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**HOW THE WEST FAILED IN UKRAINE:  
LESSONS TO BE LEARNED**

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# How the West Failed in Ukraine:

## Lessons To Be Learned

Marcel H. Van Herpen

### Abstract

**In this paper the author analyzes the causes of the West's lack of preparedness for the Russian neo-imperialist revisionism in Ukraine, culminating, so far, in the annexation of the Crimea. He mentions three: 1. the political and military weakness of post-modern Europe, 2. the naiveté and often even pro-Kremlin attitudes of many European leaders, and 3. mistakes by the Obama administration which completely misread the Kremlin's intentions.**

On February 27, 2014, uniformed militias without insignias occupied the government building in the Crimean capital Simferopol. It was the beginning of a *blitz* occupation, which ended - after a phoney referendum – with the annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation. Most Western observers were surprised by the swiftness of the operation. Neither NATO, nor the White House in Washington was prepared for this brutal aggression. Thereafter, further attempts at dismemberment of Ukraine were made. Violating international law, trampling over the sovereignty of an independent country, the Kremlin started an unprecedented operation of re-imperialization for which only Russian autocrats seem to know the recipe.

*Why* did it happen and why *could* it happen? And why did most Western leaders naively believe it would *not* happen, notwithstanding the many indications to the contrary? Russia's re-imperialization is the subject of this book. I will show that a strategy of re-imperialization was present right from the start of Putin's first Presidency and that this strategy was the deciding factor in Putin's efforts to remain at the helm of the state for at least 18 years (and maybe even 24 years). The West – the United States, as well as the European Union – has made significant strategic and tactical mistakes which will have grave and enduring

consequences for the future of Europe. At least three important lessons can be learned from the geopolitical and human drama in Ukraine that is unrolling before our eyes. These lessons, which I will present under three headings, are the following:

1. The false premise of post-modern European politics
2. Political mistakes by leading European politicians
3. U.S. President Obama's wishful geopolitical thinking, leading to a wrong assessment of the Kremlin's intentions and an ill-conceived foreign policy vis-à-vis Moscow

I will conclude this Preface with an assessment of the consequences of recent events in Ukraine for the geopolitical position of Poland.

### *Post-Modern Europe: The Hubris of a Weak Continent*

Europeans often tout the European Union as the world's first, major *post-modern* project, in which a centuries-long tradition of power politics and wars of conquest has been substituted by peaceful cooperation, transparency, diplomacy, mutual trust, and interdependence. In this *zone of peace* there is no longer a place for the law of the jungle which often still prevails in international relations. Not only is the European Union presented by its defenders as a zone of peace, it is also presented as a unique *zone of values*: its member states adhere to the same – high – democratic and moral standards, which include free elections, an independent judiciary, free media, and the protection of human rights. Last but not least, the European Union is presented also as a *zone of prosperity*, which offers the member states the benefits of a large, integrated market, and transfers generous subsidies to improve their agriculture and infrastructure. It was these three characteristics of the European project: to offer a 'zone of peace', a 'zone of values', and a 'zone of prosperity', which made the EU so attractive in the eyes of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe after the demise of the Soviet Union. In fact it promised the best of all possible worlds: a world in which one could live quietly and in peace with one's neighbors, a world in which the permanent shortages of the communist planned economy had made place for increasing prosperity, a world in which dictatorship and oppression by foreign powers was replaced by democracy, national independence, and the rule of law.

For Poland, in particular, the European Union, was a promising prospect. In the 1980s I went to Gdańsk several times to participate in seminars for economists, organized by the Universities of Amsterdam and Gdańsk. The subject of these seminars was a comparison between the Comecon (C.M.E.A.) and the European Community. I remember that at the end of one seminar a Polish participant said to me – with a deep sigh: “Just imagine Poland becoming a member of the European Community...” It seemed in that period – just after the imposition of martial law by General Jaruzelski – a distant, if not a completely impossible dream. In the meantime Poland has joined the EU of which it has been a prominent member now for 10 years. The dream has come true. Poland is doing very well. It has even not suffered from the Great Recession which started in 2008. According to Marcin Piatkowski, a World Bank economist, Poland “has just had probably the best 20 years in more than one thousand years of its history.”(1)

However, especially for Poles, it must have become clear in the meantime that the EU – this unique, postmodern zone of peace, prosperity, and shared values – is not without its downside. Robert Cooper, a British diplomat, has already pointed to the fact that “in the prolonged period of peace in Europe, there has been a temptation to neglect our defenses, both physical and psychological. This represents one of the great dangers of the postmodern state.”(2) Living in a zone of peace, in which relations between countries are based on rules and mutual respect, can lead to a tendency to forget that international relations *outside* this zone are often less civilized, and to ignore the fact that just across the EU frontier a Hobbesian state of nature still prevails. “The challenge to the postmodern world,” wrote Cooper, “is to get used to the idea of double standards. Among ourselves, we operate on the basis of laws and open cooperative security. But when dealing with more old-fashioned kinds of states outside the postmodern continent of Europe, we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era – force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the nineteenth century world of every state for itself.”(3) Unfortunately, Europeans did not listen to Cooper’s warning.

In his book *On Paradise and Power* Robert Kagan sketched a portrait of the EU which comes close to Cooper’s description.

“Europe is turning away from power,” wrote Kagan, “or to put it a little differently, it is moving beyond power into a self-contained world of laws and rules and

transnational negotiation and cooperation. It is entering a post-historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity, the realization of Immanuel Kant's 'perpetual peace'."(4) "Europeans insist they approach problems with greater nuance and sophistication [than the U.S.]. They try to influence others through subtlety and indirection. They are more tolerant of failure, more patient when solutions don't come quickly. They generally favor peaceful responses to problems, preferring negotiation, diplomacy, and persuasion to coercion. They are quicker to appeal to international law, international conventions, and international opinion to adjudicate disputes."(5)

After the end of the Cold War Europeans thought peace on the European continent had been definitively established and was not in need of a sustained effort. On the contrary, even in recent years they have continued to cut their defense budgets, profiting from a never ending 'peace dividend'. According to NATO in 2013 only a few European NATO members fulfilled the criterion of spending 2 percent of GDP on defense. These members were the United Kingdom, Estonia, and Greece, with respectively 2.4, 2.0, and 2.3 percent.(6) France, one of Europe's major 'defense nations', spent just 1.9 percent. The majority spent just more than a little over 1 percent, with Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse, spending only 1.3 percent. (Poland and Turkey, with 1.8 percent, shared the sixth and seventh place). Europe in fact demobilized and disarmed, despite many signs in recent years that Russia, the successor state of the former Soviet Union, was becoming more and more assertive, ultra-nationalist, and revanchist. Moscow's 'suspension' in 2007 of the CFE Treaty, a corner stone of peace and stability in Europe, was a first warning sign. The invasion of Georgia in the summer of 2008, for which this suspension was a preparatory phase, was a second, and more important warning about the Kremlin's objectives. After the war in Georgia Russia accelerated the modernization of its army. Since 2008 its defense spending has grown by more than 10 percent each year, while in the same period several European NATO countries have cut their defense expenditures by more than 20 percent. According to a 2012 study by the U.S. National Defense University these cuts have created "gaps in meeting core NATO tasks," and resulted in "forces that are not ready, not trained, and not sufficiently equipped."(7) After the invasion and dismemberment of Georgia by

