

Department of Political Science

Course of Sociology of Terrorism

Is the Ukraine Crisis the West's fault? - Analysis from a Realist view

Prof. Alessandro Orsini

SUPERVISOR

Gaia Antonia Santacroce

CANDIDATE

Matr. 084932

Questi tre anni passati in Luiss sono stati tra i più belli della mia vita, sia dal punto di vista accademico che per esperienze. Concludere questo percorso triennale è dolce-amaro, ma so che oltre aver acquisito un bagaglio di conoscenza infinito, ho anche costruito relazioni che porterò avanti per sempre. Per questo motivo, nonostante io non sia molto brava con le parole in queste situazioni, vorrei ringraziare alcune persone fondamentali per la riuscita del mio percorso di laurea.

Innanzitutto, vorrei ringraziare il Prof. Alessandro Orsini, relatore di questa tesi. Oltre ad avermi guidato nella stesura dell'elaborato, mi ha trasmesso la conoscenza necessaria affinché la tesi prendesse forma nel modo migliore possibile.

Poi, vorrei ringraziare coloro che mi hanno sempre sostenuto durante ogni mia scelta, coloro che hanno dovuto sopportare le mie ansie pre e post esame, mentre si è in attesa del voto: i miei genitori e la mia sorellina Sofia. Grazie al loro incoraggiamento continuo, ho raggiunto traguardi molto importanti, come il completamento di questa laurea, e sempre grazie al loro supporto sono sicura di raggiungerne ulteriori.

Anche ai miei nonni da Torino e ai miei zii da Milano va un grande ringraziamento, che nonostante la lontananza, tramite telefonate e messaggi hanno seguito con interesse tutto il mio percorso. La mia famiglia romana, Isa, Angelo e Antonio, non è stata da meno nell'essere presente e partecipativa in questo percorso formativo, dispensando sempre consigli molto utili e dimostrando il loro interesse, e per questo li ringrazio infinitamente.

Inoltre, vorrei ringraziare gli amici di sempre, i "Graeculi", che in questi anni mi hanno fatto capire che il valore della vera amicizia non sta nel vedersi quotidianamente, ma nell'esserci nei momenti importanti, festeggiare insieme le vittorie e cercare il modo di rimettersi in piedi dopo le sconfitte. Un particolare grazie va a Simone, Agnese e Giorgia che hanno avuto un ruolo fondamentale per me.

Questi anni in Luiss non solo mi hanno fornito un'educazione di eccellenza, ma mi hanno permesso di conoscere persone altrettanto fantastiche, come Carlotta, Annalisa, Carlo Alberto e Micol. Le ore passate a studiare, ripetere, confrontarci, ma soprattutto divertirvi, avranno sempre un posto speciale nel mio cuore.

Infine, vorrei ringraziare Edoardo, a cui in parte devo l'ottima riuscita di questo ultimo anno. Nonostante tutte le difficoltà che ci sono state messe davanti, abbiamo avuto insieme la forza di continuare imperterriti per la nostra strada, essendo la roccia l'uno dell'altro e donandoci a vicenda tenacia, perseveranza e anche un po' di testardaggine.

Grazie quindi a tutti voi per questi tre fantastici anni!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
1. Realism	6
1.1 An International Relations theory.....	6
1.2 Offensive Realism - John J. Mearsheimer.....	8
2. Ukrainian Crisis - Case Study	20
2.1 Historical summary	20
2.2 Mearsheimer “Why is Ukraine the West’s Fault”	30
2.3 Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?	37
3. The Role of Fear – Guglielmo Ferrero	41
Conclusions	46
Bibliography & Sitography:	49
Summary	52

Introduction

At the basis of this dissertation, it is possible to notice, starting by the title itself, the aim to analyze the causes and consequences of the Ukrainian crisis whose climax was the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation on 18th March 2014.

In the following thesis, I will take into consideration both historical facts and opinions regarding the happenings. In particular, I will keep in consideration the contribution to the discussion by the Realist scholar John J. Mearsheimer who came up with an unconventional view on the matter. Through papers, lectures and articles, he made clear that his position was utterly different from the acknowledged thought and explained the events in line with his preferred theory of International Relations, that himself shaped: Offensive Realism.

As a matter of fact, International Relations (IR) is a mosaic academic subject that is becoming a complex compound of sub-theories constantly emerging and in contrast with one another. I will dedicate a part of Chapter 1 to the analysis of one of the major IR approach: Realism. Besides, John J. Mearsheimer poses himself as a prime leader in the dissemination of Offensive Realism and I will explain in detail his theories and how he differentiates himself from other thinkers belonging to the same macro-theory.

Even though all systems are imperfect, I believe Mearsheimer brings on an innovative outlook to the analysis of the historical events and the account for behavior and actions of various actors involved in the crisis in Ukraine. Throughout the paper I will try to aim at explaining the facts that fostered the annexation, its consequences and the rejoinders from the international community. In particular, my focus will be pointing to show that the true spark for the Ukrainian revolution is not Russia, who is often depicted as the antagonist of democracy in Europe, but actually the Western countries that instead show themselves as the defender of justice. I will pursue this argument thanks to several Western, Russian and Ukrainian sources and lectures John J. Mearsheimer delivered at the University of Chicago, where he is the R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor.

Thus, my research is going to be based on different kinds of evidences, which I will reference with footnotes and in the final bibliography and sitography. Furthermore, in order to better explain my reasonings I will attach graphs and maps.

The dissertation is structured in three chapters: firstly, in *Chapter 1, Realism* I will report a summary of the historical footsteps of Realism as an international relation theory which unfolds topics regarding the nature of the state, the individual, international organizations, identity and reality itself (cf. *1.1 An International*

Relations theory) and I will focus in particular on the contribution of Mearsheimer and offensive Realism (cf. 1.2 *John J. Mearsheimer - Offensive Realism*). For these parts, the sources are mainly texts from IR tradition at the roots of Realism and in particular I will use abundantly references to John J. Mearsheimer's *The tragedy of Great Power politics*¹.

Secondly, in *Chapter 2, Ukrainian Crisis - Case Study*, I will explain widely the history of Ukraine and the historical roots that allowed two popular revolutions to spark ten years apart (cf. 2.1 *Historical summary*). Moreover, I will devote paragraph 2.2 *Mearsheimer's "Why is Ukraine the West's Fault"*² to the analysis of the thesis put forward by the Realist scholar using his theory as a tool to investigate the events. In order to do so, I will analyze the lectures and papers by Mearsheimer himself. The following paragraph (cf. 2.3 "*Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?*") will regard the critiques of his reasonings proposed by Michael McFaul and Stephen Sestanovich and John J. Mearsheimer's reply in the paper *Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis? in the scholarly International Affairs* ³.

Finally, the last chapter (cf. *Chapter 3, The Role of Fear - Guglielmo Ferrero*) will concern a deviceful argument relating the similarities between the sociological study of fear by Guglielmo Ferrero and the Realist approach to conflicts. It will be interesting to compare a study relating to the behavior of individuals and the actions by international actors, mainly States. The book I will use as a main source for this parallelism is *The two French Revolutions*⁴ by Guglielmo Ferrero.

Thanks to this dissertation, I will have the possibility to research deeper into such a contemporary topic and to view it from a different prospective rather than that most acknowledged narrative where the West is depicted as the good savior that helps hesitating democracies to stabilize, while Russia is the foe that threatens peaceful cohesion.

I will not try to find the absolute truth, but my main goal is to present a different interpretation of the facts. Thus, through all the material exhibited above, the question I will try to answer through this paper is "*Is the Ukraine Crisis the West's fault?*".

¹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The tragedy of Great Power politics*, Norton, New York, 2001.

² John J. Mearsheimer, *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*, in "Foreign Affairs", 2014, pp.1 - 12.

³ Michael McFaul, Stephen Sestanovich, & John J. Mearsheimer, *Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?*, in *Foreign Affairs*, 2014/ 93(3), pp. 167 - 178.

⁴ Guglielmo Ferrero, *Le due rivoluzioni francesi*, by Ferrero Guglielmo, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2013.

1. Realism

1.1 An International Relations theory

In International Relations, as an academic subject (IR), Realism is the major school of thought that focuses on the competitive and conflictual side of international affairs.

Its roots can be found in ancient writings, as early as Thucydides, c. 460 – c. 400 BC, who is considered the father of "scientific history" due to his impartiality, cause-effect analysis and evidence-gathering without the acknowledgement of religion. Although we cannot argue that Thucydides was a "Realist" due to the lack of this nomenclature at his time, we can trace Realism's origins with Thucydides in his "History on the Peloponnesian War"⁵ (431- 404 BC) which regards the competition between Greek city-states, considered inevitable and with substantial inequalities (few 'great powers'—such as Athens and many 'lesser powers'—such as the tiny island statelets), which were considered natural and inevitable. Furthermore, in his view, States are unequal endemically, meaning justice is an international relation concerning relative strength, weakness, and adaptation to an unequal power, and is not about equal treatment.

After Thucydides, Machiavelli, often targeted as the father of political philosophy and political science, in the masterpiece "*The Prince*"⁶ (1532), claimed that 'Power' (portrayed as the allegory of lion) and 'Deception' (as allegory of the fox) are fundamental to properly manage foreign policy. Thus, he affirms the supreme political value is national freedom (independence) and rulers main aim is to provide it using both strength and ruthlessness in the pursuit of self-interest. If rulers fail to be astute and adroit, their State may not survive.

Additionally, Thomas Hobbes, English philosopher and founder of modern political philosophy, was also prominent in shaping Realism. In his opinion, he depicted people living in a "State of Nature" prior to the establishment of the State, which is a condition of permanent war where 'every man is against every man', leaving fear to be the only sovereign. The only way to reassure security is through the creation of a sovereign State, which means the creation of rational cooperation. Paradoxically, people are willing to find an agreement only to avoid living in fear. For Hobbes, even though people can still collaborate within the State, States are ultimately a sphere where the condition of nature still carries on, therefore, this is not always true.

⁵ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1920.

⁶ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Harmondsworth, Eng., New York, 1981

This creates the so called “Security Dilemma”: there is no escape because there is no global state or world government, so an international war is always a threat⁷.

What links these classical realists is that the human condition is embedded in insecurity and there is no escape from it. This pessimistic and unhelpful view is at the base as of all Realism and is carried on by later scholars.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, in “*Politics Among Nations*” (1948), according to Morgenthau - one of the most prominent scholars in the study of international relations - people need to be defined as political animals: their lives are centered on power games (he calls this ‘animus dominandi’, meaning ‘lust’ for power). Of course, this craving creates conflicts and causing politics to be defined as nothing other than “a struggle for power over men, and whatever its ultimate aim may be, power is its immediate goal and the modes of acquiring, maintaining, and demonstrating it determine the technique of political action”⁹.

Morgenthau, echoing Thucydides and Machiavelli claims that morality can only exist in the private and that political ethics is completely separate. For example, sometimes it may be necessary to work in favor of a ‘greater good’ and in fact he describes rulers as not merely free, but inevitably surrounded by moral dilemmas, and sometimes evil actions (e.g., defending the national interest through a war), even though they need to hold cardinal virtues, such as prudence, moderation and judgement, which are defined as “political wisdom”. So, for him, politics is basically self-centered, self-regarding, and self-interested, thus it cannot be reduced to morals. Furthermore, international relations are defined as a sober activity that requires profound knowledge of human limitations (so again, a pessimistic awareness).

Many others are the scholars that shaped Realism as a pillar theory of international relations, also creating several different schools of thought: important to cite are Waltz (1924 –2013)

and his Neorealism, Schelling (1921 – 2016) and Strategic Realism, Carr (1892 –1982) and Defensive Realism and Mearsheimer and Offensive Realism (refer to later paragraph 1.2 for more insights on this).

Thus, to summarize the assumptions of Realism: the nation-state is the main actor in international relations and it is a unitary actor which means that it speaks with one voice (no internal divisions). Third, rulers are rational actors, which act in the best interests of the State, without taking into account their private morals.

Finally, States are embedded in anarchy since there is no unified world government, every country merely relies on itself. Realists claim that their theory accurately portrays the real world politics, however, critics argue that it is a pessimistic view which merely helps to perpetuate the violence and armed conflicts are seen

⁷ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.

⁸ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Knopf, New York, 1954.

⁹ Ibidem.

as the only solution to resolve disputes (Liberalists would much better prefer the creation of international organization to facilitate cooperation between different actors in the international arena).

Moreover, in a Realist outlook, change (specially peaceful change) is almost impossible to achieve and no statesman should ever rely on this utopia, but this same account is disapproved since Realism was not able to predict major recent transformations like the end of Cold War (without an actual armed conflict) and the subsequent blossomed of international organizations aimed at creating a more pacific world (not only is it a more optimistic view of world politics, but it also allows for a more diversified display of international actors – e.g. rebels that were vital in the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989).

Of course, Realists recognize the truthfulness of these criticisms, but tend to target those events as exceptions to the normal pattern of world politics. Despite it all, Realism remains central in IR theory, with most other sequent theories concerned with critiquing it (Constructivism, Feminism, Post Colonialism, etc.).

1.2 Offensive Realism - John J. Mearsheimer

Realism is all but a theory belonging to the past. One of the most important examples of present scholars still waving Realism as the most prominent way of thought in International Relations is John J. Mearsheimer. Born in 1947, he is an American political scientist and international relations scholar and appointed the R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Chicago. He, as the vast majority of academics of his generation, was profoundly influenced by Waltz (founder of Neorealism), but eventually he founded his own school of thought: Offensive Realism.

Probably the most important of his writings is “*The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*”¹⁰ (2001) where he explains in detail his theory.

First of all, he claims that right now the vast majority of non-scholars argue that countries no longer view each other as potential rivals, but rather prefer to enter in relations of cooperation – “members of a family of nations”.

He goes on describing that international politics is sad and ruthless and thinking in this way is nothing other than being naive. In our world, there are ‘great powers’ who fear each other and enter in conflictual relations in order to maximize their share of world power, therefore becoming the hegemon.

There are three key reasons why States should act aggressively to secure their own power:

¹⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, *The tragedy of Great Power politics*, Norton, New York, 2001.

- i. *Absence of a Central Authority* - a world government. The United Nations are the closest body to this mindset, but they are still ruled by power games which do not allow it to work efficiently.
- ii. *Offensive Military Capability* - every State retains their own military forces (only a few countries nowadays decided not to have any army).
- iii. *Uncertainty about other States' intentions* - the best guarantee is to be the hegemon so that nobody will confront you.

Furthermore, Mearsheimer insists that a multipolar system, glorified by Liberalists, is more war prone and most dangerous because of the presence of multiple hegemonies than bipolar systems, where two great powers simply balance each other out (a typical example of this was the situation between USSR and USA during the Cold War).

In order to better understand the theory, it is of vital importance to define what a “*great power*” is: a State with sufficient military capability to enter in a serious fight against the most powerful State. The former does not need to actually defeat the latter, but simply it needs to weaken it drastically after the military campaign. Of course, the kind of military strength needed in order to pursue such action depends on the historical period and fighting technology (in modern times a nuclear strike would be the most efficient deterrent). This theory asserts that the international arena shapes individual behavior of States, which are seen as a unitary matter. In the words of Mearsheimer himself: “[...] *Offensive realism is like a powerful flashlight in a dark room: even though it cannot illuminate every nook and cranny, most of the time it is an excellent tool for navigating through the darkness*”¹¹.

In his Offensive Realism, Mearsheimer keeps all the basic assumptions of classical Realism, building on them to fit contemporary global relations. States' main aim is to maintain security (as the father of capitalism, the Scottish economist Adam Smith wrote in his “*The Wealth of Nations*”, defense is more important than opulence itself) and since there is no “9-1-1 to call”, as the author himself argues, they are vulnerable and alone and they enter in relationships of mutual help (like international organizations) as they were finalizing a “temporary marriage of convenience”. In fact, balance of powers is fundamental (done through economic, diplomatic and military means) and the final goal is to become the hegemon of the system (which means domination of it). Furthermore, a State can be a regional hegemon (United States in the American continent for the past hundred years) or a global hegemon. This latter is a way harder situation to achieve since it is not viable to achieve global control across the oceans and land. A regional hegemon behaves as a “offshore balancer” in its own area and it works endlessly to counter a “distant hegemon” from domination of that region. This kind of hegemon is defined by Mearsheimer as “rare species” since to be entitled to be the strongest power, you need to be the wealthier in that zone. But this creates a “Prisoner Dilemma”, at the essence of Offensive Realism, since increasing one's power necessarily means decreasing

¹¹ Ivi pg. 11

some else's and threatening other States is an action which could always backfire. The classic Security dilemma is shown in Graph 1.1 below.

