

Revisiting the Ukraine crisis: realist reflections on causes and consequences

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Abstract

This paper presents a realist reflection on the crisis in Ukraine from the perspective of the Western powers, in particular, that of the United States. Its theoretical argumentation is built on the basis of thoughts of contemporary realist minded scholars and geopoliticians, but, concomitantly, criticizes the contradictory nuances in their approaches. The paper analyses the consequences of the Ukraine crisis as an accomplishment from the Western point of view and diverges from other realist scholars who consider it as a mistake of the West. It argues that the United States has successfully completed its geopolitical mission concerning Ukraine by breaking it away from Moscow's sphere of influence, therefore, now it can seek to de-escalate tensions with Russia over Ukraine and re-direct its focus on other threats, such as the rise of China.

Keywords: Geopolitical Realism, the Ukraine Crisis, EU, United States, Russia

Introduction

This paper is drawn on the conviction that “Geopolitics will remain relevant as long as individual states and their associations continue to be the principal actors on the world arena” (Trenin, 2001, p. 29). Here the term “geopolitics” refers to the belief that the interaction between geography and power determines all the international relations. This theoretical stance underpinned by the realist premises of international relations provides some useful tools to comprehend the rationale of the abrupt breakout of the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent escalation of tensions between Russia and West (i.e. the European Union and the United States). Not many Western political analysts and politicians recognize that the driving forces of the West – Russia confrontation over Ukraine are primarily geopolitical and as such have little to do with the personality of the leaders (Sperling, 2015), the inaccurate perceptions of each other's intentions of the conflicting sides (Rieker *et al.*, 2016), differences in values (Burnell, 2010; Krastev, 2014) or regime preferences (Smith, 2015). Besides, most of those, who have done it, have failed to capture the whole picture and blamed only one of the conflicting sides for geopolitically motivated foreign policy making (Wilson, 2014; Götz, 2015;

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Rutland, 2015; Raik, 2016), while only a few scholars have produced more objective analyses (Müllerson, 2014).

The paper argues that the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis and the events that led to it were significantly affected by the geopolitical ambitions of Russia and the Western powers. Hence, the paper follows the analysis of John Mearsheimer (2014), one of the leading advocates of structural realism, who argues that Russia is not the only player to be blamed on the eruption of the Ukraine crisis. However, it questions the background of the West's role in this geopolitical event: Was the Ukraine crisis really a mistake the West had made, as many observers, including Mearsheimer (2014) and Henry Kissinger (2014) suggested? Or was its inception a well-thought and ultimately successful geopolitical strategy by the Western powers to force back Russia's attempts to reinstate its hegemony over the neighbouring post-Soviet countries? If so, what can be expected to be observed in the West's impending policies concerning Ukraine and Russia?

This study is conducted on the basis of the analytical logic of structural realism which is one of the most influential and sophisticated approaches to the international politics (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). The anarchic system of international politics is chosen as the independent variable and regarded as objective reality out there which is distinct from the observer. The lack of overarching supranational Leviathan in the system urges its actors to act in accordance with the rule of self-help and survive in the hostile environment of the international relations. The behaviours of the great powers in this environment, their ambitions to maximize their power and security, and their corresponding policies to achieve this goal constitutes the dependent variable of the study. The exploration of the causal relationship between the two variables allows the study to identify the sources of the West - Russia rivalries over Ukraine and the geopolitical outcomes of the recent crisis. The paper is to build its empirical argumentation by analysing a wide range of sources, particularly in the academic literature, but also the publications of think-tanks, official documents, and news media articles.

The paper proceeds as follows: The next section, discussing the combination of the premises of structural realism and classical geopolitics, is to build a theoretical framework for the study. This is to be followed by a brief discussion on the recent historical background of the West – Russia rivalries over the countries that constitute the “common neighbourhood” between the European Union and Russia: Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. The section serves the aim of briefly depicting the geopolitical context in which the Ukraine crisis flared up in early 2014. The two sub-sections in this section assess the sources and some consequences of the crisis from the perspective of geopolitical realism. The paper ends with a short conclusion.