Russia, relations with Moscow remained unchanged, based on the principle of *business as usual*. The occupation and dismemberment of Ukraine could have been prevented if the European Union and its leading nations had acted with more assertiveness and vigilance and with less post-modern complacency and self-satisfaction.(8)

### *Political Mistakes by Leading European Politicians*

However, the EU has not only a *general* problem in correctly assessing Europe's geopolitical situation and preparing for eventualities coming from the external, Hobbesian world. It also has a problem at the level of *individual* European leaders. I am not in the habit of quoting myself, but in this case I want to make an exception for a commentary that I wrote in the wake of the Russian invasion of Georgia and that was published on the website of the Cicero Foundation on September 15, 2008.

“One month after the Russian occupation of Georgia the situation in the European Union is a reason for deep concern. Right at the start of the war EU President Sarkozy blundered when the ceasefire agreement, which he brokered between Russia and Georgia, could be interpreted in such a way as to give the Russian army a permanent presence in the Georgian heartland. And when Russian troops did not withdraw despite Medvedev's promises the reaction of the EU leaders was so soft as melting butter, so that even Putin could declare that he was 'satisfied' by the European response to his aggression. What was even more disquieting during the last month is the tone of appeasement, the 'understanding' many politicians show for the 'reasons' for the Russian aggression, an understanding which, sometimes, goes so far as to scarcely hide a pro-Russian bias. This pro-Russian bias is strongest in Germany, Italy, France, and the Benelux, the six founding countries of the EU. The German Minister of Foreign Affairs and SPD chancellor candidate Frank-Walter Steinmeier is the most outspoken representative of this group. Steinmeier is well known for his pro-Russian attitude. He started his political career as chef de cabinet of former chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who together with his friend Putin initiated Gazprom's Nord Stream gas pipeline consortium of which Schröder himself later became the

president. Steinmeier acted as a mediator in the Abkhazia conflict in July of this year. His mediation was problematic because in the document that he drafted he not only accepted the continuation of Russia's 'peacekeeping' forces in the breakaway province, but he also forgot to mention the territorial integrity of Georgia, which is usual in international documents. He equally used the term 'Abkhazia' instead of 'Abkhazia, Georgia' which is normal for a document under UN aegis. These 'slips of the pen', hinting already at a secession of Abkhazia, were certainly not unpleasant for Russia. It was no surprise that after the Russian invasion of Georgia Steinmeier called for *Vernunft*, 'reason', which meant: no sanctions. Also the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, a personal friend of Putin, refused to condemn the Russian action. In a television interview on 8 September 2008 on the French television two former Prime Ministers of France, the Gaullist Dominique de Villepin and the Socialist Laurent Fabius, instead of attacking the Russian occupation of a free and democratic nation, declared themselves both hostile to a possible membership of NATO of Ukraine and Georgia. In an article in the Dutch daily *NRC Handelsblad* of 5 September 2008 former Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers and former Defense Minister Joris Voorhoeve equally did not say a word about the Russian aggression, but only spoke about 'the humiliation' experienced by the Russians. "In the past decennia the attitude of the West has been much too arrogant", according to the authors. "Therefore Europe should not react to the Georgian crisis (...) with arrogance and dominance, as the US has done in the last few years." "Europe must give an alternative for a blunt power policy." Which means "to look critically to yourself instead of only accusing the others." What does this mean in practice? The authors suggest putting the missile defense project on hold, and to look how "the sovereign integrity of Georgia can be assured without NATO membership." Russia should recognize Georgia's territorial integrity 'in a special treaty'. The tone and contents of the message are clear: give in to all Russian demands and distance yourself from the United States. Why we should need a special treaty with Russia on Georgia's sovereign integrity is also a big question. As a member of the United Nations, the OSCE and the Council of Europe Georgia's territorial integrity is already firmly established by international law. It does not need any 'reaffirmation' by Russia. One can only be disappointed, if not shamed, by the weak reaction of most European



governments and politicians, which oscillate between appeasement and open support for Russia. This appeasement did not start in August, but can be traced back to the Bucharest NATO summit of April of this year, when France and Germany blocked the Membership Action Plans for Georgia and Ukraine – which was a signal to Moscow to accelerate its aggressive policies towards both countries. (It was the same conference where Putin said to Bush that Ukraine ‘was not a real country’. We know what happened in 1939 with Poland, another country that was not on the map for more than 120 years and that was not considered ‘a real country’ by its neighbors). The wish ‘not to provoke Russia’ might equally have inspired the refusal of Germany and the Benelux countries to give Ukraine an EU membership pledge at the EU-Ukraine summit on 8 September. In ‘old Europe’ of the EU-15 only a few politicians stand out from the crowd, such as the Swedish Foreign Minister, Carl Bildt, and his British colleague, David Miliband, who both have taken courageous and principled positions, not wanting to compromise on what they – rightly – consider as non-negotiable values.”(9)

I wrote these words one month after the Russian aggression, and, surprisingly, they remained not only relevant immediately after the Russian invasion, but are still relevant today. Of course, similar narratives on Russia’s supposed ‘humiliation’ by the Western countries, exist in the United States also.(10) It seems legitimate, however, to counter this talk about Russia’s ‘humiliation’ with a remark by the French political scientist Pierre Hassner: “*What about speaking now about the countries that Russia has humiliated.*”(11)

Contrary to what one might have expected, cooperation in the military field between Russia and leading European countries did not diminish after the war in Georgia, it increased. The Russian-French cooperation, in particular, flourished. It culminated in the sale to Russia of the French high-tech *Mistral* helicopter carrier, which is the pride of the French navy. The ship can carry 16 heavy or 35 light helicopters, 4 landing craft, 900 soldiers, and up to 70 military vehicles, including 40 tanks. The Russian Navy Commander Admiral Vladimir Vysotskiy commented: “In the conflict in August last year [with Georgia] a ship like that would have allowed the Black Sea Fleet to accomplish its mission in 40 minutes, not 26 hours, which is how long it took us.” Russia bought 2 ships in France and was to build another 2 ships in Russia. The €1 billion deal was the largest procurement sale by a NATO

country to Russia ever. On December 18, 2009, six U.S. senators, including former presidential candidate John McCain, wrote a letter to the French ambassador in Washington, in which they expressed their concern, drawing attention to the fact that Russia had suspended its participation in the CFE Treaty, did not honor its 1999 commitments to withdraw from Georgian and Moldovan territory, and was not in compliance with the Russian-Georgian cease-fire agreement negotiated by the French government. “We fear,” they wrote, that “this sale sends Russia the message that France acquiesces to its increasingly bellicose and lawless behavior.”