As Herz, 1908 – 2005 father of the term “Security dilemma” in 1951, who first introduced this topic in 1950 in the journal ‘*World Politics*’¹², claimed that in order to survive in an anarchic system is to take advantage of other weaknesses - to defend yourself, you need to offend others.

Graph 1.1

		State 1	
		HOLD	ATTACK
State 2	HOLD	(1)Low Threat (2)Low Threat	(1)Exploited (2)Dominant
	ATTACK	(1)Dominant (2)Exploited	(1)Arms Race (2)Arms Race

Power maximizing behavior is to create high levels of fear among States; the greater the fear, the more power a State has (and vice versa). This stems from archaic systems creating a difficulty to discern the intentions of other agents. Mearsheimer defines ‘power’ as population and level of wealth, which are constructing parts of the military. This is usually referred as “potential power”, diverging from “actual power” which is the material military forces a State owns and shows to the enemy. Of course, a huge military against a few nuclear bombs has no influence on the enemy or barely any threatening power. Further, important in a system of power is the gap between the hegemon and the following most powerful State. As mentioned before, bipolarity is the status which has less levels of fear since these powers balance themselves out in order to create a situation of stability.

The reasons for States to go to war is embedded in the framework of the international system. Because of the power ratios among countries (the key ratio is inevitably the one between the two most powerful), endowments need not to be distributed equally, but rather the system has to be balanced to ensure maximization of security.

Eliminating three short-lived and dangerous situations:

¹² John H. Herz, *Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma*, in “*World Politics*”, 1950/2, pp. 157–180.

- i. *Unbalanced bipolarity* - impossible to achieve and would mean a single great dictator of the world, a dystopia;
- ii. *Unbalanced multipolarity* - several hegemon which cannot find a compromise;
- iii. *Balanced multipolarity* - multiple great powers, but none try to become hegemon, or prefer not to become so, although asymmetries still exist - very similar to the current situation within the European Union.

Balanced bipolarity seems to be the only remaining viable option since great wars, even if almost impossible since the hegemon keep the situation calm and quiet, are likely to be one-on-one and not system wide. In fact, minor powers are often pulled into fighting from great powers that used them as buffer States and consequently great powers will hardly ever enter into a fight with smaller ones. Specially if under the sphere of control of the other hegemon - the United States would have never started a conflict against Hungary or Poland during the Cold War, and this point it will be useful in the following analysis of the Ukraine Case Study in chapter 2.

Thus, he underlines that “great powers balance against capabilities, not intentions”, meaning that since others’ plans are hidden to our knowledge, States have to manage their own foreign policy based on the material strengths shown by the actors surrounding it. In fact, the potential for miscalculations in a multipolar world are infinite and States tend to overestimate not only their strengths, but also underestimates their enemies’.

Mearsheimer does not stop arguing in favor of his theory on bipolarity but also shows how multipolarity (praised by Liberals) does nothing other than create inequality and foster miscalculations, since asymmetries will be inevitable with more agents (not only States) sharing power. He uses the example of when there are two hegemon, there is a 50% chance that each State will control the same amount of power. On the other hand, if there are three great powers, then there is only a 12.5% chance that they will hold the same latent power and this percentage decreases when the number of powers increases. He goes on saying that even if we assume that all powers share equal latent power, imbalances are still endemic to the system.

Miscalculations are less likely in bipolarism since States are more aware of their limits, cannot, of course, create false egoistic alliances (since their enemy is only one) and they know in which direction they can push their opponent. Once again citing Mearsheimer himself: “Simplicity breeds certainty; certainty bolster peace”¹³.

¹³ John J. Mearsheimer, *The tragedy of Great Power politics*, Norton, New York, 2001, pg. 344.

A common argument against this way of reasoning is that now in the 21st century, we witness an extensive proliferation of multilateralism and International Organizations (IOs), but the scholar argues that great powers are not to be seen as defenses of world order for its own sake, but rather States believe that entering in these kinds of relationships with other States will allow them to have a greater and greater share of world power (noting that this is in clash with naive belief of a sustaining international stable order). Instead of seeing countries as aiming to avert wars for “world justice”, they actively try to avoid losing conflicts. Offensive realism holds that cooperation is discouraged by the consideration of relative gains (States do not care about getting a share of a pie that is increasing - absolute gains - but focus on how the pie is divided, which creates selfish cooperation) and the possibility of the other cheating since in the world, everyone is a potential enemy (once again, Prisoner’s Dilemma).

When we talk about power, we distinguish between ‘latent’ and ‘military’ power, which are closely linked, but very different because of their asset derivation.

The former appertains to the socio-economic factors needed to build the latter, so it is largely based on wealth and country’s size. In fact, at last, when we think of a great power, we always envision a State that has a massive amount of money, technology and personnel and so that has the ability to rival others militarily. This is the core of offensive realism: military strength is the “ultima ratio” of international relations.

There are several definitions of power (Dahl, well-known political for example, believed that power is the ability to make A do what B wants even if A would have not done it otherwise; making control and influence is the key element) , but Mearsheimer is bounded to an undoubtedly materialistic one: the most powerful is the winner of a conflict.

Furthermore, even though the scholar is aware that population and wealth are both key elements to measure power, he underlines that wealth alone can be used as a method to calculate “potential power” since when discussing on State’s wealth, the population size and the economic dimension is already incorporated. Therefore, he makes the assumption than States with a great wealth are also very populous. Population itself, though, cannot be an indicator of wealth: in India or China during the Cold War the population was exponentially larger than the ones of the USSR and USA, but they were still the two unrivalled hegemons. Hence, “wealth” can acquire several meanings and in economics there is no single definition. In the book, Mearsheimer often refers to it as Gross National Product (GNP), just as macroeconomics does, but he also argues that it is not always a precise indicator since it does not differentiate in which ways State use their wealth and technological sophistication (a vital asset in a war). For example, only focusing on GNP, may lead to think that the United Kingdom and Russia were economically developed equally and the two hegemons of Europe during the 1814 - 1915, but this conclusion is wrong since it is true that in that century there was the so called “Pax Britannica”, but Russia was living a period of economic, social and political

turbulence which saw it as a loser of most conflicts at the time (Crimean War, 1853 - 1859, Russo-Japanese War, 1904 - 05 and eventually World War I, 1914 - 1917).

As stated above, power in international relations is due to the military States possess. Fighting forces are not all the same:

- i. *Sea Power*: large bodies of water are a perfect defense against other State's rivalry (their offensive capability lowers). The possible attacks hurled are amphibious landings (D-Day in 1944); troop transports and naval bombardments.

The so-called "*Thalassocracies*" - commercial maritime powers, with a fluid and individualistic society and the State is minimal and weak (examples are the United Kingdom in the past with its Royal Navy or Japan during WWII). For the American naval officer and historian Mahan, who developed the Naval Theory¹⁴, maritime power is crucial to develop the hegemony of the space of the seas and oceans, hence the world. For him, it is potentially possible to do that through isthmuses and channels and a clear example is what the United States did in 1903 with the Panama Canal and thanks to it they gained control of any economic flow passing through).

- ii. *Airpower*: 'air superiority' means controlling the sky, in particular for strategic bombing (and now drones).
- iii. *Nuclear Power*: becoming more and more the dominant form of military power in competitive world, which at the same time makes international politics more stable since no country will attempt to fly into a rage with a nuclear bomb owner.
- iv. *Land Power*: dominant form of military in modern world - traditional armies. With this label, we can also designate powers that have characteristics of all the powers cited before (the United States is always a good example since they are surrounded by two oceans, have a massive air force, where the first ones to develop the nuclear bomb and the only one to have used it and they have military bases allocated in all parts of the world).

Even after all these diversifications of power, Mearsheimer argues that land power with traditional armies is the best way to exercise control since they are the main instrument for conquering and controlling. In fact, to

¹⁴ Alfred T. Mahan, *The influence of sea power upon history 1660-1783*, Little, Brown & Co, New York, 1890.

control vast amounts of water such as oceans does not mean to have control all the time, but have it strategically allowing operation only when needed and to limit others access to it as well.

The so called “*Tellucracy*” - political territorial rooted, stable and hierarchical society, strong State, but other actors are weak. An example has historically been Russia and Germany before 1848 when it was constructed the Reichsflotte which was seen by the Royal Navy as the main threat in Europe and some even give to this foundation some credits for WWI.

Regarding nuclear power, Mearsheimer asserts that as soon as a State declares the ownership of a nuclear arsenal, they have a good chance of becoming the hegemon (regional or absolute) because of the possible destruction level. The nuclear retaliatory force, witnessed during the Cold War, has been diminished with the creation of “*Mutual(ly) assured destruction*” (*MAD*). *MAD* is a military strategy tenet in which nuclear power could potentially extinguish both the attacker and the attacked (in forms of pre-emptive and second strike). Thus, the threat of your enemy using weapons counters your use as well (theory of deterrence). This blueprint can be seen as a Nash Equilibrium since no country has the incentive of dropping the first nuclear bomb, but at the same time has no intention of disarming. In particular, this appellation was coined by Donald Brennan¹⁵ in 1962 and it depicts a stable world. As McNamara argues, nuclear power has no real use, but only the threatening power which has the potential of making the system conflict-free (or at least, armed conflict-free). All these reasons become clear when analyzing the Cold War in which both the USA and the USSR were nuclear powers that enjoyed showcase it, but none of them actually ever dared to use their resources. And this still goes on nowadays, since both maintain nuclear weapons and Russia shows deep seated hostility to NATO and its expansion (this topic will be described further in chapter 2).

In chapter five of “*The tragedy of Great Power politics*” entitled “*Strategies for Survival*”, the author completes a list of strategies that States use in order to balance power (or change this balance). *War*, of course, is the main scheme to gain relative power, but it also the most controversial, especially in contemporary times and it is seen by many as a “losing proposition”¹⁶, for example, the cost of maintaining an empire is greater than the gains acquired by establishing it (economic growth is slowed at home especially) - cost argument. Another opposition is the benefits argument, claiming that modern industrial economies cannot be exploited and nationalism is very much rooted so that it is hard to maneuver the new subdued population (and new information technology help in this process, so repression is not a viable option like it used to be for centuries). But the “War Strategy” is not to be seen as not achievable anymore

¹⁵ Donald G. Brennan, *Mutual Deterrence and Strategic Arms Limitation in Soviet Policy*, in “International Security”, 3/2978, pp. 113 – 129.

¹⁶John J. Mearsheimer, *The tragedy of Great Power politics*, Norton, New York, 2001, pg. 147.

and the most prominent example is the United States that positions itself as the country that has the largest military spending since the 1940s. What they are trying to do is not to expand their territories to build an empire (like great colonial powers tried to do only to eventually witness their empire's decay), but rather they employ war to position themselves as the "world police" and gain indirect control (this is an apparent narrative in the 20th century war with Korea and 21st century with Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.).

To summarize, War is and was used mainly to balance power in favor of: i. Employment some portion of population as army or labor (Napoleon's tactic); ii. Acquisition strategically important areas (buffer zones like the Israeli annexation of the Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights and West Bank in 1967 during the Six-Day War); iii. Disappear of the loser State from world arena (Hitler had planned to remove the Soviet Union from the European map).

Secondly, another scenario would be the use of *Blackmail* ("the act of putting pressure on a person or a group to do something they do not want to do, for example by making threats" for the Oxford Dictionary). In this case, the desired outcome is achieved through coercive threats and intimidation, so, differently from war, is almost cost-free, which make is tempting. But, on the other hand, it is hard to fulfill it since great powers will adopt armed fight if blackmailed from smaller powers, so it is more probable that this tactic would work between or against minor powers (unprepared for a conflict). An example was the Panama liberation from Colombia when the USA dispatched the gunboat "Nashville" to local waters around the city of Colón and the Bogotá government decided to sign the Panamanian independence in 1903.

Thirdly, *Bait and Bleed* ("a State tries to weaken its rivals by provoking a long and costly war between them", pg. 139) is as difficult as the second. A variant easier to achieve is *Bloodletting* in which the "the adversary is involved in (wars) that are protracted and deadly"¹⁷. There are few examples of this technique like the fiasco in 1954 when the Israeli government decided to fuel conflicts between United Kingdom and Egypt in order to have the British troops withdrawn from the Suez Canal.

Then Mearsheimer extends on *Balancing* and *Buck Passing* which are considered the main schemes adopted in order to stop the enemy from shifting the balance of power. With the former, States decide to stop with any mean the aggressor, while with the latter they are able to force another great power to do it, remaining only as a spectator of the bloodshed.

States usually take different measures to make Balancing work: i. diplomacy based on confrontation and not conciliation; ii. external balancing - creation of defensive alliance to contain a common enemy, iii. internal balancing - mobilize individual resources, seen as self-help. Whereas, Buck Passing develops usually in: i.

¹⁷ Ivi pg. 139

good diplomatic relation with the aggressor like the behavior adopted by France or the Soviet Union during the 1930s in regards of Hitler; ii. creates good diplomatic relations also with the buck-catcher (since the main aim is precisely to not be dragged into the conflict); iii. entrance of great powers to make this buck passing work; iv. make the buck-catcher gain more power so that it can properly defeat the common enemy. This system embodies the theory of free riding in coalitions and has the potential of mangle it.

The scholar also disparages the strategies of *Appeasement* (“modify behavior of the aggressor by conceding it power”¹⁸, the disastrous approach adopted by Chamberlain with the hope of limiting Hitler’s ascent) and *Bandwagoning* (the hope to prevent the aggressor is lost and it remains “to join forces with the dangerous foe to get at least some small portions of the spoils of war”, pg. 139). In his opinion, in fact, these two violate the axioms of offensive realism and they should never be employed by great Powers (for example the United Kingdom won the war only after the new PM Churchill countered all the steps taken by his predecessor imposing a strong realist strategy of war).

Finally, Mearsheimer wants to counter the argument regarding offensive realism being a form of anarchism that only leads States to fight wars. In fact, as also Hobbes claimed before him, in anarchic systems there is always a hostile environment between the members. In fact, the scholar does not contrast this view and underlines that anarchy is a constant, but he claims that war is not. So, he adds another element to be considered: distribution of power. And, of course, in his opinion the best structural theory is offensive realism since it is the only that can analyze the best “crude predictors”¹⁹ of war. Still, the limits of this approach are that it cannot predict precisely when warfare will be initiated but can merely detect the elements that can foster it. And this curb derives from non-structural factors, since States do not fight merely for security reasons, but also political, economic and cultural calculations, it depends on the architecture of the international system.

Regarding Offensive Realism, several scholars have framed their consideration inferring on it and developing the concept. For instance, the international arena has been pointed as an unerring abode to analyze social change, since all the alliances, conflicts and, of course, wars, shape contemporary and future society. As striking evidence, the Fascist party would have never had any possibility without the mad and disillusioned thousands of young men who were forced to enlist for World War I. But at the same time, attention needs to be layed on the famous quote in ‘The End of History and the Last Man’²⁰ (1992). by Fukuyama “History is over” at the end of the Cold war, meaning that if history really was over after the two

¹⁸ Ibidem

¹⁹ Ivi pg. 335

²⁰ Fukuyama, F., 1992. *The End Of History And The Last Man*. New York: Free Press.

hegemons' quite war, we would live in a war-less environment. Nevertheless, reality of the world is different. Thus, humankind, maybe, does not really learn from the past and continues to perpetuate the same mistakes and political realism is pointed as the only IR doctrine that is able to give answers to many questions regarding this topic, (Orsini²¹, 2008).

Realism has “many faces” (citing directly Panebianco, 1992) and there are various layers that need to be analyzed. This IR doctrine embodies a world vision, which offers a program of action and a scientific theory and it is “highly composite and heterogeneous” (Panebianco, 1997). Important to remind is that the international politics is dominated by the “Logic of power”, which means that each State is focused merely on its success and this creates a behavior of ‘conflict for power’. The international arena is the permanent location for forever-going conflicts of various degrees of gravity. As a consequence, it is a zero-sum game in which every country needs resources to survive and prosper, so to impose its decisions. Distribution of power is of key importance: there are those who lose (little powers) and those who win (great powers), (Kissinger 2004). In fact, some States define themselves on the basis of the clash with others (the two hegemons during the Cold War could not have had the same political ideology, but needed to be on the opposites of the ideology scale).

Often times, the international system is compared to an “iron cage” where States are the prisoners. In fact, as I also recounted above, Offensive Realism is rooted on the notion of ‘anarchy’ in the international system: since there is no higher authority, no world government and no State can be sure of other States’ true intentions. Consequently, States’ nature is not aggressive, but it is rather the system that makes them behave aggressively towards the other actors. As the latin maxim, that then Hobbes conjures it as well, recalls “Homo homini lupus” (translation: “A man is a wolf of another man”), meaning that States behave selfishly with the main aim to survive. This vicious cycle is shown in Graph 1.2 where fear is at the center and all around it are the consequences it leads to.

Furthermore, another metaphor used to better understand this is by Thomas C. Schelling in which States are compared to the landlord who wakes up in the middle of the night and faces a thief who entered the house. If both are armed, there is a risk of a shooting - an undesired effect that does not depend on the willingness of any of the two actors, but rather it is a consequence of their interactions and of the intentions that each attribute to the other (Shelling, 1960).

²¹ Alessandro Orsini, “Mutamento Sociale e relazioni internazionali. Il realismo politico e il problema della guerra.” in AA. VV. *Aspetti Del Mutamento Sociale Contemporaneo* edited by Alfredo Agustoni, Aracne, Roma, 2008, pp. 113 – 129.

Graph 1.2



So, in a realist perception, the greater good is not peace - such as the one for Liberals - but it is security and a conflict with the potential of contributing to national security is a war, worth fighting. The problem of violence, in modern times, is a false problem since every State condemns others' use of power and never their own. A blatant example is the former US president Barack Obama who repeatedly spoke against the unjust use of strengths in particular in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries and he showed himself as a champion of justice, even gaining a Peace Nobel Prize in 2009²². But even the Nobel committee secretary Geir Lundestad has written in his memoir, that conferring the award to him was “a mistake” and this is because the president, even if championing for a nuclear-free world, was a staunch interventionist, even more than his predecessor Bush who is pointed to have initiated several conflicts like the one with Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, he was responsible for the involvement of US troops on the Libyan territory and the consequent killing of its leader Gaddafi, the endless fight with the most dangerous ever witnesses terroristic organization, the Islamic State, the help given to the authoritarian oil monarchies to resolve the rebellions of the Arab Spring in order to protect the oil incomings in the USA, the Libyan, Syrian and Iraqi refugee crisis his military actions fostered, etc. Thus, as the geopolitical analyzer and strategist, Brahma Chellaney writes on the Japan Times, “Obama’s legacy will clearly be defined as more war than peace. Obama embraced drone attacks with such alacrity — authorizing 506 known strikes, compared with the 50 strikes under Bush — that he was dubbed ‘the drone president’. By dramatically boosting U.S. weapon

²² Christi Parsons, C. and W. P. Hennigan, “President Obama, Who Hoped to Sow Peace, Instead Led The Nation In War”, *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 13, 2017.

exports, Obama also distinguished himself as the greatest arms exporter since World War II.”²³. In the second chapter of this dissertation, we will also look at how the Obama administration handled the civil war in Ukraine and the tensions with the other world hegemon, Russia.

As also argued in the above paragraphs, Realists are aware that the maintenance of the international order favors the interests of some States (great powers) and damages other’s interests, in such wise, international organizations are doomed to have utopic plans and they do not work efficiently and ethically as thought by Liberals. This is clearly visible in the United Nations Security Council²⁴, where sit ten rotating members and five permanent members who also hold the *veto power* (“the right to refuse to allow something to be done, especially the right to stop a law from being passed or a decision from being taken”, Oxford Dictionary). Of course, these five members were the winners of the greatest conflict of contemporary history, WWII and since then Russia, United States, France, United Kingdom and China have had a greater saying in the international arena on matters security, which, as we said, is considered the “greater good” of international relations and politics.

But, being a Realist and being a ruler who adopts a Realist view (since from Machiavelli on many scholars claimed it is the only viable conduct), does not mean to always root in favor of war in spite of everything. In fact, Alessandro Orsini reports the words of Hitler in the July of 1940 in which it offered to sign a peace treaty with the United Kingdom because it knows that at the time a war with the great naval power would have been deleterious and a year later the dictator even describes himself as a “peace lover” convinced that a war against the Russian and English imperialism is necessary to preserve everyone’s freedoms. Looking at the situation from a contemporary ex post view, of course we realize how Hitler’s words were wicked, false and heinous, but this is the representation on how “peace” is a volatile term that can be given the meaning most appropriate for the situation.

²³ Brahma Chellaney, "Obama: More war than peace", *The Japan Times*, Jan. 18, 2017.

²⁴ Un.org. *Functions And Powers. United Nations Security Council*. 2020.

2. Ukrainian Crisis - Case Study

2.1 Historical summary

Ukraine (Map 2.1) is the second largest country in the European continent and its population is of around 42 million people. Its capital and largest city is Kiev and Ukrainian is the official language. Historically, its territory has been split between Poland and the Russian Empire and after World War I, it was established the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, becoming part of the Soviet Union.

Map 2.1



source: The AEGEEan

After its own independence declared after the Ukrainian - Soviet war (1917 - 1921), the Ukrainian People's Republic was established. But, after that the Ukrainian Bolshevics, part of the Red Army, overthrew the newly formed government in Kiev, they established the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic which in 1922 became part of the founding republics of the Soviet Union. Even though part of the USSR, the country kept their official language and cultural heritage, but that lasted until the 1930 when russification happened since the rule from Moscow became more stringent and in the '30s, millions of people starved due to famine

(Holodomor - Terror Famine). After the invasion from the Soviet Union of Poland in 1939, Ukraine expanded west, but it was then occupied from 1941 to 1944 by the Axis.

When World War II ended, Ukraine became one of the founding States of the United Nations and in 1954, Ukraine expanded to the south and Crimea became officially part of the republic.

Ukraine found independence once again after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and it started a period of rough economic times (considered an eight-year recession), but it was immediately followed by a period of GDP growth.

So, in the early 2000s, Ukraine was going through a period of economic amelioration, but at the same time of great corruption and criminality and for Adrian Karatnycky²⁵, a senior fellow with the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center, it was the spark for the Orange Revolution in the country that started in 2004. As a matter of fact, evidence shows the existence of two 'Ukraines' – one Western-leaning and another of Russian heritage. This latter has tried several times to ignite the existential crisis- economic, political, territorial and diplomatic - that have afflicted the country continuously, in particular in relation with Russia itself, (Popescu²⁶, 2014). Thus, many are the reasons why Ukraine fell into massive corruption such as the barter system used for cross-border financial transactions, wide-ranging privatization and weak tax inspectorate. In fact, the former Soviet Republic was, at the time, a country where the oligarchies detained all the power in the State and that is why presidential candidates who were not part of those elites faced several impediments (like planes denied landing privileges before landing on the day of political public speeches, negative press, etc.) and the later-to-become president, Yushchenko, was even poisoned which forced him to stop his campaign for a month. Not only the politicians were harassed, but also the voters were threatened (university students were forced not to participate to rallies or they would have been evicted from their accommodations). Thus, the main adversary of the oligarchies' candidate Yanukovich, Yushchenko, had a high profile in the country already: he used to be the chairman of the National Bank in the 1990s and he was the one responsible for the betterment of the GDP through the increase in fiscal controls and tax and privatization receipts. He then found himself elected as Prime Minister in 2000 and in that same year Ukraine registered an annual growth rate of + 9.2%. Of course, his policies had the main aim of reducing the oligarchies' power and as a retaliation they managed to depose him pulling strings with the then-president Kuchma (even though polls showed that around 52% of the public opposed the decision).

Even though Yushchenko was no longer PM, his administration approach brought the GDP to nearly double from 1999 to 2004 and created a significant middle class in the capital Kiev and in other important urban

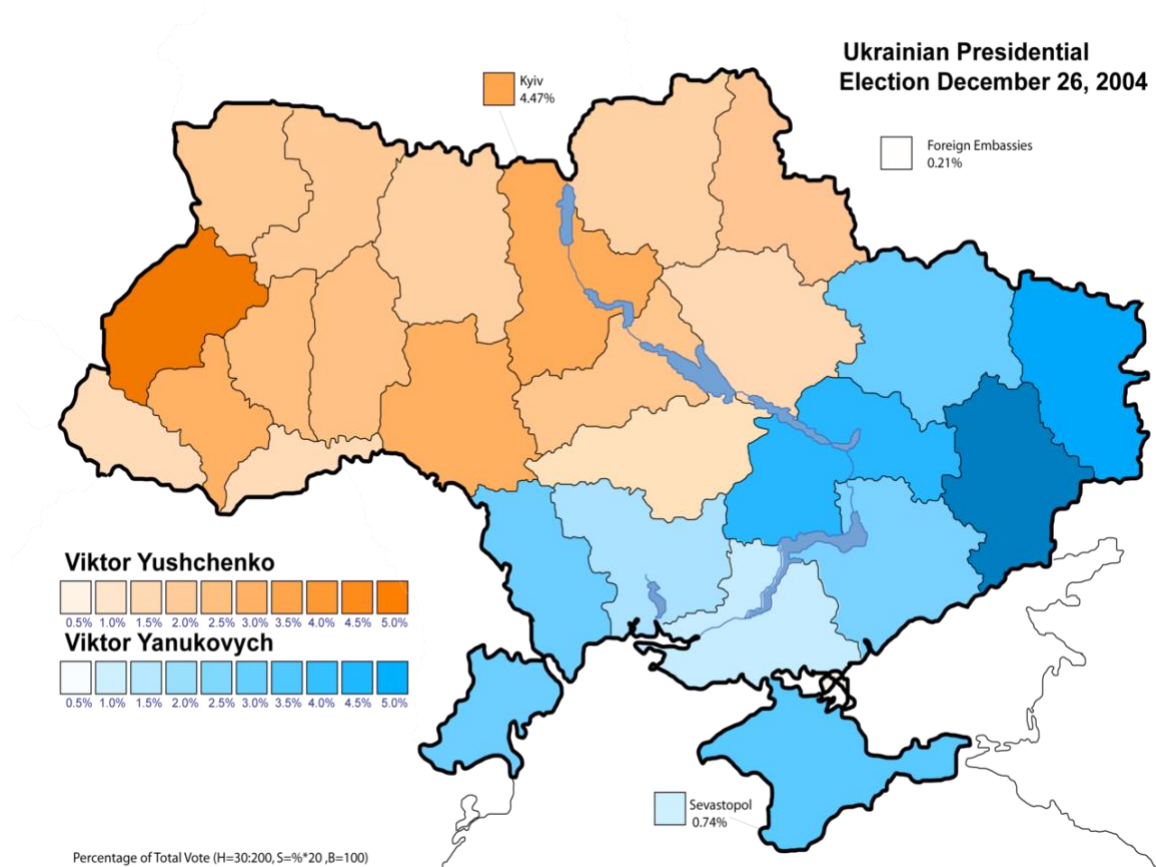
²⁵ Adrian Karatnycky, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, in *Foreign Affairs*, 2005/2, pg. 35 – 52.

²⁶ Nicu Popescu, *Ukraine: four crises, one country*, in European Union Institute for Security Study (EUISS) Brief, 2014.

centers. Because of all these positive contributions to the economy and the affection the Ukrainians felt for Yushchenko, he, on November 22, 2004, after being banned from national television, organized grassroots rallies across thousands of cities that soon became known as the Orange Revolution. During the following six days, the beloved leader proclaimed himself president and called for nationwide strikes appealing to the military to protect the people first. Eventually the Ukrainian Supreme Court annulled the former elections and called for fresh ones and changing the system: Ukraine became a parliamentary-presidential republic.

As visible from Map 2.2, the Ukraine territory was still divided and the heritage from the former colonizer was still strong, in particular in the southern-eastern part of the country. This was visible also from polls results that showed how Yushchenko (seen as a “Western candidate”) was backed mostly by the northern population. It is no surprise that ten years later, Crimea, region in the south, would be invaded by Russia with the general consensus of Ukrainians living there - as we will see later in this chapter.

Map 2.2: Ukrainian Presidential Elections 2004

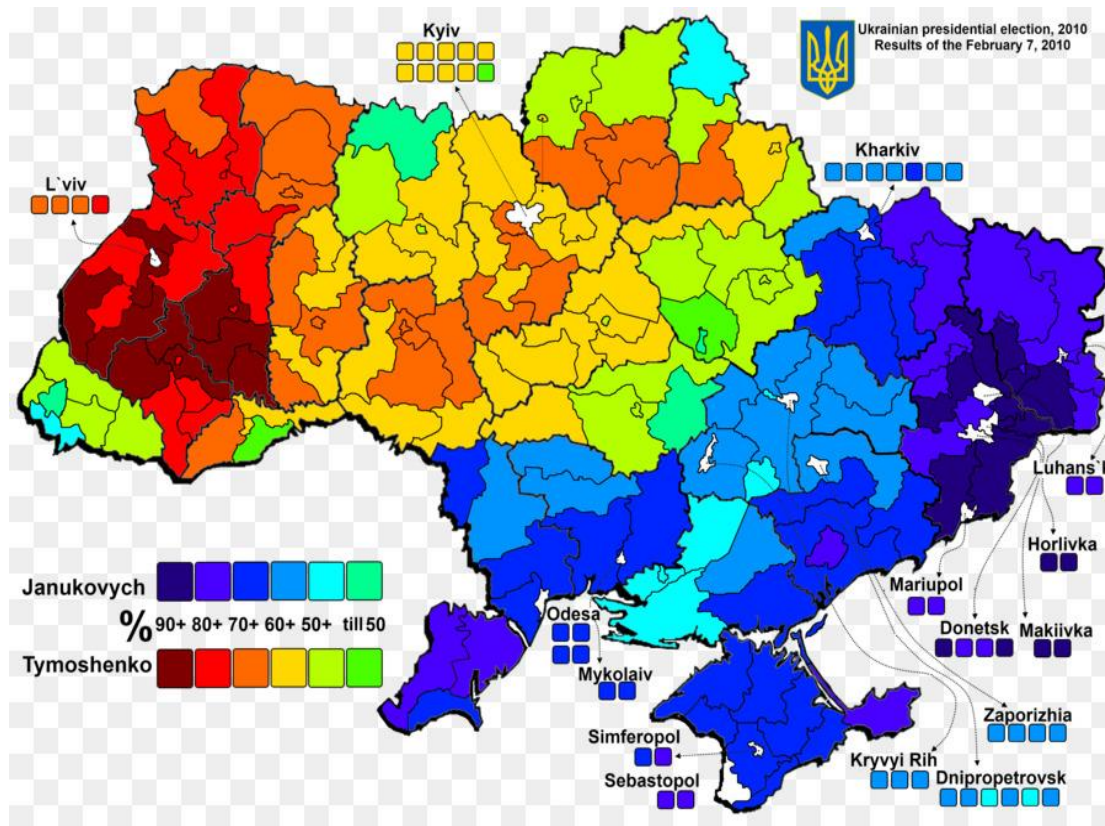


source: Wikimedia Commons

Through all this, of course the relationships with the European Union started to be created since many countries surrounding Ukraine (such as Romania, Moldova, Poland, etc.) were entering the Union and so the State was becoming more and more isolated which strengthened the bounds with the former colonizer

Russia. The EU and the United States (working on the NATO side) could not permit it and started a series of negotiations for a deeper integration. Of course, it is important to underline that Russia was in favor and helped the succumbing Yanukovych, investing in his figure in sequent elections allowing him to run and win for the presidency in 2010 and continuing to rule till 2014, when he was exiled to Russia itself. Again, from Map 2.3, it is recognizable as he was mostly backed by citizens in the southern and rural part of the country (blue zone).

Map 2.3: Ukraine Election 2010



source: Wikimedia Commons

Regarding the topics of territorial integrity and limitation of use of force between Russia and Ukraine were contained in several multilateral agreements, first of all the *Article 2 (4) UN Charter*²⁷, and the *Helsinki Final Act*²⁸ of 1975. Furthermore, the *Budapest memorandum* of 1994 provided to Ukraine security assurances for signing, as a non-nuclear state, the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*. In

²⁷ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), 1 UNTS XVI, “*Charter of the United Nations*”, Oct. 24, 1945.

²⁸ Max Gotesman, Mark Kac, & Mark Mellman, *Helsinki Final Act*, Science, 1980, p. 137.

fact, the already signatory countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia itself affirmed:

“[...] their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine and that none of their weapons will ever be used against Ukraine except in self-defense or otherwise in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations” (Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances²⁹, 1994)

From this, of course, the following year, 1995, the realist Mearsheimer concluded on the paper published by MIT press and titled *“The False Promise of International Institutions³⁰”* that Ukraine without any nuclear defense was likely to be exposed to possible encroachments, particularly from Russia, but, at the time, this view was not taken into consideration by the international community.

In addition, two years in 1997 later Ukraine and Russia again organized a meeting in order to reiterate the inviolability of the borders, establishing that the two:

“ [...] shall build their mutual relations on the basis of the principles of mutual respect for their sovereign equality, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, peaceful resolution of disputes, non-use of force or the threat of force, including economic and other means of pressure, the right of peoples to freely determine their fate, non-interference in internal affairs, observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, cooperation among states, the conscientious performance of international obligations undertaken, and other generally recognized norms of international law.” (Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership³¹)

So, since the that year with the “Big Treaty” and later the “Black Sea Fleet Partition Treaty” - the two agreed to divide the Black Sea fleet (Russia getting 80 % and Ukraine the remaining 20 % of the vessels and Ukraine leasing the Crimean naval facilities to Russia for twenty years), Ukraine and Russia started the signing of several treaty to bolster their “friendship” in particular over the matter of Crimea which, as we saw above, it was a controversial matter since the XX century. The international community, even though always aware of the tension, believed in the legality and the mutual respect of each other's national law: Chapter X of the Ukrainian constitution officially declares the autonomous status of Crimea and in Article 134 it is claimed that the peninsula is an *“inseparable constituent part of Ukraine”*.

²⁹ Un.org. General Assembly & Security Council. 2020.

³⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, *The False Promise of International Institutions*, in “International Security”, 1994/ 19(3), pp. 5-49.

³¹ Ukraine and Russian Federation, I-52240, *Treaty on friendship, cooperation and partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation*, May 31, 1997.

Nevertheless, the 21st of November 2013 it was the start of the Ukrainian crisis, estimated as the gloomiest crisis on the European continent since the Cold War, when the president discontinued the negotiations for an association agreement with the European Union. Thus, this political move originated ‘Euromaidan’- protests in favor of the Union against that part of the population mostly from the eastern and southern Ukraine, as we saw with Maps 2.1 and 2.2, that instead had more Russian culture, (De Maio³², 2016). The consequences were staggering and Yanukovich was overthrown and had to flee to Russia and a new pro-Western interim government was formed.

As expected, Russia stroke back: on the 27th of February 2014, the Ukrainian autonomous region of Crimea was invaded and annexed to the country (Map 2.4 shows the geographical strategic position of the region and its proximity with Russia). On that day, the Ukrainian military was forced to surrender and flee the peninsula. Still to this day, Putin affirms that the military forces were already on the peninsula and did not belonged directly to the official army, but it rather was a Crimean “self - defense unit”, (Marxsen³³, 2014). This appropriation was predominantly criticized in the West as a ‘gross violation of international law’ and separatism for the first time started to be a problem in Ukraine. As noticeable in the Map 2.5 below, in Ukraine a vast part of the population still retains ethno-linguistic Russian heritage, so it is of no surprise that Russia decided to annex and invade Crimea.

³² Giovanna De Maio, *Russia's View of Ukraine after the Crisis*, in IAI Working Papers: Istituto Affari Internazionali. 2016/ 16/04 , pp. 2-17.

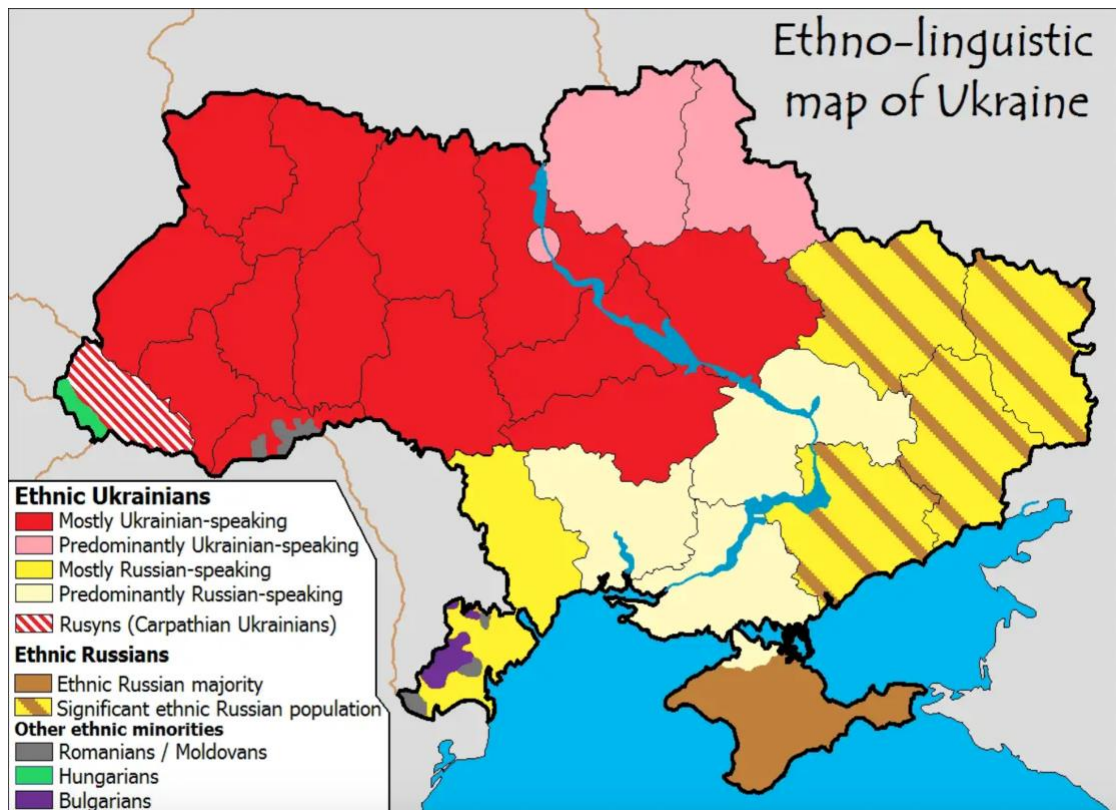
³³ Christian Marxsen, *The Crimea Crisis. An International Law Perspective.*, Kyiv-Mohyla Law and Politics Journal, 2014/2, pp. 13-36.

Map 2.4



source: iStock/Thinkstock

Map 2.5



source: Wikimedia Commons

The government sent security services to resist the attacks, but every move was weighed carefully since the leaders fretted stronger and heavier Russian military response. As expected, the ‘West’ (which from now on I will consider as the United States and the European Union) started issuing economic sanctions against Russian industries and individuals and Russia was officially suspended from the G8. Moreover, Russia has various interests in Crimea, since it serves it as a basis for its Black Sea Fleet. Nonetheless, even though Russia needs somehow Ukraine, the relationship mainly goes the opposite direction: Ukraine relies on gas and oil supplies from Russia which prefigures itself as its main trading partner. This same role has allowed Putin to counter the EU-Ukraine association agreement, scheduled to be signed in November 2013.

Furthermore, the Supreme Council of Crimea (founded in 1991 and disbanded three days before the annexation, 15th March) had organized a referendum regarding the independence of the region from Ukraine which was then held the 16th of March with the question focused on whether ‘Crimea should accede to Russia or restore the 1992 constitution within Ukraine’ (invalidated when the region had been attached to Ukraine). The referendum did not ask a polar question with simple answer “yes” or “no”, which is for the Code of Good Practice on Referendums drafted by the Venice Commission and the Council for Democratic Elections in 2006³⁴. Indeed, the voters were faced with two descensible options:

“1. Are you favorable to the reunification of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to Russia as a constituent part of the Russian Federation?”

or

“2. Are you favorable of restoring the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea of 1992 and of Crimea’s status as part of Ukraine?” , (Marxsen³⁵, 2014).

So, there was no option for the restoration of the status quo - Crimea as an autonomous region of Ukraine. Even though the vote was accounted as unlawful, 95.5% of voters in Crimea (turnout was 83%) were in favor of becoming a region of Russia parting from Ukraine. Indeed, the results were mistrusted since shared by pro-Russian authorities, and it was even claimed that people did not needed to be citizens of Crimea, but merely holding a Russian passport in order to vote. In order to quiet the arguments, it was asked to the OSCE – the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe – to examine the validity of the

³⁴ Venice Commission & Council for Democratic Elections., *Code of Good Practice on Referendums*, 2006.

³⁵ Christian Marxsen, *The Crimea Crisis. An International Law Perspective.*, Kyiv-Mohyla Law and Politics Journal, 2014/2, pp. 13-36.

referendum (on the basis of international law self-determination principle), but the forum refused to send observers. As a response, Russia itself created a committee of observers from European political parties - mainly far right - who deemed the referendum legal and valid.

Since the 1990s, at end of the Cold War, the international system has changed and evolved so that a transition from bipolarity (with all the rules and benefits stated in paragraph 1.2) to multipolarity with continuous swings in rule formulation - and all the drawbacks already covered above. In fact, these kinds of Russian policies allow analyst to hypothesize Does Russia's policy represent the start of a new era in international relations? Some analysts speak of Chapter Two of the Cold War since a key component of that conflict was the ideological clash between the hegemons. This ended only with the collapse of one of the two (USSR), but, in practice, Putin, with his continuous direct and indirect attacks to the West, is trying to restore the conflict through conservative revolution like encouragement of Christianity, family exaltation, state control of the economy, modernization of weapons and military compartments, Soviet expanse through a strong Eurasian bloc and the aversion to the values that the West itself embodies, (Stein, 2014). But, as also Mearsheimer reminds us, today's Russia is not the strong economic and military power as the USSR and Putin is not ready to sacrifice all the country's resources on a conflict with the West (and the United States in particular). In fact, Russia prefigures as a Third World country with nuclear weapons that is self-sustainable due to the oil and gas revenues - which are ephemeral.

As a consequence, the United Nations General Assembly voted against the action and affirmed, in Resolution 68/262 entitled "*Territorial integrity of Ukraine*³⁶" and adopted on March 27, that "the referendum having no validity, cannot form the basis for any alteration of the status of [Crimea]" and it was decided that no State in the Assembly should have recognized the annexation except for the Russian leader Putin who declared 'as a sovereign and independent state' and the Republic and Sevastopol as federal subjects of his country. Meanwhile in Crimea, a de facto State Council declared the Russian ruble the official currency and Moscow time (UTC +4) the official time zone.

Russia supported the legality of the annexation waving two concepts of international law: i. the protection of nationals abroad and ii. the intervention upon invitation. Putin's chairwoman Matviyenko justified the action in order to safeguard against "a real threat to the life and security of Russian citizens living in Ukraine. There is a threat to our military in Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet, and I think that Russia should not be a bystander". A further justification for the rescue of nationals abroad stands on the customary norm, allowed by international law, about the exemption from the prohibition of the use of force based on the positive

³⁶ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), A/68/262 ,"*Territorial integrity of Ukraine*", Mar. 27, 2014.

opinio juris of the intervening of third States. In order to act accordingly as a mean of ultima ratio, there must be first, there evidence that nationals are endangered and the other state must be unwilling or unable to offer safeguards. In this case Russia was never able to show concrete evidence of Russian citizens mistreated in Ukraine. Another point against Russian thesis is that the Crimean people were not officially of Russian citizenship, but rather only of ethnicity.

Another argument put forward by the Russian diplomats regards the concept of *intervention upon invitation*³⁷. In fact, it has been claimed that, before fleeing the country and finding refuge in Russia, Yanukovych sent a letter inviting Russian authorities to take action in order to countermeasure against the nationalist and anti-Semite Maidan protesters (how Russia has defined them). In an interview with AP News³⁸ in April 2014, the former Ukrainian leader validated this thesis and confirmed of having written the letter, but showed himself regretful of the decision justifying his action saying that he “acted on [his] emotions” and that what happened in Crimea since has been a “major tragedy”. So, since the abrupt removal from office is not conformed with the Ukrainian constitutional provisions which instead claim in articles 108 and 111 that the presidential impeachment procedure needs to have initiation by the majority of the constitutional membership of parliament and then the same has to check the result of an established ad hoc investigating commission; as a final step, two thirds of the majority of the constitutional members vote and the decision of removal needs to be confirmed by the Ukrainian Constitutional Court. All of this never happened with Yanukovych who autonomously exiled and consequently the Parliament voted (not reaching the quorum). Even though officially the president had not been removed constitutionally, the international community counterclaimed that through the “classical vision” that only the government forces can ask Third Countries to intervene and at that point Yanukovych belonged to the opposition. The reasonings behind the refusal were posed by the International Law Commission in its commentary on the articles on state responsibility establishing that a State’s consent for Third Country intervention:

“1. has to be valid in international law, i.e. the consent may not be based on error, fraud, corruption, or coercion;

2. needs to be clearly established and really expressed, which excludes a merely presumed consent;

3. must be given prior to the otherwise wrongful act (i.e. the intervention);

4. must be attributable to the state;

³⁷ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), A/49/765, “*General And Complete Disarmament Maintenance Of International Security*”, Dec. 19, 1994.

³⁸ Caro Kriel, “Yanukovych Admits Mistakes On Crimea”, *AP News*, Apr. 2, 2014.

5. and is void if it relates to acts whose commission would violate an obligation of states under a peremptory norm of international law, such as the consent for another state to newly establish a protectorate over its territory”

(Commentary on Article 29 of the Draft articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, with commentaries³⁹.)

Nevertheless, Russia appealed to criterion 4 underlining that Yanukovich’s consent was attributable to Ukraine since he *de lege lata* was officially the president, but *de facto* since the country was not under his democratic control, he had the right to invite foreigner troops to re-establish freedom. Eventually, the international actors decided uniformly that Yanukovich was no longer authorized by international law to ask for intervention since he lost effective control moving to another country due to the prior loss of internal support. Further, another reason against Russian reasoning is that they never tried in any way to re-establish the status quo, but pursued its national interests.

In July 2015, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev declared Crimea as fully integrated into Russia. As also mentioned above, sanctions (not only economic, but also suspension of talks relating to military, space, investment, and visa requirements) were imposed from all the Western countries, but also Japan instituted milder sanctions. As a consequence, in order to avoid asset freeze, Russian companies started to withdraw their enormous capitals from of Western banks.

As of 2020, the Crimean crisis has not yet found an end. Russia and Ukraine have not found a final agreement on the situation of Crimea, whose status is still discussed. In fact, the United Nations still recognize it as part of Ukraine, but the region is still strongly governed by Moscow and since 2018 it is connected to Russia from the Kerch Strait Bridge.

2.2 Mearsheimer “Why is Ukraine the West’s Fault”

In June 2015, a little bit over a year after the Crimean annexation, during the Alumni Weekend at the University of Chicago, John Mearsheimer held the lecture “*The Causes And Consequences Of The Ukraine Crisis*”⁴⁰, following the publication in September 2014 with the title “*Why is Ukraine the West’s Fault: The*

³⁹ United Nations International Law Commission (LEGAL) & General Assembly (UNGA), A/56/10, “*Draft articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts*”, with commentaries, 2001.

⁴⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Causes and Consequences of The Ukraine Crisis*, lecture at University of Chicago, 2015.

Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin"⁴¹ on the academic journal 'Foreign Affairs'. His analysis was mainly centered on the behavior of the West regarding the Ukrainian crisis, first doing an historical recount and then showcasing his offensive realist view on the matter. Indeed, he dismisses all the prevailing wisdom according to which the Ukrainian crisis is all due to the Russian aggression and it is the only to blame.

In his opinion, the core US strategic interests during the 1990s and 2000s, outside the Western hemisphere, were mainly the European Union, Northern Asia and the Persian Gulf. The great powers in European Unions are more important than any others. Although, after the 2000s, Asia became the first concern, followed by the Persian Gulf and finally the European Union. Nevertheless, after 2014 the European continent started again to be an important asset to control.

For Mearsheimer, the real main causes of the crisis were divided in:

- *Deep Causes*: the West shares responsibility, not Russia itself as pointed by the international theater. Since the Cold War, the USA tried to incorporate Ukraine and make it a western country, but close to the Soviet orbit. In particular, the Western hegemon did it through what the scholar calls 'triple package of policies':

- a. *Promoting* NATO expansion towards the East (in particular in form of military institution) in 1999 in a first tranche, pushed by the Clinton administration, which brought in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, Then 2004 in a second tranche gave membership to Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia and eventually in 2008 with the Bucharest Summit⁴² where in the final declaration it was stated that

"23. NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations. We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections [...]", (NATO, 2008).

Of course, this was a direct threat to Russia and Putin, invited at the Summit, underlined that his government opposed the entrance of both Ukraine and Georgia. In

⁴¹ John J. Mearsheimer, *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*, in "Foreign Affairs", 2014, pp.1 - 12.

⁴² North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), *Bucharest Summit Declaration, Apr. 4, 2008*,

Mearsheimer's paper it was also reported that a Russian newspaper promulgated the words of Putin during a conversation with US president Bush: "very transparently hinted that if Ukraine was accepted into NATO, it would cease to exist." (Mearsheimer, 2014). As a matter of fact, Russia indeed invaded Georgia later that same year because its president Saakashvili was deeply committed to the NATO membership, which merely shows that the Ukrainian annexation was the final straw of a plan openly declared.

- b. *Fostering the EU expansion as an economic institution in order peel countries such as Ukraine away from Russia.* In fact, before Yanukovich was coerced to flee the country, the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov claimed publicly that the EU was constructing a "sphere of influence" in eastern Europe.
 - c. *Encouraging the Orange Revolution, in fact it is not a new narrative the one seeing the US as deposing authoritarian regimes and insert democratic ones.* In fact, since 1991 the US invested more than \$5 billion in Ukraine to accomplish "the future it deserves", as claimed by the American assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs Nuland, (Mearsheimer, 2014). On this point, Mearsheimer underlines that this typical behavior of the USA not because they are extremely appreciative of democracy, but because they believe that anyone who will get elected after the end of the despotic rule will be in favor of West.
- *Precipitating Causes:* the 22nd of February 2014 Russia decides to hit Ukraine with a coup, as we saw in paragraph 2.1, and Mearsheimer sees as the main dates to analyze:
- a. November 2013: Russia proposes a phenomenal economic trade agreement to Per to detach Ukraine from the EU that decided not to rival this deal because of the well-known high rates of corruption in the country.
 - b. December 2013 – Large demonstration started to march in square Maidan in Kiev and protesters seized the City Hall. Putin, as a response, announces a \$15 billion loan to the neighbor country.
 - c. January 2014 – first two deaths in protest in Kiev.
 - d. 18 – 20 February 2014 – First street clashes with the Ukrainian military.
 - e. 21 February 2014 – Deal worked out between the various Ukrainian political parties for the institution of elections in the following May.
 - f. 22 February 2014 – Yanukovich fled the country and exiled to Russia.

After the coup, the key events have been:

- g. 23 February 2014 – Ukrainian Parliament voted to repeal minority language laws.
- h. 27 February 2014 – Russia begin seizing checkpoints in Crimea.
- i. 6 March 2014 – Crimean Parliament votes to join Russia.
- j. 16 March 2014 – Crimean referendum is held.
- k. 18 March 2014 - Incorporation of the region into Russia.

The offensive Realism scholar underlined in particular the Russian reaction because Putin did not try to conquer Ukraine, but attempted to continue to have the Republic as a buffer state – defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as a “a usually neutral state lying between two larger potentially rival powers” - and keep it away from US’ influence.

Furthermore, Mearsheimer recalled that the 19th century (in)famous Monroe Doctrine - the proposition of not interference in the internal affairs of European powers, colonies and dependencies and they put upon themselves the role of safeguarding the Western Hemisphere from any oppressing hostile action from the outside - still holds for US. He, in fact, compared what happened in Ukraine with the Cuban Missile crisis of 1962 - the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War which almost became a nuclear conflict, but thanks to diplomacy work a war was avoided.

After the analysis of these behaviors, the professor claims that no international actor should have been surprised in the actions of Russia (especially because of what claimed during the Bucharest Summit in 2008), but still president Obama and the Western Elites were confused and dismayed. Indeed, most realist were against the NATO expansion since the beginning since they were sure that a declining power with an aging population and a one-dimensional economy such as Russia did not need to be restrained and counterbalanced and it was foreseeable that the State would have reacted adversely (as also underlined by the US diplomat Kennan in 1998), (Mearsheimer⁴³, 2014).

Furthermore, in the lecture Mearsheimer emphasized that much of the reactions from the international press embodying conventional wisdom was based on the view of Putin as the main cause (the irrational president bent on creating a “greater Russia”, who resembled Hitler as a dictator). Withal, the Russian experience in Chechnya since 1999 scarred the country as an everlasting reminder that military occupation does not end well when the population does not identify itself with the occupant (only a small minority of Ukrainians belongs to Russian heritage).

In reality, the scholar defines Russia as a ‘declining great power’ and Ukraine is not the key of the reconstruction plan. Putin with the annexation as acted rather strategic as a retaliatory move after the

⁴³ John J. Mearsheimer, *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*, in “Foreign Affairs”, 2014, pp.1 – 12.

expansionary actions of the USA. In fact, while the United States are seen as the “good” hegemon seeking to promote EU stability, but rather it felt threatened, so the press for cooperation had the real intent of saving itself. Mearsheimer describes it as plain balance politics.

In the first decade of the 2000s Liberals dominated the discourse about European Security and this is clearly visible with all the open-door policies of growth regarding NATO and in a speech of March 2014, US President Obama talked of the “the ideals” that motivate Western policy regarding Ukraine how those ideals “have often been threatened by an older, more traditional view of power” referring to realism , (Mearsheimer,⁴⁴ 2014).

As a matter of fact, the West started considering Putin as a hazardous adversary only after the 2014 events and before there were no signs of such plan of expansion, which shows once again that seen Russia as a colonialist, that was testing the waters with Crimea to conquer all Ukraine, is a weak narrative.

As a consequence of the fact that the international community blamed Russia, it started playing a losing hand and doubling down.

This created an invisible conflict between two ways of thinking: the liberal West and the realist Russia.

The US typical plan in international matters is often to inflict ample pain economically so that they will “hold their hands up” (citing directly from the lecture), but Mearsheimer rather claims that when the adversarial position of power is at stake, the ‘defending’ State will be able to bear a lot of negative consequences before amending – and Russia was an example: it did not backing up even after all the economic sanctions imposed by the Western countries.

Rather, the realist says that this approach could backfire since Russia owns thousands of nuclear weapons and if it ever feels under the pressure of an extreme situation, it will use them in spite of everything. So, the US are willing to risk a nuclear war over “a piece of real estate” - Ukraine - which is not a vital strategic interest for them, but it rather is for Russia, as it stated clearly several times before the formal annexation. In a realist view, it also does not dovetail to include Ukraine into NATO from a strategic point. In fact, it is important to remember the imposing article 5 of ‘NATO’s founding treaty’⁴⁵ of 1949 which states that

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

⁴⁴ Ibidem

⁴⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), *North Atlantic Treaty*, Apr. 4, 1949.

North Atlantic area. [...] Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.", (NATO, 1949).

What this article embodies is the idea of mutual help in case of ‘unjust’ conflict, but many international relations scholars, first of all Mearsheimer, allege that it was inserted merely to justify the frequent American use of military in situations that do not directly concern them. In fact, it is written along the lines of the Monroe Doctrine and it legalizes the “world police” role that the US autonomously took upon themselves. Thereupon, if Ukraine entered officially NATO, then all the other twenty-nine members would have to enter in clash with any country threatening its security and, in this case, the nuclear power Russia. So, the question that Mearsheimer poses to its audience with a harsh irony is if we, the West, really care and want to protect Ukraine.

Hence, Western elites are described by the realist as “blindsided by events” and belonging to a “flawed view of international politics”, (Mearsheimer⁴⁶, 2014). For the scholar this even is the perfect example of *realpolitik*, which is often ignored by 21st century leaders who deem the logic of realism no relevance.

At last, the scholar tried to give a solution and an ideal strategy on how the West should have behaved in order to resolve the tension between States, since its past actions have been credited as “misbegotten policies”, (Mearsheimer⁴⁷, 2014). The core aim would be to create a neutral Ukraine which would act as a buffer state between NATO and Russia (which was Putin’s plan since the beginning since Ukraine does not need to be ‘pro-Russian’ and ‘anti-NATO’ endemically, but rather neuter). Map 2.6 shows the ideal buffer zone imagined by Putin in order to create a separation between his State and the rest of the West.

Chiefly, some of the specific measures that needed to be undertaken from the West should have been:

- i. Explicitly abandon the NATO expansion towards Russian buffer states (such as Georgia and Ukraine);
- ii. Fashion an *Economic Rescue Plan* together with Russia, Ukraine, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union (EU);
- iii. Guarantee minority (specially language) rights in Ukraine and Crimea.

⁴⁶ John J. Mearsheimer, *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*, in “Foreign Affairs”, 2014, pp.1 - 12

⁴⁷ Ibidem

Map 2.6



source: Quora

As the founder of Offensive Realism, Mearsheimer reckons that the European Union cannot be ruled on the basis of liberal principles as the rule of law, economic interdependence, and democracy as wished: this view is simply naive. The West needs to withdraw their plan of ‘westernization’ of the Eastern Europe and rethink the geopolitical area in a completely new way, (Mearsheimer⁴⁸, 2014).

Moreover, this crisis has been construed as a “New Cold War”, but Mearsheimer wanted to erase this theory arguing that the EU does not matter anymore in the international theater and now the West should consider Asia as the real enemy, particularly for the US. He, in fact, concludes that this conflict over Ukraine and Crimea is against the West’s own interests since Russia, which is not anymore, a not a peer competitor, will be an allied of China due to their historic closeness in ideology and government.

Finally, the scholar also accounts for the critiques that may be put forward like that changing policy toward Ukraine after all the steps already undertaken would maim U.S. integrity and trustworthiness, but the positive results would overweight the costs of misguided policies. Plus, Ukrainian foreign policy cannot be determined by values such as self-determination, which is deemed as meaningless in a realist view and

because of the same notion, in the future the West should always reject the Ukraine's petition to enter NATO and even the EU. In Mearsheimer opinion, it is mere and simple power politics and Ukraine is not supposed to be a Western core strategic object.

By the same token, Russia should be kept as an allied not only as said above for the future economic competition which sees in head China as main world hegemon, but also because Russia has already been a Western ally in other situations such as the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan through its territory, signing a nuclear pact with Iran and stabilization in Syria.

In Mearsheimer's opinion, this is the modus operandi that can create a win-win situation for all parties, and it requires a realist approach.

2.3 Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?

In November of 2014 on the well-known academic journal on the Foreign Affairs, for the Council of Foreign Relations⁴⁹, the scholars Michael McFaul and Stephen Sestanovich wrote two articles against the thesis of John J. Mearsheimer. The latter responded to the critiques in the same paper.

The paper by Michael McFaul, American academic of political science, appointed as the United States Ambassador to Russia from 2012 to 2014, is entitled '*Moscow's Choice*' and since the very first lines he claims that Mearsheimer's theories on the Ukrainian crisis shows the limits of realpolitik and only some aspects are able to explain the US - Russia relationship since the end of the Cold War. In fact, while the realist scholar claims that Russia is a weak power, the former ambassador instead affirms that the State has displayed its force in military campaigns as the two wars in Chechnya and the armed intervention in Crimea is not of less importance.

Another point that McFaul counters of the IR academic is the underestimation of the cooperation relations between the West and Russia. In fact, both the US and Russian presidents Obama and Medved ratified "the New Start treaty", took viable steps for Russian membership in World Trade Organization supported the UN Security Council sanctions against Iran and vastly expanded the supply route for U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan through passage in Russia. For these cooperation actions, the diplomat underlined also how in 2010 60% of the Russian population had a positive view of the United States.

⁴⁹ Michael McFaul, Stephen Sestanovich, & John J. Mearsheimer, *Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?*, in *Foreign Affairs*, 2014/ 93(3), pp. 167 - 178.

The two Americans do not agree on the role of Putin, too. Mearsheimer considers him a “first class strategist”, while McFaul promotes the liberal steps undertaken by the leader. Russian foreign policy was not always on the defensive side trying to attack other states as countermeasures, but rather was modified by its head leader as a response to the harsh response from the international community to his third presidential term. McFaul gives credit to this echo to the social media which allowed also the world public to follow closely the elections and to uncover its problematicness. The widespread discontent, both internally and externally, created fear in Putin who knew the consequences of similar restlessness in neighboring countries - first of all the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. It is wrong also to claim that Putin started to be a realist in 2011 after his third re-election, but rather also the first measures taken by Medvedev were in spirit of the realpolitik and balance of power strategies - the intention to close the US military Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan for example. Nevertheless, every time, Obama reasoned with the Russian leaders in order to create a “win - win outcome for both Washington and Moscow”. His position is supported by the fact that he firsthand witnessed the meetings between the leaders, and he sustains that he never heard Russia threatening the West as countermeasure for NATO enlargement. Notwithstanding, McFaul admits that Obama also used often the stick and carrot technique working with the rest of the West on imposing sanctions against human rights offenders like Russia, since the US has always acted in order to defend international law and perpetuate democratic values. In fact, he underlines that all these actions that have been deemed as inefficient to stop Russia aggressive behavior by realists, but probably the only decisive operation would have been to grant NATO membership to Ukraine before the Crimean annexation, but he claims that not even the Ukrainian people ever really desired it. Rather, realist actions by Russia have backfired and created a stronger and organized pro-European identity in Ukraine since the West was the only ally after the annexation. So, if Russia was really plotting with pragmatic ideas in order to dissociate politically and economically the West with Ukraine, annexation was a complete fail and not at all rational. Rather, it guaranteed the dissolution of any plan regarding the institution of the Eurasian Economic Union. To the contrary, this seemingly violent action has undermined Moscow’s international reputation and weakened its economy. McFaul concludes his dissertation claiming that it would be wrong to regard Russia as Realist and blame the crisis on the West, rather the fault stands in Putin’s “unconstrained and erratic adventurism”, (McFaul, 2014).

The second open letter of Stephen Sestanovich, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and a Professor at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs and U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for the Former Soviet Union in 1997 – 2001, is titled ‘*How the West won*’. He starts immediately by mocking Mearsheimer’s theories and goes on claiming that the Realist scholar has contradicted himself several times when arguing that Russia’s hyper-nationalism would have been rowdy, but now instead stand on the thesis for such turbulent atmosphere that the fault was on the West. Furthermore, Sestanovich limits the scope of the NATO membership proposal for Ukraine saying that not only pro-Russian governments did not approved it -

like Yanukovich's - but generally there was no domestic support. For the former ambassador, Putin is to blame completely. In fact, after calling openly "fascist" the - democratic - forces that removed Ukrainian president Yanukovich, he admits that the leader needed to overcome the "political humiliation"⁵⁰ in order to "Recover from [Russian] egregious mistakes"⁵¹. Thus, Putin is described as a leader who put his own desires first, which is exactly the opposite of what a completely rational leader is supposed to do.

Although he points to Putin for the vast majority of the fault, he also admits that Russia grew resentment after the NATO enlargement and the open willingness to work for Ukraine and Georgia membership. Nevertheless, Sestanovich asserts that if NATO did not expand its sphere of influence, the crisis would have been even stronger permitting other countries to side with Russia or, potentially, Putin would have entered other weaker countries. He concludes citing directly from Mearsheimer's book "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics" regarding how an hegemon should act in order to keep being in power and underlining how the West, and in particular the United States, have righteously acted to increase the positive world opinion regarding their status as "world liberator".

After these two long critiques, Mearsheimer replied to both in one final letter in the paper. He starts arguing that his two fellow colleagues reprimand him for his analysis on the NATO expansion, but he claims that they have too narrow views and they misrepresent his true core argument. For Mearsheimer, NATO enlargement is not the main cause for the crisis, but merely "provided fuel for it"⁵². In fact, he holds in this response, like he did in both the paper and the lecture at the University of Chicago (cf. paragraph 2.2) that the his reasonings are drawn from two "critical elements"⁵³: expansion of the European Union and the promotion of democracy. Furthermore, the Realist scholar opposes Sestanovich since he put forward the thesis that the Association Agreement that the EU wanted Ukraine to sign in 2013 was simply a free-trade agreement, but first of all it was a security agreement. As a matter of fact, the pact openly Ukraine being involved in the European Security area and it aped a softer membership to NATO. Due to this, Mearsheimer explains that Russia's fear is justified since, as Realism teaches, great powers always try to balance powers with other actors in order to keep hegemony (especially regional hegemony as explained in paragraph 1.2). In such wise, the comprehension of Russian security fears was completely missed out by the American and European foreign policies.

The American IR scholar also criticizes the two ambassadors regarding their view of what he calls the "coup"⁵⁴ - the February 22, 2014. In fact, while Sestanovich suggested that Yanukovich was removed legitimately, but he argues that the same president a day before signed an agreement for new elections

⁵⁰ Ivi pg. 172

⁵¹ Ibidem

⁵² Ivi pg. 175

⁵³ Ibidem

⁵⁴ Ibidem

(which would have probably been of negative denouement for him and his party), but nevertheless the protesters preferred to remove him abruptly which forced him to find refuge in Russia since he was scared for the violent repercussions. Furthermore, McFaul underlines how the US did not encourage in any way the protests in Kiev, but Mearsheimer displays proofs regarding the National Endowment for Democracy's – an American NGO with the core aim of promoting democracy abroad - decision to support anti-Yanukovich groups.

Furthermore, there is also an invective against the opinion that the US foreign policy was built on the concept of power calculations typical of Realism, since Russia has never been in an serious offensive position - that is also why they were willing to allow membership to Ukraine and Georgia since the West was never worried about an armed attack in those regions.

John J. Mearsheimer concludes saying that even though his colleagues are convinced that Putin expansionist behavior was detrimental, he believes that it followed the basic rules of Offensive Realism and this annexation helped him to block Ukraine membership in NATO or even EU.

Nevertheless, the international community agrees on one point: Ukraine is the actor most severely hit and has been torn apart by the political, social and economic crisis. The difference in the analysis of these phenomena is the point of view: Realism maintains the realpolitik principles, while Liberalism reinforces the ideals of cooperation and diplomatic resolution.

3. The Role of Fear – Guglielmo Ferrero

“*The two French revolutions*”⁵⁵ (original title: “Le due rivoluzioni francesi”) is the posthumous work by Guglielmo Ferrero published for the first time in 1951. He was a writer, historian, philosopher and political sociologist who worked for the most of his life as a professor of modern history and lived the last years of his life in Geneva where he moved as anti-fascist exile.

In the preface of the book, titled “The role of fear in the social change”⁵⁶ (original title: “Il ruolo della paura nel mutamento sociale”), Guglielmo Ferrero is considered not belonging to any particular discipline, but rather be a “classic” author that has the capability of always delivering important messages, indifferently to the reader’s epoch.

In fact, even though he is not an international relations theorist, I believe his book is useful to examine in depth and enhance John J. Mearsheimer’s claims. In particular the Italian scholar helps to analyze the role of fear which he pointed as the key element to sparkle international and national crisis and in particular Ferrero uses as the pivotal example of his assumptions the two French Revolutions (the first on the 28th June and the second on the 14th of July 1789, the Storming of the Bastille). As a matter of fact, we can clearly link the French revolutionaries and monarchs to the Western and Russian rioters and leaders.

The sociological theory is based on the idea that political power is the principal agent of social change. Mindful of the times when he lived and worked, Guglielmo Ferrero posed his theory on the exact antipode of Marx’s, based on the continuous search of the economic factor as the real origin of historic development. In fact, for the German philosopher society is ruled by laws of productions, which means on relationships born between man in the productive process. As a consequence, Ferrero considered this way of reasoning as “anemic” and claimed that the basic needs of every man (like feeding and clothing himself) does not give enough reasons to justify the willingness to associate and civilize. This is a clear reminder to Hobbes' State of Nature, mentioned in paragraph 1.1.

Quoting directly: “Fear is the soul of the living universe”⁵⁷, which means that humankind is always employed in the abatement of fear since people are the only animals forced to live with the obsessive

⁵⁵ Ferrero Guglielmo, *Le due rivoluzioni francesi*, by Ferrero Guglielmo, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2013.

⁵⁶ Alessandro Orsini, “Il ruolo della paura nel mutamento sociale” in *Le due rivoluzioni francesi*, by Ferrero Guglielmo, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2013, pp. vii – xxxi.

⁵⁷ Guglielmo Ferrero, *Potere. I geni invisibili della città*, Marco Editore, Lungro di Cosenza, 2005, p. 30.

awareness of death. In fact, men, knowing they can die in every moment, live their life in fear and continuously seeing perils, which for Ferrero are both real and imaginary. In particular this latter establishes the creation of weapons. On this point we can see the clear link to Realism: Guglielmo Ferrero argues that since men do not know the malicious intentions of others, they decide to arm themselves in order to be secure, in the same way Realists claim that States organize their military. Furthermore, this creates a paradox, both in the human and State relations: the increase of armament is directly proportional to the hypothesized quantity of weapons the enemy holds. Simultaneously, the enemy will increase further the armaments since they know you are doing the same. This is clearly a vicious circle since in order to remove the idea of death (or of being destroyed as a State), the same fear of others rises. I tried to explain graphically this paradox with Graph 3.1 below, which I already used in Chapter 1 to explain the same phenomenon.

Graph 3.1

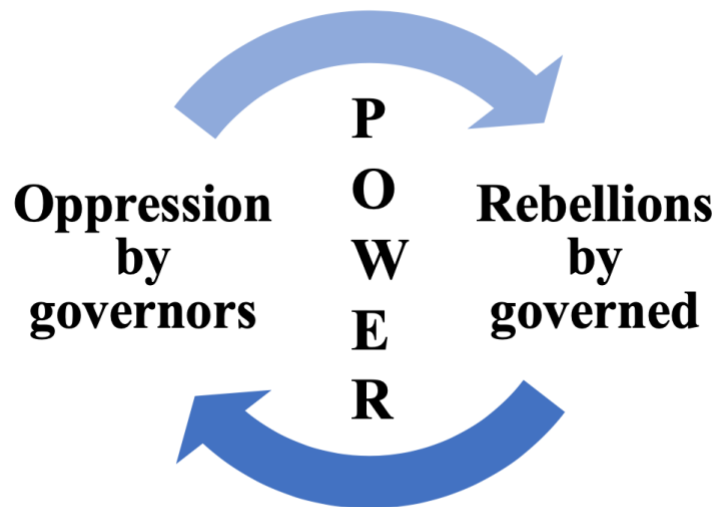


For the Italian sociologist, humankind will never be able to escape from fear, but can somehow impede to imaginary perils to multiply through the creation of established power. This is possible concentrating the instruments of command and coercion in the hands of a small minority. In his opinion, the invention of power had the function of posing violence under a system of shared and legitimate rules which produce a scheme which is always the same where there is authority. Everyone, who accepts the existence of a minority - e.g. the leaders - that is endowed with the decision-making power, must abide to those same decisions and are forced to obey. The problem here arises since all man have theoretically the same right to govern, so justifying why one is in power is sometimes complicated.

So, another paradox arises: men create power to diminish fear, but he or she is scared by that same power. Governed, in fact, fear the means of oppression, while governors fear the rebellion - a clear example of these

unbalanced power relations happened with the Orange Revolution in Ukraine as shown in chapter 2.1. I graphed this paradox in Graph 3.2 below.

Graph 3.2



The only viable way to interrupt this spiral is through the Law which is considered the real pillar of society. Guglielmo Ferrero, opposing Marx once again, believed that the history of society is based on the consensus regarding the institutions and not on the relationships of the production process. If the institutions are strong, men live, otherwise they are destined to die.

While Marx claims the primacy of economy, Ferrero affirms the primacy of politics, like also Realists do. Moreover, there are two feasible ways to govern: i. *consensus* - the principle that justifies the exercise of power is shared and does not create violent social responses - and ii. *subjugation* - power acquired through the violation of legitimacy principle.

Furthermore, the aim of this book, useful as “colored lenses” (citing the philosopher Kant) to understand our contemporary times, is to answer a series of questions such as “*why revolutionaries, even if moved by great ideals, have killed cruelly? Why revolutions end up bloodily?*”⁵⁸. As also mentioned above, Guglielmo Ferrero tried to solve these issues studying the French revolution which, in his opinion, exemplifies all revolutions.

Even though Ferrero never considered himself a Realist or embraced that view of international politics and probably Mearsheimer never read Ferrero’s theories and analyses, it is clear how those two reasonings are somehow similar. In fact, while the Italian scholar focuses his ideas on a philosophical and

⁵⁸ Ivi pg. xiv

sociological research of the human soul and behavior, the American's inquiry is less pathetic (in the ancient Greek acceptance meaning 'full of emotions'). The Offensive Realist is not focused on single individuals, but rather the State as a unitary actor which speaks with one voice - as recalled in the assumptions in paragraph 1.1. Nevertheless, those two seemingly different conceptions can build on each other in order to have a better understanding of the case study of Chapter 2. In fact, the reasons behind the Orange Revolution of 2004 were clearly the disillusionment derived from the corrupt government and the continuous frauds from the political and economic elites. Here the people are the main protagonists and there is a link between the fear of being subjected to unjust rule, with the popular revolt. In this case the cycle depicted in Graph 3.2 is broken and the government response was not strong enough to counter the citizen's attack and so it capitulated. Mearsheimer, when analyzing the same event, shifts the attention not on what happened internally, but rather on the international arena that took advantage of the situation. In Chapter 2, I stated all the consequences and the reactions from the other States in the aftermath, in particular those who tried to gain more power from this situation (the US, the EU, in particular through the claims done in the NATO conferences).

Correspondingly, as a consequence of the revolution, the Crimean annexation was derived from the same motifs of ten years before, but this time the prime mover was Russia. In Mearsheimer's opinion, Putin gave orders to his army to occupy the peninsula because he felt that the West was stepping on his toes and needed to acquire back Russia's buffer zone. It was plain and simple realpolitik and balance of powers. If we analyze deeper the situation and look at the event with Ferrero's eyes, we could hypothesize that Russia (personified) acted with a strong move beforehand in order to counter the fear of being limited and subdued by the other hegemon (the United States). The West acted with an "iron fist" thinking it would have scared Russia enough to back on its proposition, yet it never happened. At the same time, the Crimean citizens decided to vote in favor of the annexation in the referendum held on the 16th of March, hypothetically due to the fear of the consequences that a negative vote would have brought on their lives. Recalling the critiques moved against Mearsheimer by McFaul and Sestanovich⁵⁹, Ukrainian people were divided regarding accepting Russian sphere of influence and the separation was probably due to fear of consequences. As a matter of fact, Russia - long time world hegemon, one of the winners of both World War I and II, world oil and gasoline oligopolist, permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and nuclear weapons owner - has historically punished harshly States who tried to go against its rule (the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 in South Ossetia and Abkhazia was still fresh in the Ukrainian people).

⁵⁹ Michael McFaul, Stephen Sestanovich, & John J. Mearsheimer, *Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?*, in *Foreign Affairs*, 2014/ 93(3), pp. 167 - 178.

To conclude, Guglielmo Ferrero develops an interesting theory regarding how people behave when under the stimulus of fear. I believe that these considerations deserve a wider scope than merely the societal sphere and can be applied as a macro-theory of conduct between States.

In fact, behind foreign policy decisions of countries, there are leaders who apply to the fears described by the sociological argument. Realism claims strongly that every country speaks with one unitary voice, but nevertheless the State resolutions are taken by men and women who are naturally influenced by their emotions and fear is endemically one of the drives embedded in the humankind.

Conclusions

This dissertation was aimed at identifying the true actor to guilty for the spark of the revolution in Ukraine in 2014. My analysis was based on qualitative data collected by both factual events and interpretations of them in an International Relations Realist perspective. The main question I indeed tried to answer was “*Is the Ukraine Crisis the West’s fault?*”.

In fact, after recounting the most important events that led to the explosion of an intestine conflict between Ukrainian corrupt elites and the rest of the population, which caused their official president, Yanukovych, to flee the country and the institution of a new government based on more democratic principles. I not only explained the mere facts, but I also described all the consequences and the echo in the world this crisis created. In fact, in my opinion it was important to not only talk about the main country in my research, Ukraine, but also all the linked actors that played a key role not only in furtherance and the aftereffect, but in the antecedents that led to such a strong result. Indeed, it is well established by the international community, acting through the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), that the Russian Federation is to blame and to punish harshly for the annexation (cf. *chapter 2 Ukrainian Crisis - Case Study*), enacted through economic sanctions⁶⁰. After six years, Crimea has yet become an independent state, since it could not apostatize from Ukraine, which is a very complicated ruling to process. Thus, even though de facto Crimea is a propriety of Russia, for International Law it has not succeeded yet. As a consequence, it cannot enter into treaty alliances.

Nevertheless, I decided to approach the issue from another angle rather than the usual (which we can designate as a Liberal interpretation), I preferred to scrutinize the phenomena from an offensive realist prospective adopting in particular the schemes conceived by John J. Mearsheimer. My intention to follow this path was due to the large amount of information and opinions gathered by the important scholar in various books, lectures and papers which I already referenced in the footnotes and in the following bibliography. My analysis was centered on the idea that the West caused the crisis and Russia simply acted following the rules of realpolitik and balance of power.

⁶⁰ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), A/68/262 , "Territorial integrity of Ukraine", *Mar. 27, 2014*.

Of course, I accounted also for the counterarguments and cited influential personalities⁶¹, too (cf. 2.3 *Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?*). As a matter of fact, I am a firm believer that in order to have a complete picture of the interpretation of a historical event, there is the need for the display of more standpoints and that is what I tried to accomplish. Nevertheless, I was led to the conclusion that Mearsheimer's evaluation is the most suited, even though being also the least widely accounted.

My results indicate that John J. Mearsheimer contributions to the argument are not only valid, but can effectively explain several factors otherwise not taken into consideration. He divided the real main causes of the crisis into *deep* - promotion from the West of the NATO expansion, EU expansion and encouragement of the first wave of revolution with the Orange Revolution in 2004 - and *precipitating* - the actual historical happenings depending on Ukrainian domestic politics. He underlines often the idea that Russia is not the world hegemon that has to be feared, but it is rather a 'declining great power' and Ukraine is not the key of its reconstruction plan to re-gain the power it once had. In his opinion, Putin has become a hazardous adversary only after the 2014 events and before there were no signs of such plan of expansion, which he has been blamed for.

Furthermore, my dissertation carries on also a critique to the West, and in particular to the US, regarding their foreign policy. Mearsheimer uses bitter words about the American tendency to act as a "world police" and that is the reason why he calls any kind of Liberal policies - such as NATO expansion - a "flawed view of international politics".

Plainly, I also accounted for some viable measures that could be taken in order to resolve the underlying conflict between the West and Russia such as i. explicitly abandon the NATO expansion towards Russian buffer states; ii. fashion an *Economic Rescue Plan* together with Russia, Ukraine, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union (EU); iii. guaranty of minority rights in Eastern Europe. In Mearsheimer's opinion, this is the only modus operandi that can create a win-win situation for all parties, and it requires a Realist approach (cf. 2.2 *Mearsheimer "Why is Ukraine the West's Fault"*).

Furthermore, I concluded the dissertation with an innovative parallelism which, in my opinion, makes the crisis more "human". In fact, even though I appreciate immensely Realism, it sees international actors as merely the State, but it is important to counter for the individuals who make the State itself. In the last chapter (cf. *Chapter 3 The role of fear - Guglielmo Ferrero*), I merged sociology and international relation with the aim of building a unitary understanding from both. In order to do so, I brought into play the well-

⁶¹ Michael McFaul, Stephen Sestanovich, & John J. Mearsheimer, *Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?*, in *Foreign Affairs*, 2014/ 93(3), pp. 167 - 178.

known book by Guglielmo Ferrero⁶² and complemented his reasonings with the traditional assumptions of Realism and in particular Offensive Realism.

Based on these conclusions and to better understand their implications, future studies on the causes and consequences of Ukraine's 2014 crisis could address Mearsheimer's innovative way of thinking in order to detach the ordinal (Liberal) narrative with new insights on the matter. In fact, I believe that additional research is needed to determine the true meanings behind the relationship between the West and the States in Russia's buffer zone, not only Ukraine, but also countries such as Georgia. I firmly believe that these kinds of liaisons and links between powers are rooted in more than simply Liberal cooperation attitude, but lie in front of Realist anarchic and world hegemony aims as I demonstrated thoroughly.

⁶² Ferrero Guglielmo, *Le due rivoluzioni francesi*, cit.

Bibliography & Sitography:

- Adrian Karatnycky, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*, in *Foreign Affairs*, 2005/2, pg. 35 – 52.
- Alessandro Orsini, “Il ruolo della paura nel mutamento sociale” in *Le due rivoluzioni francesi*, by Ferrero Guglielmo, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2013, pp. vii – xxxi
- Alessandro Orsini, “Mutamento Sociale e relazioni internazionali. Il realismo politico e il problema della guerra.” in AA. VV. *Aspetti Del Mutamento Sociale Contemporaneo* edited by Alfredo Agustoni, Aracne, Roma, 2008, pp. 113 – 129.
- Alfred T. Mahan, *The influence of sea power upon history 1660-1783*, Little, Brown & Co, New York, 1890.
- Andrew Sorokowski, *Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation*, in “Harvard Ukrainian Studies”, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1996/20, pp. 319-329.
- Brahma Chellaney, *Obama: More war than peace*, The Japan Times, Jan. 18, 2017
- Caro Kriel, “Yanukovich Admits Mistakes On Crimea”, *AP News*, Apr. 2, 2014.
- Christi Parsons, C. and W. P. Hennigan, *President Obama, Who Hoped To Sow Peace, Instead Led The Nation In War*, Los Angeles Times, Jan. 13, 2017.
- Christian Marxsen, *The Crimea Crisis. An International Law Perspective.*, Kyiv-Mohyla Law and Politics Journal, 2014/2, pp. 13-36.
- Donald G. Brennan, *Mutual Deterrence and Strategic Arms Limitation in Soviet Policy*, in *International Security*, 3/2978, pp. 113 – 129.
- Giovanna De Maio, *Russia's View of Ukraine after the Crisis*, in IAI Working Papers: Istituto Affari Internazionali. 2016/ 16/04 , pp. 2-17.
- Ferrero Guglielmo, *Le due rivoluzioni francesi*, by Ferrero Guglielmo, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2013.
- Guglielmo Ferrero, *Potere. I geni invisibili della città*, Costantino Marco, Lungro di Cosenza, 2005, p. 30.
- Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Knopf, New York, 1954.
- John H. Herz, *Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma*, in “World Politics”, 1950/2, pp. 157–180.
- John J. Mearsheimer, *The Causes and Consequences Of The Ukraine Crisis*, lecture at University of Chicago, 2015.
- John J. Mearsheimer, *The False Promise of International Institutions*, in “International Security”, 1994/ 19(3), pp. 5-49.

- John J. Mearsheimer, *The tragedy of Great Power politics*, Norton, New York, 2001.
- John J. Mearsheimer, *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*, in "Foreign Affairs", 2014, pp.1 - 12.
- Marek Menkiszak, *Russia's Long War on Ukraine*, in German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2016, pp. 2 – 8.
- Max Gottesman, Mark Kac, & Mark Mellman, *Helsinki Final Act*, Science, 1980, p. 137.
- Michael McFaul, Stephen Sestanovich, & John J. Mearsheimer, *Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?*, in Foreign Affairs, 2014/ 93(3), pp. 167 - 178.
- Michael Ray, "Ukraine Crisis. Ukrainian History", Encyclopedia Britannica, Aug. 28, 2014.
- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Harmondsworth, Eng., New York, 1981.
- Nick Thompson, "Ukraine: Everything You Need To Know About How We Got Here", CNN, Feb. 3, 2017.
- Nicu Popescu, *Ukraine: four crises, one country*, in European Union Institute for Security Study (EUISS) Brief, 2014.
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), *Bucharest Summit Declaration*, Apr. 4, 2008.
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), *North Atlantic Treaty*, Apr. 4, 1949.
- Office of the Historian, "Milestones: 1961–1968", History.state.gov, 2020.
- Robert Jackson & Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations Theories and Approaches*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013/5, pp. 65 – 99.
- Samuel P. Huntington, *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*, Touchstone, New York.
- Stefan Lehn, *Reviving The OSCE: European Security and The Ukraine Crisis*, in Carnegie Europe, 2020.
- Stephen McGlinchey, Rosie Walters, Christian Scheinpflug, *International relations theory*, E-international Relations Publishing, 2014, pp. 1 – 22.
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.
- Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1920.
- Ukraine and Russian Federation, I-52240, *Treaty on friendship, cooperation and partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation*, May 31, 1997.
- Un.org. *Functions and Powers. United Nations Security Council*. 2020.
- Un.org. *General Assembly & Security Council*. 2020.
- United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), 1 UNTS XVI, "Charter of the United Nations", Oct. 24, 1945.
- United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), A/49/765, "General And Complete Disarmament Maintenance Of International Security", Dec. 19, 1994.

- United Nations International Law Commission (LEGAL) & General Assembly (UNGA), A/56/10, “*Draft articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts*”, with commentaries, 2001.
- Venice Commission & Council for Democratic Elections., *Code of Good Practice on Referendums*, 2006.

SUMMARY

La Crisi in Ucraina è colpa dell'Occidente? – Analisi dalla prospettiva realista

Nell'ambito delle Relazioni Internazionali intese come materia accademica, il Realismo è la principale scuola di pensiero a focalizzarsi sull'aspetto competitivo e conflittuale degli affari internazionali. Le radici di questo pensiero possono essere trovate in scritti antichi come quelli di Tucidide (ca 460 – 400 a.C.), considerato il padre della “teoria scientifica” grazie alla sua imparzialità, all'analisi causale e alla raccolta di fatti storici senza influsso della religione. Infatti, nonostante al tempo non esistesse ancora come concetto, Tucidide può essere considerato un Realista, essendo un sostenitore dell'idea che gli Stati fossero endemicamente ineguali (ovvero, pochi “poteri superiori” e tanti “poteri inferiori”), credendo inoltre che la competizione tra essi fosse inevitabile e che nelle relazioni tra di essi bisognasse considerare la forza relativa e le debolezze. Dopo questo esempio preso in prestito dalla cultura greca, uno dei successivi esponenti *ante litteram* del Realismo può essere considerato Machiavelli, padre della filosofia e della scienza politica, il quale nel suo capolavoro “*Il Principe*” (1532) affermò che la “Forza” – rappresentata dalla allegoria del leone – e l’“Astuzia” – rappresentata dalla allegoria della volpe – sono fondamentali per portare avanti una fruttuosa politica estera e che il maggiore valore politico è la libertà nazionale (indipendenza) e pertanto i governanti devono provvedere al raggiungimento degli interessi primari del proprio Stato per permetterne la sopravvivenza. Inoltre, Thomas Hobbes, il fondatore della filosofia politica moderna, è stato una figura prominente nell'affermazione del Realismo in quanto lui per primo descrisse lo “Stato di Natura”, una realtà precedente alla formazione dello “Stato di Diritto”, che vive in una condizione di guerra permanente poiché ogni individuo pensa principalmente alla propria conservazione. La paura agisce, quindi, da sovrana. L'unico modo per assicurare la sicurezza è attraverso la creazione dello Stato e, conseguentemente, di una cooperazione razionale. Nel mondo contemporaneo, però, c'è sempre la paura di entrare in guerra con altre potenze in quanto non esistendo un unico governo globale, è come se ogni Stato fosse atomizzato e contro gli altri. Dopo la Seconda guerra mondiale, iniziò a prendere forma la materia accademica di Relazioni Internazionali e molti furono gli studiosi che sposarono la causa della creazione di nuove teorie. Il Realismo, come sopra citato, si definisce sin da subito come una delle maggiori correnti di pensiero in questo campo, insieme con il Liberalismo. Tra i Realisti più importanti, si trova Morgenthau, che definì le persone come animali politici in quanto la loro vita è incentrata su giochi di potere – “*animus dominandi*” – che fa sì che la politica possa essere definita come “lotta per il potere tra uomini”. Per sintetizzare, i pilastri fondamentali del Realismo sono: i. lo Stato è l'attore principale nelle relazioni internazionali; ii. lo Stato è un attore unitario e parla con una sola voce senza divisioni interne; iii. i governatori sono attori razionali che agiscono per gli interessi dello Stato senza essere influenzati dalla propria morale privata; iv. tra gli Stati esiste un sistema anarchico in quanto non esiste un governo globale e per questo agiscono al fine di mantenere il

maggior quantitativo di potere possibile nel sistema. Inoltre, nella prospettiva realista il cambiamento, in particolare quello pacifico, è quasi del tutto impossibile da raggiungere, ma questa tesi è stata smentita da cambiamenti molto importanti nella storia e nelle relazioni tra paesi come per esempio quelli legati alla fine della Guerra Fredda e al proliferare di organizzazioni internazionali con l'obiettivo di creare un universo più pacifico di quello passato, tutto ciò in linea con il pensiero Liberale. Ovviamente, i Realisti conoscono questi limiti del loro pensiero, ma tendono a etichettare questi eventi come eccezioni al normale andamento della politica mondiale.

Inoltre, è importante che il Realismo non sia visto come una corrente unitaria, bensì eterogenea racchiudendo in sé molte sottocategorie. Alcuni nomi importanti da citare sono: Waltz con il Neorealismo, Carr con il Realismo Difensivo, Shelling con il Realismo Strategico e Mearsheimer con il suo Realismo Offensivo.

Il Realismo non è una teoria appartenente al passato, bensì in continua espansione. Infatti, uno dei maggiori studiosi di Relazioni Internazionali è il fondatore della scuola del Realismo Offensivo: John J. Mearsheimer. La sua pubblicazione principale è sicuramente "La Tragedia della Politica dei Grandi Poteri" (2001), dove spiega in dettaglio le sue teorie. Infatti, egli è convinto che le tre ragioni per cui gli Stati agiscono in modo aggressivo per assicurarsi la maggior parte del potere nella sfera internazionale sono: i. *Assenza di un' autorità centrale* – le Nazioni Unite sono l'organizzazione internazionale che più di tutte cerca di ottenere questo ruolo, ma è al contempo governata da giochi di poteri che fanno sì che non lavori in modo efficiente; ii. *Capacità Militare Offensiva* – ogni Stato possiede un apparato militare, con pochissime eccezioni; iii. *Incertezza sulle intenzioni degli altri Stati* – la miglior garanzia è essere l'egemone del sistema in modo da non essere confrontati da nessuno.

Per interpretare al meglio queste teorie è fondamentale comprendere cosa significhi essere un "Potere Forte": uno Stato con sufficiente capacità militare per entrare in un conflitto contro il più forte dei paesi nel sistema, senza necessariamente sconfiggerlo, ma indebolendolo. Infatti, l'arena internazionale influenza i paesi a scegliere le loro politiche estere e Mearsheimer mantiene tutti i pilastri del classico Realismo utilizzando alcune sue aggiunte teoriche per spiegare eventi contemporanei.

Per Mearsheimer inoltre, un sistema multipolare, glorificato dai Liberali, è più soggetto a conflitti e pericoloso a causa della coesistenza di diversi egemoni che potrebbero dichiararsi guerra in ogni momento; in aggiunta, le asimmetrie sono inevitabili quando ci sono più Stati forti che condividono il controllo del sistema internazionale. Invece, il Realismo Offensivo propone come bilanciato un sistema bipolare in cui ci sono solo due poteri forti che mantengono stabilità – ad esempio Guerra Fredda con USA e URSS. Una bipolarità bilanciata del sistema internazionale è l'unica opzione praticabile che possa evitare una grande guerra, come la Prima e la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, in quanto dei piccoli poteri non andranno mai a scontrarsi con il grande potere, consapevoli di non avere i mezzi per vincere. Quindi, bilanciare i poteri tramite misure economiche, diplomatiche e militari, è fondamentale per diventare egemone, il che significa

dominare il sistema. Tutto ciò però rischia di precipitare nel Dilemma del Prigioniero in cui aumentare il potere di uno Stato significa necessariamente ridurre quello di un altro, creando tensioni che possono scaturire in un conflitto. Tuttavia, è importante ricordare che nel sistema dipinto da Mearsheimer il comportamento più efficace per accrescere il proprio potere è proprio quello di infondere paura.

Una critica comune al Realismo offensivo è che nel 21° secolo c'è stata una proliferazione estesa di organizzazioni internazionali e di multilateralismo, ma lo studioso risponde affermando che i gli Stati sono convinti che entrando in questi rapporti pacifici, la loro quota di potere e controllo del mondo aumenti, opinione quindi in contrapposizione con il credo che i paesi entrino in cooperazione con altri per puro spirito di cordialità (Liberalismo).

Inoltre, Mearsheimer dopo aver messo in rassegna vari metodi utilizzati dagli Stati per minacciare altri, come *l'appeasement* o il *buck passing*, definisce che la guerra è storicamente la tattica migliore per garantire il mantenimento del proprio potere e ampliarlo (ovviamente in caso di vittoria). Da qui il nome "Realismo Offensivo", proprio per questa tendenza continua di vedere in un conflitto la principale forma di risoluzione delle relazioni tra Stati.

Come caso studio per trovare un esempio della teoria del Realismo Offensivo, la crisi in Ucraina risulta molto esplicativa. Infatti, lo stesso John J. Mearsheimer ha dedicato a questo argomento svariati articoli e lezioni universitarie alla Chicago University, dove è professore.

L'Ucraina è il secondo paese più grande del continente europeo e storicamente il suo territorio è stato sempre motivo di conflitto tra la Polonia e l'impero Russo. In seguito alla guerra Ucraina – Sovietica (1917 – 1921), fu instaurata la Repubblica Popolare Ucraina, ma ebbe vita breve in quanto nel 1922 divenne parte delle repubbliche fondatrici dell'Unione Sovietica. Durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, il paese fu occupato dall'Asse e infine divenne uno stato libero a guerra conclusa. Nel 1954, l'Ucraina ampliò nuovamente i suoi confini con la Crimea, la quale diventò una regione a statuto speciale.

Dopo il collasso dell'URSS e una conseguente crisi economica durata ben otto anni, nei primi anni 2000 il paese affrontò un periodo di grande sviluppo economico, ma anche di grande corruzione. Quest'ultima causò nel 2004 l'inizio della Rivoluzione Arancione in cui si scontrarono due coalizioni: quella Occidentale, ovvero la parte settentrionale del paese, e quella Russa, la parte meridionale del paese tra cui la regione indipendente della Crimea.

In questo frangente, le oligarchie ucraine al tempo erano i detentori di tutto il potere nello Stato e questo è il motivo per cui i candidati presidenziali che non avevano il loro supporto, dovevano affrontare diversi impedimenti. Ad esempio, il candidato presidenziale del 2004 Yushchenko, ex capogruppo della Banca Nazionale ucraina e promotore di privatizzazioni e controlli fiscali stringenti, eletto nel 2000 Primo Ministro e aiutando il PIL nazionale a crescere del 9.2%, fu avvelenato e insieme a lui anche molti elettori subirono

diverse violenze e limitazioni: molti studenti universitari ad esempio furono minacciati di sfratto dai loro dormitori se avessero partecipato a dimostrazioni politiche.

Il 22 novembre 2004 iniziò quindi la Rivoluzione Arancione che terminò sei giorni dopo con la proclamazione da parte della Corte Nazionale di nuove elezioni, stabilendo inoltre che anche l'Ucraina sarebbe diventata una repubblica parlamentare-presidenziale, in modo da limitare il potere delle élite. Nel frattempo, è importante sottolineare gli sforzi titanici dell'Occidente e della Russia per mantenere la propria sfera di influenza sul paese. Infatti, se da un lato gli Stati Uniti e l'Unione Europea spingevano per una "occidentalizzazione", la Russia cercava di aumentare i legami, per esempio firmando il Trattato di Partizione della Flotta del Mar Nero del 1997, in cui la Russia si aggiudicava l'80% del territorio marittimo e l'affitto delle basi navali in Crimea.

Nonostante la situazione di relativa pace dovuta a una rete fitta di accordi multilaterali e bilaterali, nel novembre 2013 iniziò una delle più profonde crisi che il continente europeo ha affrontato dalla fine della Seconda Guerra Mondiale. Il presidente ucraino dell'epoca, Yanukovych, supportato dalle oligarchie, perse la fiducia della popolazione e quella stessa notte fu costretto a rifugiarsi in Russia. Un nuovo governo ad interim a favore dell'Occidente fu formato, ma ciò che dovette affrontare non fu solo una insurrezione popolare che chiedeva la fine della corruzione, come dieci anni prima, ma il 27 febbraio 2014 la Russia decise di entrare militarmente in Crimea e dichiararla annessa al proprio Stato. Questo gesto fu immediatamente condannato dal mondo occidentale come una "grave violazione della legge internazionale", ma questo non bastò per far arretrare le truppe di Putin. Infatti, la Crimea era sempre stata considerata una regione culturalmente più vicina alla Russia piuttosto che all'Ucraina e per questo motivo la Russia spinse il Consiglio Supremo della Crimea a programmare un referendum per approvare l'annessione. Il voto, che si tenne il 16 marzo 2014 vide il 95.5% dei votanti favorevoli, ma i risultati non furono visti come legittimi dalla comunità internazionale. Infatti, l'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite votò a sfavore dell'azione e con la Risoluzione 68/262 "Integrità Territoriale dell'Ucraina" del 27 marzo 2014, dichiarò che il referendum non aveva alcuna validità e per questo motivo gli Stati membri non dovevano riconoscere la Crimea come regione russa.

Il tutto avvenne nonostante la Russia avesse tentato in tutti i modi di giustificare l'accaduto richiamando due norme ben stabilite del diritto internazionale: la protezione dei nazionali su territorio estero e l'intervento per invito. La prima tesi non fu accettata in quanto anche se la popolazione della Crimea era culturalmente legata alla Russia, ufficialmente non c'erano legami legali (in quanto essi avevano cittadinanza ucraina e non russa). La seconda invece fu discussa largamente in quanto ufficialmente il presidente ucraino Yanukovych, prima di scappare dal paese, inviò una lettera a Putin chiedendo il suo aiuto. La comunità internazionale, nonostante di norma accetti che un paese possa invitare truppe estere a intervenire per ristabilire la pace, questa volta rifiutò questa tesi in quanto il leader ucraino era già stato *de facto* deposto dal suo parlamento e pertanto non aveva più tale diritto.

Malgrado le Nazioni Unite non accettarono mai l'annessione, il Primo Ministro russo Medvedev nel luglio 2015 dichiarò che la Crimea era ufficialmente integrata nella Federazione Russa. L'Occidente tentò di intervenire con sanzioni economiche, ma la Russia decise di non arretrare e ancora oggi nel 2020 la questione non ha trovato una risoluzione.

La lettura che viene per lo più data dell'accaduto è quella di incolpare la Russia di questo attacco unilaterale, ma non tutti gli studiosi sono d'accordo. Infatti, John J. Mearsheimer, fondatore del Realismo Offensivo, tramite una famosa lezione universitaria alla University of Chicago del giugno 2015 e la pubblicazione di vari articoli, il più celebre *Why is Ukraine the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin* (tradotto: *Perché [la questione] ucraina è colpa dell'Occidente: l'illusione liberale che ha provocato Putin*) sul giornale accademico "Foreign Affairs", sostiene il contrario. Infatti, egli afferma che le vere cause della crisi del 2014 possono essere divise in *Cause profonde e Cause Precipitanti*. Le prime riguardano il comportamento degli Stati Uniti che dalla Guerra Fredda hanno cercato di portare l'Ucraina sotto il proprio controllo e lontano da quello sovietico e hanno continuato anche successivamente attraverso tre tipologie di politiche: i. promuovere dell'espansione NATO verso i paesi dell'est Europa; ii. favorire l'allargamento dei membri dell'Unione Europea; iii. incoraggiare la Rivoluzione Arancione in Ucraina attraverso fondi. Le seconde, invece, riguardano le tappe principali che la Russia ha percorso da novembre 2013 – Putin propone a Yanukovich un patto economico molto conveniente all'Ucraina, fino al 22 febbraio 2014, il presidente ucraino trova rifugio in Russia e inizia l'annessione della Crimea per concludersi con la proclamazione ufficiale dell'incorporazione della regione da parte della Russia il 18 marzo 2014.

Importante per Mearsheimer è sottolineare che la Russia non ha mai tentato di conquistare l'Ucraina, ma il suo unico scopo è stato quello di mantenerla come Stato cuscinetto (def. da Vocabolario Treccani: "formazione politica che, trovandosi fra Stati o regioni più grandi, ha la funzione di evitarne il contatto e di attutirne i possibili urti").

Infatti, la Federazione viene definita come un "potere in declino" dallo studioso realista che non può vedere l'Ucraina come punto d'inizio per la ricostruzione di un grande Stato come l'Unione Sovietica. Infatti, Putin è stato definito un avversario pericoloso solo dopo gli eventi del 2014, dimostrando che non è mai esistito un piano coloniale da parte della Russia. L'annessione non è altro che un contrattacco strategico dopo le azioni di espansione dell'Occidente verso territori storicamente sotto il suo controllo. Tutto ciò ricade nella classica tattica realista del bilanciamento dei poteri. Ciò ha creato un conflitto invisibile tra due ideologie: il Liberalismo occidentale e il Realismo russo.

In aggiunta, John J. Mearsheimer sottolinea come i comportamenti dell'Occidente dimostrano poco tatticismo in quanto sarebbe sconveniente per tutti i paesi occidentali che l'Ucraina entrasse ufficialmente nelle loro organizzazioni. La NATO, ad esempio, con l'articolo 5 del Patto Atlantico lega tutti i suoi stati membri all'aiuto mutuale, ossia nel caso di un conflitto ritenuto ingiusto, gli altri Stati sono tenuti ad entrare in aiuto. In questo caso, non converrebbe a nessuno dei trenta membri dover aiutare, economicamente e

militarmente, un paese con un'alta possibilità di essere minacciato dalla Russia come l'Ucraina. Inoltre, non bisogna dimenticare che la Russia è una potenza nucleare, molto pericolosa sullo scacchiere internazionale. Perciò, le élite occidentali sono descritte come “accecate dagli eventi” e appartenenti a una “visione fallace delle relazioni internazionali”. Tutto ciò è, quindi, il perfetto esempio di *realpolitik*, che è spesso ignorata dai leader del XXI secolo che giudicano senza alcuna rilevanza la logica del Realismo (Mearsheimer, 2014). Infine, lo studioso propone una possibile strategia come risoluzione della crisi ucraina dal punto di vista del Realismo offensivo: l'obiettivo principale è quello di creare un'Ucraina neutrale che agisce come stato cuscinetto tra la NATO e la Russia, come ipotizzato da Putin. Le misure principali che l'Occidente dovrebbe adottare sono: i. abbandonare esplicitamente il piano di espansione della NATO verso i paesi dell'est Europa; ii. ideare un Piano Economico di Soccorso con Russia, Fondo Monetario Internazionale, Unione Europea e Ucraina come firmatari; iii. garantire i diritti di minoranza in Ucraina e Crimea. Quindi, per Mearsheimer una “Nuova Guerra Fredda” è stata creata attraverso questa crisi, nonostante ormai l'Europa non è più strategicamente la questione principale su cui la politica estera degli Stati Uniti deve essere concentrata poiché gli Stati asiatici potrebbero causare molti più danni nel futuro. Dunque, inimicarsi la Russia non fa altro che spingerla verso una possibile alleanza proprio con queste nuove potenze.

Come risposta a queste teorie di Mearsheimer, due figure cardine della politica estera americana hanno deciso di pubblicare sul giornale *Foreign Affairs* la loro opinione. Michael McFaul, ambasciatore statunitense in Russia dal 2012 al 2014, pubblica l'articolo con il titolo “Moscow Choice” (tr. “La scelta di Mosca”) in cui afferma che la crisi ucraina dimostra i limiti della *realpolitik* e che la Russia non è un potere debole, ma anzi ha dimostrato la sua grande potenza militare nelle due guerre in Chechnya dal 1994 al 2009. Inoltre, il diplomatico sottolinea che tra l'Occidente e la Federazione c'è stato un buon rapporto dall'inizio degli anni 2000 e ciò viene dimostrato dai passi fatti a favore della entrata della Russia come membro della World Trade Organization. Anche il ruolo dello stesso Putin è visto in modo diverso dai due studiosi: se da un lato per Mearsheimer è un “eccellente stratega”, per McFaul invece è un liberale in campo diplomatico nell'ultimo periodo, grazie anche alla globalizzazione che ha permesso una maggiore trasparenza e un controllo continuo da parte della comunità internazionale. Nonostante Michael McFaul ammetta che lo stesso Obama, presidente americano leader del liberalismo, abbia utilizzato spesso la tecnica della “carota e del bastone” per ottenere il miglior risultato possibile per il suo Stato, gli Stati Uniti hanno sempre agito in difesa del diritto internazionale e che l'unica tattica idonea a contrastare il comportamento aggressivo della Russia nei confronti dei paesi dell'est Europa, sarebbe stato garantire l'entrata dell'Ucraina nella NATO, evento ipotizzato nel 2008 con il Convegno di Bucarest. Infine, definisce l'annessione come un'azione fallimentare e irrazionale, che non può essere il prodotto di una strategia realista e pragmatica, ma che ha semplicemente causato la fine di importanti accordi economici ipotizzati tra Europa occidentale e orientale.

Il secondo articolo, scritto da Stephen Sestanovich, Membro Senior del Consiglio delle Relazioni Estere e professore alla Columbia University in Affari Pubblici e Internazionali, nonché ambasciatore per l'ex Unione Sovietica dal 1997 al 2001, è intitolato "How the West won" (tr. "Come ha vinto l'Occidente"). Dopo aver ridicolizzato le teorie di Mearsheimer definendole come poco "realistiche", afferma che la proposta di ammissione all'Ucraina alla NATO del 2008 non fu accettata dall'Ucraina stessa essendo troppo pro-Russia. Perciò, non si può incolpare l'Occidente per la crisi, ma la colpa deve ricadere completamente su Putin arrivando a chiamare "fasciste" le forze che hanno rimosso il presidente ucraino Yanukovich nel febbraio 2014. Inoltre, Sestanovich è convinto che se la NATO non avesse ampliato la sua sfera di influenza, le conseguenze della crisi sarebbero state ancora peggiori in quanto la Russia avrebbe cercato di anettere altri paesi più deboli. Quindi, concludendo, l'ex ambasciatore afferma che gli Stati Uniti non possono avere colpa se non quella di aver agito al meglio delle loro possibilità come "liberatore del mondo".

Dopo queste due lunghe critiche, Mearsheimer risponde in una lettera finale in cui afferma che i suoi colleghi hanno visioni troppo ristrette e limitate e non hanno ben compreso i suoi schemi di analisi. Infatti, mentre sia Michael McFaul che Stephen Sestanovich hanno interpretato l'espansione della NATO come la causa principale per lo studioso realista, egli, invece, continua ad affermare che la Russia ha agito principalmente per bilanciare il potere e pertanto mantenere l'egemonia, specialmente quella regionale. Quindi, egli critica i due ex ambasciatori nell'ambito di quello che lui stesso definisce "colpo di stato", il 22 febbraio 2014. Infatti, mentre McFaul sostiene che gli Stati Uniti non abbiano in alcun modo aiutato le proteste a Kiev, Mearsheimer dimostra prove riguardanti le decisioni National Endowment for Democracy, organizzazione americana non governativa e non profit che ha come scopo ultimo quello di aiutare l'avanzamento della democrazia all'estero, di inviare fondi di supporto ai gruppi anti-Yanukovich. John J. Mearsheimer conclude dicendo che nonostante i suoi colleghi siano convinti che il comportamento espansionista di Putin sia stato deleterio, il Realismo Offensivo contrariamente accetta questa strategia e lo studioso stesso è convinto che questa azione abbia precluso anche per il futuro l'ammissione dell'Ucraina sia alla NATO che all'Unione Europea.

Nonostante i vari conflitti di visione, la comunità internazionale è d'accordo su un punto principale: l'attore più severamente colpito da questo conflitto è l'Ucraina che è stata devastata politicamente, economicamente e socialmente. I due filoni principali di pensiero si dividono solamente nell'analisi del fenomeno: da un lato il Realismo mantiene i principi della *realpolitik*, mentre dall'altro il Liberalismo rinforza gli ideali di cooperazione e risoluzione diplomatica.

Infine, per concludere, merita menzione l'analisi di un testo non propriamente riguardante le relazioni internazionali, ma comunque di notevole importanza. "Le due rivoluzioni francesi" di Guglielmo Ferrero del 1951 è una descrizione del ruolo della paura come elemento principale per la fomentazione di una crisi. Il sociologo italiano prende ad esempio le due rivoluzioni francesi (quella del 28 giugno e del 14

luglio 1789, la presa della Bastiglia) e le sue analisi sui rivoluzionari e i monarchici possono essere estese ai rivoltosi e ai leader russi e occidentali.

Questa teoria sociologica è basata sull'idea che il potere politico è il principale agente del cambiamento sociale e che l'umanità è da sempre e per sempre forzata a vivere con l'ossessiva paura della morte. Infatti, gli uomini, sapendo che potrebbero perire in ogni momento, vivono nel terrore, reale e immaginario. Proprio per quest'ultimo, Ferrero suggerisce che le armi sono state create in modo tale da sentirsi più sicuri verso l'ignoto. È un meccanismo che rispecchia il comportamento degli Stati che temendo gli altri poteri, incrementano e migliorano le loro forze militari come il realismo postula. Questo comporta un paradosso: l'aumento di armi è direttamente proporzionale alla quantità ipotizzata di risorse belliche del nemico, che a sua volta si corazzava per questo aumento. Come per Hobbes l'unico modo per uscire dallo stato di natura è la creazione dello Stato di diritto, per Ferrero solamente concentrando gli strumenti di comando e coercizione nelle mani di una piccola minoranza si può evitare di cadere in una paura infinita del prossimo. Su questo motivo si fonda la creazione di una élite – il governo – che è dotata del potere decisionale a cui tutti coloro che hanno creato questa stessa devono obbedire.

L'unico modo per interrompere questa spirale viziosa è stabilendo la Legge che è considerata il vero pilastro fondante della società. Guglielmo Ferrero credeva che la storia della società fosse basata sul consenso sulle istituzioni e che se queste sono forti, gli uomini possono vivere liberamente. La politica ha quindi primato assoluto, esattamente come sostenuto dal Realismo.

Quindi, “Le due rivoluzioni francesi”, analizzando gli eventi di fine XVIII secolo che esemplificano tutte le rivoluzioni, è un mezzo utile per capire il periodo contemporaneo e per rispondere a domande come *“Perché i rivoluzionari, anche se ispirati da grandi ideali, hanno ucciso crudelmente? Perché le rivoluzioni finiscono sanguinosamente?”*.

Nonostante il sociologo italiano non si consideri un Realista, è chiaro come i due pensieri siano assimilabili a tale visione. Infatti, egli incentra le sue idee sulla ricerca sociologica e filosofica dell'animo e del comportamento umano, le ricerche di Mearsheimer sono sicuramente meno patetiche (nell'accezione greca antica di “emotivo”). Il Realismo Offensivo non è focalizzato sugli individui, ma sugli Stati come attore unitario. Infatti, le motivazioni della Rivoluzione Arancione del 2004 e della crisi del 2014 sono basate sulla disillusione derivata dalla corruzione dell'élite e sulla volontà di cambiamento da parte degli ucraini soggetti a un governo autoritario. Mentre Ferrero di questi eventi analizzerebbe i soggetti singoli della società ucraina, Mearsheimer pone l'attenzione non su cosa è accaduto internamente al paese, ma a come l'arena internazionale ha preso vantaggio della situazione e tutte le conseguenze e reazioni degli altri Stati di quel periodo di turbolenze, in particolare le risposte degli attori più importanti come l'Occidente.

Unendo entrambe le teorie per creare una analisi composita, si potrebbe quindi dire che la reazione russa nasce dalla *realpolitik* e bilancio dei poteri delle relazioni internazionali, ma che si può inoltre ipotizzare che la Russia ha agito con una azione molto forte come l'annessione per la paura di essere limitato e soggiogato dal ‘co-egemone’, gli USA. L'Occidente ha preferito quindi agire con il pugno di ferro, ipotizzando che

questo avrebbe spaventato così tanto Putin da arretrare, ma riprendendo il paradosso analizzato prima, la Russia non ha fatto altro che armarsi ancora di più. Quindi le considerazioni di Ferrero sono funzionali anche per analizzare i comportamenti tra Stati in quanto dietro a ogni decisione di politica estera ci sono diplomatici e leader che vivono le paure e pressioni analizzate dal sociologo. Il Realismo sostiene fortemente che ogni paese parla con una voce unitaria, ma questa stessa è la voce degli uomini e donne che sono per natura influenzati dalle emozioni e paure endemiche nella specie umana.

Per questa motivazione, con l'analisi della crisi ucraina, è fondamentale ricordarsi che i giochi di potere nella sfera internazionale sono fondamentali per capire i meccanismi che spingono ogni Stato ad agire e reagire. In conclusione, avendo analizzato tutti gli attori principali e le cause e conseguenze, si può evincere che l'annessione della penisola della Crimea non è stato altro che una risposta che dimostra la paura della Russia nei confronti delle pressioni per ampliare la sfera di influenza degli Stati Uniti e Unione Europea.