1. Theoretical Framework

The analysis of this paper is based on the realist understanding of the international political system and the relationships within it. Realism posits that states, particularly the great powers, are the most important and influential actors in the anarchic structure of the international political system. Under the circumstances of the absence of an overarching global authority, states are primarily concerned about their security in the inherently hostile environment of international relations (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 13). Realism underscores the struggle for power and survival as the underlying motivation of states' behaviours in the international sphere. Notwithstanding the fact that the sources of this struggle are calibrated in different ways by realist scholars, they come to terms in the interpretation of it as the guiding principle of international relations. Realism, particularly structural realism, of which one of the most prominent advocates is John Mearsheimer who has regularly commented on the Ukraine crisis, treats states as "billiard balls" and singles out the impact of their internal structures on foreign policy (Waltz, 1979). According to realism, states are concerned about the distribution of relative power capabilities in the system and are particularly focused on the relative gains. They act with the "zero-sum game" logic in their approaches to the changes in the balance of power (Powell, 1991).

Realism and geopolitics are inherently connected. Geopolitics dictates that the geographic location of a country, its topography, resources and capabilities define its policies and place in the structure of international politics. This approach is, academically, based on the conviction that the methods of natural sciences are applicable also in the social sciences. It regards the international system and the relationships within the system as objective reality and does not pursue a critique of them. Instead the objective in this case is to explore solutions to the immediate problems within the system and between the actors therein.

From the standpoint of the combination of structural realism and classical geopolitics the great powers seek to dominate their neighbourhood. The encroachment of rival powers into the neighbourhood tends to be treated as a direct threat to the national interests of the regional powers. Shaping the immediate external environment according to its own interests is *sine qua non* in order to ensure the great power status and take part in great power politics. The states that dominate their region continue to seek to maximize their power and security by expanding their sphere of influence and inhibiting rival hegemonic states from "their" region. This struggle might allow states to become the unchallenged hegemon in a certain region. However, the scope of the prizes this struggle promises is bounded. Realist scholars agree that no great power has ever been able or is likely to be able to become a global hegemon anytime soon due to the "stopping power of water" (Mearsheimer, 2001).

This is why undermining the emergence of a regional hegemon overseas, not evolving to global hegemony, is considered as the uppermost objective for the regional hegemons. The “fear that a rival great power that dominates its own region will be an especially powerful foe that is essentially free to cause trouble in the fearful great power’s backyard” (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 41-42) urges the regional hegemon to seek to prevent others from dominating their respective regions.

2. The Transatlantic Alliance and Russia: Continued Rivalries over the “Common Neighbourhood”

The fall of the Soviet empire in the early 1990s opened the doors of the Central/Eastern European and South Caucasian countries, which had hitherto been dominated by Russia, to an influx of geopolitical influence of the Western powers. In a relatively short period of time most of the post-communist countries in the region became members of the European Union and NATO. The eastward expansion of NATO’s sphere of influence changed the balance of power in Europe substantially. In the 1990s, Russia could only miserably observe this process due to the dramatic decline of its military and economic capabilities. Russia was also ignored as an influential international actor and treated as a defeated, declining, and secondary power by the Western states. Russia was consistently side-lined and never accepted as an equal power in the Western military and political structures. The cooperation between the two sides in the form of Russia’s participation in NATO’s Partnership for Peace initiative (1994), the signing of the NATO – Russia Founding Act (1997), and eventually the establishment of the NATO – Russia Council (2002) were of a relatively minor significance. Meanwhile the borders of the Alliance reached the countries of the former Soviet Union, which are presently known as a “common neighbourhood” between Russia and European Union – Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine. The NATO leaders, especially the United States, were not willing to stop there. Instead they declared their support to the integration of the regional post-Soviet states into the Alliance. This coincided with the resurgence of Russia from the misery of the 1990s and its regaining of international prominence. The rising Russia launched its own integration projects to offer to the regional post-Soviet countries as an alternative to the Western military and political structures. The most prominent one of those Russian projects was the Eurasian Economic Union which was seen by the Western leaders as an attempt to “re-Sovietize the region” (Radio Free Europe & Radio Liberty – RFE&RL, 2012). They regarded it as a dangerous development and vowed to take effective measures “to slow down or prevent it” (RFE&RL, 2012).

