

CRIMEA – THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Andreea-Ioana Cozianu*

Abstract: *The present approach studies the probability of the decomposition of the current international geopolitical system in the context of the EU's socio-economical and political stagnation. We do not intend to say that European Union represents the determinant factor for the system's decomposition, since we have not found EU as a major player on the International Relations arena, but we are more pointing out that EU's dream to recover a lost greatness will not so soon fulfil. We also intend to refer to those elements that actually connect EU to a changing world: competitive human resources engaged in the market economy, and hardly its values, like the promotion of the human rights and democracy. So, is it possible to play by the rules and be regarded as a powerful player on the same time?! International Relations system diversity makes it almost impossible. (Neo)Liberal concepts like "democratic peace" or "international institutions", the promotion of the human rights and of democracy get pale in the face of a reality dominated by an emerging Russian Federation that plays by the (Neo) Realism power commandments. And so we get to deal with the Ukrainian situation where to each Western sanction, The Russian Federation opposes a "tank".*

Keywords: Crimea; European Neighbourhood Policy; (Neo)Realism versus (Neo)Liberalism; Russia as an emerging power; the value of the international interdependence; the new international actors on IR scene.

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INTRODUCTION

After the end of the Cold War, researchers agreed that the international relations system was in transition, but they could not actually predict its evolution or future structure. Daniel Biro (Miroiu, Ungureanu, 2006) explained the heterogeneity of the international system as being caused by the coexistence and the competition of different logics regarding the political and economic organization and the development of the foreign policy. For a while United States ruled the international scene, and I believe that the main consequences of US hegemony were related to the increased relevance of the technology of communication, the internet, and with a consistent decrease of the borders importance, that lead to a more and more significant role of a variety of actors but states on the international arena.

Yet, 2008 announced the end of this hegemony, due to an economic crises started by the crash of the American banking system. We almost can say that US lost it on its own liberal game. Meanwhile, concepts like "democratic peace", "global governance", "state rebuilding / reconstruction" have been put to work, making Neoliberalism like the ultimate star on the

* Stefan cel Mare University, Romania; e-mail: ioana.cozianu@yahoo.com.

International arena. Based on Neoliberalism principles, US highly contributed to the economical rehabilitation of the former Soviet Union, mainly because a drifting Russian Federation would have endangered the integrity of the whole world. The economic help mission succeeded, since the Russian Federation is among the fast growing economies in the world. Yet, the money proved to have no smell / “added value”, because they only seemed useful for the economic recovery, while having no effect what so ever on the evolution of the Russian (democratic) political system. So, now, the emerging Russian Federation is logically reaffirming its traditional position within the global order by claiming territories on liberal grounds: the protection of the human rights of their Russian citizens, and their right to choose freely their destinies.

I believe we once more assist to a paradigm’s clash, an epic fight between the (Neo)Liberalism and the (Neo)Realism, but in a twisted way, where Russian Federation acts in a Rational fashion while invoking Liberal arguments.

1. RUSSIA AS AN EMERGING POWER

In a world where states theoretically agreed upon the importance of supporting human rights and the principles of democracy, and “sealed” the *status quo* within all sorts of treaties, while establishing guardians – international institutions for its protection; an economic and power position winning solution would be to let others do it, play by the rules, while the emerging state is banding the rules, giving the least of attention to the promotion of human rights or democracy. Such attitudes would only stay in the way of the economical progress, which leads to a preeminent power position on the international arena in the 21st century. Sometimes, playing by the rules might reflect the impossibility of doing it in any other way, as it is the case of the European Union, whose cohesion relays on sticking to the common values, or else.

Getting back to The Russian Federation, based on Ann C. Logue (2014) “Russia is the world’s largest country in terms of land and has an emerging market to match, although it doesn’t have as much foreign investment as many other emerging markets.” The Telegraph, in an article by Liam Halligan (March, 2008), headlined: “Russia is emerging as a global economic giant”, while continuing with an apologetic analyses: “Goldman Sachs describes Russia's economic performance as "remarkable". UBS calls it "awesome". Russia, India, China and the other large emerging markets are upending the world economic order. Their resurgence has created hundreds of billions of dollars of wealth and lifted tens of millions from poverty.” The author, who was the Chief Economist at Prosperity Capital Management, thought that whoever criticized Russian Federation

style, as it was the case of Hillary Clinton, “is nothing but a small-minded reaction to this rapidly shifting balance of global power” [...] Western politicians struggle to adjust to these new realities - particularly when it comes to the old "Cold War" enemy.”

In 2009, Andrew E. Kramer reported in the New York Times (June, 2009) that “the leaders of the four largest emerging market economies discussed ways to reduce their reliance on the United States at their first formal summit meeting”, in Yekaterinburg, Russia. The prediction regarding the four countries, China, Russia, India and Brazil, indicate that by the middle of this century, a surpass of the current leading economies while producing a tectonic shift, and dethroning United States and Western Europe from the center of world’s productivity and power. It is hard to think that such a change will leave no marks on the values’ system, and accordingly on the behavior and attitudes. At this very (first) meeting, Dmitri A. Medvedev, the Russian president, believed that meeting’s main aim could be to point out that “the BRIC should create conditions for a more just world order”.

In 2011, OECD ordered a study that focused on the *Inequality in Emerging Economies*: “Emerging countries are playing a growing role in the world economy. It is a role that is expected to be even greater in the future. It is important, therefore, that any comprehensive assessment of inequality trends worldwide considers the emerging economies. This chapter discusses inequality patterns and related issues in the biggest emerging economies. It begins with a brief overview of such patterns in selected countries, before going on to examine in greater detail the main drivers of inequality. The following section outlines the key features and challenges of underlying institutional settings. Finally, the chapter sets out some key policy challenges that the emerging economies need to address to improve income distribution and curb inequalities, while promoting more and better jobs.”

