

## Russia and the World Following Ukraine: A Strife 4-part Series

*The entries forming this series are all reprinted from the Strife blog (at [strifeblog.org](http://strifeblog.org)), where they were posted during April - May 2015. All web references were last accessed on 25 May 2015.*

### Introduction

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'At last, Russia has returned to the world arena as a strong state - a country that others heed and that can stand up for itself.'

Russian President Vladimir Putin, 2008.

While the overall strength of the Russian state, especially in the long-term, is still a subject of debate, Russia has increasingly become a power the international community must take note of once again. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 following the end of the Cold War, Russia suffered significant economic and social hardship and a loss of power as a result. The president of Russia at the time, Boris Yeltsin, was more mocked than respected.

When Vladimir Putin took office in 1999, he resolved to improve Russia's stature in the world. Helped by a commodity boom, the country's economy and standard of living improved notably during his time in office.<sup>1</sup> With material conditions in the country improved, the Russian leadership grew increasingly assertive in its regional sphere of interest, abandoning the earlier path of accommodation with the West. Richard Sakwa, professor of Russian and European politics at the University of Kent, argues that this turn towards what he calls 'neo-revisionism' came at around 2007. By this time Putin had become

increasingly emboldened by the country's economic growth, while there was a heightened sense of rivalry with the EU and the US over their growing influence in the states bordering Russia.<sup>2</sup>

The current crisis in Ukraine is the latest in a series of incidents that have led to deteriorating relations between Russia and the West. The Ukraine crisis was preceded by the wars in Chechnya in 1999-2000 and Georgia in August 2008. The Chechnya campaign was perceived as being heavy-handed, exemplified by the carpet bombing of Grozny<sup>3</sup>, and it has even been argued that Russia provoked the conflict in the first place.<sup>4</sup>

International dismay has also accompanied Russia's backing of the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad in the country's ongoing civil war in order to protect Russian naval installations in the country.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, domestic policies pursued by the Kremlin, such as discriminatory laws against homosexuals and a perception that the Russian state is cracking down on dissent and opposition, has also contributed to worsening relations between Russia and significant parts of the international community.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands* (I.B. Tauris, 2015), pp. 30-32.

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'War Crimes in Chechnya and the Response of the West', online at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2000/02/29/war-crimes-chechnya-and-response-west>

<sup>4</sup> Georgia Began War with Russia, but it was Provoked, Inquiry Finds', *The Independent*, 1 October 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Max Fisher, 'The four reasons Russia won't give up Syria, no matter what Obama does', *Washington Post*, 5 September 2013.

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<sup>1</sup> John Thornhill, 'Vladimir Putin and his Tsar Quality', *Financial Times*, 6 February 2015.

However, the Ukraine crisis can still be seen as a major turning point. Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula in March 2014 and its subsequent support of the Russian separatists in the Donbass region shocked large parts of the international community.

The Russian takeover of Crimea was the first annexation of another European state's territory since the Second World War. It was met with accusations that Russia was breaking one of the most basic principles of the post-war international order, the sanctity of borders, by trying to redraw the map through force. The subsequent war in eastern Ukraine, a conflict which has killed an estimated 6000 people,<sup>6</sup> where pro-Russian separatists have been aided by Russia, has provoked even further indignation in capitals across the world. Russia is seen as conducting a war of aggression by proxy. The downing of flight MH17, allegedly by the separatists, killing 298 people, added to the outrage as the conflict began to directly affect Western citizens. Comprehensive sanctions were imposed against Russia, and the United States even contemplated supplying Ukraine with arms before the so-called 'Minsk II' ceasefire in February.

The Ukraine crisis can arguably be viewed as sounding the death knell for the belief that Russia could be harmoniously integrated into a Western system following the end of the Cold War, like other post-communist countries in Eastern Europe.

Much has been written about the situation in Crimea and about the battlefields of eastern Ukraine, but what will be the geopolitical and diplomatic consequences of the Ukraine crisis?

Despite having declined in importance since the days of the Soviet Union, Russia remains a power of significance on the world stage. It still has a substantial population (140 million) and economy (the ninth-largest in the world) and retains close trade and diplomatic relations with

other major actors. For example, it is the EU's third-largest trading partner and many European countries rely on Russia for their gas supplies. It retains a large degree of influence in several areas of the world, in particular what is referred to as Russia's 'near-abroad', the former republics of the USSR.

Given this, how are Russia's relations with other states being affected by its perceived aggression in its neighbourhood and increasing revanchism? How are neighbouring states reacting to Russia's conduct?

Over the course of a few weeks, *Strife* had been examining how relations between Russia and various countries and international organisation were being affected and how parties are approaching the Ukraine crisis, as well as looking at the possible geopolitical fallout of Russia's actions in Ukraine. Mike Jones discussed Britain's handling of the crisis and why the Ukraine crisis has not received more attention in the UK. Conradin Weindl looked into the relationship between the European Union and Russia in the wake of the war in Ukraine. Andrzej Kozłowski analysed Poland's approach to the crisis and the implications for Polish security. Finally, Sebastian Åsberg, examined the debate regarding NATO membership in neutral Sweden and Finland, which has intensified significantly as a result of the war in Ukraine.