The collusion of the geopolitical interests of the two powers provoked one of the most intense confrontations in the modern international political system. For the Kremlin, its southern neighbours,

particularly Ukraine and Belarus, are of supreme geostrategic significance and losing them to rival powers would pose a serious existential threat to Russia. The fact that these countries are situated less than 500 kilometres away from the Russian capital and they border Russia's industrial hubs considerably raise their importance for the Russian strategists. Although they are not in the equally vital interests of the European Union and are even of lesser importance for the United States, these two Western powers have since the early 1990s sought to acquire control over them. The acquisition of this control was regarded as highly important to push Russia further eastward and avert its possibility to re-emerge as a great power challenging the West's interests in Europe and in the wider region. The United States, being itself a regional hegemon in the Western hemisphere and lacking the necessary power resources to become a global hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 40; Hyde-Price, 2007, pp. 44-45), demonstrated a determined desire to prevent Russia from becoming a hegemonic power in its neighbourhood. These conflicting objectives of the two rival geopolitical centres constituted the rationale of their integration projects which addressed the "common neighbourhood" countries, which aggravated the mutual confrontation and pushed the sides to the brink of a military clash. Crimea's annexation, the violent instability in Eastern Ukraine, and the ongoing international crisis over Ukraine took place in this geopolitical context.

2.1. The Ukraine Crisis

Ukraine, the largest country located entirely in Europe, comprises the most important territories in the "common neighbourhood" from the geopolitical point of view. Up to Crimea's annexation, Ukraine hosted one of Russia's two warm water ports – the Black Sea Fleet base which was founded in the late 18th century – in Crimea (the other one is located on the Mediterranean coast of Syria). Ukraine is a country without which Russia's plans to re-integrate the post-Soviet countries under the Eurasian Union would lose most of its value. Therefore, it has been the primary target of Russia's integration projects invariably. Master minds of geopolitics have commonly assigned a very high importance to this former Soviet country. Zbigniew Brzezinski's (1994, p. 80) famous dictum that "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire" is a prominent example. This geopolitical reality outweighed all the other spheres of bilateral relations between the West and Russia when the two sides' interests met at loggerheads over Ukraine.

Russia first came to see geopolitical nightmare of losing Ukraine to the West coming true prior to the presidential elections in 2004. The elections had turned out to be a race between the two geopolitical foes impersonated by the two leading candidates – Russia-supported Viktor Yanukovich

and the West-supported Viktor Yushchenko. The two sides spared no effort to back their respective candidate in the elections. Eventually, the Orange revolution, in which both Russia's and West's interference is widely documented (Traynor, 2004; Beissinger, 2007; Brucker, 2007; Lane, 2009; Wapinski, 2014, p. 49) – brought Yushchenko to power. The Western influence over Ukraine reached its highest level historically during Yushchenko's presidency. He was a passionate supporter of the Euro-Atlantic integration and a determined opponent of Russia's influence over his country. President Yushchenko made a series of moves to gradually minimize Russian influence over Ukraine. Towards this end, he made a decision that arguably stripped the sleep of the Russian political elite for a while: Kiev refused to launch the negotiations on the extension of Russia's deployment of the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea which was to expire in 2017 and required the Kremlin to withdraw its forces by the end of that year. On the other hand, Yushchenko requested NATO to grant membership to Ukraine, which, if had happened, might have brought NATO to Crimea and to other strategically important Ukrainian territories. The countries present at the Bucharest summit of the Alliance in 2008, having the support of the United States, came very close to granting the Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Ukraine and Georgia. Although this did not happen due to the opposition of France and Germany, the alliance declared that "These countries will become members of NATO" (The Official Website of the NATO, 2008).

However, Yushchenko's incapability to act efficiently in internal politics inhibited him to realize his plans in the foreign sphere. His pro-Western approach failed to meet the expectations of the Orange revolution (Kuzio, 2011). The revolution did not end the influence of the oligarchic groups on the Ukrainian politics, the economy did not mark a noteworthy growth, the unemployment rate further increased, and against this background the popularity of President Yushchenko plummeted to 4% towards the end of his term (Wapinski, 2014, p. 59). The disillusionment of the Ukrainian people with the Orange government resulted in an electoral loss for Yushchenko in the 2010 presidential elections which was won by Viktor Yanukovich. Yanukovich reversed most of the moves of his predecessor in foreign policy. Most importantly, in 2010, Ukraine's new Law on Foreign and Domestic Policy adopted the so-called non-aligned status in international sphere, prohibited the participation in military alliances, and thus ruled out the accession to the transatlantic alliance (Law of Ukraine: About the fundamentals of domestic and foreign policy, 1 July 2010). This was a fundamental change to the 2003 Law on the Fundamentals of National Security which had declared NATO membership as the country's foreign policy goal.

