

# Russia and the Transforming European Security

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**Motto:** *When the relationship between countries becomes critically complex or turns sour, ties between these countries' top officials are very often the last resort for restoring relations, and this door must never be shut. We must serve the interests of our nations. I must never forget this either.*

The Russian President Vladimir Putin, 20 June 2019

*Abstract: Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has retained world's special attention as a key vector for both global and European security. While the energetic link is undeniable the backbone for EU-Russia relations, the sanctions game prove to be a stone corner for redefining not only the course of bilateral relations but the future of European security. In view of the new realities shaped by this rough geo-political game, our article aims to bring forward some essential issues for the new coordinates of European security, while highlighting both the challenges and opportunities brought by the current international framework. Our assumptions are based not only on core strategic European documents, but also on the latest transformations induced by Russian foreign strategy and by the international sanctions imposition. Also, it is our opinion that while the bilateral dimension of EU - Russia relations is important in itself, special attention ought to be paid to more general matters concerning the current global situation and issues of the emerging new world order that took place during the last G-20 summit. The heightened interest in those topics is understandable, because EU - Russia relations are not developing in a vacuum, and the dynamics and prospects of these relations are largely contingent on the global political and economic situation as a whole. Perhaps the most relevant conclusion for the future of Russia and EU relations has been highlighted by French President Emanuel Macron who concluded that Russia is considered a deeply European country, while he personally believe in a Europe, which extends from Lisbon to Vladivostok. It is on this positive note that we can affirm that a new architecture of security and trust between Russia and the European Union is needed, while undoubtedly both France and Germany, as joint leaders of Europe, will have to play an important role in this process.*

*Key-Words: European security, Russia, international sanctions, geopolitical framework, multipolar world, global governance*

*JEL Classification: F01, F02, F42, F5, F50, F51*

## **1 Introduction - the international economy outlook and the implications for the relations between EU and Russia**

Currently, the security imperative has become a key topic on the European agenda, this fact not meaning that this common policy would have been of minor importance in the past years, but only that the new

international realities, shaped by the decisions of the great powers representatives (the US President Donald Trump and the Russian President Vladimir Putin) have redefined the future evolution of this European strategic policy.

The new global outlook is different due to the fact that we are no longer in the bipolar world created by the Cold War, but the number of important global players is increasing while their priorities are redefined, hence the current international order becomes overcrowded because of the multitude of divergent interests that act as so many centrifugal forces inside it. As some international analyses (Trenin, 2018) have pointed out there is a fragile shifting balance between the great powers interests and the need for stability and security in the European areal.

In view of the results of the G-20 Summit, held on July 2019, in Osaka, Japan, we are in our opinion very close to reaching a new consensus between the US and Russia. This meeting designed to initiate the dialogue between this two great powers was difficult to obtain on the one hand due to the suspicions that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential elections, and on the other hand due to the imposition of international sanctions on Russia (after the annexation of Crimea). As showed by Ehret (2019), the G20 summit from Osaka, revealed the emergence of a new triad between US-Russia-China, as it was foreseen by Henry Wallace, one of the best collaborators of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in its post-war doctrine – the Atlantic Charter<sup>1</sup>. Through his "Century of the Common Man" speech, in 1942, Wallace prophesied a design of a new world order ruled by US, Russia and China, and in his 1944 book, "Our Job in the Pacific," he mentioned that " it is vital to the United States, it is vital to China and it is vital to Russia that there will be peaceful and friendly relations between China and Russia, China and America and Russia and America. China and Russia Complement and supplement each other on the continent of Asia and the two together complement and supplement America's position in the Pacific." Let us also remember that in another paper also from 1944," Two People - One Friendship ", Wallace advanced the idea of joint development by the US and Russia of transport links through the Bering Strait. If at the time Wallace's vision, this cooperation could not be realized, at the G-20 meeting in Osaka, agreements between Russia and China and the US intervened, reflecting the US reorientation towards an "alliance" with the superpowers of Eurasia. This emerging new alliance is all the more important as some analysts (Ivanov, 2019) have pointed out that is not exaggerate to consider that the former pillars of the world order, Yalta and Malta agreements are now obsolete, and new basis for new alliances must be enforce. While the trade war unleashed by Trump administration can be very well considered an important new threat to global and even European security, Trump's announcement (made during Osaka summit) that he will lift the Huawei ban on American companies, together with his promise to cancel the additional \$300 billion in tariffs with China, and his cancelling the sanctions on Turkey for its purchase of Russia's S400 defence system (which renders a big chunk of the NATO ABM shield against Russia impotent) are undoubtedly signs that a new era of reopen dialogue is not only possible, but basic criteria seems to change drastically.

