, e consente a persone che provengono da diverse (e anche antagoniste) nazioni di entrare in contatto le une con le altre, comprendersi e conoscersi a vicenda, che è una proprietà che certamente i leader odierni non possiedono.

Se la Russia e la NATO si siederanno nuovamente allo stesso tavolo è qualcosa che dipende almeno in parte dal caso, dalla fortuna. Nella disciplina della teoria dei giochi questa complessa situazione cadrebbe nelle categorie di mancanza di cooperazione, problemi di fiducia e asimmetria delle informazioni, cose che vanno a determinare gli "equilibri" dei giochi. La Russia e la NATO hanno avuto assieme un impatto sulla sicurezza europea, e l'avranno sulla sicurezza internazionale, come hanno già avuto modo di dimostrare nella guerra al terrorismo. La Russia è una risorsa per l'Europa, e l'Europa è altrettanto per la Russia, tenendo conto delle numerose e difficili sfide che queste "vecchie" potenze euroasiatiche dovranno affrontare riguardo alle economie emergenti e tutte le tensioni che un mondo multipolare porta con sé.

Conservando come guida un vero e profondo rispetto per le antiche società euroasiatiche, questi popoli dovranno unire i loro sforzi se vorranno che i loro paesi entrino nei prossimi decenni e secoli come potenze influenti, con un concreto peso specifico nel processo decisionale degli affari del mondo.

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK