

UKRAINE, EU AND RUSSIA: SOFT POWER *VERSUS* REALPOLITIK?

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Abstract

The relationship between the European Union (EU) and Ukraine began in 1998 with the signature of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Afterwards, in 2003 Ukraine joined the European Neighbourhood Policy and in 2004 EU was already the major trade partner with Ukraine, bigger than Russia. Anticipating the approach of former soviet republics towards Euro Atlantic structures and the foreseen loss of influence in its near abroad, Putin's Russia launched in 2011 the Eurasian Economic Union, an economic bloc formed by some of the Russia's former satellite States - Belarus and Kazakhstan – and through a carrot and stick policy tried to attract also Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, in order to thwart the Chinese economic development and to impose itself in the regional and global markets. In November 2013, during the 3rd EU's Eastern Partnership Summit, in Vilnius, Lithuania, Ukraine's President, Viktor Yanukovich surprised the world refusing to sign the Commercial Agreement with EU, turning back to a EU possible integration. On the other hand, Russia offered to reduce the natural gas rates plus a fifteen billion dollars loan, throwing Ukraine in a *quasi* civil war, and leaving EU and Russia on opposite sides. Considering this situation what to expect from Ukraine? To continue being a Russian satellite or head towards the Euro Atlantic geopolitical space?

This paper intends to analyse the actual situation in Ukraine following Barry Buzan's approach of multidimensional security, focusing on the different postures assumed by each one of the actors - EU and Russia - which have been between complementarity and division. The scope of the analysis is to contribute to the academic debate about security dynamics between EU, Russia and Ukraine during the post-USSR period, arguing that in the geopolitical dispute for the post-soviet space where Ukraine is integrated, the Russian Realpolitik prevails the EU soft power.

Keywords:

Security; European Union; Eurasian Economic Union; Eastern Neighbouring Policy; Ukraine; Russia; *Realpolitik*

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Introduction

After its Independence in 1991, Ukraine, a natural Russian ally, chose to adopt a foreign policy favouring the West. The signature of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in 1998 with the EU formalized Ukraine's approach towards the EU shared values, and underlined EU's strategy to promote the region's stabilization and the security of its economical, commercial, and most of all, energetic projects (Barata, 2013: 158). Thus, Russia saw its near abroad shrink; in a clear threat to the maintenance of its heartland and contributing to high tension relationship between the parts involved (Feire, 2011: 92). Post-USSR Russia tries at all cost to maintain the region's domination because it allows them to gain strategic depth and to access deep-water ports¹.

In this new organization of the international system, the internationalization of the capital flows and of the national economies reached its plenitude², and new threats beside military ones arose changing security approach to a broader multidimensional concept, peculiar of The Copenhagen School³ led by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, where non military threats such as political, economical, environmental and societal are considered.

This paper aims to analyse EU, Russia and Ukraine relationship, considering Barry Buzan's multidimensional approach, observing the different postures they have been assuming, complementarity and division. The author argues that actual situation in Ukraine is due to the geopolitical dispute between EU's soft power and Russia's Realpolitik in its near abroad. Therefore, the following question will be answered: in which way will Russia and EU's actions in Ukraine shape the regional security dynamics?

¹ Georgia and Ukraine's independence confined Russia's access to Novorossiysk port in the Black Sea. Besides that, the best ports are in Georgia - Batumi, Poti and Ochamchire and in Ukraine - Odessa and Sevastopol.

² In North America we have assisted to the appearance of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) led by United States of America; in Europe, unified Germany links East and West; in the Pacific Japan's centralizes a huge influence area (Office of the United States Trade Representative, S/D).

³ According to Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen in *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, The Copenhagen School analyses threats and the objects of security, specially societal security, with particular attention to the regional level, focusing on securitization, i.e., in the social oriented process through which groups of people build something as a threat, increasing the security objects and therefore extending the security agenda (Buzan, B., Hansen, L., 2009: 36).



The paper is structured in the following parts: the first one analyses the situation in Ukraine since its Independence, focusing on its political and economical situation. The second part analyses EU's European Neighbourhood Policy, main goals and how it could be an option to Ukraine. After that, the opposing Russian project of establishing a Eurasian Economic Union will be analysed and how Moscow is trying to attract Ukraine towards this project. Finally, EU and Russia's relationship will be scrutinised in order to see if they can trigger or not stabilization to the current situation in Ukraine.

1. USSR breakup: *Quo Vadis* Ukraine?

The period after Ukraine's Independence in August 1991 brought the Ukraine identity assertion and the expectations of building a State model based on fundamental robust state institutions, on a market economy, far from the soviet model - i.e. legal power independence towards executive and judiciary power – on promoting the rule of law, freedom of press, free elections, and this way approaching the Western values heading to a sustainable development (Lutsevych, 2013: 2). However, reality showed to be slightly different, a real threat to political⁴, economical and energetic security:

Between 1991 and 1994 Ukraine was ruled by the semi-authoritarian regime of Leonid Kravchuk, a highly structured power hierarchy, meaning a Russian alike planned economy which led to a 50 % fall of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Wilson, 2013: 1), triggering new elections in 1994 and Leonid Kushma's election, who led Ukraine until 2004. Kushma's ten years of governance meant the emerging of elites - government and opposition – and a clan based with economic and financial power oligarquic political system, sometimes possibly connected to organized crime, capable of influencing the Ukrainian policies, and hampering structural reforms implementation towards development (Matuszak, 2012: 13)⁵. The year of 2004 brought some changes, as the troubled period after the allegedly fraudulent elections showed clearly that people wanted to change and to participate in Ukraine's future, in what was known as the "Orange Revolution". The elections opposed the Pro West⁶ Kushma's ex-prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko to the Pro Russia (and supported by) Viktor Yanukovych. The Revolution turned out to be less effective to reforms implement (Freire, 2008: 3). Yushchenko won, named Yulia Timoshenko as Prime-minister and opposing the Pro-Kremlin orientation the European option was still present in the Ukrainian foreign policy, in a bipolar *Janus*⁷ posture, hard to conciliate and achieve between one Ukraine facing East and another facing West, and very often these postures provoked tensions. Yushchenko's governance meant political instability and power struggling between the

⁴ Barry Buzan considers that political threats are a constant threat to the State, and the most difficult to identify – such as different ideologies competition or Nation attacks – although Buzan distinguishes between intentional, provoked political threats from the ones that arise structurally on result of external alternatives to States freedom (Buzan, 1991: 120).

⁵ An example is Rinat Akhmetov, known as the richest man in Ukraine and main financial supporter of Viktor Yanukovych's regime was till now a member of the Ukrainian parliament, in 2014 his businesses assured about e 31% of the Ukrainian state businesses and controls about 50 parliament member, with the privileges one can imagine. Another example is the natural gas magnate Dmitry Firtash, who with the Vice-Prime Minister heads the "Firtash Group" which includes about 30 parliament members (Lutsevych, 2014). Finally, Yanukovych's son, Oleksander Yanukovych, during his father's presidency between 2010 and 2013 assured about 50% of all Ukrainian state contracts. In 2007 his fortune was estimated in 24 million dollars, and in November 2013 about 770 million dollars (Grey, 2014).

⁶ Although not turning back Moscow.

⁷ Roman God of doors and windows, beginnings and endings, represented by two faces looking to opposite directions.



political elites⁸, and Tymoshenko's government fell in 2006, triggering new parliament elections, won by the Yushchenko-Yanukovich coalition, and the latter, for the rejoicing of Vladimir Putin, was appointed Prime-minister⁹. In 2007 after Yushchenko's call to new elections as a response to Yanukovich's attempt to diminish Prime-minister's powers and to resign Yushchenko, Ukraine fell in a new political crisis and Tymoshenko was re-elected.

The arrival of the global financial crisis to Ukraine in 2008 provoked a 14.8%¹⁰ fall of the Ukrainian GDP to the already weak Ukrainian economy, which was followed in the first three months by a 49% decrease on the exports and increase of the unemployment rate to values above 9% (Wilson, 2013: 8). Compounded with the economical situation, Tymoshenko's return to the government didn't mean political stability, and using statements like "*The Ukrainian awake for the people and not for the politicians*"¹¹ or "*Ukrainian course towards the integration on the Euro Atlantic structures is not an alternative to the building of relations with the Russian Federation*" in its foreign policy did not contributed to improve relations between Ukraine and Russia (Ukraine Government Portal, 2014).

The pressures that Moscow applied to Ukraine, namely increasing the gas rates and stopping pumping natural gas, putting into risk the Ukrainian economic and energy security¹² paved the way to the end of Yushchenko's presidency, and in February 2010 Yanukovich was elected Ukraine's new President, in a new turning West of Ukraine.

Besides economic and political issues, the identity of the populations is another factor that must be considered when analysing the security framework in Ukraine. Facing the political instability situation, and taking into account the historical legacy, the independence processes were used by the nationalists to highlight ethnic and social differences and to hamper state building and the definition of new borders (Simão, 2011: 44). We talk about threats to societal security, which Barry Buzan defined as threats to society identity – traditions, costumes, religions, language (Buzan et al

⁸ When in 2008 Tymoshenko returned to the government and directed the state funding to her party supporters - BYuT - Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko, leaving out some of the enterprises belonging the Party of Regions oligarchs. Therefore part of the Party of Regions with financial connections to Rinat Akhmetov, had to politically negotiate with the BYuT in order to assure the access to some of that funds. As a result, in 2008 some of that negotiations were initiated, with a coalition between the two parties, the revision of the Constitution and some changes in the political system which included the appointment of the President after the approval of the Parliament (Matuszac, 2012: 33).

⁹ "Putin congratulates Yushenko on ending stalemate". Disponível em: <http://morigin.rferl.org/a/1070390.html>, accessed in February, 7th 2014.

¹⁰ World Bank in <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG/countries/UA?display=graph> accessed on February, 7th 2014

¹¹ "Ukrainian breakthrough: for People, but not for Politicians" Available in http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/en/publish/article?art_id=106080712&cat_id=244315174. Accessed on February, 7th 2014

¹² Economic security of a State stands for the possibility to access to material, financial resources, as well as to different markets in order to ensure economic growth capable of financing state activities, and therefore it's population well being (Buzan, 1991: 445). Retarding development and budgeting financial dependence on foreign institutions like International Monetary Fund or World Bank may equal the incapability to provide basic well being needs to the populations (*Ibid*:446). Although energy doesn't appear in Barry Buzan's security approach it is a common issue to all the levels and dimensions - military, political, economic, societal – and therefore it's important to refer to it. Energy represents to States its guaranty to economic and sustainable vitality, and therefore, to its development allowing the States to use it as a political instrument. To this matter let us remember Barry Buzan's and Ole Weaver's words in "Region and Powers: the Structure of International Security "The main prize in the geopolitics of Central Asia and the Caucasus is control of the transportation of oil and gas. For some is about energy, for others mostly about the economic implications, to others again it is mainly a way to gain influence and/or preventing others from doing so" (Buzan,B., Weaver, O., 2003: 422).



1991: 433). On the other hand, and quoting Svante Cornell, this ethnicity has a political component, that the author classifies as “ethnicity politicization”, i.e., communities don’t accept, even reveal some hostility in being ruled by people from another ethnicity, and this feeling as in its base the fear from consequences that might occur, so, triggering nationalisms and adding instability to the region which easily can pour out borders and become a global threat (Cornell, 2011: 40-41). As an example one can observe the on going crisis in Ukraine and what happened with Crimea, which ended with a military intervention by Russian military forces as an excuse to defend the Russian population, as Russia did in 2008 *vis-à-vis* the Georgian autonomous republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The result is well known; a referendum was voted on March 16th 2014 by allegedly 96% of its inhabitants deciding to be integrated in Russia, before the fumbled look of the international community¹³.

2. EU, Ukraine, and the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy

The relationship between Ukraine and the EU was determined by the signature of the Eastern Partnership (ENP) in 1998¹⁴ (EUR-Lex, 2014), whose objective was the political dialogue, the development of commercial and economical relationship, and the implementation of state reforms. To Ukraine, ENP means cooperation with the European institutions, the liberalization of the economy towards a market economy, stimulating foreign investment and a sustainable development¹⁵. Besides, Ukraine was the first of the fifteen NIS of the former URSS to increment such a partnership, in 2003 embraced the ENP and from 2004 onwards, EU was already Ukraine’s largest commercial partner, including Russia (Freire, 2008: 17). The importante question is: will Ukraine be as relevant to the EU as the other states included in the ENP? Or it’s historical legacy, the proximity with Russia and the security concerns, particularly energetic, make this country a prime actor in the EU’s ENP? The answer is: Yes, Ukraine is a different partner. It is located in the main routes between Europe and Asia, it has frontiers with EU States but also NATO’s – Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania - consequently, strategically Ukraine is an important actor in EU’s security architecture.

EU looks eastwards as an area of opportunity to reinforce its economical and energetic securities, and implementing its politics of “softpower” tries to continue the cooperation at political, economical and secure levels, towards good administration, market economy and sustainable development. And, as a matter of fact, there are good reasons to do it. According to the European Commission, in 2012, EU represented the largest commercial partner to Ukraine – 33.7% of total imports and exports, followed by Russia with 21.6% (EC, 2013: 9). Regarding to the commercial flow inside the ENP, Ukraine was also the largest commercial partner to EU 58% of exports, followed by Belarus with 21% and 44% imports, next Azerbaijan with 39% (Eurostat, 2013).

¹³ In Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/16/us-ukraine-crisis-idUSBREA1Q1E820140316>, accessed on April, 3rd 2014.

¹⁴ Council and Commission Decision of 26 January 1998 on the conclusion of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part Disponível em: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:31998D0149>, accessed on April 4th 2014.

¹⁵ Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Their member states, and Ukraine. Available in <http://ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/downloadFile.do?fullText=yes&treatyTransId=659>



Concerning energy security, it's important to consider that the disintegration of the USSR brought to the political and economical international agenda the dispute for the energy resources, particularly natural gas and crude oil, adding a new chapter to what had once been referred to as "The Great Game"¹⁶ - the control of Eurasia (Barata, 2013: 18). EU has only 2% of the world's natural gas energetic reserves¹⁷, depending on oil imports for as much as 53.8% and 60.8% of that is relative to natural gas. According to the "Statistical Pocketbook 2012", if the tendency keeps up as from 1990, the level of dependency of oil imports in the EU will continue to grow¹⁸.

Russia exports to the EU, through Ukraine about 80% of its natural gas (Freire, 2008: 25). Natural gas delivery cuts to Ukraine in 2006 and 2009 imposed by Russia for allegedly failing to comply to the financial compromises, and in an effort to increase the involvement of Gazprom in the Ukrainian Naftohaz, with unwanted implications in some European States, such as happened in Germany, is a clear evidence of the EU's security vulnerability, as well as the politicization¹⁹ of energy by Russia, that considers its great energetic income a way to guarantee its economical and political stability²⁰. This existing energetic interdependence between Ukraine and Russia, and between Russia and the EU has contributed to the energy securitization²¹, adding additional uncertainties to that tripartite relation.

In March 2003, in the scope of the enlargement of the EU to twenty five, ENP was enforced (European Union Extended action Service, 2014), consolidating a new framework for the relations between the enlarged EU and the neighbouring Eastern countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldavia and Ukraine) and to the South (Algeria, Palestine Authority, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia), allowing a degree of economical integration and a deeper political relationship. Russia, though being a EU neighbour, is not part of the ENP countries²²,

¹⁶ The term "Great Game" is linked to Arthur Conolly. British Army Officer, used this term to describe the dispute between the British Empire and the Russian Empire for the Central Asia in the beginning of the XIXth Century (907). The term was first written in one of the two volumes he wrote about his military campaigns called – Journey to the North of India. Overland from England, through Russia, Persia and Afghanistan (British Empire, 2014).

¹⁷ In 1997 223.2 tons of Oil Equivalent were pumped representing about 12% of world reserves. The major part of these reserves are in Netherlands and Great Britain (European Commission GREEN PAPER - Towards a European strategy for the security of energy supply, 2000: 18).

¹⁸ In accordance with EU's report, since 2000 oil imports (in TOE) were the following: 532.76 in 2000, 600,37 in 2005 and 560,98 in 2010. Concerning natural gas the figures are the following: 192.53 in 2000, 257.29 in 2005 and 275,53 in 2010 (Statistical Pocketbook, 2012: 115).

¹⁹ An issue that is publically known and thus needs a governmental decision (Khrushcheva, 2011: 217).

²⁰ Later in 2009, Tymoshenko renegotiated the possible agreement with Russia which Ukraine was obliged to import per year about 52 billion cubic meters, and Russia would pay a small fee by the fact of using the Ukrainian pipelines (Shumylo-Tapiola, 2012). Ukraine pays one of the highest natural gas prices - 400 dollars for 1000 cubic meters, when, for instance Belarus pays 160 dollars (Ibid).

²¹ The term securitization was introduced by the Copenhagen School and is based on the speech-act. It assumes that exists a threat, an agent and a security object, and can be observed as the way a state (or agent) socially, builds up publicly an existing (or not) threat to its security which forces an immediate action beyond daily and routine political measures (Buzan, et al,1998: 23-24).

²² In accordance with the Russian Vice-Prime-minister in 2004 Vladimir Chizhov: "this [the ENP] is an attempt to reduce to the least common denominator groups of countries and individual states that are entirely different in their level of development and that, in addition to this, have different objectives with respect to the EU itself – objectives that are oftentimes incompatible with one another., "Russia is a large self-sufficient country with its own views on European and Euro-Atlantic integration. In contrast to some smaller Eastern European or South Caucasus countries striving for EU-membership Russia is neither a subject nor an object of the European Neighbourhood Policy". That is to say that Russia felt offended when was compared with other minor states like, for example Moldova or Morocco, and insisted that the bilateral relations between them should take into account the equal treatment between the two regions towards the strategic partnership (Haukkala, 2009: 2-3).



and its relations belong in the framework of a Strategic Partnership²³ (Ministerio das Finanças, 2010).

ENP allowed these new partners to participate in various EU activities, through the cooperation at a political level, in security and also in economic and cultural events. The objectives of that policy are evident in the Plans of Action and in the European Neighbourhood Accords established with each one of the neighbours, political documents that define the strategic objectives of the cooperation between neighbour countries and the EU and which contain a global list of priorities established in common grounds by each of the countries and the EU.

In 2009, during the Prague Summit, EU launched the initiative of Eastern Partnership²⁴ aiming to support Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldavia and Ukraine with their transition reforms and consolidation of democracy, promoting the gradual integration of the economy and concomitantly activating the citizens mobility, the political association and encouraging cooperation. This initiative is based on the principle "more for more – more support for more progress", and advocates as values the respect for human rights, the Rule of Law, democracy and the compromise to implement a market economy (European Council, 2013)²⁵.

In December 2012 EU defined as pre-requisites for the acceptance of the Agreement of Association with Ukraine, the implement of structural reforms, free elections according to the patterns of the West and the Independence of the three powers of the state: legislative, executive and judiciary. It was equally made clear that the fulfilment of this conditions gets Ukraine closer to a future possible integration, but does not imply, per se, full admission as a member of the European Union, (External Action Service, 2014c)²⁶. It does mean the politic of the three M's money, markets and mobility, and more resources when Ukraine needs more and better State, although without a promise of integration - membership. However this type of cooperation with Ukraine is seen by Russia as a threat to its regional interests, for an eventual integration of some of the participating States in the Euro-Atlantic structures - as in the case of Ukraine or Georgia – would remove them from its sphere of influence, which is understood by Russia as a clear strategy of seclusion²⁷.

From EU's point of view, its politic of softpower has a goal, to keep active its politic of neighbourhood, fundamental instrument for the European security architecture- in every dimension – in order to stay as an actor in the region. The remoteness of the Ukraine, the instability encroached in the Southern Caucasus, and the slowdown of reforms in Moldavia, deflate the influence of the EU in the region, strengthening the influence of Putin's Russia (Osica, 2013: 47).

²³ "The EU has a coherent European Neighbourhood Policy to direct relations with its eastern and southern neighbours. A Strategic Partnership based on four Common Spaces is the framework for relations with Russia, which is not part of the ENP." (European Commission, 2014).

²⁴ The Eastern Partnership (EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE (2014b)

²⁵ "Cimeira da Parceria Oriental prepara assinatura de acordos de associação", Available in: <http://www.european-council.europa.eu/home-page/highlights/eastern-partnership-summit-prepares-signing-of-association-agreements?lang=en>, accessed on February 13th 2014.

²⁶ Council Conclusions on Ukraine. Available in: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/134136.pdf

²⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski once said that Russia without Ukraine is a Nation-State but with Ukraine is an Empire. Charles Tannok in "Ukraine's path not taken" (2013). Available in: <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/charles-tannock-asks-why-ukraine-has-rejected-the-eu-and-considers-what-the-west-should-do-about-it#irTD40WiS0MjFLIw.99>, accessed on April. 5th 2014.



On the 3rd Summit of the Eastern Partnership in Vilnius effected in 28-29th November 2013 the EU aimed to review the process of integration of some of its partners in the Association Agreements and in the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement²⁸ among them Georgia and Moldavian though maintaining the negotiations with Ukraine present on the table²⁹. For that it was important to analyse if the pre-requisites defined in December 2012 had been complied, for they constitute condition *sine qua non* for the signing of the EU agreements. Facing the possibility of a postponement of the Commercial Agreement by Yanukovych one week before the beginning of the Vilnius Summit, the pro-Western voices initially pacific descended to the streets in Kiev attempting to press the Ukrainian President to rethink his decision and sign the agreement. However though shaken – Prime-minister Mykola Azarov resigned – Yanukovych resisted aligned with Russia and prays for this decision to guarantee a victory in the next presidential elections 2015 (Sarna, A., Wierzbowska-Miazga, A., 2013).

After two months of conflicts mainly centred in the capital, Kiev, and dozens of deaths, President Yanukovych and the opposition decided to negotiate a truce. At the moment the agreement mediated by EU's German and Polish Ministers of Foreign Affairs involved the formation of a government of national unity and the return to the 2004 Constitution; the reformulation of the powers of the President, Government and Parliaments; the summoning of presidential elections after the enforcement of the 2004 Constitution - never before December 2014 – the proceedings of an investigation to the acts of violence conducted by a team formed by the authorities, the opposition and the European Council; restraining violence by Ukrainian authorities and the opposition and, at last, the deliverance of every illegal weapons to the Minister of Internal Affairs (BBC, 2014).

In this triangle of relationship EU-Ukraine-Russia Ukraine lives internally pressed to take a decision about the line of integration that should be followed in a model, which is political and economically incompatible. Ethnical and political diversity³⁰ present between Russians (about 17.3%) pro-Eurasian Union, and Ukrainians (about 77.8%) pro-EU sets a challenge, which transcends economical and energy questions but should not be impeditive to achieve a cooperative solution to both ways – East and West.

²⁸ This agreement is included in the European neighbourhood Policy and aims to enlarge commercial relations with some partner states on a holistic approach and allow an integration of South Caucasus in the EU markets – facilitate customs mechanisms, decrease transaction taxes, among other measures (European Commission, 2012). Azerbaijan was out of this initiative once it doesn't belong to the World Trade Organization, a condition imposed by the EU to integrate DFCTA.

²⁹ Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan announced on September 3rd 2013 that integrating Eurasian Union was the option, what was considered by EU incompatible with the signature of the Association Agreements (European External Action Service, 2014d). In fact this position can be understood, Russia is its main economic trade partner and its security shield. Since May 1992 that Armenia member of the *Collective Security Treaty Organization* of CIS and since August 1997 that is linked to Russia through the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance – which foresees a Russian intervention in case of any attack to Armenia (Tamrazian, 2012). Referring to Azerbaijan, The ENP Vilnius Summit in November 2013 meant the signature of the facilitation visa agreement and EU underline that will pursuit towards the signature of the Association Agreements with Azerbaijan after its admission to the World trade Organization (Council of the European Union, 2013).

³⁰ Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Available in: http://ukrexport.gov.ua/eng/about_ukraine/population/ukr/179.html, accessed on April, 8th 2014.



3. The Eurasian Economic Union: towards Russian hegemony

In October 2011 during the presidential campaign, the yet Prime-minister Vladimir Putin proposed to create an economic bloc which would allow the regional integration of its member states, paving the way towards leadership in the global markets. To this bloc, based on the previous experiences acquired with the Community of Independent States (CIS), with the Eurasian Economic Community and with the Custom Union between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, Putin called the Eurasian Economic Union.

With this policy Russia intends to maintain control over the regional markets as well as to build a strong position in a region where its influence never ended. This build up has been possible through a close relationship with Belarus and Kazakhstan, and using Realpolitik³¹ of carrot and stick policy with Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. In Belarus case approach began in 1997 through the Russia-Belarus Union – Union of States³² after the year 2000. However, the fact that it doesn't have natural resources available to feed its industry, and therefore be dependent on Russian financing³³, leaving few alternatives to react to a possible Russian economy retraction, allowing its foreign policy to be controlled by Russia (Voloshin, 2012). Kyrgyzstan's case is different. Its energy reserves and strategic position linking Europe and Asia – right in the middle of Mackinder's Heartland³⁴ – allows Russia to promote its economic interests with the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, as well as to ensure its southern borders security. What about Ukraine?

Ukraine is a concern to Russia *vis-à-vis* Eurasian Economic Union's success. Its bipolar posture, divided between integrating Euro Atlantic structures and maintaining its linkage with Russia raises concerns to regional hegemony ambition from Moscow's government. In first place because since early ages of Empress Catherine II that Ukraine has an important Russian naval base in the Crimea Peninsula - Sevastopol – which allows Moscow to maintain its presence in the Black Sea and its southern borders security. This importance was clear when in 2010 Russia and Ukraine announced that they were negotiating renewal of the leasing contract signed in 1997 and which would expire in 2017. The main goal was to extend the contract for more twenty five years, until 2042, and on the other hand Ukraine's natural gas rates would be reduced to 30% of the market value, as Ukraine assumed to increase annually its gas imports from 2011 and ahead to 40 million cubic meters³⁵ (Martins, V., Conde, P., 2010). Maintaining Sevastopol's leasing Russia intended to block any aspiration towards a NATO membership, once NATO would not accept to have a member in the Alliance, which integrates, in its territory a Russian military base with the Black Sea Fleet. This issue was definitely solved (think so) when in last February 2014, on conclusion of three months of riots centred in Kiev pro-EU protesters and security forces, under the banner of Russian population protection, Russian troops entered Crimea and in a few

³¹ Realpolitik it's a term that was coined in the XIXth century, revisited by Henry Kissinger in the XXth century and expresses the policy and diplomacy of the states based on power and practical aspects instead of moral, ethical and ideological aspects.

³² Available in: <http://mfa.gov.by/en/courtiers/russia/>, accessed in April, 4th 2014.

³³ In Putin promised a 4 million dollars loan to the Belarusian government paving its economical dependence (Voloshin, 2012).

³⁴ Halford Mackinder argued in *The Geopolitical Pivot of History* that heartland, where Eurasian continental masses meet is the fulcrum of all major geopolitical transformations that occurred in the World's Big Island. This geographic uniqueness gives political advantage; therefore, the one who rules the heartland would rule the World's Big Island, and the planet (Mackinder, 1904).

³⁵ More than in 2009 and in 2010 (Chow, 2010).



days took control of government buildings, military bases and airports, and on March, 24th 2014 integrated Crimea in Russia. Secondly, because the Ukrainian energy market represents 46 million of potential consumers, and because Ukraine stands in most of the energy routes to Europe, as for historical reasons Poland and the Baltic States are out of the question regarding energy transportation³⁶ (Voloshin, 2012). Finally, it is important to underline that Russia is an Ukraine's economic partner: in 2012 represented about 26% of total exports and 33% of total imports (World Trade Organization, 2013), inside CIS Ukraine represents 38% of foreign Russian investment, and this geo-economics space represents 40% of total Ukrainian exports, therefore it shouldn't be wise to be hostile towards Ukraine (Fânzeres, 2013).

Ukraine's integration in the Eurasian Economic Union represents a one third reduction on natural gas rates, which will be reviewed by Moscow (i.e. Gazprom) each four months, and a 15 billion dollars loan to be paid in three years (Reuters, 2014). This means that when the West waves with money for reforms, Russia offers money expecting subduing and to endure a strong dependence (Sherr, 2013: 4).

4. UE-Rússia: division or ou complementarity?

Nowadays we assist to EU and Russia rivalry, and it is possible that this rivalry will increase in the following years, endangering twenty years of partnership existing since 1994³⁷, despising 500 million possible consumers market, and making believe that in the near future division will place complementarity, shaping regional's security architecture.

On one hand, because Russia will continue to influence Ukrainian political elites in order to keep away a possible Euro Atlantic structures membership, risking possible sanctions as a retaliation to some politics that would endanger its influence in its near abroad. The rest, Prime-minister Dmitry Medvedev made it clear to Mykola Azarov – Ukrainian Prime-minister - in the beginning of November 2013 that the chances to sign the Association Agreement with EU were null, because, otherwise Ukraine will have to begin paying in advance its natural gas supply. Besides that, Russia will demand the payment of all existing debts at the moment, and therefore, would be better to start financing its energy needs with the EU (Havlik, 2013). On the other hand, because Ukraine has a strong economic dependence on Russia, and besides that, Crimea's integration in Russia at the eyes of a disbelieving international community clearly, clearly showing power, deteriorated the already tense relations between EU and Ukraine. Meanwhile Putin acts in accordance to Colin Gray's statement: "the exercise of continuous influence or control requires the physical presence of armed people in the area at issue"

³⁶ Poland's territory suffered from Russia (with Prussia and Austria) three divisions during the XVIIIth Century (1772, 1793 e 1795). Later, in September 1939, at the beginning of World War Two, Russia invaded Poland again (Cienciala, 2004). Referring to the Baltic States, few states know Russia better, once during hundreds of years they were part of the Russian Empire, and subdued by the Soviet Union for 50 years (Economist, 2014).

³⁷ In was initiated the Cooperation Partnership Agreement (1994 Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA)).



(Kaplan, 2013: 33)³⁸, the international community, in particular the West answers with economic and diplomatic sanctions, which, at the moment, don't seem to be effective³⁹.

What can one expect from EU, turning back or proceed in order to achieve its strategic interests?

The decision would be to reinforce its presence in the East, and for that should ensure international financing to the in charge Ukrainian government, showing that it opposes to Russian politicization of the natural gas prices. At the same time EU should rethink its policies concerning democracy development, rule of law and security in order to achieve a stable and secure neighbourhood which will allow to, together with its partners, collect benefits from this common space (Dempsey, 2014). For that, time is on its side, and that was perfectly clear in Herman Van Rompuy's, President of the European Council, statement at the Security Conference last 1st of February in Munich: "Our biggest carrot is our way of life; our biggest stick: a closed door". (Conselho Europeu, 2014). For the EU will be important to maintain Ukraine's Association Agreement signature as a strategic goal which will allow the access to new markets where 46 million of consumers stand⁴⁰, as well as access to new resources, in particular energy ones, and a key geographic position towards Central Asia and Middle East. Therefore EU should look forward to be next to Ukraine, instead of trying to get answers to the reason why Ukraine didn't sign the agreement last November during the Vilnius Summit. The summit showed that EU should rethink its strategy towards the Eastern Partnership, including Russia, and promoting cooperation in areas such as trade and mobility (Popescu, 2014: 4).

Conclusions

Ukrainian's President decision of not signing the Association Agreement with the EU during the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius brought up the fragilities of Kiev's regime, and at the same time, showed Putin's intention to project power to the region maintaining the Russian influence on a geopolitical space that was always considered its near abroad.

Last February, 20th 2014 the signature of an agreement between Yanukovych, at the time the Ukrainian President, and the Ukrainian opposition brought to an end months of demonstrations and conflict, specially in Kiev, that arose in late November 2013. The completion of one and every point of the agreement, in particular those referring to the presidential elections will mark an important moment on Ukraine's future and on its relations either with Europe and Russia.

For Ukraine, government instability, deficient social policies, fragile and highly dependency on Russia economy, corruption indexes, and elite politicization - government and opposition – have been provoking divisions in the society, which have been spreading all over the eastern parts of Ukraine, specially in the regions with bigger Russian expression, such as Donetsk, Luhansk and, Karkhiv, showing the

³⁸ Colin S.Gray in Robert D. Kaplan "The Revenge of Geography".

³⁹ As a response to the economic sanctions Putin's Russia (GAZPROM) answered with a pike on the natural gas rates. During the week of 31st of March to 6th of April natural gas rates increased 40% (Reuters, 2014b).

⁴⁰ In accordance with the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, available in: <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/>, accessed in 6th of April 2014.



presence of non-military threats, such as political, economic, societal and energy threats.

Competition between EU and Russia for the post-soviet space where Ukraine lies has been shaping security dynamics in the region in its several dimensions, in what is already considered as The New Cold War after *Perestroika*. For EU, Ukraine, strategically located in the major trade and energy routes to Central Asia, is an important economic partner and constitutes a key player in EU's security architecture. However, EU's soft power has been quite ineffective. In face of the entrance of thousands of Russian militaries in Crimea, occupying governmental buildings, military bases and airports, EU in particular (the international community in general) answered with diplomacy and economic sanctions to Putin's Russia.

Russia is and it will continue to be an important economic partner to Ukraine, specially concerning energy security. Though it is probable that Russia will continue to pressure Ukraine to increase its flux trades eastwards in order to get lower gas rates, if not be prepared to suffer consequences - economic blockades or energy cuts – one should not neglect EU's pressures waving with more for more. As a way to block the Euro Atlantic intentions eastward, Russia promoted the Eurasian Economic Union, in a clear intention to expedite trade relations and free circulation and markets with its neighbours, in a quasi-empire trade policy of carrot and stick where each one of the participating States only approves the decisions already taken by Moscow. However it is paramount to this project that Russia be able to keep Ukraine on its influence sphere in order to definitely avoid an Ukrainian turning towards Europe, which will mean the regional game over to Russia in a clear threat to its interests in its preferential space of influence. Eurasian Economic Union implementation will allow Russia to aspire regional hegemony, twenty years after the falling of the Soviet Empire and will do everything to achieve it. Till this moment, Russian Realpolitik has been directed to energy securitization, but one should not neglect military securitization as well.

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