During his presidency, Ukraine reached an agreement with Russia on the stationing of the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea. Kiev extended the contract until 2042 in return for a 100\$ discount in gas imports (Shapovalova, 2014, p. 252). This extension was another move that was meant to prevent Ukraine's

NATO membership, as this *de-facto* limited Ukraine's sovereignty over Sevastopol and Crimea (Shapovalova, 2014, p. 252). Yanukovich, however, demonstrated a serious reluctance towards Russia's integration projects. Until the end of his power, he remained committed to his strategy playing the two geopolitical poles against each other and seeking to extract as many benefits as possible from each of them (Samokhvalov, 2015, pp. 1379-1380). Hence, he was also interested in the development of relations with the European Union and the United States, pursued integration into the EU and initialized the Association Agreement. This was most likely the reason why the Russian political elite, as the US embassy cables released by WikiLeaks revealed, "hated" him (Götz, 2015, p. 5).

This geopolitical balance Yanukovich built ended abruptly in the wake of his refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union in November 2013 which triggered massive anti-government upheaval. From the very beginning of these protests, the Western powers interfered in a way that some experts in international law characterized as the violation of international law in a form of interference in Ukraine's domestic affairs. For example, Rein Müllerson (2014, p. 135), the President of the Tallinn Law School, at Estonia's Tallinn University, in his article titled "Ukraine: Victim of Geopolitics," highlighted that:

...[I]t was the representatives of Western states who completely ignored one of the cornerstone principles of international law – the non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. Such unconditional support of the opposition not only constituted a flagrant interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine, but it also raised expectations and made uncompromising revolutionaries even more intransigent.

It is true that, the Euromaidan protestors were seriously emboldened by and became more determined thanks to the clear support of the European Union and United States. The protests toppled down President Yanukovich and brought to power the leaders who were favoured by Washington.¹⁹ The Russian leaders worriedly observed the developments related the Euromaidan. The formation of a pro-Western government in Kiev and Russia's heedless reaction to it would inevitably result in a complete loss of Ukraine to the Western bloc. This forced a dilemma on Russia: to make a choice between reconciling with the fact that Ukraine was to be part of the NATO's sphere of influence or risking at all costs and intervening to prevent it (Sakwa, 2015, p.100). The Kremlin opted the latter and made an intervention, in clear violation of international law and bilateral agreements between

¹⁹The role of the United States in the formation of the post-Yanukovich government "became embarrassingly clear" in a leaked telephone conversation between Assistant Secretary Victoria Nuland and US ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt (Sparrow, 2014, p. 328). On the phone the two American politicians assessed the skills of the Ukrainian opposition leaders to lead the government and agreed on the fact that Arseniy Yatsenyuk is a more suitable candidate to govern the post-Yanukovich government. (See: BBC, 2014).

Russia and Ukraine in order to secure its control over Crimea and prevent Ukraine's accession to NATO.

In the wake of Yanukovich's overthrow, Ukraine massively intensified its relations with the Western powers. The Association Agreement and DCFTA, which imply "a comprehensive 'Europeanization' of Ukraine's economy, political system, and public administration" (Umland *et al.*, 2016) were signed shortly after Yanukovich's departure. The country has already launched the implementation of these agreements. The volume of trade with the EU currently accounts for 40% of Ukraine's foreign trade, while the share of Russia has dropped from 27.3% to 11.5% over the last three years (Lb.ua, 2017). Ukraine has obtained a visa-free regime with the EU which will certainly increase the integration of the Ukrainian society into the European community. The range of integration with the West expands beyond the borders of Europe: In 2016, Kiev signed a free trade agreement with Canada (CUFTA). In the same year of Yanukovich's fall, the Ukrainian parliament revoked the law on neutrality and declared the country's goal to obtain NATO membership. A state programme for the adoption of NATO standards by the Armed Forces of Ukraine by 2020 has been accepted and is being implemented (Interfax Ukraine, 2017).