Beyond the suspicions that Trump's gestures were aimed at his campaign for re-election as US president for a second term, being possible in the context of the very good evolution of the US economy, it remains valid that they indicate, taking into account his visit to the demilitarized area between North Korea and South Korea, to meet Kim Jong-Un and be the first US president to step into the territory of North Korea, that US has a new international strategy against old rivals that could be turned into possible allies.

Until now, the two global powers, the US and Russia, have been confronted on different issues and in different areas, such as Syria and the Islamic State, have continued their joint space program and have issued mutual threats regarding non-compliance with the treaties of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. During all this time, democratic Europe was in the throes of the shooting between the two powers, stating its allegiance for the democratic principles that represent the foundation of its unity, but also inviting on a dialogue based on calm and reason.

For the traditional post-war European security, a powerful blow came precisely from Trump's NATO line, which called for increased member states' contribution to the Alliance's military operational force by 2% of GDP, while the US is claiming that can no longer bear alone the expenses necessary for European collective security. The international reactions, especially from Germany side, are well, being delivered through the voice of Chancellor Angela Merkel, who spoke equally not only for Germany, but for the entire European Union. We

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<sup>1</sup> This triad between US, Russia and China was anticipated by the American strategy which was firmly established during the 1941-1944 presidential term of America's President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his loyal collaborator Henry A. Wallace who had planned a grand design for a US-Russia-China New world order founded upon principles enshrined in the Atlantic Charter and enunciated in his Wallace's 1942 "Century of the Common Man" speech.

are at the height of new diffuse tensions between the Western partners of the Alliance regarding the future of the continent's security, even when the commitments of mutual assurance of the security of the Member States have been renewed within NATO and from the US side. At the same time, we are also witnessing an escalation of tensions between NATO and Russia, at the Eastern border of the enlarged Alliance and at the Black Sea area. Each party, NATO, USA, Russia understands to strengthen its presence in front of the other through a combination of troops and military devices, the presence of military deterrent ships, bombing over flights and military exercises on the verge of inducing real aggression. This situation that implicitly affects Romania's security, through its geographical and material exposure based on NATO membership and the Strategic Partnership with the USA, is a "dèja vu". Expanded on the European continent, the impact of security threats through the tensions between the US and Russia needs a recourse to history to be fully understood and the past will reveal that nothing seems new in the way of approaching Russia's security and its impact on European space.

## **2 From history to present challenges – the legacy of Peter the Great**

Some analysts (Dowling, 2014; Cracraft, 1993) point out that Russia continues to address the issue of its own security through a traditionalist paradigm, the origin of which can be traced back to the famous will of Peter the Great in 1725. Indeed, if we look at the problem of Moscow's security policy, but also that of Europe from a historical perspective, we note that the approaches of the two parties have remained largely unchanged, from the year of the famous will until now. Russia's continued obsession with expanding its influence over Europe has been confirmed by indisputable historical facts. Regarding this perennial aspiration, in the will of Peter the Great, he considered it desirable "that the Russian nation be kept constantly in a state of war, so that its soldiers are always trained and ready to fight, so that the war is useful for peace and contributes to Russia's expansion and its future well-being."

By deciphering the instructions of Peter the Great through an historical key we find an explanation for the cynical approach of the Czarist Empire and, subsequently, that of USSR in the field of foreign policy relations. It can be said that through its natural resources and through its educated human resource Russia has sought to obtain all possible advantages from the other European nations without giving anything in return. Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russia has been present in all European disputes, interfering in the external problems of all the neighbouring states, including by providing financial support, provoking and maintaining revolts and divisions, applying the old principle known since the Roman Empire era: "divide and impera"<sup>2</sup>. Thus the conquests of Russia targeted territories from Western Europe to the Atlantic, from Southwestern Europe to the Black Sea extending its influence with an impressive number of countries, enmeshing them, and creating new alliances that, however, will prove both fragile and volatile. During the twentieth century, Russia has consistently pursued this strategy in terms of its external interests, and the greatest success in expanding its global influence has undoubtedly been registered at the end of World War II, when this state has obtained a place at the winners table.

A series of historical events (beginning of the Second World War and USSR participation in it, the alliance with US and UK against Germany, in violation of the Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty by which Russia contributed to the dismemberment of Poland -after having participated in the seventeenth century in other three divisions of this European state- the re-annexation, at the end of the war, of the Baltic countries, the occupation of Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria and part of Germany, followed by the establishment of totalitarian communist regimes, obedient countries from Moscow, in the occupied countries the outbreak of the Cold War) confirms that the height of Russia's power was the most dangerous factor for the security of democratic Europe.