Another concern was the transfer of technology. The French government refused to make the details of the technology transfer public. However, no one doubted that the Kremlin had obtained what it wanted. Even the pro-government paper *Le Figaro* wrote: “Today France would be prepared to sell almost all technology with which the *Mistral*, one of the flagships of the national navy, is equipped.”(12) The paper added: “According to information obtained by *Le Figaro*, Paris appears thus to have agreed to handing over the command and communication systems, including their codes. One of the very sophisticated communication systems of the *Mistral*, Sinik 9, is directly derived from Sinik 8 with which the *Charles de Gaulle* [the French aircraft carrier] is equipped. Even the director of the shipyards of Saint-Nazaire has acknowledged that there existed “a risk” in connection with the transfer of technology.”(13)

However, not only France was eager to sell its armaments and its technological know-how to Russia. On February 9, 2011, Klaus Eberhardt, chairman of *Rheinmetall*, a German defense firm which produces the Leopard tank, - signed a contract with the Kremlin to build a new-generation combat-training center in Russia. The combat training center, to be located at Mulino near Nizhnyy Novgorod, would be the first high-tech facility of this kind in Russia with the latest state-of-the-art equipment to simulate realistic battlefield conditions. The project, estimated at 280 million euro, and to be completed in 2014, would be able to train 30,000 troops a year. It would enable the Russian army not only to improve and shorten the training process, but also to evaluate more effectively the competences of individual soldiers, thereby substantially cutting expenses. The center would give Russian forces access to the most modern German training methods. Polish commentators expressed their concern. “[T]he nature of this co-operation is not strictly commercial,” wrote Andrzej Wilk, a

security analyst, “as progress in the implementation of the project to construct the centre is made, co-operation is being intensified between the Russian armed forces and the German army (they signed a memorandum of co-operation in the training of officers and non-commissioned officers in February this year [2011]).”(14) Wilk added that “the German-Russian co-operation on the building of the combat training centre has never been an issue discussed in the press. In Germany this is a taboo subject (...).”(15) Why this is a taboo subject is not difficult to guess. One of the main reasons might be to silence criticism of Germany’s eastern neighbors, who are not amused by this newly emerging German-Russian military cooperation, which evokes memories of a not so distant past, for instance when, after the Treaty of Rapallo (1922) a similar military cooperation developed between the two countries. According to Jakub Grygiel,

“However one looks at this, the German-built center inevitably will enhance the fighting capabilities of the Russian army, increasing the risks to neighboring countries such as Georgia and Ukraine, as well as to the most exposed eastern NATO members, notably Poland and the Baltic states. But such assessments of the security impact of a transfer of German know-how to Moscow didn’t seem to play a role in Germany’s decision-making process, which seemed to focus instead on the economic benefits and the potential for future deals.”(16)

It did not take long for these potential future deals to materialize. By the end of 2012 Rheinmetall armored vehicles were also being tested in Russia. Critics of the flourishing arms trade between leading EU member states and Putin’s Russia were usually told ‘that the Cold War is over’ and that Russia had become a ‘normal’ state with which one could have normal trade relations. Recent developments, however, have showed that Russia is anything but a ‘normal’ state and is rather a direct threat to the new member states of the European Union. Lenin is supposed to have said “that the capitalists will sell us the rope with which we will hang them.” Europeans seem to have forgotten this old slogan. However, Putin, apparently, has not.(17)

Europe bears a great responsibility for the events in Georgia and Ukraine. It blocked the Membership Action Plans for these countries at the Bucharest NATO summit in April

2008,(18) and after the Russian invasion of Georgia, it was not so much Russia, as Georgia that was blamed for the war. Europeans preferred doing 'business as usual' with the aggressor. This led to juicy defense contracts, which significantly contributed to the modernization of the Russian army. European leaders were cosying up to Vladimir Putin: from Gerhard Schröder to Silvio Berlusconi, from Nicolas Sarkozy to François Fillon, from Frank-Walter Steinmeier to Vaclav Klaus. Even Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron, who, after the polonium murder in London of the former Russian spy Aleksandr Litvinenko, had no reason to be friendly, sought Putin's approval – which led *The Guardian* to call him a "useful idiot."(19) The crowned heads of Europe followed the Putin-friendly trend. After the introduction of homophobic laws in Russia, when most European politicians refrained from attending the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Dutch King Willem Alexander and Queen Maxima not only attended the ceremony, but also joined in toasts with broad smiles with Vladimir Putin in the 'Holland Heineken House' in the Olympic village.(20) A shameful event.

### *Obama's Ill-Conceived Russia Policy*

But not only Europe is to blame. The United States – in this case the Obama administration - carries a great responsibility for what happened too. The election of Barack Obama in November 2008 was welcomed worldwide - not only because he was the first black president of the United States, but also because he was a convinced liberal and embodied as such the 'Anti-Bush'. It was in this quality of embodying the 'Anti-Bush' that he was awarded in 2009 – rather prematurely - the Nobel Peace Prize.(21) Instead of waging war, he promised to withdraw troops, end the military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and turn his attention to America's internal problems. This 'pendulum effect' in which incoming presidents distance themselves from the policies of their predecessors and choose a completely different course is not exceptional in democracies where two parties compete for power. However, it can lead to sudden reorientations in foreign policy which are motivated more by ideology than by a cool analysis of the facts.

Obama's new foreign policy had important consequences for Europe in particular. Since the Second World War all American presidents, without exception, paid special attention to Europe. Europe always had a privileged place in their foreign policy. President Harry Truman founded NATO, Eisenhower had fought in Europe and overseen the D-Day landings, Kennedy called himself a 'Berliner', while President Reagan, in a speech in December 1981, after the introduction of martial law in Poland, urged everybody to burn a lighted candle in the window to show solidarity with the Polish people. Even President Jimmy Carter, who is generally considered a 'weak' president, had two trump cards: he took Zbigniew Brzezinski, one of the most brilliant foreign policy experts of the United States, as his national security adviser; he was also the first to demand that the Soviet Union fulfil its human rights obligations, as was recorded in the Helsinki Declaration of August 1, 1975.

Barack Obama, unlike his predecessors, completely lacked this European orientation. This was no surprise. Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, he lived for a few years of his childhood in Indonesia, and then returned to Hawaii. However, Ronald Reagan also, a 'Westerner' from California, had no Atlantic experience. This did not prevent the latter, as president of the United States, from becoming very involved in European affairs. Unfortunately, this was not the case for Obama. It is telling that in his Inaugural Address of January 2009 he did not mention Europe once. (22) Nor did he four years later (then he only mentioned 'alliances in every corner of the globe' – which actually downplayed the importance of NATO).(23) Were Obama to have appointed an experienced national security adviser, as presidents before him had done, he certainly would have overcome this deficiency. The problem was that Obama greatly overestimated his own capabilities in this field.

“Surrounding himself with experienced cabinet members who are not personally close to him,” wrote three security experts, “along with junior advisers who are close but not experienced, Obama has kept the conceptualization, articulation, and sometimes even implementation of his foreign policy in his own hands. Intelligent, self-confident, ambitious, and aloof, he is more directly responsible for his record than most of his predecessors have been.”(24)

This version of the facts is confirmed by Michael Hirsh, who wrote:

“Despite his short tenure as a senator, Obama prided himself on his grass-roots knowledge of foreign affairs, having grown up partly in Indonesia with a foreign stepfather, and he had developed his own definite worldview. As the aide put it, “If you ask, ‘Who is Barack Obama’s Henry Kissinger?’ the answer, of course, is that it’s Barack Obama.”(25)

Obama’s oversized self-confidence in this field, however, was not justified, as Hirsh explained:

“On a number of critical issues, anything resembling a larger strategy was often hard to find in Obama’s first term. In a recent conversation with me, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the dean of the Democratic national security establishment, criticized the administration’s foreign policy for being “improvisational”.”(26)

‘Improvisational’ was still a friendly characterization. Because the Obama administration, right from the beginning, took the wrong approach toward Russia. Instead of taking a tough stance after the Russian invasion and dismemberment of Georgia, Obama started a ‘reset’, which transmitted the implicit message that the U.S. would not sanction further Russian aggression - a message that could only have pleased the Kremlin. Even the term ‘reset’ – coming from computer technology – was badly chosen. ‘Reset’ means that a computer is reconfigured to its state at an earlier date. It is, therefore, completely a-historical. Everything that happened *after* this earlier date is erased. ‘Reset’, therefore, is synonymous with total amnesia. That is in fact what happened. The ‘reset’ meant that the Obama administration consciously and intentionally wanted to forget what happened in Georgia. Making things worse, Russian media poked fun at Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for offering her colleague Sergey Lavrov a mock ‘reset’ button on which the wrong Russian word was written.(27)

In another effort to please the Kremlin Obama soon abandoned the ballistic missile defense project as it had been originally conceived - with a radar in the Czech Republic, and elements of the system on the ground in Poland. The Poles, in particular, could not hide their disappointment with the U.S. decision, which not only was taken unilaterally, but about which they were informed on September 17, 2009 - a fateful date which could not have been a worse choice: September 17 is the anniversary of the Soviet invasion in 1939! In

October 2009 the U.S. mended fences, proposing that Poland host smaller, mobile SM-3 interceptors of a revised system, partly based on ships, renamed “Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense”, to be deployed in Poland by 2018.(28) Things seemed to go better, until, in 2012, Obama was overheard on an open microphone, telling President Medvedev: “On all these issues, but particularly missile defense, this, this can be solved, but it’s important for him [incoming President Putin] to give me space.”(29) He added, “After my election I have more flexibility.”(30) According to Jadwiga Kiwerska, “Obama’s confidential conversation with Medvedev at the end of March 2012, in which the U.S. President was reported to have said – in an undertone – that after winning reelection, he will have “more room for maneuver” as concerns the missile shield, was alarming for the Poles. The credibility of Obama, who purportedly hides his real intentions before the allies and reveals them to Russia, was put into question.”(31) Obama was clearly more focused on establishing good relations with the Kremlin than with the new NATO members. When, in 2013, the U.S. cancelled phase 4 of the Europe based ballistic missile defense, to be deployed by 2020, it was rumored to present the concession promised by Obama to Medvedev. Unlike the interceptors deployed in the first three phases, which could intercept only short- and intermediate-range missiles, the interceptors deployed in the fourth phase would have been capable of intercepting *intercontinental* missiles. These, in particular, had attracted the Kremlin’s ire.(32) In 2012 Senator John McCain already warned that

“our friends and allies tell me they want more of America – more of our trade, more of our diplomatic support, more of our security cooperation, and more of our moral leadership – but they feel they are being left to settle for less. ... This is the feeling across Central and Eastern Europe, where Vladimir Putin’s Russia still casts a long shadow, but where many of our allies believe their national interests are being sacrificed by the administration’s repeated, and largely unrequited, attempts to reset relations with Moscow.”(33)

Obama’s growing neglect of Europe also came to the fore in another foreign policy initiative, known as the ‘Asian pivot’ – which placed a new emphasis on Asia. This new policy has been criticized from different sides. The American security expert Richard N. Haass wrote, for instance:

“The Obama administration ... could (and should) have done better in articulating and implementing its new course. “Pivot” implied too sharp a turn, both by suggesting too dramatic a pullback from the greater Middle East and by overlooking all that the United States has already done over the decades in East Asia.”(34) Haass added that “the military dimensions of the new policy were also overemphasized at first.”(35)

By presenting the ‘Asian pivot’ as an important policy shift and, additionally, emphasizing its military dimension, this policy could only provoke the country against which it was directed: China. However, China was not the only one on the receiving end of the message of the ‘Asian pivot’ – so was Russia. By stressing the need to balance China, “the implication is that the United States should get out of Afghanistan and Iraq, *reduce its military presence in Europe*, and pivot to Asia.”(36) The implicit message, which the ‘Asian pivot’ sent to Putin was that Obama considered the European theater ‘safe’ and that he was ready to further reduce the American troop presence there, in accordance with his strategy of the ‘small-footprint’ – a message which must have been music to the ears of the leader of a revisionist and neo-imperialist country.(37) The U.S. troop presence in Europe was already reduced from 400,000 during the Cold War to about 67,000, which means a reduction of about 85 percent.(38)

Finally, there was the question of Obama’s ‘red line’, warning the Syrian government that it should refrain from using chemical weapons. When it became clear that this ‘red line’ was *not*, after all, a red line, this finished the job of undermining definitively Obama’s credibility – not least, because it was Putin, the staunch defender of Syria’s genocidal regime, who ‘helped’ him with a shaky compromise to escape the awkward and embarrassing situation he found himself in.