On the other hand, the gap between Russia and Ukraine is increasingly widening at both governmental and societal levels. Russia's intervention devastated its image in the eyes of millions of Ukrainians and cultivated hate against Russia's leaders and their policies *vis-à-vis* Ukraine. The post-Euromaidan government took a series of actions in order to accelerate this process and minimize the Russian cultural influence on Ukraine. Towards this end, the government imposed restrictions on the Russian language textbooks, Russian media, Russian language, Russian symbols, and the promotion of the Soviet heritage. The weakening of Russian soft power in Ukraine against the background of the growing soft power of the EU and the United States is supremely important in the context of the modern international relations. The fact that the two geopolitical poles are forced to focus on non-military spheres, due to *inter alia* the mutually assured destruction possibility, makes the superiority in soft power a decisive element in their rivalries (Huseynov, 2016). Very tellingly, while just 4% (ICPS, 2010) of the respondents rated Russia unfavorably in Ukraine in 2010, the percentage of these people went up to around 60% (Pew Research Center, 2014) in 2014. A similar trend was felt in other regional countries, even in Belarus, Russia's closest ally in the region: after Crimea's annexation, fearing that Russia's "green little men" would be deployed also against Belarus, President Lukashenko sought to normalize its relations with the West (Wilson, 2015). He also underlined Minsk's "independence" from the Kremlin and stressed that "Belarus is not part of the Russian World" (Ukraine Today, 2015).

2.2. Realist Reflections on the Ukraine Crisis

Contrary to the commonly held view, there is *not* in fact a significant conceptual difference between the policies of the West and Russia concerning Ukraine. The policies of both of them have been motivated by their national interests and geopolitical imperatives, although the Western powers put emphasis on liberal ideas in their narratives. It is important to note that some scholars, including many realists, have argued differently, in a way that is in fact contrary to realism itself. For example, Mearsheimer (2014) argues that in the context of the Ukraine crisis

the two sides have been operating with different playbooks: Putin and his compatriots have been thinking and acting according to realist dictates, whereas their Western counterparts have been adhering to liberal ideas about international politics. The result is that the United States and its allies unknowingly provoked a major crisis over Ukraine.

Mearsheimer and like-minded scholars seem to overlook the fact that the struggle for power and security is the primary motivation of all states in their external policies notwithstanding their possible differences in domestic structure. It has been widely established by the realist scholars that both the United States and the European Union are acting in their policies concerning the former Soviet space in accordance with the realist principles despite the fact that it is not directly acknowledged in the narratives of their leaders (Zimmermann, 2007; Hyde-Price, 2007; Smith, 2016). For instance, Smith (2016, p. 43) has famously and rightfully argued that the EU's foreign policy approach with regard to its eastern neighborhood appears "far more Machiavellian than Kantian". The West – Russia rivalries over Ukraine is by no means an exception to this. Despite the fact that the Western powers empathically emphasized liberal ideas and international law in their rhetoric, as we have seen in Müllerson's above-quoted assessment, this rhetoric fails to reflect in deeds when geopolitical interests are at stake.

From the perspective of geopolitics, the Ukraine crisis can be in fact interpreted as a great victory for the West. It is true that NATO is unlikely to grant membership to the three countries in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus – Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine – that have chosen the Euro-Atlantic integration. In fact, the existence of these countries as a West-controlled buffer zone – not their admission into the Alliance that could spiral into a military clash or even a nuclear war with Russia – is more advantageous for the West (Cohen, 2016). The West's victory lies in the fact that without any military operation the goal to prevent the Kremlin's plans to pull Ukraine under its domination has been accomplished. On the other hand, the Ukraine crisis also contributed to the growing controversies amongst the Eurasian Economic Union and accelerated its break-up (Galstyan, 2017). Therefore, much of the analyses that criticize the West for making a mistake or failing to learn

the lesson of the previous events, such as the Georgia War of 2008, (e.g. Kissinger, 2014, Mearsheimer, 2014) are misleading.