An increasingly assertive and antagonistic Russia, with its military of 800,000 personnel and a vast nuclear weapons stockpile, has been described as one of the biggest challenges facing the world today.<sup>7 8</sup> In this four-part series *Strife* hopes to provide a deeper understanding of how key countries and regions are reacting to this challenge.

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations, 'Death Toll in Eastern Ukraine Crosses 6,000, Zeid Says, as UN Releases New Report', 2 March 2015.

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<sup>7</sup> Gideon Rachman, 'Russia is a Bigger Problem than Isis for Obama', *Financial Times*, 10 November 2014.

<sup>8</sup> *The Telegraph*, 'What is the Biggest Threat Facing the World Today?', 17 April 2015.

## **Part I: The British Reaction to the Ukraine War**

Michael Jones

Britain's Defence secretary Michael Fallon said in February that the Russian Leader Vladimir Putin presented as much of a threat to Europe as ISIS<sup>9</sup>. It seems strange that to assert the seriousness of the threat from Russia – a major nuclear-armed power in Europe – Fallon had to compare it to a rebellion on another continent. Fallon was suggesting that people were seriously underestimating Russia's power and misunderstanding its nature.

This is suggestive of both how the crisis in Ukraine arose and why our reaction to it has been so muted. The House of Lords said as much in a new report, stating that Britain, NATO and the EU had 'sleepwalked' into the crisis with Russia in the Ukraine. Britain, much like NATO and the EU, has consistently misread Russia's perceptions and actions, and even now they seem confused over how to react to the Russian intervention in eastern Ukraine and the subsequent confrontation.

Fallon's comparison of Russia to ISIS reflects the relatively minor attention this war in Europe has received in Britain. With the exception of the downing of flight MH17, the Ukraine conflict has generally garnered less media or public attention than ISIS or the threat of terrorism at home. Parliament has debated the subject several times, but action has been limited to sanctions in line with the US and EU, sending one company of non-combat troops and a large amount of high-flying but ultimately hollow rhetoric.

The reason for this seems to be that Britain has had more immediate problems. It is easy to forget that seven months ago Britain came close to splitting up, which would have thrown the government, economy and military of Britain into uncertainty and crisis. Thus, for most of 2014, while the Ukraine crisis blew up into a civil war, Britain was not sure if it would make it to Christmas in one piece. Britain could hardly commit to radical sanctions or military

pressure when it was not sure if its treasury and armed forces would be split with an independent Scotland.

The haunting figure of the Londoner 'Jihadi John' personifying the 'Islamic State' (IS) on our TV screens hooked our attention and dominated debate. Horror reminiscent of the dark ages in a country we recently invaded, with large numbers of our (erstwhile) countrymen running enthusiastically to join in was hard to ignore. IS has not only stolen the headlines with its sweeping conquests and brutal TV executions, but it has provoked a serious debate about the role of extremism within the West. Radical Islam seems to be a brutal and terrifying enemy that is hard to understand and is at work amongst us, an impression fuelled by the Charlie Hebdo and Copenhagen attacks.

Finally, in the face of economic crisis, potential dissolution and domestic terrorism, Britain's public has become reluctant to sanction actions abroad and the government has been duly circumscribed. The 2013 defeat in Parliament of David Cameron's proposed intervention in Syria has made government reluctant to commit forces abroad; indeed, we have fewer aircraft fighting IS than Denmark. This all suggests that Britain's government is preoccupied and its people unwilling to act.

With all of these distractions and weaknesses, perhaps conflict in Ukraine is a troublesome irrelevance. But Britain *is* involved, whether we like it or not. Britain is an EU and NATO member state, both of which are being challenged by Russia. Even without NATO and the EU, we are one of the three guarantors of the Budapest Agreement of 1994, which promised Ukrainian sovereignty would be inviolate in return for abandoning the nuclear arsenal it inherited from the USSR.

The UK supported NATO expansion into Eastern Europe, with seemingly little consideration of what the implications would be. NATO expansion brought with it Article V of the NATO treaty, meaning that an attack on one state is an attack on all. Britain is therefore bound by treaty to defend the states of Eastern Europe as much as it is bound to defend the Falklands. Russia's consistent and vocal

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<sup>9</sup> *I Magazine*, 20 February 2015, p. 4.

opposition to this expansion should not have left us under any illusions about what might happen. The states of Eastern Europe that joined NATO expected the protection of NATO's Article V, because they did not want to be treated like Ukraine. Despite seeking and accepting these numerous responsibilities, we seem surprised that they should cost us anything. Sleepwalking is an apt description.

In terms of concrete action, Britain has joined EU sanctions against Russian banks, energy and defence companies, although the government policy states it has merely left its economic relations with Russia 'under review'.<sup>10</sup> British troops help form the NATO Rapid Reaction Corps, which has drilled in Poland and the Baltic states, while the RAF and the Royal Navy intercept Russian ships and jets near the UK.

Britain did unilaterally send 75 troops to Ukraine to help train the government forces, a move that no other EU states matched. But this was a gesture, nothing more, as it was too late to affect the training standards of troops already engaged in combat and the ceasefire of February has effectively created a frozen conflict already.

These lacklustre actions mean that at home and abroad we are perceived to lack the will to act. A growing chorus of generals, politicians and journalists are drawing attention to our underwhelming reaction. Generals are using the menace of Russia as an argument to stop or reverse defence cuts. So far in this election campaign, none of the UK's main parties have pledged to maintain the commitment to spend 2% of GDP on defence required of NATO states. This has drawn warnings from our American allies and will not have been missed in Moscow.

