



## The core values of Russia foreign policy: Assessing its historical and geopolitical variables which have determined and are still determining its actions during the 21<sup>st</sup> century

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the core interest of Russia's foreign policy since the collapse of the Soviet Union with the view to ascertain the extent at which history and geopolitical condition have determined and still determining Russia's foreign policy actions to present time. The study established that, in today's global world, Russia core foreign policy interest lies primarily on ensuring the security of the country, protecting and strengthening its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and also to secure its high standing in the international community as one of the influential and competitive poles of the modern world. Russia long-held defending strategic interest could be viewed first from historical and geopolitical condition characterized in its extensive territory with its borders which has over time created a natural strategic security challenge on Russia. The second factor is the aggressive Western agenda. This predominant foreign policy has been consistent in Russia's call for multipolar world with the desire to overcome the USA's post-Cold War unipolar standpoint in the international system. This stems from the view that, by gaining more diplomatic support, Russia could restore the world order to a fairer and more balanced one to put an end to Western diplomatic dominance in international institutions. This remained the larger struggle for Russia to regain its great power status. The study employed a historical research method based on information documented overtime on the subject matter.

**Keywords:** soviet, geopolitical, historical, Russia

### Introduction

Russia was a great power since the period of Peter the Great. It was an important player in the seven years Napoleonic war, (the land power that vanquished the Napoleonic army) and a leading member of the Concert of Europe. It was the main protagonist in the Crimea War and subsequent crisis that arose from the Ottoman Empire in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century <sup>[1]</sup>. Russia defense of Serbia in 1914 was the principal factor for the First World War. Russia role in the World War II was quite decisive, for after the War, the Soviet ruled part of Europe for half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century <sup>[2]</sup>. Like every other countries of the world, Russia also has unique attributes. Spectacular in this area is its size stretching across not only Europe, but also Asia. Given this unique Russian historical and geopolitical setting, imperial expansion remained Russia's way of defending itself against invasion. While Russia has been part of the European system, it has also stood far apart at times. Russia geography has made it possible to vacillate between periods of engagement with Europe and periods of relative retreat <sup>[3]</sup>.

Though, following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia political capabilities changed to be not as powerful as it has been during its super power years, but giving insight on world politics especially, in the on-going confusion of ideas of

who should formulate foreign policy behaviour, some nationalist characteristic became eminent. Throughout the 1990s, Russia considered cooperation with Western-dominated international institutions to alleviate the growing disappointment from post-Soviet states. The turning point for Russia's trust and reliance on the USA was the war in Kosovo in 1998, where confidence in Western institutions and policies were destroyed. From then on, Russia assumed a more assertive and independent foreign policy, in producing regional and global multilateral solutions aimed at the creation of alternative centers of power" <sup>[4]</sup> Beginning from 2000, Russia's Foreign Policy practice followed that, "Russia shall seek to achieve a multi-polar system of international relations that really reflects the diversity of the modern world with its great variety of interests" <sup>[5]</sup>

The above however, does not mean that Russia's foreign policy was wholly anti-Western. It still continues to ally with the EU and the US, but only where it is in its national interest <sup>[6]</sup> We may conclude that, the foreign policy of Russia in many respects, is a continuation of the policies of Tsarist Russia, but the post-Soviet Russia under Vladimir Putin had to make some adjustments to the existing structure of the international

<sup>1</sup> O. Oliker and Christopher, S, Perspective: Russian Foreign Policy in Historical and Current Context, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/.../RAND\\_PE144.synopsis.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/.../RAND_PE144.synopsis.pdf). Accessed: 17/11/2017.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> A. Makarchev and Morozov, V, "Multilateralism, Multipolarity and Beyond: A Menu of Russia Policy Strategies", *Global Governance*, Vol.17, Issue 3, (2011), 353-373.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 335.

<sup>6</sup> C. Locomte, "To What Extent Does History Determine the Foreign Policies of the BRICS?", [www.e.ir.info/.../to-what-extent-do-historical-condition-determine-the-foreign-policies-of-the-brics/](http://www.e.ir.info/.../to-what-extent-do-historical-condition-determine-the-foreign-policies-of-the-brics/) Accessed: 13/11/2019.

relations <sup>[7]</sup> Giving this background, the study of Russia's foreign policy within the period chosen is very important. For better understanding of the analysis, the work is divided into four main parts. Firstly, we conceptualized foreign policy. Second, we undertake a broad study of some foreign policy theories and adopted the best that suit the scenario in Russian foreign policy. The third part shed light on Russia foreign policy themes with emphasis on its core national interest. The fourth section dwells on history and geopolitical condition as determinant of Russia foreign policy drive. The study concludes with overview of the analysis.

### Concept of foreign policy

Several definitions have been given by scholars to the understanding of the complexity of the nature of relationship that nations create with their fellow nations at the international environment for the purpose of satisfying their basic objectives and goals in the course of the relationship. Foreign as defined by A. M. Okoli refers to specific decision-making aimed at protecting, maximizing, and promoting the prescribed national interest of the given state. Foreign policy making shares all the attributes of domestic political decision-making and in addition faces some difficulties which have their sources within and outside the country <sup>[8]</sup> Akimboye and Otto see foreign policy as a type of policy that transcends the boundary of given state. It is that types of action a state embark upon in its interaction with other member state in the international environment in the process of striving to attain its objectives and goals <sup>[9]</sup> It is a set of principle that defines the objectives a given state pursue in the international arena in the process of its interactions with other international actors. It is on this note that Northedge, F. S, defines foreign policy as interplay between the inside and the outside <sup>[10]</sup> Whatever angle scholars may have conceptualized foreign policy, all that can be said here is that foreign policy attempt to explain such instrument by which a country designed to achieve her superior objectives in her relationship with other nations in the international environment.

### Theorizing Russia's foreign policy

Theories generally as held by Donnelly are beacons, lenses, or filters that direct us to the understanding what is happening in the world <sup>[11]</sup> Various theories of international of relations can be helpful analyzing a country's foreign policy as they provide us with schemes and frameworks upon which one can try and fit the actions of a country, thus classifying them as one or another kind of foreign policy. In analyzing the Russia's Foreign policy, one is inclined to locate its theoretical frame work based on the following existing theories of international relations.

<sup>7</sup> N. D. Palmer and H. C. Perkins, *International Relations: The World Community in Transition*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Indian Policy of Peace and Non-Alignment, (Delhi, A.I.T.B.S, Publisher, 2007), 602.

<sup>8</sup> A.M.Okoli, *Trends and Dynamics of Nigerian Foreign Policy*, 2015, p.80.

<sup>9</sup> S. O. Akinboyeand Otto, F. O, *A Systematic Approach to International Relations*, (Lagos (Nigeria), Concept Publications, 2009), 115.

<sup>10</sup> F. S. Northedge (ed), *The Foreign Policy of Powers* (London, Faba, 1968), 15.

<sup>11</sup>J. Donnelly, Realism, in Palgrave Macmillan ed. *Theories of International Relations*, (York, Palgrave Macmillan, New 2005), 29-52.

### Realism

It is generally the belief of Realists that, the international system is defined by anarchy, and absence of central authority <sup>[12]</sup>. In the absence of central authority, states are autonomous of each other, and no inherent structure of society can exist or emerge to obstruct relations among them, they are bound only by forcible or either by their own consent. In such an anarchic system state power is the key, and indeed, the only variable interest because it is only through power can states defend themselves and hope to survive. As J. Mearsheimer rightly points, Realists vision of the world rests on four assumptions:

1. That survival is the principal goal of every state. Foreign invasion and occupation are thus the most pressing threats that any State faces. Even if domestic interests to a set of national ideals would dictate more benevolent or co-operative international goals, the anarchy of the international system requires that states constantly ensure that they have sufficient power to defend themselves and advance their material interests necessary for survival.
2. Given the goal of survival, states will act as best they can in order to maximize their likelihood of continuing to exist. By this, realists hold states to be their rational actors.
3. Realists assume that all States possess some military capacity, and no state knows what its neighbors intend precisely. The world, in other words, is dangerous and uncertain.
4. In such a world it is the Great Powers-the states with most economic clout and, especially, military might, that are decisive. In these view international relations is essentially a story of Great Power politics <sup>[13]</sup>.

Realists' overriding emphasis on anarchy and power leads them to a dim view of international law and international institutions. Why would any State choose to expend its precious power on enforcement unless it had a direct material interest in the outcome? Why would any State agree to co-operate through a treaty or institution in the first place? Thus States may create international law and international institutions, and may enforce the rules they codify. However, it is not the rules themselves that determine why a State acts a particular way, but instead the underlying material interests and power relations. International law is thus a symptom of State behaviour, not a cause <sup>[14]</sup>

### Liberalism

Liberalist <sup>[15]</sup> went for a more complex and less cohesive body of theory that can be seen in realists' theory. While in realists'

<sup>12</sup> K. N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Addison O. Westley Reading 1979), Cited in Anne-Marie Slaughter, Cited in Anne-Marie Slaughter, *International Relations, Principal Theories*, in Wolfrum, R (ed.) *Max Planet Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, (London, Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>13</sup> J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (Norton, New York 2001), 22, See, also Anne-Marie Slaughter, *International Relations, Principal Theories*, in Wolfrum, R (ed.) *Max Planet Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, (London, Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> M.W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism*, (Norton, New York 1979). See Anne-Marie Slaughter, *International Relations, Principal Theories*, in Wolfrum, R (ed.) *Max Planet Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, (London, Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

state of view, states are actors pursuing self-interest and wealth for survival. Here all states have essentially the same goal and behaviours in the international system, the basic insight of the liberal theory are that, the national characteristics of individual states matter for their international relations. The theory therefore emphasized the unique behavior of individual states in the international system. Basic in this aspect is the absence of war between liberal states, a phenomenon which Doyle described as matured liberal democracies<sup>[16]</sup> Although theories of international relations have yet to create a compelling theory of why democratic States do not fight each other, however, it is the opinion of many scholars that, the road to the democratic peace may be a particularly bloody one. Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder have demonstrated convincingly that democratizing States are more likely to go to war than either autocracies or liberal democracies<sup>[17]</sup>.

Alternative to the above assumptions, Andrew Moravcsik has developed a more general liberal theory of international relations, based on three core assumptions namely:

1. Non-State Actors (individuals and private groups, not states, are the fundamental actors in world politics),
2. States represent some dominant subset of domestic society, whose interests they serve; and
3. The configuration of these preferences across the international system determines State behavior<sup>[18]</sup>

The submission here is that, in this view States are not simply seeking to survive and prosper in an anarchic system but, are configurations of individual and group interests who then project those interests into the international system through a particular kind of government. Survival may very well remain a key goal, but commercial interests or ideological beliefs may also be important<sup>[19]</sup> Liberal theory is quite useful as sources of insight in designing international institutions like courts that are intended to have an impact on domestic politics or to link up to domestic institutions. Liberal theory is very challenging to international lawyers, because international law has little mechanism for taking the nature of domestic preferences or regime-type in to account.

### Charles F. Hamanne's theory

Hermann theoretical framework is a scheme whose objective is to interpret those situations in which governments decide to change the direction of their foreign policies. Hermann created a theoretical framework, a scheme whose objective is to interpret those situations in which governments decide to change the direction of their foreign policies. Hermann classified foreign policy changes according to their magnitude and divided them into four categories namely:

1. Adjustment changes: are quantitative changes: small

modifications in the effort with which foreign policy is carried out, or refinements of the targets of that particular policy. Under such changes the main purposes of the policy remain unchanged, so does what is done, and how it is done.