It should be noted that by spreading the communist ideology and its totalitarian economic model in Southeast Asia (China, North Korea and North Vietnam) and in the vicinity of the United States (Cuba), the USSR has far exceeded the geographical boundaries indicated in the testament of Peter the Great. However, the tensions during the Cold War did not lead to an open military conflict due to the moderate attitude of the two world leaders at that time Ronald Reagan, US President, and Mihail Gorbachev, USSR President. By their wise actions, these two leaders managed to stop the war for world domination (*imperia mondo*) predicted by Peter the Great centuries ago and to pave the way for negotiations and cooperation in the years to come. However,

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<sup>2</sup> Divide and conquer (Latin language).

after the collapse of the USSR, due to the permanent expansion of the EU and NATO with former Soviet states, Russia again felt challenged in terms of its external security, being pushed by these events into a new logic of War type in order to ensure the security of its borders with the West. Thus, although the Cold War had ended with the dissolution of the USSR, Russia continued to express the same historical fears regarding its external security, maintaining a hostile attitude towards the West at the population level, resuming the arms race and eventually becoming an autarchic and centralized political power. Basically, the hostility of the population towards the West and its values has been maintained and permanently fuelled by the Kremlin authorities while the sanctions that Russia is currently facing have proved perfect for sustaining this anti-Western propaganda at the population level. Basically, the anti-West resentments have been and are successfully used by the Moscow authorities as an antidote to all internal problems, in order to distract the population from economic problems, but also to justify the new form of autocracy established after the 1990s (Vladimir Putin's regime) which only mimics democracy, respect for human rights, the rules of the market economy and international law.

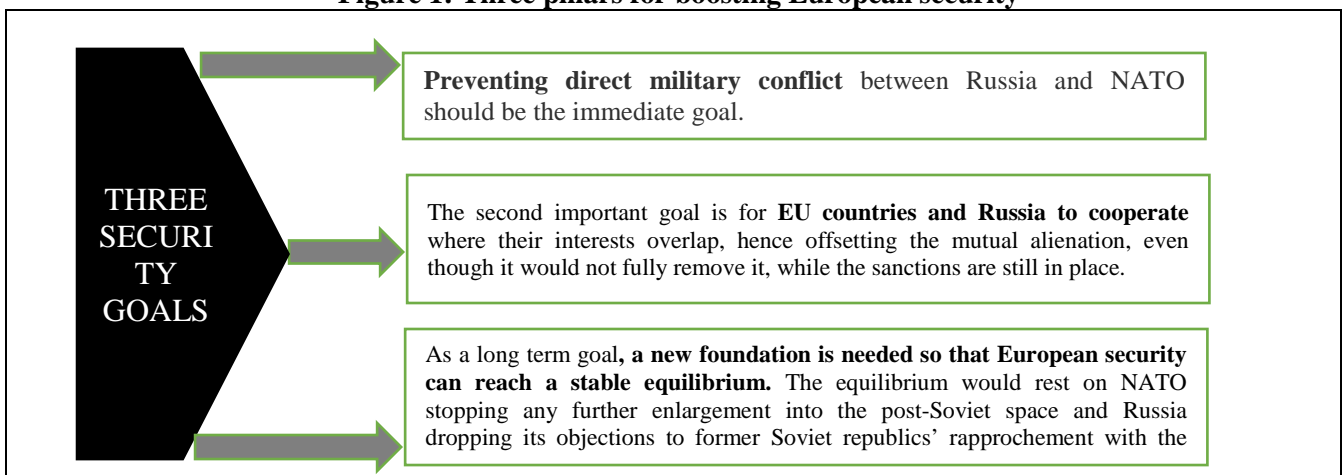
### **3 New challenges for the EU and Russia and the consequences for the bilateral relation**