However, was it just a problem of ill-conceived policies, which might still be changed? According to *The Economist* the roots of the problem lay deeper and resided in Obama’s personality and character structure. During Obama’s negotiations with Republicans on the debt ceiling *The Economist’s* columnist ‘Lexington’, wrote:

“Plenty of Democrats on the left grumble privately that the president’s handling of the crisis has been inept, spineless – and all too typical. Having failed to take evasive action, he showed no bottom line once lured into negotiation. In the health-care



negotiation, likewise, he had wasted precious time hoping for Republican support that never came. It all fits into a pattern, they say, of a leader who shies away from necessary conflict, refuses to understand the intransigence of his enemies, would rather split differences than make a firm stand and lacks the courage of his own convictions. Foreigners – from Vladimir Putin ... to the Taliban – are in danger of drawing the same conclusion.”(39)

‘Spineles’, ‘no bottom line’, ‘shies away from necessary conflict’, ‘refuses to understand the intransigence of his enemies’, ‘lacks the courage of his own convictions’: all the ingredients of the American president’s present behavior are already listed here, as well as the fact that Vladimir Putin is ‘in danger of drawing the same conclusion’.

Lexington could have added yet another characteristic: arrogance. During a conference in The Hague on March 25, 2014 - just after the annexation of the Crimea - Obama said that Russia was a “regional power,” acting “not out of strength but out of weakness.” To say this during a crisis which has exposed in particular the weakness of the Western response to the Russian aggression, is not only an awkward attempt at minimizing the problem, it is unnecessarily arrogant, and, additionally, it is not true. In 1994, twenty years ago, Henry Kissinger wrote: “What America can do is begin treating Russia like a great nation.”(40) He was right. It makes no sense belittling Russia - and least so at a point when the Kremlin is starting a great imperialist maneuver, trying to swallow up a country one third its own population size. In the 1930s, after Hitler’s annexation of Sudetenland, would any European leader have dared to say that Germany was ‘acting not out of strength but out of weakness’? On March 26, in Brussels, Obama continued in the same vein, stating that “unlike the Soviet Union, Russia leads no bloc of nations, no global ideology.”(41) The statement that “Russia leads no bloc of nations, no global ideology”, meant to belittle Russia’s international status, wrongly underestimated Russia’s geopolitical position. This is, because Putin, since he came to power, has proved to be a staunch organization builder. He founded the CSTO, a new version of the defunct Warsaw Pact, built close cooperation with China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and took the initiative for the BRIC summit of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, which was later enlarged with South Africa. The Russian intent behind these initiatives is to build an anti-Western front. Putin’s most recent project, the “Eurasian Union”, an economic union of former Soviet states, is an unveiled attempt at reconstituting

the Russian empire. These initiatives are complemented by a series of bilateral cooperation projects, targeting old and new friends, including Cuba, Vietnam, Syria, Iran, Venezuela, Turkey, Egypt, Cyprus, and Israel. During the last few years - while the U.S. was losing the trust and goodwill of many old allies - Russia was busy spinning its new web.

Similarly, Obama's statement that the Kremlin has "no global ideology" is completely wrong and underestimates what is going on. On the ideological front, in fact, Russia has also made an unequalled effort to build a new ideology, capable of challenging Western liberal democracy, and which, at the same time, is attractive to a majority of countries outside the Western world. This new ideology consists of three components: 'sovereign democracy', 'traditional values', and 'Putinism'. 'Sovereign democracy', while not directly attacking Western democracy, subsumes democracy under a country's national sovereignty, which means that there are no universal qualifications of what democracy is. Each country is sovereign and therefore able to determine its national variant of democracy. This suits not only Russia, but also other authoritarian regimes, which attract Western criticism. The second pillar of the Kremlin's ideology consists of so-called 'traditional values', meant to relativize Western universal 'human rights' standards. The Kremlin wants to subsume human rights under a country's 'traditional values' – mostly religious values. 'Traditional values', for instance, can be invoked to oppose the emancipation of gay people or the protection of women. The third pillar of the Kremlin's new ideology: Putinism, is more dangerous. It is a hybrid ideology which contains elements of postmodern, Berlusconi-style populism, 19<sup>th</sup> century Bonapartism, and Italian fascism. Its core is an aggressive ultra-nationalism which presents itself as 'anti-fascism'. In the name of this 'anti-fascism' Western ambassadors in Moscow are harassed and neighboring countries are bullied, threatened, invaded, amputated and, eventually, annexed. All this takes place under the banner of 'defending Russian minorities' and 'fighting fascism'. What happens here is that one's own behavior, which shows all the characteristics of fascist behavior, is attributed to the other, weaker, attacked party. The Kremlin's youth movement *Nashi* has a special 'Anti-Fa' (Anti-Fascism) department, which, instead of promoting tolerance and democratic ideas, specializes in 'patriotism'. The *Nashi* harassed the Estonian ambassador during the *Bronze Soldier* affair – Estonia's decision to remove this Soviet-era monument from the center of Tallinn, a decision deemed to be 'fascist'. In the same vein the occupation and annexation of the Crimea was

also a measure 'to protect' the local population against the 'fascists' in Kyiv. 'Anti-fascism' has become the common denominator for acts of fascist intimidation and aggression. This third pillar of the new Kremlin ideology could be attractive for revisionist governments all over the world. The close resemblance the Kremlin's new ideology has to classical fascist ideologies is also the reason why Putinism has become so attractive for European extreme right parties. Under the aegis of Moscow a new "International" is in the making. This time not a communist International, but an "International of the Extreme Right", which will have its own pro-Russian fraction in the European Parliament. Obama's remark that Russia has no global ideology was true ten years ago, but not so today. Putinist 'anti-fascism' is a fully-fledged successor to the fascist and extreme right ideologies of the interbellum.(42)

### *Consequences of the Ukrainian Crisis for Poland*

It is clear that the crisis in Ukraine directly affects Poland. The quote of Marcin Piatkowski of the World Bank, we mentioned at the beginning, that Poland "has just had, probably, the best 20 years in more than one thousand years of its history," may, with hindsight, be more than true. What the next twenty years will bring is as yet unknown, but the events in Ukraine cast a dark shadow over the future. Poland may become, again, a victim of its specific geography. "Nations do in fact have a certain unchanging core of permanent interests," wrote Francis Fukuyama, "imposed on them by geography and the external environment. The foreign policy of a country like Poland, bounded as it is on two sides by powerful and ambitious neighbors, cannot help but differ from that of a Japan or an England surrounded by water."(43) Poland would have preferred to be surrounded by water, but, unfortunately, one cannot choose one's country's geographical location. Unlike in the past, this geographical position had become more reassuring for Poland in the last two decades. Although Poland had a common border with Russia's Kaliningrad exclave, independent Ukraine constituted a strong buffer against the Russian mainland, while on its Western frontier Poland has been reassured by a unified Germany which - pacified and satisfied within its existing borders - had given up any territorial claims. Moreover, Poland was reassured by Germany's integration into the EU and NATO. The partial absorption of Ukraine

by Russia and further Russian attempts to bring the rest of Ukraine in its sphere of influence, fundamentally changed Poland's geopolitical situation.

“Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot,” wrote Zbigniew Brzezinski, “because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire. Russia without Ukraine can still strive for imperial status, but it would then become a predominantly Asian imperial state ... However, if Moscow regains control over Ukraine, with its 52 million people and major resources as well as its access to the Black Sea, Russia automatically again regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state, spanning Europe and Asia. Ukraine's loss of independence would have immediate consequences for Central Europe, transforming Poland into the geopolitical pivot on the eastern frontier of a united Europe.”(44)

In his book *The Dawn of Peace in Europe*, a title which now seems to belong to another era, Michael Mandelbaum wrote, in the same vein:

“Now the most dangerous place on the continent is the border between Russia and Ukraine. If Russian-Ukrainian relations are friendly, Russia will be seen in the West as a benevolent presence on the eastern flank of Europe. If, on the other hand, the relationship between the two becomes hostile, this will put Poland, then Germany, on alert for a revival of imperial conduct.”(45) He continued: “A Russian effort to absorb all or part of Ukraine, because of a Ukrainian collapse or as part of a concerted policy to reconstitute a greater Russian state or some combination of the two motives, would have serious consequences for Europe. It would cripple, perhaps even destroy, the post-Cold War common security order. To the extent that the reincorporation of Ukraine was successful, Russia would once again become a multinational empire with a foreign policy of expansion westward, and thus a threat to Europe.”(46)

Poland's new position as a geopolitical pivot and a frontline country means that it will occupy a central position in NATO's defense – not unlike the position of the Federal Republic during the years of the Cold War. This means also that Poland, even more so than before,

will seek a close, 'special' relationship with the United States, because the U.S. remains the ultimate anchor of Poland's security. When, on March 18, 2014, Vice President Joseph Biden visited Warsaw, Prime Minister Donald Tusk said that the alliance between NATO's European members and the United States could act as a brake on Moscow. "Only Euro-Atlantic solidarity," he said, "will allow us to prepare sufficient and strong reactions to Russia's aggression." (47) However, the Obama administration's weak response, so far, to the Russian aggression, has also raised doubts. Obama announced the imposition of 'unacceptable costs' on Russia if it *continued* its aggression, which seemed to imply that the West could eventually accept the occupation and annexation of the Crimea, if Russia stopped there. And what are "unacceptable costs"? In a report of the Congressional Research Service the viability of this strategy has already been called into question. "Is U.S. strategic thinking rigorous enough, and is U.S. cultural understanding well-developed enough, to craft and execute the imposition of "unacceptable costs" on a given adversary?" asked the authors. (48) An important question. Because one should be reminded of the words of Herfried Münkler, that

"At the heart of political imperialism theories, then, is a different kind of competition from the one emphasized by economic imperialism theories: not the competition of capital for markets and investment opportunities, but the struggle of states for power and influence. In this, the weighing of costs and benefits in the economic sense has less importance." (49)

Which means that Putin's long-term *political* goal: the reconstitution of the Russian empire, is for him so important that he is ready to accept any short-term *economic* cost – apart from a complete economic breakdown (and it is not likely that Western sanctions will have this effect).

According to *The New York Times*, "Mr. Biden's visit [to Poland] comes at a time of deep unease in Eastern Europe about the reliability of the United States as a guarantor of its security. President Obama's announced shift of military and diplomatic emphasis toward Asia was viewed by many here as a turning away from Europe ..." (50) It is certainly true that after a decade of warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan not only the administration, but also the American people are in a more isolationist mood, which is bringing with it a certain reluctance to give military support to allies. However, this is no new phenomenon. John J.

Mearsheimer, in a book published in 2001, had already quoted a 1999 study on American public opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy, which found, “that only 44 percent of the public and 58 percent of U.S. leaders think that ‘defending our allies’ security’ is a ‘very important’ goal. Furthermore, if Russia invaded Poland, a NATO member, a mere 28 percent of the American public favors using U.S. troops to defend Poland.”(51) Mearsheimer concluded at that time that “the American commitment to defend Europe and Northeast Asia shows signs of weakening. Public polls and congressional sentiment seem to indicate that the United States is at best a ‘reluctant sheriff’ on the world stage ...”(52) Under Obama, who shares more than any president before him (excepting, perhaps, Jimmy Carter) the values and attitudes of post-modern Europeans, the sheriff seems to have become even more reluctant. For Mearsheimer this is not a problem. “The United States,” he wrote, “is an offshore balancer, not the world’s sheriff.”(53)

However, Mearsheimer seems to misinterpret the role of an ‘offshore balancer’. The idea behind it is that the U.S. has ‘no boots on the ground’, and goes into action only when in a part of the world, deemed relevant for U.S. interests, the balance of power is endangered. Such an approach, in which the U.S. stays aloof from conflicts overseas, only to jump in at the last moment, is not sustainable. As Herfried Münkler – rightly – observed:

“The central power is under an evident compulsion to intervene politically and militarily *within* the imperial ‘world’ it dominates – a compulsion it cannot resist without endangering its position. In other words, an empire cannot remain neutral in relation to the powers in its sphere of influence, and accordingly it has a strong inclination not to allow them the possibility of neutrality either. ... An imperial power that remains neutral in relation to conflicts within its ‘world’ or periphery loses its imperial status.”(54)

One may ask oneself the question: would the United States have been able to contain the Soviet Union during the Cold War without stationing up to 400,000 troops on European soil? And would it have been able to contain North Korea without permanently stationing 28,500 troops in South Korea? “As the long-term U.S. deployments in Europe and Asia have demonstrated,” wrote Flournoy and Davidson, “the physical presence of military forces sends a powerful message to potential adversaries.”(55) The logic of containment also imposes itself in the case of Poland. In order to defend Poland and the Baltic states, a

permanent NATO troop presence on the ground is needed, a significant part of which should consist of American troops. The cost of this presence should be paid by all NATO members, and a formula should be found so that neutral EU countries, such as Austria, Sweden, and Finland, should also contribute. The need for such a permanent military presence is also felt in Poland. In a recent survey, carried out between 3 and 9 April 2014, 80 percent of adult Poles named Russia as the main threat (56) and