2. Program changes: in this case too, the purposes of the policy do not change, what changes are the methods used to address the goals and objectives of the policy; in others words, what is done and how it is done does change.
3. Goal changes: At this stage, the purposes of the policy are replaced.
4. International orientation changes: Is the most extreme kind of foreign policy alterations: in such events, states completely redirect their approach to world affairs<sup>[20]</sup>

As it is indicated, while adjustment changes do not represent major foreign policy redirections, the other three kinds of change do. Foreign policy change always seems to stem from failure. This means that a redirection of foreign policy is dictated by the realization that the actual policy is not properly addressing the problems it had set out to resolve, or that it is not achieving the goals it was meant to reach. In the realization of the above, Hermann's foreign policy change theory identified four basic reasons why government chooses to redirect its foreign policy. Such change agents are:

1. Predominant leader driven change: This occurs when a policymaker, usually the head of government, has enough power, conviction, and energy to urge his administration to redirect the course of its foreign policy in accordance with the policymaker's own vision.
2. Bureaucratic advocacy: change happens when a particular group within the government sees the need for changing the course of foreign policy and it is influential enough to make that change take place through advocacy.
3. Domestic restructuring: This form of change is possible because any government needs the support and legitimating of the most politically relevant segments of society for it to govern effectively. When these elites either change in their composition or alter their views on foreign policy, they can cause the policy to be redirected.
4. External shocks: Foreign policy change can also be the result of dramatic international events. When these events' visibility and their impact on a government are large, they can spark major foreign policy changes<sup>[21]</sup>.

There is no doubt that realism and liberalism remained the main theoretical frameworks in international relations used in the interpretation of foreign policies, and albeit some characteristics of realist are clearly reflected in Russia's behaviour, neither of this two approaches is the most appropriate to undertaking an analysis of Russia's foreign policy. Given the fact that Russia's foreign policy experienced several abrupt redirections in its recent history, Hermann's theory does seem to provide the most appropriate starting basis from which to try and decode Russian foreign policy and

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> E. D. Mansfield and Snyder, J, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (MIT Cambridge 2005). Cited in Anne-Marie Slaughter, *International Relations, Principal Theories*, in Wolfrum, R (ed.) *Max Planet Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, (London, Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>18</sup> A. Moravcsik, "Talking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics, (Int'lOgr 1995), 513-53.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> C. F. Hermann, *How Vladimir Putin's Worldview Shapes Russia Foreign Policy*, (International Studies Quarterly, Vol.34, No.1, 1990), 5-6

<sup>21</sup> C. F. Hermann, "How Vladimir Putin's Worldview Shapes Russia Foreign Policy", 11-12.

foreign policy changes under the period of study. The point emphasized here is that, Hermann's theoretical model will accompany us throughout this paper as an assistance tool in our assessment of Russia's foreign policy in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The choice of Hermann's theory is in no way an empirical truth, but rather, the most appropriate theory agreed by this researcher to explaining the Russia's foreign policy.

### Overview of core values of Russia's foreign policy

The Concept of the Foreign Policy of Russia described the basic principles, priorities, goals and objectives of her foreign policy. In addition to the top priority objective of the national security policy, which is ensuring the protection of an individual, society and the state, the foreign policy as clearly spelt out by Olga Oliker and Christopher, S. Chivis, focused primarily on pursuing the following basic goals:

- a. Ensuring the security of the country, protecting and strengthening its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and securing its high standing in the international community as one of the influential and competitive poles of the modern world;
- b. Creating favorable external conditions for a steady and dynamic growth of the Russian economy and its technological modernization with a view to putting it on the innovation-based development tracks, as well as for improving the quality of life, strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions, and ensuring human rights and freedoms;
- c. Active promotion of international peace and universal security and stability for the purpose of establishing a just and democratic system of international relations based on collective decision-making in addressing global issues, on the primacy of international law, including, first of all, the UN Charter, as well as on equal, partnership relations among nations with the central coordinating role of the UN as the principal organization regulating international relations;
- d. Promoting good-neighborly relations with adjoining states and helping to overcome existing and prevent potential tensions and conflicts in regions adjacent to the Russian Federation;
- e. Developing mutually beneficial and equal bilateral and multilateral partnership relations with foreign states, interstate associations, international organizations and forums on the basis of respect for independence and sovereignty, pragmatism, transparency, multi-vector approach, predictability and non-confrontational protection of national interests; promoting broad international cooperation based on the principle of non-discrimination and facilitating the formation of flexible non-bloc network alliances with Russia's active involvement;
- f. Strengthening Russia's positions in the global trade and economic system, providing diplomatic support to national economic operators abroad, preventing discrimination against Russian goods, services or investments; making use of the potential of international and regional economic and financial institutions to that end;
- g. Ensuring comprehensive protection of rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots residing abroad, and promoting, in various international

- formats, Russia's approach to human rights issues;
- h. Promoting the Russian language and strengthening its positions in the world, disseminating information on the achievements of the peoples of Russia and consolidating the Russian Diaspora abroad;
- i. Facilitating the development of a constructive dialogue and partnership relations between civilizations in the interests of enhancing accord among various cultures and confessions and ensuring their mutual enrichment <sup>[22]</sup>.

Several themes that made up Russia's foreign policy interest and goals have remained consistent since the birth of the post-soviet Russian state, and have customarily repeated in most Russian foreign policy and security documents since the first foreign policy concept was issued in 1993 <sup>[23]</sup> The most persisting has been Russia's prioritization of its relations with Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which is unfailingly listed as the most important regional priority for the country. Significance in this area, Russia as Lukyano noted, has historically seen central Asia as its zone of influence, a chase board where Russia would play to dominate <sup>[24]</sup>.

It is important to note that, Russia territories lies within vast flat plains which have made the country more vulnerable to external invasion by the enemies to conquer it. The right thinking for former Soviet- Russia was to create buffer zone around its boarder and expand the space around it as to make invasion difficult. The above strategic thinking might be right, but seem outdated since it is all about Russia past, but the thinking has influenced Russian policy-makers until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This century is not likely not to see any ground invasion of Russia by foreign enemy, nevertheless, the Kremlin is concerned with a more sophisticated kind of invasion that might take place if the CIS were to become Westernized; it could easily influence the Russian population and bring about regime change in Russia. It is on account of this that, Russian leaders have unfailingly considered the post-Soviet space as their primary foreign policy priority, a zone of privileged interest. It is also noted that the CIS (former Soviet possessions) remained so important to Russia administration. It wants them under its influence because they represent buffer to protect its core <sup>[25]</sup> Russia's long-held defending strategic interest could also be viewed from the aggressive Western agenda. It could be recalled that, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the West began to spread democracy to the world. In most cases, the West approach to enthronement of democracy was

<sup>22</sup> G. Baldoni, A Theoretical Analysis of Russian Foreign Policy: Changes Under Vladimir Putin, *International Relations, Principal Theories*, [www.e.ir.inf/.../a-theoretical-analysis-of-russia-foreign-policy-change-under-vladimiri-putin/](http://www.e.ir.inf/.../a-theoretical-analysis-of-russia-foreign-policy-change-under-vladimiri-putin/) Accessed: 17/11/2017.

<sup>23</sup> A. Putin and Light, M. *Russian Foreign Policy Themes in Official Documents and Speeches: Tracing Continuity and Change*, In Chadeir, D. and Light, M, Eds. *Russia's Foreign Policy Ideas, Domestic Politics and External Relations*, ISBN 978-1137-46887-1, (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2015), 13-29

<sup>24</sup> F. Luyanov, *Russia and the EU: Back to Realism, School of Economic and Political Sciences*, (London, 2016), 35.

<sup>25</sup> A.C.Kuchin, and Zevelev, I. A. "Russia Foreign Policy: Continuity Change", the *Washington Quarterly, Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, 35, (1), 2012, 147-161.

peaceful and in some other part of the world, it chose to apply the use of military force to get some countries submit to the Western-established international order. Since the Gulf War, the application of force, either through NATO or individual state actions has been consistent. It did so in 1999, when it bombed Serbia, a close Russia ally to support the secession of Kosovo. Following that operation, NATO or some of its members have engaged in military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and recently in Zimbabwe [26].