When considering the current status-quo between EU and Russia the complete lack of trust in the bilateral relationship is the most serious security issue. While not so long ago, Russia strove to become part of a Greater Europe, while EU was willing to share everything with Russia except its institutions, now the foundation of bilateral relations has been totally dismantled. Europe's security is difficult to maintain if we take into account the fact that the EU is facing the challenge of being turned apart between US and Russian interests, especially with regard to its Eastern border. As some analyses (Glasser, 2018) have pointed out the impact of US President's decisions on European security is considerable. Presently NATO support for the EU it depends decisively on Trump's vision on common security for EU and US. This is a challenge in itself for Europe all the way more since Trump criticized Germany's reluctance to increase military spending in order to contribute to NATO strengthening. President Trump's criticisms has been fuelled by the fact that the current German Chancellor, Angela Merkel is bound to respect the Russian interests, as she wants to complete the much-discussed Nord Stream 2 energy project. In his statement, President Trump directly stated: "What could be good for NATO, if Germany pays Russia billions of dollars for gas? The US pays for the security of Europe, but losing billions of its trade. Germany must pay 2% of GDP for military purposes now and not in 2025". President Trump's straightforward approach seems opposed to a "patience strategy," as the one adopted by Angela Merkel who was advised to adopt the negotiations as main tool in its dialogue with the US. Some advisers to the US president have intervened to tone down his statements, showing that while President Trump may be unpredictable and tough, he is "even tougher with its friends and she (Mrs. Merkel) is among them. President Trump sees Germany as a prosperous country that should do more for military spending" and implicitly for NATO's collective security. In fact, another US official, Benjamin Rhodes, a former security adviser for President Obama, recalls that at the last dinner he had with Angela Merkel near the end of President Obama's term, he warned the German chancellor that "Trump's presidency will be like a storm ", a prediction that came true, taking European leaders by surprise, especially with regard to the issue of external security. Undoubtedly, in the future, Germany has a key role to play in the security of Europe but, in the view of the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, the fate of Europe's security lies, above all, in the hands of all Member States: "The days when we could base unconditionally on other allied countries (such as US) no longer exists ", and this means that there is still a need for a major European leader to keep Europe united in the face of Russia's adversity, but also of China's expansion through its global Road and Belt Initiative (RBI) project .

Currently, the main threat to European security concerns Russia's adversity, but it is necessary to mention that Russia's aggressive attitude was determined by the fact that NATO keep expanding very close to its borders along with the continuously enlargement of the Eastern Partnership, to which Russia was not invited to join, both those phenomena being perceived by Moscow as aggressive moves in the "strategic chess game on foreign policy" played with EU (Engdahl, 2010). It should be noted that regarding the future of NATO-Russia relations, President Trump's approach, as evidenced by his statement given at the celebration of NATO's 70th anniversary, is a relatively optimistic one: "I hope that it's not going to be a security threat. I hope we have a good relationship with Russia, and with, by the way, China and everyone else. The fact that we have NATO, and NATO is a lot stronger since I was elected President. But I think we will get along with Russia. I do believe that". However, nowadays, more than ever, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the security not only of Europe but

of the whole world, is faced with multiple challenges (restructuring of economic powers and the impact of this process on the balance of forces worldwide, climate change, digitization and artificial intelligence, terrorism, the arms race). As a result of all these realities, there is a need for increased cooperation between the great powers, and this is expected to happen as soon as possible. Currently, Russia's relations with Europe are a reason for division between Member States. The main criticism is related to Germany's hegemony over the continent and the consequences for the EU's relations with Russia. The disputes with the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, are related to facilitating Russia's advance to central Europe through the Nord Stream 2 project, fervently supported by German interests. Nord Stream project is criticized for creating an energy dependence on Russia for the EU, but also because it would bring new funds to Russia's budget as a result of large and continuous energy sales to European countries with stable and prosperous economies. Critics of the Nord Stream 2 project are also showing that its realization would actually pose a threat to Europe's security as it would provide increased financial resources to Russia, making it easier for this state to make new military expenditures. In fact, at EU level, there is a suspicion that Russia exerts unwanted interference with European security also using subversive means, in particular through a constant manipulation in mass-media and within social networks. These manipulations and the propaganda maintained are aimed at supporting radical and Eurosceptic forces while being duplicated by other criminal actions such as: cyber-attacks, money laundering, and revenge against Russia's own spies. Of course, all these actions are denied by Russia and are hard to prove, but their consequences are quite visible, contributing to the stimulation of centrifugal forces that may lead to the dissolution of the European integration project, including major investment projects targeting open governments opposed to a new enlargement of the EU (such as in Hungary). Some analysis (Karaganov, Suslov 2018) are showing that although Russia has a key part to play in the New World Order, its main force of influence will be at geo-political level, not economic. Russia's geo-political approach aims to maintain the balance of military forces, but also to preserve its own territorial security challenged by the neighbourhood of Western ideologies and economic models, and that of post-communist regimes that aspire to become strong democracies and powerful economies. No doubt that the challenges faced by Russia in its efforts to maintain its status as an economic power are quite great and this is why, in our opinion, it is necessary that is better that Russia be treated as a legitimate global power. Otherwise, by emphasizing Russia's structural weaknesses a vicious domino effect in its proximity could be created, especially at the Eastern border of the EU, with unpredictable consequences for Europe future security. Considering all the arguments set out above in our analysis, we consider that there are some key issues that could contribute to strengthening European security from the perspective of relations with Russia (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Three pillars for boosting European security**



Source: Authors, based on studied literature.