The present status-quo in the region is certainly not pleasant for the Kremlin, although many Russian experts glorify the Kremlin's "victorious" foreign policy over the last three years (Karaganov, 2017). Russia's annexation of Crimea and its intervention into Eastern Ukraine was the last nail in the coffin of Kremlin's plans to pull Ukraine into its orbit. Although Russia took over Crimea and transformed Donetsk and Lugansk into satellites akin to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it lost Ukraine. The Ukraine crisis further shrunk Russia's sphere of influence and marred its desire to emerge as a regional hegemon. However, another nuance of the Ukraine crisis is the fact that Russia is apparently satisfied with the existing status-quo which is why the Russian experts interpret the outcomes of Russia – West stand-off over Ukraine as a victory for Russia (Karaganov, 2017). The reason for this enthusiasm is the fact that Russia has rolled over obstacles before Ukraine's accession into Euro-Atlantic blocs. Although it is very hard for Russia, if not outright impossible, to reverse the Euro-Atlantic path of Ukraine, it is equally improbable for the West to risk accepting it into the EU or NATO, as long as the territorial conflicts in Eastern Ukraine are not resolved and the threat of nuclear Armageddon remains relevant.

Thus, the status-quo over Ukraine established over the last three years satisfies both Russia and the Western powers at varying degrees. Presumably, this is why no serious reaction to Russia's annexation of Crimea or its support to the separatists in East Ukraine has been made by the United States and the European Union. Although the two powers have imposed a wide range of sanctions on Russia, they seemingly do not affect Russia's foreign policy (Movchan, 2017). George Friedman (2014), in the aftermath of Crimea's annexation, made an accurate observation that "The U.S. sanctions strategy is [...] not designed to change Russian policies; it is designed to make it look like the United States is trying to change Russian policy." Likewise, the German *Die Zeit* newspaper wrote in May 2015 that "Anyone attempting to measure the gap between the Ukrainian wishes and American response will see that there hasn't been anything more than gestures and symbolism so far" (Bota *et al.*, 2015). During the ensuing two years, under the presidency of Barack Obama, no serious changes happened to this strategy. In this respect, President Donald J. Trump's statements calling for a de-escalation of the tensions with Russia are not at odds with America's hitherto foreign policy strategy concerning Eurasia and are in line with its national interests in this region. The United States, having completed one of the most important parts of its geopolitical mission in Europe by tearing Ukraine away from Russia's sphere of influence, now can redirect its focus on increasingly militant China, the goal which will need Russia's support, too. This "Nixon strategy" has been supported by realist-minded experts and politicians (Bandow, 2017). Kissinger, one of the founders of Nixon's

strategy to drive a wedge between China and the Soviet Union, highly valued the importance of such a rapprochement between Washington and Moscow which he found necessary for the United States to effectively offset China's rise (RT, 2016). Likewise, for Mearsheimer (2016), positive relations between the two would eventually lead Russia to join "the balancing coalition against China".

Conclusion

This paper analysed the Russia – West rivalries over Ukraine from the perspective of the West, especially that of the United States. The intersection of the premises of structural realism and classic geopolitics within the framework of geopolitical realism guided this research. The paper has found out that the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis was inherently related to the geopolitical interests of the Western powers and Russia. The Western fear of and distrust in the resurgence of Russia as a strong regional power has generated a desire to tear away Ukraine from Russia's sphere of influence and thus to undermine its projects to re-integrate the post-Soviet countries. Russia's determination to push back the expansion of the Western military and political structures and to reinstate control over its immediate neighbourhood brought it into a stand-off with the West over Ukraine. The research found out that Ukraine has been integrating increasingly deeper into Euro-Atlantic community in the aftermath of Yanukovich's fall. This integration has not only covered the inter-governmental relations but also has been reflected in the opinion of the general public about West and Russia. Hence, contrary to the observers who think that "Russia is winning" in the crisis over Ukraine (Mearsheimer 2015), the paper argued the outcomes of the crisis have been so far more in favour of the West rather than that of Russia. The paper finalized its argumentation by supporting the views of those politicians and experts who argue that the existing status-quo over Ukraine allows the United States to de-escalate the tensions with Russia and get the Kremlin involved in its policies to offset China's rise.

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