“47% saw a risk to national independence – the highest level in the poll’s history dating back to 1991 – as a result of the Ukrainian crisis. In December [2013], before tensions in Ukraine escalated, the survey showed one in seven Poles saw a risk to independence.”(57)

In the same survey, Poles said they would like NATO to permanently station significant numbers of troops in the country, ignoring any objections Russia might have in this respect. The percentage of those in favour was telling: 64% was for an increased NATO presence in Poland, 43% was for a temporary presence, and 21% for a permanent presence, while 25% was against increasing NATO’s presence. It is clear that the new frontline position of Poland and the Baltic states is a matter that not only concerns these countries. It concerns the whole Western world and not only the U.S. The European Union and its leading countries, France and Germany in particular, should do everything to build a credible defense. Because recent events have proved, once again, that, in the words of Robert Kaplan,

“The struggle between Russia and Europe, and in particular between Russia and Germany-France, goes on, as it has since the Napoleonic Wars, with the fate of countries like Poland and Romania hanging in the balance.”(58)

Paris, May 27, 2014,

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## NOTES

- 1) Quoted by Mitchell A. Orenstein, "Poland – From Tragedy to Triumph," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 93, No. 1, January/February 2014, p. 23.
- 2) Robert Cooper, "The new liberal imperialism," *The Observer*, April 7, 2002.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power – America and Europe in the New World Order*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), p. 3.
- 5) Ibid., p. 5.
- 6) Cf. "Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence," NATO, Communiqué PR/CP(2014)028, Brussels, February 24, 2014, p. 6. According to SIPRI "The rising trend in Russia's military expenditure, which started in 1999, accelerated sharply in 2012, with a real terms increase of 16 per cent. The draft budget for 2013-15 contains plans for a further rise in nominal terms of just over 40 per cent by 2015. The increases come as Russia implements the ambitious 2011-20 State Armaments Programme ..." (*SIPRI Yearbook 2013 – Armaments, Disarmament and International Security – Summary*, (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2014), p. 7. <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2013/files/SIPRIYB13Summary.pdf> ).
- 7) Quoted in "NATO's Military Decline," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 2014.
- 8) The diplomatic incident caused by Victoria Nuland, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, who, in an intercepted telephone call with Geoffrey Pyatt, the American ambassador to Ukraine, said: "F\*ck the EU," is a sign of the justified (although not 'diplomatic') American exasperation with the EU's lack of geopolitical clout. (Cf. Al Kamen, "Victoria Nuland loves the EU, really, she does," *The Washington Post*, March 25, 2014).
- 9) Marcel H. Van Herpen, "Russia, Georgia, and the European Union – The Creeping Finlandization of Europe," *The Cicero Foundation*, September 15, 2008. [http://www.cicerofoundation.org/lectures/Marcel\\_H\\_Van\\_Herpen\\_Russia\\_Georgia\\_and\\_the\\_European\\_Union.pdf](http://www.cicerofoundation.org/lectures/Marcel_H_Van_Herpen_Russia_Georgia_and_the_European_Union.pdf)
- 10) An example of this is a book by Stephen Cohen, titled *Soviet Fates and Lost Alternatives – From Stalinism to the New Cold War*, (New York: Columbia University



Press, 2009), in which the author argues that the bombing of Serbia ‘had humiliated the Kremlin’ (p. 172), without saying one word about the genocide of the Kosovars. He also claims that “the new doctrine of ‘sovereign democracy’ was a direct response to the U.S. ‘democracy-promotion’ crusade,” (p. 175) and that “the new cold war began in Washington.” (p. 180). He further argued “that Russia has made so many advances to the West .... It is now America’s turn to persuade Moscow of its good intentions, not the other way round.”(Ibid.) “As I finish this book, in early 2009,” wrote the author, “the best and possibly last hope is the new American president, Barack Obama.”(p. 196). Obama, he continued, having emphasized “the need to ‘reset U.S.-Russia relations’ ... would seem the ideal agent of a new thinking about Russia.” (p. 197). Obama, in fact, followed the precepts recommended by Cohen to the letter, with the results we know today.

11) Quoted by Alain Frachon, “L’égotisme des Russes, les abdos de Poutine,” *Le Monde*, April 18, 2014.

12) Isabelle Laserre, “Avis de gros temps sur le Mistral,” *Le Figaro*, March 15, 2011.

13) Ibid.

14) Andrzej Wilk, “France and Germany are establishing a closer military co-operation with Russia,” *Eastweek*, June 29, 2011.

15) Ibid.

16) Jakub Grygiel, “Europe: Strategic Drifter,” *The National Interest*, No. 126, July/August 2013, p. 34.

17) After the annexation of the Crimea by Russia in March 2014 Germany took the decision to suspend the implementation of Rheinmetall’s contract to construct a combat training center in Mulino. It was announced, however, that this decision was “temporary.” (Cf. Anna Kwiatkowska-Drożdż and Konrad Popławski, “The German reaction to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict – shock and disbelief,” *OSW Commentary*, April 3, 2014). The French government refused, so far, to cancel the sale of the “Mistral” helicopter carrier.

18) On the NATO MAPs George W. Bush wrote in his memoirs, “At the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, both Georgia and Ukraine applied for Membership Action Plans, MAPs, the final step before consideration for full membership. I was a strong

supporter of their applications. But approval required unanimity, and both Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy, the new president of France, were skeptical. They knew Georgia and Ukraine had tense relationships with Moscow ... I thought the threat from Russia strengthened the case for extending MAPs to Georgia and Ukraine. Russia would be less likely to engage in aggression if these countries were on a path into NATO.”

George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011), pp. 430-31.

19) Simon Tisdall, “To Vladimir Putin, David Cameron is a useful idiot,” *The Guardian*, September 12, 2011. Tisdall wrote: “If the European Union as a whole took a stronger, unified stand on championing issues of democratic principle in Russia, perhaps the Kremlin might take notice ... But the trend is in the other direction, favouring the German and French collaborationist approach. Until now, Britain was more or less alone in making a stand against Putinism. Today Cameron shuffled into line.”

20) <http://www.nieuws.nl/entertainment/20140210/Willem-Alexander-aan-het-bier-met-president-Poetin>

21) Barack Obama was one of the first persons to receive the Nobel Peace Prize not so much for the results of his actions, as for the *expectations* one had of these. In the same vein, the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk wrote in his diary on November 5, 2008 - one day after Obama’s election: “The American election let us, indeed, hope for something greater, because this man, above whom the stars twinkle, brings something with him what could make him a historical figure. He seems to be predestined ... to become ... a figure of modern history, close to Roosevelt, Churchill, or De Gaulle.” (Peter Sloterdijk, *Zeilen und Tage – Notizen 2008-2011*, (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014), p. 96). It is time to analyze the psycho-social roots of this strange ‘Obamamania’.