The Prime Minister was notably absent from the Minsk talks and has generally allowed Angela Merkel and François Hollande to lead

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<sup>10</sup> UK Trade & Investment, Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 'Doing business in Russia and Ukraine: Sanctions latest', news brief first published on 16 September 2014 and amended on 22 December 2014, online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/doing-business-in-russia-and-ukraine-sanctions-latest>

the Western diplomatic efforts. Politicians have talked tough on Russia but musings about cutting Russia off from the SWIFT banking mechanism were quickly silenced by Medvedev's claim that this would be an act of war. Russia has achieved escalation dominance and they are prepared to do more in Ukraine than we or our allies are prepared to do to prevent them.

The implications of this are considerable. Our actions here will affect our interests globally. First, Russia has redrawn European borders at gunpoint, a move that we have not prevented (although NATO also did this in Kosovo in 2008). The fact that the UK was unable to prevent the violation of the Budapest Agreement means that our ability to uphold our obligations will be called into doubt. This will mean our enemies show less respect for our interests or those of our allies. Our allies will view the UK as a less credible ally and think twice before admitting us to the negotiating table. If Russia feels emboldened by our weakness and NATO is indeed undermined by Russian actions, the security of the UK will be undermined because the reliability of NATO as a pillar of UK security will vanish.

The second issue is nuclear weapons. As Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons based on the promise of the protection of its sovereignty in 1994, what message does that send to Iran, North Korea and other would-be nuclear powers? Arguably it shows them that a nuclear weapon is more necessary than ever, that their sovereignty can be violated without it. This impression was exacerbated by the US-led invasion of Iraq. Powers like Israel and Pakistan are nuclear states that, despite many threats, remain intact; while non-nuclear Ukraine and Iraq have both suffered invasion. The logic behind nuclear non-proliferation will be irrevocably damaged.

It is easy to highlight problems and not proffer solutions, and clearly the UK has made some efforts in Ukraine which other states have not. It is extremely unlikely the UK would ever fight a war over Ukraine, whatever its treaty obligations. But what can the UK do?

First, the crisis in the Ukraine has taught us that

we need to think carefully about taking on burdens we cannot support, specifically in terms of the implications of signing up to treaties and expanding alliances. Renewing our commitment to spending 2% of GDP on defence would improve the means to act and signal to the rest of the world that we are not shirking from our responsibilities.

Second, we should play Russia at its own game. Since Russia has violated the Budapest accords by invading Ukraine, we could, in turn, stop adhering to the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997. This Act stated that there would be no permanent NATO bases in Eastern Europe, only temporary deployments. Estonia's president has called for NATO troops to remain in Eastern Europe on more long term deployments in violation of the act. By stationing troops in Eastern Europe for as long as Russia is in Ukraine, the UK and NATO would show that they are prepared to support and honour their obligations to their allies and that Russia would not be able to hide behind treaties if it was itself reluctant to honour them.

Whatever the wisdom or morality of NATO and EU expansion, and whether or not we have provoked Russia, the damage to UK-Russia relations is done and Russia cannot be appeased. We are now bound to support our allies. We cannot salvage our failure to keep to the terms of the Budapest Agreement by withdrawing from Eastern Europe, acknowledging a Russian sphere of influence and thereby forsaking our NATO responsibilities.

The world is shaped by powers that act. If we don't, it will be shaped by someone else, quite probably to our detriment.

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## **Part II: Russian Great Power vs. EU Normative Hegemony: What is at Stake in Eastern Europe?**

Conradin Weindl

Since the start of the Ukrainian conflict, Russia's determination to maintain a sphere of

influence within the former Soviet Union has been the subject of an intense debate.<sup>11</sup> Russia's need for regional predominance is frequently attributed to the country's great power identity. However, Russian domination of its 'near abroad' is not primarily an end in itself. Rather, it is a means to regain Russia's position as a European great power. The battle over conflicting norms and values is central in this context.

Russia's status as a great power stands at the heart of its identity and mandates an equal and independent role among the other major powers in Europe.<sup>12</sup> Such a role can only be pursued if accepted by Russia's peers on the continent.<sup>13</sup> Yet there are no longer any great powers in the traditional sense in Europe. In fact, the United Kingdom, France and Germany have to an important degree joined forces with the vast majority of European states within the structures of the European Union. The EU has elevated liberal norms and values such as democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights to form the very core of its identity as a normative power.<sup>14</sup> Even if it lacks the will and capacity to offer membership to all European states, the EU's identity is pan-European in nature. Consequently, the EU is pursuing 'normative hegemony in Europe'.<sup>15</sup> It

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Kagan, 'The United States must resist a return to spheres of interest in the international system', Brookings, 19 February 2015, online at <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/02/19-united-states-must-resist-return-to-spheres-of-interest-international-system-kagan>

<sup>12</sup> Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation', published on 12 February 2013, online at [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D). See also Dimitri Trenin, 'Russia's Spheres of Interest, not Influence', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (2009), p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Iver Neumann, 'Russia as a great power, 1815-2007', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Vol. 11 (2008), pp. 128-151. See also Hiski Haukkala, 'A Norm Maker or a Norm taker? The Changing Normative Parameters of Russia's place in Europe' in Ted Topf (ed.), *Russia's European Choice* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Ian Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2002), pp. 235-258.

<sup>15</sup> Hiski Haukkala, 'From Cooperative to Contested Europe? The Conflict in Ukraine as a Culmination of a Long-Term Crisis in EU-Russia Relations', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2015), p. 36.

follows that all relationships between the EU and other European states, regardless of their size, are by definition asymmetrical.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Russia has two options with regard to Europe. First, it can adopt the established norms through a process of integration. This was the intention of both Russia and the EU after the break-up of the Soviet Union, formalised in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement based on 'common values' concluded in 1994.<sup>17</sup> Yet full EU membership and hence a real say for Russia on European matters was never seriously considered.<sup>18</sup>

Second, Russia can refrain from playing a role in Europe. After Russia had abandoned the path towards normative convergence, and the gap in values became increasingly difficult to ignore, the EU offered Russia the title as one of its strategic partners alongside other major powers such as the US, China, Japan and India. Although this did some justice to Russia's need to be officially recognised as a great power, it made it into less of a player within Europe itself.<sup>19</sup>

Ultimately, both alternatives are irreconcilable with Russia's self-perception as a European great power. The result has been a deadlock in Russia-EU relations for two decades, despite sincere efforts on both sides for engagement.

Since the return of Vladimir Putin to the presidency in 2012, Russia has sought to resolve the impasse by breaking the EU's monopoly on defining the 'rules of the game' in Europe, by challenging the Union's hegemonic normative power. One tool has been to reinterpret many established norms such as sovereignty, democracy and self-determination, in a fashion that is in line with the Kremlin's domestic and

foreign policy objectives.<sup>20</sup> The Russian leadership's decision to raise the stakes in the Western new independent states (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the three Caucasus states) is closely related. These are the only states in Europe –apart from Russia itself– where the EU's claim to normative predominance has not yet been fully realised.

Russia's instrument of choice was to gather these states under the umbrella of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and thus prevent their path towards integration with the EU within the Eastern Partnership framework. Russia hopes that its alternative normative agenda might be more appealing to some of the states concerned, at least the ones where autocrats are eager to secure their positions.<sup>21</sup>

However, establishing an alternative regional grouping is not primarily an end in itself and the EEU is not a tool for the separate economic integration of its members. Indeed, the economic case for the EEU is rather weak.<sup>22</sup> Instead, as Putin himself argued in an opinion article in 2011, the EEU will give Russia and other EEU member states better bargaining power *vis-à-vis* the EU and an ability to formulate new European norms between equals.<sup>23</sup> The bet is that additional geopolitical weight on the European continent will strengthen the case for Russia's desired equal and independent role in Europe. Once the EU's normative hegemony is broken, Russia can make a legitimate 'claim [to] an equal role in collective leadership and decision making'.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Hiski Haukkala, 'Explaining Russian Reactions to the European Neighbourhood Policy' in Richard G. Whitman and Stefan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.162.

<sup>17</sup> Haukkala, 'From Cooperative to Contested Europe?', pp. 25-28.

<sup>18</sup> Arkady Moshes, 'Russia's European Policy under Medvedev: How Sustainable is a New Compromise?', *International Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (2012), p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Haukkala, 'Explaining Russian Reactions', p. 166.

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<sup>20</sup> Ruth Deyermond, 'The Uses of Sovereignty in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Russian Foreign Policy', *Europe-Asia Studies* (2015) [forthcoming].

<sup>21</sup> Hiski Haukkala, 'The Russian Challenge to EU Normative Power: The Case of European Neighbourhood Policy', *The International Spectator*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (2008), pp. 40-42.

<sup>22</sup> Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, 'Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation or Rivalry?', *Chatham House Briefing Paper* (REP BP 2012/01), (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Vladimir Putin, quoted in Dragneva and Wolczuk, 'Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU', p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> Derek Averre, "'Sovereign Democracy" and Russia's Relations with the European Union', *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2007), p. 183.

How will the EU respond to this challenge? Prior to the Ukraine crisis, the EU chose to largely ignore the EEU. Subsequent events have since forced the EU to acknowledge the challenge to its normative hegemony. The EU has responded in the familiar manner of strategic ambiguity.

Russia's disrespect for national sovereignty and the inviolability of national borders has prompted the EU to impose political and economic sanctions on Russia. Furthermore, the EU has reaffirmed the right of Russia's Western neighbours to choose the path of European integration by signing the Association Agreements with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. At the same time the EU has been eager to keep Russia engaged by suddenly welcoming a future pan-European trade agreement between the EU and the EEU.<sup>25</sup>

The EU will have to perform a delicate balancing act if it does not want to jeopardize its normative credibility and ultimately the entire normative foundations of the European governance mode in the process. The review of the Eastern Partnership and the European Security Strategy in the coming months should provide an indication of where we are heading.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, 'The EU and EEU: Geopolitical Problems cannot be Addressed by Technocratic Measures', *European Leadership Network* (3 March 2015), online at [http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/the-eu-and-eeu-geopolitical-problems-cannot-be-addressed-by-technocratic-measures\\_2490.html](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/the-eu-and-eeu-geopolitical-problems-cannot-be-addressed-by-technocratic-measures_2490.html)

<sup>26</sup> For the review of the Eastern Partnership see European Commission, 'Consultation: "Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy"', online at [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/consultation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/consultation/index_en.htm)

For the European Security Strategy see EU External Action, 'Security and Defence on the agenda at Riga Informal Meeting', online at [http://eeas.europa.eu/top\\_stories/2015/190215\\_eu\\_defence\\_ministers\\_in\\_riga\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/2015/190215_eu_defence_ministers_in_riga_en.htm)

### Part III: Polish Security & Russian Aggression: The Return of Old Fears?

Andrzej Kozłowski

*A history of difficult relations*

The history of Polish-Russian relations is one of the most complex and difficult among all nations in the world. Polish troops were some of the only troops to have captured and occupied Moscow –in 1610– and the day of their ousting from the Kremlin is celebrated as a national holiday in Moscow. Poland itself was occupied by Tsarist Russians for 123 years from 1795, and then again after 1945 when Poland was ruled by the puppet communist government controlled by Moscow.

This heavy historical burden has been reflected in bilateral relations since the beginning of the 1990s, primarily because both sides have used history for political purposes.

After the collapse of the USSR, Poland feared Moscow revisionism and warned against it. Even joining NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004 did not change this attitude. Because of this stance it was commonly viewed as the most anti-Russian country in both NATO and the EU.

This situation was eventually addressed by the Civic Platform, which won the elections in 2007. One of the main points of foreign policy of its Prime Minister, Donald Tusk and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Radosław Sikorski was rapprochement with Russia. They made several political gestures to show their changing attitude. Sikorski also announced a new doctrine of foreign policy, more focused on joining the EU leadership and less focused on an active role in Eastern Europe.<sup>27</sup> He even claimed that Russia could join NATO.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Piotr Maciążek, 'Rządowa wizja polskiej polityki wschodniej', *Fundacja Amicus Europae*, online at [http://www.stosunkimiedzynarodowe.info/artukul,967,Rzadowa\\_wizja\\_polskiej\\_polityki\\_wschodniej](http://www.stosunkimiedzynarodowe.info/artukul,967,Rzadowa_wizja_polskiej_polityki_wschodniej)

<sup>28</sup> Małgorzata Gołota and Paweł Wroński, 'Sikorski: Russia in Nato? Why Not', *Wyborcza*, 31 March 2009, online at [http://wyborcza.pl/1,98817,6445605,Sikorski\\_\\_Russia\\_in\\_Nato\\_\\_Why\\_Not.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,98817,6445605,Sikorski__Russia_in_Nato__Why_Not.html)

They ignored the signs from Moscow, namely that it was not going to abandon its aggressive foreign policy, like the military drills in 2009 that simulated an invasion of Poland, which was imagined as the 'aggressor',<sup>29</sup> or Russia's failure to properly investigate the plane crash that killed the Polish President in 2010 over Smolensk.

Indeed, the Polish military and defence experts stopped seeing Moscow as a threat. In *Vision of Polish Armed Forces in 2030*, published in 2008, they concluded that in 20-25 years there would be no possibility of military aggression of one country against another in Central-Eastern Europe.<sup>30</sup> These opinions were repeated in Poland's *White Book of National Security*, where again the authors suggested that the main challenge in Central-Eastern Europe would come from non-military threats.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, Poland ended conscription and focused on a small, professional army with a strength of 100,000 soldiers, aimed at conducting interventions abroad but not sufficiently strong to defend its own territory. These political and military movements have now been recognised as great mistakes in the wake of the Ukraine crisis.

### *Poland as peacemaker*

Since the beginning of the Maidan clashes, Poland has been among the most active countries engaged in the Ukraine crisis. Politicians from both the ruling party and the opposition have travelled to Kiev to support protestors and find a compromise between the Yanukovich regime and the opposition.<sup>32</sup> Polish citizens were also involved in supporting the people protesting against the Ukrainian President at the Maidan in Kiev and in other

Ukrainian cities. They sent packages with medicine, food and other necessary things.

What's more, young people from Poland and Ukraine created a human chain on the Polish-Ukrainian border checkpoint to show their support for the signing of an association agreement with the EU. Eventually Radosław Sikorski took part in negotiating a deal between the opposition and the Ukrainian President,<sup>33</sup> which lapsed with Yanukovich's escape.

But what seemed to be the end of the crisis turned out to be just the beginning. The Russian Federation reacted aggressively to the change of government in Kiev and accused Western countries, among them Poland, of training the opposition.<sup>34</sup> The subsequent hybrid warfare in Eastern Ukraine formed the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea.

At the same time Russia increased the frequency of its military exercises,<sup>35</sup> and its rhetoric became much more aggressive. The Ukraine crisis started to be perceived as a potential threat to Polish security, which, according to the authors of the previously mentioned strategic document, was almost unimaginable.

### *Changes in security policy after Crimea*

The Polish authorities had two main tasks in the wake of the crisis in Ukraine. The first was to increase the military power of Poland's army. The second was to guarantee that members of NATO would fulfil their obligations in case of an armed attack. This was at a time when more and more people were becoming sceptical about the readiness of the Alliance to defend

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<sup>29</sup> Matthew Day, 'Russia "Simulates" Nuclear Attack on Poland', *The Telegraph*, 1 November 2009, online at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/poland/6480227/Russia-simulates-nuclear-attack-on-Poland.html>

<sup>30</sup> Polish Ministry of National Defense, *Vision of the Polish Armed Forces 2030* (MND, May 2008), p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> National Security Bureau, *White Book on National Security of the Republic of Poland* (NSB, November 2013), pp. 7-17.