In our opinion, the future of relations with Russia, viewed from the perspective of the other global powers, the US, EU and China, must be approached with pragmatism and not with the naivety that characterized the period that followed immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall and that of the Iron Curtain. If in the 1990s the dream of establishing global peace still seemed possible, by Russia's accession to democratic and Western values, with the accession of the nationalist regimes of Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev to power, this dream proved to be only a utopia. Initially, both former US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair believed that they could work with Russian President Vladimir Putin, but as his

power strengthened, during his successive mandates, the Western leaders came to realize that they are facing an aggressive leader, determined to implement in his international negotiations strategies enforced during the Cold War.

The dialogue with Russia was becoming increasingly difficult due to a resurrection of nationalism, practiced by Vladimir Putin's regime, a policy which was facilitated, according to Nina Khrushcheva, the exponent of the New Russian School of thought, by the "double standard" promoted by the West in the matter of territorial divisions. Thus, as much as they upheld Kosovo's right to independence (after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the ensuing bloody war), so did the Western leaders radically pronounced against Crimea's annexation. As a consequence of this apparent antagonism in the West's vision concerning the conflicts that are about to erupt at any point in the Eastern Europe and in the Balkans area, driven by the ethnic multitude and by the complicated history of those territories, the historian Robert Skidelsky shows that NATO's expansion toward Central Europe and ex-Soviet Baltic countries could be considered a main cause for the restoration of an authoritarian and anti-liberal regime in Russia.

Consequently, by asserting its absolute sovereignty, today Russia wants to contribute to the solution of global problems, but only if it obtains a special place in world domination. Related to this indisputable tendency political scientist Vladislav Surkov, in an article published in the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* entitled "Why Putin's State Will Last After It", mentioned that Russia has become a new type of state, "Putin's State", the fourth of the three major models of governance known in the history of this country: the Great Kingdom of Ivan the Terrible, the Empire of Peter the Great and the Soviet state. Russia may want to repeat the model of France today - the fifth Republic of De Gaulle, or that of Turkey - the state of Atatürk or that of the United States - the creation of the "founding fathers" (Vlad, 2019). In other words, Russia, like China, is moving towards an exportable societal model, and through it, Russia believes that it will be able to meet its internal and external challenges, while actively promoting its interests at a global scale.

As we will show in our analysis, regarding the "new geo-political game" practiced by Russia, a very hot topic is the problem of the EU at its Eastern border. This "Achilles heel" in the issue of European security is burdening the EU-Russia relationship, and in order to eliminate this obstacle Vaclav Havel, mentioned since 1991, that the tension between Russia and Europe will diminish significantly when both sides calmly agree "where one is finishing and where the other begins". According to other analysts, such as Russian political scientist Dmitri Trenin, in order to achieve sustainable cooperation with Russia, the West must accept this state as such, with its different political model and not try to brutally impose its values on this state, but rather attract Russia to the negotiating table with the promise of future economic prosperity because "the West should be more afraid of Russia's weaknesses than of its imperial design". Therefore, there is a general consensus that Russia's economic structural weaknesses should not be allowed to deepen. Otherwise, an antagonized and isolated Russia, with a collapsed economy, would become aggressive, thus pushing the whole world into a vicious circle in terms of international security.

#### 4 Russia's come back in the global geo-political game

The need to cooperate with Russia must start from recent positive examples of international cooperation, because, as a result of sanctions, Russia is seeking to create new alliances (see its rapprochement with China) and reduce its dependence on oil exports who are highly affected by the US dollar fluctuations. Because oil export are providing an important source of revenue for the federal budget (see Table 1), the Russian authorities are aware that this is a vulnerability and are currently striving to diversify the economy.

**Table 1: Budget system parameters for Russian federal budget (% of GDP)**

	2017	2018	2019 (estimations)
Revenue	16.4	18.7	19.1
Oil and gas revenue	6.5	8.7	8.7
Additional oil and gas revenue	0.9	4.1	4.0
Non-oil and gas revenue	9.9	10.0	10.4
Spending	17.8	16.1	16
Balance	-1.4	2.6	3.1

Source: Authors based on data from the Central Bank of the Russian Federation.

Regarding the need to reduce the dependence of Russian economic growth on oil exports, the current Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, declared that Russia has drawn the necessary conclusions and does everything possible not to depend anymore on those countries that act in such a manner towards their international partners (with repeated sanctions), also underlying that a further prolongation of sanctions has the potential to create a great risk for the global stability. It should be mentioned that this idea has already been stated by some international analysts (Schoettli, 2018) and is also available for another major factor of geopolitical destabilization - the US-China trade war.