Incidentally, a more aggressive NATO has incorporated some countries such as Baltic states and Poland that have now increasingly become anti-Russian and very importantly, previously formed a buffer zone between Russia and NATO which were former Soviet members [27]. From the perspective above, it no doubt becomes increasingly convincing to Russia that the eastward expansion of NATO into its area of influence and buffer zone amount to serious security threat to its sovereignty. More importantly, if Ukraine were to join NATO, Russia would be forced to share a 200 Kilometers boarder with NATO, something Russia found unacceptable [28]. In its response to Western increasing military aggression to bring regime change to democracy, Russia has remained firm in her position as defender of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and international law in general [29]. Implied here is that, Russia has persistently not only defended its right to sovereignty and independence of other states across the globe, it has also expressed commitment to defend the norms of international law against unilateral or multilateral attempt on the part of other countries to change them. Most unfortunately, as Giovanni Baldoni commented, Putin's war in Georgia and annexation of Crimea in March, 2014, broke that commitment. For Baldoni, this two events represented abrupt shifts in the foreign policy of the Russian federation.

The resistance to the establishment of ballistic missiles defense systems in Europe is another persistence theme in Russia's foreign policy, particularly when they are close to Russia borders, [30] a threat which Russia considered to have undermined regional and international peace and security, therefore giving an unfair strategic advantage to such countries adopting them. At the core of Russia's foreign policy lies in her called for multipolar world, and the achievement of consolidation by Russia of its great power status [31]. Russia has consistently compared itself to the USA and Europe, with no intention of being led by them. In the word of Putin and Light, "Russia will strive to be leaders." [32] As expected, Russia has always defended its position as an independent strategic player in both regional and continental levels. Indeed, as noted by Carnegie Moscow Centre, "as

typical of most great powers, Russia has historically considered itself as exceptional country with a special mission. This has made Russia very proud people and also caused them to be highly resentful to the West whenever they felt like it was disregarding Russia exception alism."

### **History and geopolitical condition: A determinant of Russian foreign policy drive?**

Like all nations of the world, Russia has the most unique attributes. Very unique here is its size stretching not only across Europe but also Asia. This extensive territory with its boarders over time has created a natural strategic security challenge on Russia. Insecurity therefore created the tendency for Russia to view other states as threatening regardless of whether they had hostile intentions, and sometimes despite limited capability against Russia/Soviet interest. Throughout Russian history, absolute security defense remained the best option for Russia towards its neighboring states. As Paul Kennedy observed, during the Cold War, the Soviet Union claimed "absolute security along its boarders making relations toward its neighboring states and Western and Eastern Europe, Middle East, China, and Japan worsen," and as it was expected, imperial expansion became Russia's way of defending itself against invasion [33].

Russia tended to see the greatest threats on its immediate neighboring states thus, Russia imperial expansion was more noted in the later year of Napoleonic wars which saw Russia annex what are now Ukraine, Finland, and Poland among other territories along the Red sea. And in later decades, it's conquered central Asia. Although, throughout history, Russia frequently found itself in conflict with European states over its policies in central and Eastern Europe, especially the Balkans wars and its support for pan-Slavism prior to World War 1, it never threatened taking over other major European powers; however, the smaller ones were at risk of being attacked by imperial Russia. It could be recalled that shortly after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, it was Soviet incursions into Iran and divisions over the disposition of states in Europe that drove a wedge between Stalin and other members of the Grand Alliance, therefore causing the Cold War [34].

Since the end of the Cold War, Russia just as it was under Tsars, though with strong economic and cultural ties with the West, have viewed the existing security institutions in Europe as poorly aligned with their own interest and expansion as dangerous, if not always directly threatening to Russia. Russia has always believed that the USA, especially is actively seeking to undermine its influence by actively promoting and supporting democratic forces [35]. It is interesting to note that, even if NATO was seen as a dangerous and promoter as anti-Russia, this concern have neither slowed down the growth of Russian trade with the European Union nor Russian tourism to Western European countries. Even before Russia-Ukraine

<sup>26</sup>F. Lukynov, "Putin's Foreign Policy: The Quest to Restore Russia's Rightful Place", (Foreign Affairs, Putin's Russia, May/June, 2016), 30-37.

<sup>27</sup> S. Karaganov, "An Iron Fist to Keep NATO Expansion at bay", Rossiyskaya Gazeta, rg.ru2011/01/20karaganov-nato-site.html, Accessed: 27/11/2017.