<sup>32</sup> Paweł Majewski, 'Polscy politycy doradzają protestującym na Majdanie', *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 January 2014, online at <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/1082177.html>

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<sup>33</sup> No Author, "'Deal" Reached in Kyiv, EU Diplomats Urge Caution', *Deutsche Welle*, 21 February 2014, online at <http://www.dw.com/en/deal-reached-in-kyiv-eu-diplomats-urge-caution/a-17448526>

<sup>34</sup> Carol J. Williams, 'In Film, Putin justifies Russia's Seizure of Crimea Last Year', *Los Angeles Times*, 15 March 2015, online at <http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-russia-putin-crimea-20150315-story.html>

<sup>35</sup> David Campanale, 'Steady Expansion of Russian Military Exercises', BBC, 20 March 2015, online at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-31979290>



Poland.<sup>36</sup> The best option to gain security assurance was to persuade its allies to send their military forces to Poland.

To increase the military power of its army Poland adopted a New National Security Strategy, which described Russia and its unpredictable behaviour as a key danger for Europe, and stated that regional conflicts could not be excluded.<sup>37</sup> These changes have also been made in the minds of the main policymakers. The Head of the National Security Bureau, General Stanisław Koziej, clearly warned against the hybrid warfare conducted by Russia.<sup>38</sup> Also, according to survey polls done by the all-Poland research centre Ariadna, more than half the population feared Russian invasion.<sup>39</sup> This perceived threat has allowed the government to increase military expenditure and buy new equipment without significant opposition.

Poland started a 10-year program of army modernization (2013–2022) worth \$35 billion USD and has already bought JASMM cruise-missiles to have an ability to reach Russian bases in Belarus and the Kaliningrad Oblast. The next purchases included 32 new attack helicopters, 70 medium-lift utility helicopters, 97 drones, new tanks and armoured vehicles, three submarines and an anti-missile system.<sup>40</sup> Poland also contacted the United

States to inquire about buying Tomahawk cruise missiles.<sup>41</sup>

Polish authorities have considered different options to try to increase the number of people who have military training, given their concerns over the small size of their army and their inability to create a reserve system.

One option is compulsory military service, although there is little chance this will be restored. The idea is still unpopular in Poland and with presidential elections this month, followed in five months by parliamentary elections, politicians will be wary of such bold reforms.

Yet 600,000 Poles have received military training in volunteer paramilitary organizations. Indeed, the private sector has expressed an interest in this issue and has announced that 100 companies are ready and eager to set up their own paramilitary organizations; half of them have also declared an eagerness to fund the creation of volunteer fighting groups.<sup>42</sup>

Since it first joined NATO, Poland has tried to persuade the other members to set up military bases on Polish soil. However, limited by the agreements with Russia from 1997,<sup>43</sup> and out of fear of provoking Moscow, Poland's proposals were rejected. In the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, Poland strengthened diplomatic pressure on its partners; it even invoked Article 4 of the Washington Treaty for only the fourth time in NATO's history.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> More than 30% of people claim that NATO will not help Poland. See Paweł Szaniawski, 'NATO? Na to nie liczymy [SONDAŻ]', *Newsweek Polska*, 22 March 2015, online at <http://swiat.newsweek.pl/czy-nato-pomoze-polsce-w-razie-ataku,artykuly,359558,1.html>

<sup>37</sup> See Government of Poland, *Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2014* (Warsaw, 2014), online at <http://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/SBN%20RP.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Damien Sharkov, 'Poland Prepares for 'Hybrid War' Amidst Russian Threat', *Newsweek*, 24 March 2015, online at <http://europe.newsweek.com/poland-prepares-hybrid-war-amidst-russian-threat-316469>

<sup>39</sup> Grzegorz Osiecki, 'Polacy boją się Rosji, ale nie chcą podatku wojennego', *Gazeta Prawna*, 30 March 2015, online at

<http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/862349.polacy-boja-sie-rosji-ale-nie-chca-podatku-wojennego.html>

<sup>40</sup> For details of this program see Marcin Kaczmarczyk, 'Rosną wydatki na zbrojenia w Europie Wschodniej. Polska w czołówce', *Wyborcza.biz/ Wiadomości*, 14 April 2015, online at

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[http://wyborcza.biz/biznes/1,100896,17751954,Rosna\\_wydatki\\_na\\_zbrojenia\\_w\\_Europie\\_Wschodniej\\_\\_Polska.html](http://wyborcza.biz/biznes/1,100896,17751954,Rosna_wydatki_na_zbrojenia_w_Europie_Wschodniej__Polska.html)

<sup>41</sup> The only country which is using this weapon except the United States is Great Britain.