According to a recent statements by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russia is interested and may be involved in a process of rebooting the international cooperation, including by initiating dialogue with other major economic powers, provided that Russia's role and position as global power not being underestimated (as it happened in the case of cooperation with the US for the elimination of chemical weapons from Syria). However, there are opinions, such as the one expressed by Carl Bildt, former prime minister of Sweden, an international leader who is undoubtedly marked by the history of his own country relations with imperial Russia, which shows that Russia will always be ready to use all the necessary weapons to regain her former glory (Bildt, 2017). This opinion contradicts the ideas expressed by other international analysts (Skidelsky, 2003; Khrushcheva, Tayler, 2019) who see in Vladimir Putin a cautious leader who would hesitate to make decisions that can exacerbate global conflicts.

At the same time, Carl Bildt believes that the approach of both NATO and the EU regarding the continued expansion with new members was wrong, through this policy being jeopardised the European security as a result of increasing Russia's fears about losing its influence former soviet countries. In our opinion, Russia could abandon the restoration of its imperial ambitions, only if the West, even by continuing NATO and EU enlargement policy, would support the independence of the new military and economic allies, instead of trying to transform the former Soviet states into satellite states for the West. Undoubtedly it will also be in Russia's best interest to support the independence and the economies of the former Allied states. Such a policy from Russia would contribute to a better cooperation with these neighbouring states, thus obtaining important resources that could support the consolidation of Russia's own economic development.

A key issue for the global geopolitics remains how Russia can reopen the dialogue and cooperation with Western states, especially in the context of the current international sanctions imposed after the Crimea annexation. A further restoration of trust between Russia and the West would be all the more desirable since both sides are responsible for the current blockade of Russia's relations with the West. On the one hand, Russia was provoked by the continued expansion of NATO to the East, on the other hand Russia provoked the international community by annexing Crimea. Some authors (Pace, 2014) are underlying that Crimea's annexation was some sort of test from Russia's part, a test meant to see how the international community would react to a further expansion in the former areas of influence from the Soviet period.

Some analysts, such as Robert Gates, the CIA director in the 1990s, have admitted that the West and especially the US have underestimated, for various reasons, the effects of the humiliations suffered by Russia as a consequence of his defeat in the Cold War. Other analysts (Skidelsky, 2003) are showing that the liberal and pro-Western political forces in Russia could offer a better guarantee against Russia's "aggressive foreign actions" than the existence of NATO troops in Vilnius, Ukraine. In another context, at the NATO summit in Bucharest, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's former General Secretary of NATO, has stated that Ukraine could become a member of the Alliance, a declaration that has been received with great concern by the Russia's leader Vladimir Putin. Such assertions as well as the lessons offered to Russia by Western leaders on how to behave in the international arena after the Cold War, have inevitably led to Russia's long-term resentment and bitterness. Through all its actions the West demonstrated that any concession of Russia was immediately replaced by a form of expansion of Western power, leading the Russian authorities to the conclusion that it was a big mistake to accept the dissolution of the USSR and the loss of the buffer offered by the ex-Soviets.

Despite all these historical mistakes made by both sides, we believe that there are currently favourable premises for a geopolitical repositioning of Russia, and this could have beneficial effects on European security as well. Both Russia and the West are calling for an international rule-based order (but it must be remembered that the West created a dangerous precedents by violating the UN Charter when NATO bombed Belgrade in 1999 and separated Kosovo from Serbia). The thesis promoted by Russia regarding the necessity of a multipolar world offers a chance to improve international relations as long as the US remains a global power, and China aspires to this status.

As a result, in an ever-changing world faced with multiple challenges for global security, it is important to restore mutual trust and dialogue between Russia and the West based on existing common interests: a relaxation of Russia's economic sanctions against new nuclear and chemical weapons arrangements, followed by a solution for Syria that would decide favourably on the fate of millions of refugees whose continued migration has created great tension in the EU. Skidelsky (2018) is of the opinion that pragmatic relations can be successfully resumed between the two parties provided that the West addresses Russia's concerns more closely hence setting a reconfiguration of global powers in the new international order that is about to emerge.

Currently the relations between Russia and the EU are characterized by a certain vulnerability of the latter, especially in the context of the Brexit emergency but also due to the imminent recession that could start even from Germany, a country that was traditionally considered the one of the main drivers of economic growth in Europe. Unfortunately, the EU situation is currently characterized by a number of divergences between Member States on key issues: migration, Brexit, sanctions against Russia. As a result of these dissensions, Russia can become involved in the problems of the Union by taking advantage of the misunderstandings between the Member States. The Brexit negotiation has created further difficulties in reaching a consensus on EU reform, which has created hopes for Russia that sanctions against it will relax. Trump's election in the US as president was also viewed as an opening to better relations between the US and Russia. But, nevertheless, Russia's relations with both the EU and the US remain marked by dissensions, not only because of sanctions, but also as a result of Russia's ongoing attempts to increase its influence in the former Soviet states. Russia has strengthened military cooperation with many of the neighbouring states, former members of the USSR, and has also sought to reinvigorate initiatives and processes of economic integration in the former Soviet space. Such initiatives as the Eurasian Economic Union and the Organization of the Collective Security Treaty have the potential to interfere with the objectives of the Eastern Partnership initiated and supported by the EU. Currently Russia is trying to improve her position in the international arena by securing its economy against a low crude oil price, using long-term contractual agreements, usually for a minimum period of five years with other oil producing states. Also, a successful policy was represented by Russia's informal affiliation with OPEC's (2016) policy of limiting oil production in order to support the price increase for this energy raw material.