22) Cf. Barack Obama, “Inaugural Address,” January 20, 2009. In James Daley (ed.), *Great Inaugural Addresses*, (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications Inc., 2010), pp. 142-147.

23) Cf. “Inaugural Address by President Barack Obama,” January 21, 2013, *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*.

24) Martin S. Indyk, Kenneth G. Lieberthal, and Michael E. O’Hanlon, “Scoring Obama’s Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 91, No. 3, May/June 2012, p. 31.

- 25) Michael Hirsh, "The Clinton Legacy – How Will History Judge the Soft-Power Secretary of State?" *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 92, No. 3, May/June 2013, p. 90.
- 26) *Ibid.*, p. 88.
- 27) Cf. "Button gaffe embarrasses Clinton", *BBC News*, March 7, 2009. According to the article "Russian media have been poking fun at the US secretary of state over a translation error on a gift she presented to her Russian counterpart." The word the Americans chose, 'peregruzka', meant 'overloaded' rather than 'reset'. The BBC called it "an awkward start."
- 28) Cf. Peter Baker, "Mending Fences, Biden Assures Poland That U.S. Is Watching Over It," *The New York Times*, October 21, 2009.
- 29) David Nakamura and Debbi Wilgoren, "Caught on open mike, Obama tells Medvedev he needs 'space' on missile defense," *The Washington Post*, March 26, 2012.
- 30) *Ibid.*
- 31) Prof. Dr. hab. Jadwiga Kiwerska, "Obama, Medvedev, and the Ballistic Missile Defense – A Polish View," *Cicero Foundation Great Debate Paper*, No. 12/02, May 2012, p. 6.
- 32) According to the U.S. Defense Science Board, however, this fourth phase was cancelled for technical reasons, because the planned mission to intercept targets prior to the deployment of multiple warheads would require "Herculean effort and is not realistically achievable ..." (Quoted in "The European Phased Adaptive Approach at a Glance," *Arms Control Association*, May 2013).
- 33) John McCain, "Leading from the Front," *Foreign Policy*, August 28, 2012.
- 34) Richard N. Haass, "The Irony of American Strategy – Putting the Middle East in Proper Perspective," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 92, No. 3, May/June 2013, p. 64.
- 35) *Ibid.*
- 36) Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Lean Forward – In Defense of American Engagement," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 92, No. 1, January/February 2013, p. 139. (My emphasis, MHVH).
- 37) In the new defense strategic guidance, announced by President Obama on January 5, 2012, one can read: "Most European countries are now producers of security rather than consumers of it. Combined with the drawdown in Iraq and Afghanistan, this has created a strategic opportunity to rebalance the U.S. military investment in Europe,

moving from a focus on current conflicts toward a focus on future capabilities. *In keeping with this evolving strategic landscape, our posture in Europe must also evolve.*" (Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*, Washington, January 2012, p. 3). (Emphasis in original). In a report of the Congressional Research Service the 'pivot' is openly criticized, because of the fact that "an increased U.S. military emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region might result in the reduction in U.S. military presence or capacity in other parts of the world, which in turn could increase risks for the United States in those other regions." (Mark E. Manyin, Coordinator, *et alii*, "Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia," Washington, Congressional Research Service, March 28, 2012, p. 9). The authors added that "this approach [the 'pivot'] also carries the potential costs and risks. For example, the high profile that Obama Administration officials have given to the initiative could lead leaders in other regions to believe, rightly or wrongly, that the United States is disengaging, thereby eroding U.S. global influence." (ibid.)

38) Cf. Helene Cooper and Steven Erlanger, "Military Cuts Render NATO Less Formidable as Deterrent to Russia," *The New York Times*, March 26, 2014.

39) "An underperforming president," Column by Lexington, *The Economist*, August 6, 2011.

40) Henry A. Kissinger, "Russian and American Interests after the Cold War," in Stephen Sestanovich (ed.), *Rethinking Russia's National Interest*, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994), p. 9.

41) Cf. Andre de Nesnera, "Are US and Russia in New Cold War?" *Voice of America*, April 16, 2014.

42) On the attraction of Putinism for European extreme right parties, see my article "Putinism's Authoritarian Allure," *Project Syndicate*, March 15, 2013. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/putinism-as-a-model-for-western-europe-s-extreme-right-by-marcel-h--van-herpen> In my book *Putinism – The Slow Rise of a Radical Right Regime in Russia*, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), in which I analyzed Putin's ideology in more detail, I came to the conclusion that Putinism contains elements from modern Berlusconi populism, nineteenth century Bonapartism, and Italian Fascism. I have also indicated that Putinism is a *dynamic*

system that – like Mussolini’s – is characterized by a further radicalization over time. (In June 2014 a Polish translation of this book was published by Grupa Wydawnicza Harmonia in Gdańsk with the title *Putinizm*).

- 43) Francis Fukuyama, “The Ambiguity of ‘National Interest’,” in Stephen Sestanovich (ed.), *Rethinking Russia’s National Interest*, op. cit., pp. 12-13.
- 44) Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard – American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, (New York: BasicBooks, 1997), p. 46.
- 45) Michael Mandelbaum, *The Dawn of Peace in Europe*, (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1996), p. 138.
- 46) *Ibid.*, p. 137.
- 47) Mark Landler, “In Poland, Biden Promises Allies Protection,” *The New York Times*, March 18, 2014.
- 48) Catherine Dale and Pat Towell, “In Brief: Assessing the January 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG),” Washington, D.C., Congressional Research Service, August 13, 2013, p. 6.
- 49) Herfried Münkler, *Empires – The Logic of World Domination from Ancient Rome to the United States*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), pp. 30-31.
- 50) Cf. Mark Landler, “In Poland, Biden Promises Allies Protection,” *The New York Times*, March 18, 2014.
- 51) John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), p. 531.
- 52) *Ibid.*, p. 391.
- 53) *Ibid.*, p. 392.
- 54) Herfried Münkler, *Empires – The Logic of World Domination from Ancient Rome to the United States*, op. cit., p. 14.
- 55) Michèle Flournoy and Janine Davidson, “Obama’s new Global Posture – The Logic of U.S. Foreign Deployments,” *Foreign Affairs*, Volume No. 91, No. 4, July/August 2012, p. 56.
- 56) Marcin Goettig and Ruth Pitchford, “Poles most worried about their independence in at least 23 years: poll,” *Reuters*, April 18, 2014.
- 57) *Ibid.*

58) Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography – What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*, (New York: Random House, 2013), p. 181.