<sup>42</sup> More on this issue in Grzegorz Szymanik, 'Jak polskie organizacje paramilitarne szykują się na wojnę', *Wyborcza/ Duży Format*, 11 December 2014. online at [http://wyborcza.pl/duzyformat/1,142470,17107614,Polskie\\_organizacje\\_paramilitarne\\_szykuja\\_sie\\_na\\_wojne.html](http://wyborcza.pl/duzyformat/1,142470,17107614,Polskie_organizacje_paramilitarne_szykuja_sie_na_wojne.html)

<sup>43</sup> On the basis of its *Russia Founding Act*, in 1997 NATO pledged not to deploy significant military forces to former Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union members.

<sup>44</sup> 'The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened.' NATO, *The North Atlantic Treaty, 4 April 1949*, online at

The result was not what Poland was after: instead of setting up permanent military structures on Polish territory, NATO decided to send additional airplanes,<sup>45</sup> organized more military drills,<sup>46</sup> and setup a rotational presence of ground forces until the end of the crisis. The United States also organized a march of its cavalry brigade to show solidarity with the citizens of the Eastern Flank of NATO.<sup>47</sup>

The results of the NATO Wales Summit also left Poland somewhat disappointed, although the decision to create a spearhead headquarters in Poland was acclaimed by experts and politicians. In fact, it seems that NATO, and particularly the United States, took Poland's anxiety seriously and have made several steps to assure Poland that it can count on NATO in case of an attack.

### Conclusion

The Ukrainian crisis was profoundly significant for Poland and its security. It is a reminder of the darkest part of Polish history, when Russia attacked and captured Poland. It also shows that Polish rapprochement with Moscow has collapsed completely. The changes in military expenditure and the increasing pace of military build-up only confirm that Polish politicians and society do care about their own security and remember their own history. The only question is whether it is too late for such military reforms.

Poland still has time. Russia has cooled its activity in Ukraine and, even if it decides to continue the offensive, the next probable target would be the Baltic States. More importantly, no one in NATO will now claim that Polish demands to strengthen the military presence of the Alliance in Poland stem from Polish

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[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm)

<sup>45</sup> No Author, 'Britain, France deploy 8 fighter jets to Lithuania and Poland', *RT*, 29 April 2014, online at <http://rt.com/news/155504-uk-france-baltic-jets/>

<sup>46</sup> Krzysztof Uzdowski, 'Ekspert: Ćwiczenia zamiast baz NATO? To nie jest złe', *Newsweek Polska*, 22 August 2014, online at <http://polska.newsweek.pl/wojska-nato-w-polsce-cwiczenia-anakonda-2014-nowa-technika-wojskowa,artykuly,346149,1.html>

<sup>47</sup> US Army Europe, 'Operation Atlantic Resolve', online at <http://www.eur.army.mil/atlanticresolve/>

russophobia. The policymakers in NATO have slowly come to accept this reality. The Ukraine crisis may ultimately contribute to increasing the security of Poland by resulting in a significant NATO presence on Polish soil.

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## Part IV: NATO in Scandinavia. The Debate on NATO Membership in Sweden and Finland

Sebastian Åsberg

Following the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine, an old debate has grown increasingly more heated in Sweden and Finland: should countries join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)?

Having been non-aligned since the nineteenth century, Sweden –after intense debate– chose not to join NATO following the Second World War. Since then, NATO membership has been something of a non-issue in Swedish politics. However, Russian aggression in its near-abroad in recent years has made the issue more pertinent. Although Swedish public opinion has long been against NATO membership, polls have progressively started to register a change since the war in Ukraine broke out in 2014. Some of the latest polling figures for the first time show that almost half of the Swedish population, 48%, favour joining NATO. In addition, 73% were concerned about developments in Russia, a rise of nearly 30% since the previous year.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, the issue of NATO membership has become more frequent a topic of debate in Swedish media. In October 2014, a foreign submarine believed to be Russian entered Swedish waters near Stockholm, spurring on the discussions about NATO even further.

Oscar Jonsson, a PhD candidate at King's College London, who has written about the subject in the past, is certain that Sweden joining NATO is a realistic scenario: 'Absolutely, support for NATO has never been larger'. However, he also noted that prior to the

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<sup>48</sup> *Expressen*, 'Nu vill de flesta att Sverige går med i Nato', 11 January 2015.

Ukraine crisis 'a major problem with the NATO debate [in Sweden] is that it has not really been waged. The Moderate Party, which has in its charter to push for NATO membership, have been satisfied, along with the Social Democrats, to remain silent on the issue'.

Both Sweden and Finland have chosen to deepen their cooperation with NATO, participating in major NATO exercises such as 'Steadfast Jazz' and 'Baltops'. In September, Finland and Sweden signed a Host Nation Support Agreement, which is set to be implemented in 2016.<sup>49</sup> The agreement means that NATO can station forces in both countries.<sup>50</sup> The agreement has been seen as a major step towards NATO for the two countries, both of whom already have close cooperation with NATO through membership in the Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. 'You cannot get any closer to NATO than with the host country agreement', Jonsson says. 'Considering that they agree to accept NATO stationing troops in both peacetime but also in times of crisis and war... It also reflects how little Russia would perceive Sweden and Finland as neutral'.