As for the future of Russian-US relations, we can say that the closure of Special Counsel Robert Mueller investigation (which ended neither with incrimination nor with the accusation of Trump's collusion with Russia) has created the conditions for Russia and the US to start a dialogue on an equal basis, according to their status as great powers. Such a dialogue could lead to a true new start of relations between the two countries, which would also have a major impact on European security (according to an opinion expressed by Nikolas K. Gvosdev, a specialist in Russian-American international relations and professor of national security studies at US Naval War College). Such a reset was predicted by the meeting of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (Sochi, May 2019). This meeting, although it did not result into an agreement on sanctions or other crucial issues for world security, was still a good signal for the future of the dialogue between Russia and US.

It should be noted that the Russian Foreign Minister received also Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Iranian Foreign Minister, even before receiving the US official. At its turn Vladimir Putin also welcomed Mike Pompeo to Sochi, but only after meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and after his visit to Astrakhan to participate in testing new advanced weapons systems. Russia's message to Mike Pompeo and, consequently, to the US is more than explicit. Russia has been and remains a great military power that must be held at the table of the negotiation for world security. It is obvious that Russia, in its desire to be treated as a global power, is not intimidated by US threats, transmitting the message that it treats the USA and China equally and that the time for a single world power, as in the post-WWII unipolar world dominated by USA, has come to an end. As a result, Russia continues to engage in "hot spots" of global security such as the Middle East, Ukraine, or more recently, Venezuela. Russia's preference is to start negotiations with the US to establish that each of the two powers share their responsibilities in such a way that "everyone stays in their own sphere of influence", an approach which is difficult to accept by the US in the case of Venezuela and Ukraine respectively.

However, history has shown how dangerous and costly is the perpetual competition between two great powers and how bad are the consequences of dividing the world through an "Iron Curtain". The consequences were both negative for the West and for Russia. Nonetheless Putin's meetings with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Turkish President Recep Erdogan, on the theme of ending the war in Syria (Sochi, 2015), are a strong signal that Russia has not given up on the Cold War logic, that it is seeking to bring new allies to his



camp and that, as a consequence, history can be repeated. In fact, some international analysts have categorized the summit of the three as "a new Yalta without Americans." The President of the Duma, Sergey Naryshkin, referred to the 1945 meeting of the "Big Three" as an example of solving the international problems that haunted the world. According to the opinions of Peter B. Doran and Donald N. Jensen, both analysts at the Center for European Policy Analysis (see "Putin's Strategy of Chaos"), the Sochi summit has been described as an "axis of order", possible even without the USA. Russia believes that the international system is treating it unfairly, although it has benefited from the existing international order. The most recent example was the East-West cooperation for Russia's stabilization after the collapse of the USSR. Russia also believes that the pillars of post-1990 international order - human rights, democratic norms and the rule of law - are pretexts for interference in its internal affairs. In fact, Russia is afraid of these "pillars" that can de-legitimize "putinism" as a nationalist autarchic regime, meant to endure for many years from now on. In this context, it is worth mentioning that Mikhail Gorbachev has accused the USA, since 2017, of drawing Russia into a new Cold War, although the antagonism between the two countries was not as great as it is today. Gorbachev declared for Bild newspaper that "we must recognize that all the characteristics of time are those of the cold war that has already settled." Vladislav Inozemtsev, in his short article "Russia's Cold War Habit" (May, 2017) reminded us that Russia's adversity against the West began a century before the Cold War, when coming out victorious from the Napoleonic wars was, but, at the same time, remaining the most conservative but also most reactionary force from Europe.

Under Tsar Alexander I, Nicholas I and Nicholas II, Russia opposed any renewal and paid a high price as a result of the outbreak of the communist revolution whose consequences affected Eastern Europe for half a century.