<sup>28</sup> G. Baldoni, a Theoretical Analysis of Russian Foreign Policy: www.e.ir. Inf/.../a-theoretical-analysis-of-russia-foreign-policy-change-under-vladimir-putin/Accessed; 27/11/2017.

<sup>29</sup> M. Light, "Russian Foreign Policy" *Themes in Official Documents and Speeches*, 22.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 22-23.

<sup>31</sup> M. Light, 22-23.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> P. Kennedy, the Rise and fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflicts from 1500-2000, (Random House, New York, 1987), 488-489.

<sup>34</sup> O. Oliker and Christopher, S, Russian Foreign Policy in Historical and Current Context, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/.../RAND\\_PE144.synopsis.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/.../RAND_PE144.synopsis.pdf). Accessed: 26/11/2017.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

crisis, in 2014, <sup>[36]</sup> Russia had tend to view Ukraine at best more than other post-Soviet states as fundamentally Russian culture and background, though a claim which Ukraine disagreed. History has shown that Russia and Ukraine has overtime had very close economic links and mutual understanding in their defense sectors which had guaranteed cooperation and co-ordination.

It may have been well accepted that, Ukraine signing an EU Association Agreement could spark a chain of event culminating in Russian invasion of Ukraine, but as Olga and Christopher pointed, given the condition which it has agreed with Western donors and partners, Russia could easily have concluded that its influence with Ukraine was not at risk from the EU association agreement, and any Western shift could as well be watched by Russia slowly. Russia could attain its goals mainly by waiting and seeing, but it could not wait and see, but attack Ukraine in 2014. While it is right to accept that Russia's history of insecurity and its tendency to dominate its periphery is an essential backdrop for understanding contemporary Russian foreign policy, is sufficient to explain Russian' decision to use force in Ukraine, in spite of the underlying decades of cooperation with the Western countries? Interesting in this regard, scholars have proffered several explanation to Russian actions in Ukraine. Daniel Treisman considered three potential explanations to this effect:

1. A fear that NATO or EU would have encircled Russia if Ukraine, under its new government had joined the organizations,
2. The fear that under the new Ukraine government, Russia Black-sea fleet may be expelled from its Sevastopol base.
3. The possibility that the taking of Crimea might have been the first step of the long planned strategy by which Putin in a neo-imperialist fashion, would be attempting to restore Russian borders to those of the Soviet Union, i.e., by annexing Crimea, Putin was rightly telling the world what most Russians thought as a historical wrong, basically that Crimea should go back to being Russia, rather than Ukraine <sup>[37]</sup>.

As this study have severally identified, NATO expansion towards Russia borders has always been considered as major threat by various Russian governments. Also, it is undisputable that Putin did not get over the loss of prestige that Russia underwent following the collapse of the Soviet Union which he very often referred to as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" <sup>[38]</sup>. What matters to him are to in the possible way, no matter what it takes, to return Russia great power status.

### Conclusion

The study have put in clear terms that, Russia's core foreign policy interest lies primarily on ensuring the security of the country, protecting and strengthening its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and also to secure its high standing in the

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> D. Treisman, "Why Putin Took Crimea: The Gambler in the Kremlin, Foreign Affairs", (Putin Russia, 93 (3) May/June, 2016), 47-51.

<sup>38</sup> V. Putin, Speech on Nationwide Television, Moscow, Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/13/international/13CND-BUSH.html> Accessed:27/11/2017.

international community as one of the influential and competitive poles of the modern world. It holds the view that, historical and geopolitical identities are occupying decreasing important role in decision-making. As Nel Philip rightly observed, the current generation of leaders is more integrationist than their predecessors, in the sense that, they have more confidence in their ability to have effect on redistribution of wealth, prestige, and power in the global political economy <sup>[39]</sup> This redistribution among Russians is currently directed to achieve the desire to overcome the USA's post-Cold War unipolar standpoint in the international system. By gaining more diplomatic support, Russia could restore the world order to a fairer and more balanced one to put an end to American diplomatic dominance in international institutions. This remained the larger struggle for Russia to regain its great power status.

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