One of the reasons why some Swedes might see NATO as a more sensible option is the belief that the Swedish military is wholly unprepared to deal with a potential Russian attack. Following the end of the Cold War, the Swedish military faced substantial budget cuts. In 2012 the Supreme Commander of Swedish Armed Forces, Sverker Göransson, stated that the Swedish military would be able to withstand a military attack no longer than a week.<sup>51</sup> Due to the relatively weak state of the Swedish military, some worry that the Swedish island of Gotland may be at risk in the case of a conflict in the Baltic Sea region, due to the island's

strategic location.<sup>52</sup>

For Sweden to be able to join NATO, much hinges on the Social Democrats – the largest political party in Sweden – dropping their opposition to joining the alliance. According to Jonsson, '[neutrality] is very firmly rooted in the Social Democratic identity and self-image, which is something that hangs on from the Cold War'. But he adds that there is momentum for NATO membership within parts of the Social Democratic party itself: 'The more it is discussed and debated, the more this self-image is challenged'. But for the time being the Social Democrats, who returned to power in 2014 after eight years in opposition, show no sign of changing their position. In the declaration of government following the 2014 election they affirmed continued Swedish neutrality.<sup>53</sup>

But Sweden is not the only Scandinavian country debating the subject of NATO membership. The issue has also received more attention in Finland following the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict.

Following Finland's defeat in World War II, the country was effectively prohibited from joining NATO by the Soviet Union through the 1948 Finno-Soviet treaty. Indeed, the term 'Finlandization' stems from Finland's forced non-alignment during the Cold War; not being able to join any pro-Western alliance in return for independence. Like Sweden, Finland chose to join the EU but not NATO following the end of the Cold War. But as the conflict in Ukraine has progressed, the Finnish public's perception of Russia as a danger has increased.<sup>54</sup> Finland has had its territory violated by Russian aircrafts and sea vessels several times since the start of the conflict.<sup>55</sup>

Alexander Stubb, the Prime minister of

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<sup>49</sup> Swedish Government, 'The government decides to sign Memorandum of Understanding on Host Nation Support', 28 August 2015, online at <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/18638>

<sup>50</sup> NATO, 'Finland and Sweden sign Memorandum of Understanding with NATO', 5 September 2014, online at <http://www.aco.nato.int/finland-and-sweden-signing-a-memorandum-of-understanding-with-nato-for-operational-and-logistic-support.aspx>

<sup>51</sup> Mikael Holmström, 'Försvar med tidsgräns' *Svenska Dagbladet*, 30 December 2012.

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<sup>52</sup> Ari Shapiro, 'Sweden's Gotland. A Crucial Square in Europe's Military Chess Board', *NPR*, 27 January 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Swedish Government, 'Regeringsförklaringen den 3 oktober 2014', 3 October 2014, online at <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/3039>

<sup>54</sup> Gordon Sander, 'Could Putin's Russia Push Neutral Finland into NATO's Arms?', *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 October 2015.

<sup>55</sup> Griff Witte, 'Finland Feeling Vulnerable amid Russian Provocations', *Washington Post*, 23 November 2014.

Finland, who has been described as a 'NATO hawk', stated earlier this year that Finland should not exclude the possibility of seeking membership of NATO over the next four years.<sup>56</sup> Jonsson pointed out that Finland has taken greater steps towards NATO membership than Sweden: 'Finland has come a bit further in the public debate, they have investigated the question three times and have several former prime ministers and presidents who have expressed their support for NATO'. He adds that this is likely due to differing historical memories: 'Finland remembers World War II and thinks "We don't want to experience this again", while Sweden thinks "our neutrality saved us, we should stay away".'

However, unlike in Sweden, public support in Finland for joining NATO has not increased dramatically since the annexation of Crimea and remains relatively low, standing at 27% according to a poll conducted in January.<sup>57</sup> Having public backing for joining NATO would be essential for both countries as any application for membership would most likely be subject to a referendum. Finns may rely on their fairly robust territorial defence, consisting of some 250,000 personnel; yet critics note that the army suffers from problems of poor equipment and a reliance on conscripts.<sup>58</sup>

According to Jonsson, Sweden and Finland would most likely be welcomed into NATO if they chose to seek membership, but given their close proximity to Russia, the question remains of what Moscow's reaction would be. The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement in 2014, warning of 'negative and dangerous consequences' if Sweden and Finland joined NATO.<sup>59</sup> More recently, in April 2015, Russia voiced concerns regarding Sweden and Finland's decision to deepen their defence cooperation with NATO countries Norway and Denmark through NORDEFCO (Nordic

Defence Cooperation).<sup>60</sup>

'Russia would be vocal and create a commotion about it, they really don't want this' says Jonsson. 'But at the same time they already view Sweden and Finland, especially Sweden, as a part of the West and NATO indirectly. It would give them an opportunity to stir trouble, but it would not change much in substance.'

It appears that the debate is set to continue for the foreseeable future in both countries. Russia's future conduct may be the factor that determines whether or not Sweden and Finland take the final steps to joining NATO.

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<sup>56</sup> Jussi Rosendahl, 'Finland should not exclude NATO application in next four years: PM', *Reuters*, 22 January 2015.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Judy Dempsey, 'Should Finland and Sweden join NATO?', *Carnegie Europe*, 21 May 2014.

<sup>59</sup> Erik de la Reguera, 'Ryssland: Farligt om Sverige och Finland går med i Nato', *Dagens Nyheter*, 31 May 2014.

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<sup>60</sup> Jonas Gummesson, 'Svensk ubåt ska öva med NATO', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 13 May 2015.