It is beyond any doubt that Russia's relations with Europe have been and remain complicated, unless a formulation of cooperation or a satisfactory compromise has been found to alleviate suspicions on both sides. According to recent analyses by BESA (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies), a possible solution would be an economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok, characterized by a unified economy, political understanding and possibly even deep military cooperation. In fact, both Russian and European analysts have launched the hypothesis of creating the "Greater Eurasia" project, which is considered an attractive solution even for politicians. Regarding the project "Greater Eurasia", Angela Merkel expressed the hope that "Russia will be able to intensify the development of relations with the European Economic Area and, finally, to result in a Common Economic Space from Lisbon to Vladivostok". The Russian business community and even Putin argued that "for the future, we could even consider a free trade area or even more advanced forms of economic integration (between the two geographical points) given the fact that such forms of cooperation would result in a continental market of billions of euros" (The End of Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok", BESA, March 2019). Of course, that the realization of this project would mean giving up sanctions and relaunching the dialogue and cooperation, and this is difficult to achieve in the conditions of inflexibility and suspicion existing between both parties. However, the reopening of the cooperation would be desirable, given that both Russia and the EU need each other both from an economic perspective and for security reasons. Europe is dependent on the gas and oil exported by Russia, while Russia cannot afford to give up a market of 512 million consumers without major economic costs.

## 5 Conclusions

In view of all of the above, we can conclude that, taking into account the different views of the Member States on the issue of security, but also the need to continue the NATO role as guarantor of European security, the EU must nevertheless think about its own defence strategy, with the development of its own military capabilities. European security cannot be dissociated from global security, and conflict avoidance becomes absolutely necessary in order to achieve the New World Order. Based on the theory of concentric circles, European security depends first of all on Russia's attitude to this concept, whether it remains anchored in the tsarist tradition or whether it will think of a new type of security in light of current global transformations.

History shows that in the case of Russia a traditional inertia in approaching its own security remains unchanged over the centuries, whether if we talk about USSR or about present Russia. The ideologies and political models that have dominated Russia throughout history have emerged directly from tsarism: totalitarianism and the refusal to reform, while maintaining the perception of country's own isolation: Russia

versus world. The USSR appeared on this background, following a violent revolution but brought no fundamental changes except through the new measures imposed by totalitarianism. The USSR disappeared for the same reasons: isolation and inability to adapt to new global realities.

That said, in our opinion the tensions between the EU and Russia are manifested against the background of the EU being stuck in endless debates while being unable to reach an agreement on the right solutions. In particular, there are disagreements between the Member States regarding the initiatives proposed by the Franco-German alliance regarding the future of European integration, but also with regard to some initiatives (for example the Banking Union) aimed at helping to strengthen the EU to become more united, stronger and democratic. Moreover, the security risks of the EU are enhanced by the risk of a possible new economic crisis, while the institutional reforms aimed at ensuring better prevention and resilience to external shocks are blocked by prolonged debates that are unable to provide effective long-term solutions.

The internal divergences of the EU motivate Russia to contribute to their amplification through the tools of propaganda, misinformation and direct political involvement in some Member States. It is a wrong approach, in our opinion, which will not benefit Russia in the long run. A divided and unpredictable EU is also a risk factor for Russia's borders. At the same time, taking into account the majority of analysed in the field, but also the history lessons, it is clear that European security cannot be ensured by isolating Russia, but by recognizing its high-power status.

According to many geopolitical views, Russia must be taken "as it is", by recognizing its formal imperial tradition of conqueror state, which means that its aggressive impulses must be tempered by to the international community, but without humiliating it or denying its status of great power. Antagonizing a state to the point where it has nothing to lose can be extremely dangerous for the global stability, as the case of Germany has shown. In this country, marked by the historical pride of a former empire and great power, Nazism erupted and led to the cataclysm of World War II as a consequence of the first world war economic catastrophe to which the punishment measures imposed by the allies to the defeated Germany made a very important contribution.

Perhaps a new approach to relations with Russia needs to start from clarifying the extent to which the "conflicting parties" are really and truly irreconcilable enemies. It seems that Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin are both inclined to eliminate such a perception, but there are still important issues that need to be discussed and renegotiated between the two great powers.

The sanctions imposed on Russia seem to count less and less from a political point of view, but it should be kept in mind that renouncing at them would be beneficial for both the EU's and Russia's economy. Putin's Russia and post-Putin's Russia must be convinced that a balance between its military and economic power gives more credibility to its own nationalism, first of all by ensuring a better standard of living for the population. From the Cuban crisis, the West has to learn that Russia can benefit from the idea that she is a permanent danger to the US and its allies. Such an approach will exaggerate Russia's importance in the international arena being overestimated the risk represented by this state for world security. We believe that what matters the most for a fruitful approach of European and Russian security is that all the great powers, US and China included, should optimally combine their resources for cooperation and growth and not use them as threats or deterrent tools.

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