So, the Rationalist theory of the “Prisoner’s Dilemma” is efficiently put to work when it comes to achieve high economic growth by transgressing the rules agreed upon at the international level.

2. THE VALUE OF THE INTERNATIONAL INTERDEPENDENCE

Based on Liam Halligan (Telegraph, March, 2008), “Russia is now far more than "just an oil and gas economy". Retail sales are growing at around 13 per cent a year in real terms - one reason why leading multi-nationals are now piling into Russia. Construction is expanding by 16 per cent a year, and domestic investment by 20 per cent - as Russia rebuilds its shattered post-Soviet infrastructure. Again, this trend is now attracting massive - and welcome - foreign investment.”

Though, at approximately one year difference (2009), Medvedev, suggested that Western aid, and the dependency on the two foreign coins, the Dollar and Euro, should be removed from the BRIC's economies as much as possible, during Yekaterinburg meeting, in Russia. The Russian Federation was building not only its economic emergence, but its old international statute as well with the help of all the interested parties, either Western or fellow emerging countries that it seemed to favour.

So, the 2014 Ukrainian international crisis revolves around old topics, like territorial claims, and the display of military power, and around new ones, like the race for conventional energy resources – oil and gas. But the crisis is hardly a spontaneous one. In my opinion it is the result of a meticulously planned Russian scenario that was not kept hidden during this time, but displayed with all occasions, yet taken lightly by the Western powers, which treated Russian political class condescendingly, as if it was in a clumsy attempt for gaining image and Russians' sympathy – an often used way in the democratic societies of moving people attention from the more pressing issues: poverty, unemployment, corruption and misuse of funds etc. In all this time, Western powers were quite sure that The Russian Federation is dependent of the Western capital and other resources, like the agricultural ones. But when the conflict between Ukraine and The Russian Federation broke, “some countries balk at punitive measures that could hurt their own economies” explains Ian Talley, in the *The Wall Street Journal* (10th of April 2014). But the G7 meeting did not have the expected outcome regarding the administration of sanction to The Russian Federation: “Despite weighing further punitive measures, the brief G-7 statement after the meeting made no mention of sanctions, underscoring the difficulty of reaching consensus.” (Talley, I. 2014). The Ukrainian Minister of Finance, Oleksandr Shlapak got very disappointed with the inappropriate result, and I believe he actually felt betrayed by his country protectors and international law warrants. Pier Carlo Padoan – The Finance Minister of Italy explained, before the G7 Meeting, that: “The degree of economic interdependence between the countries involved is so high today that it would be ultimately disruptive in ways we cannot measure with accuracy if sanctions were to move forward”. But The Russian Federation seems to be more prepared for the economic crises than its Western homologues, since it does not hurry towards a diplomatic solution. Lubomir Mitov, one of the highest ranked economists from the Institute of International Finance thinks that Europe will be pushed back into recession if Vladimir Putin's threats of cutting off oil and gas exports come true; but the economist sugars his prediction, by stating that “it wouldn't be as deep as Russia's" given Moscow's reliance on energy revenues”. In the economic war of the 21st Century, the question is who will be hit harder in order to give up for now.

3. EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

Would the crisis started if the European Union did not push so hard on the Ukraine admission as associated state to the European Union as part of the *European Neighbourhood Policy* and *Eastern Partnership Initiative*?

Olga Shumylo-Tapiola (2013) believes that “a real discussion of the EU’s interests in Ukraine that moves beyond generalities may help member states avoid further frustrations and help the EU get more out of its relations with Kyiv.”

EU’s interest for Ukraine started with the “Orange Revolution”, in 2004, when Ukraine did no longer seemed to be so far from the EU’s values, principles and system, and so close to The Russian Federation and its economic and political practices. But “many policy decisions are very much driven by individual member states and their often divergent national interests.” (Olga Shumylo-Tapiola, 2013)

An explanation would be the ring of security and democracy states around The European Union, as part of the policy scenario from 2003 European security strategy. Yet, a more pragmatic scenario shows Poland, Lithuania together with other (Sweden, Finland) member state of the EU, as directly interested in Ukraine association to EU, based on the geographical and linguistic proximity, which pointed Ukraine as a potential market, and a ramp for these states’ economic revival.

But European Union was pushed into two different directions, and this became obvious when Ukraine did not sign the Association Agreement with European Union. For the Euro-conservatives, a way to preserve and insure EU’s security was to no longer force the association or integration of new countries, in order to reach EU’s economic strength and social cohesion, unless those states fully fitted the bill. In the current events light, “Ukraine is significant for the entire EU (EU27) in terms of political stability, security, and energy-related matters.” (Olga Shumylo-Tapiola, 2013)

CONCLUSIONS

Paraphrasing the former Russian President, Mr. Medvedev, I presume that a “more just world order” is materializing now in Ukraine, from a Russian perspective. I believe that the conflict was premeditated, and meticulously prepared by the Russian Federation during the past decade, and EU’s pressure on the Ukraine’s agreement regarding the association to EU was only a good pretext for the Russian Federation to act in the name of the human rights’ protection of the Russian ethnics from Ukraine. The troops movements show a Russian Federation that is not actually willing to

reach a compromise, but to gain more time to get to the perfect international relations conjuncture for a fully power position on the international arena.

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