STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

GEOPOLITICAL CONSEQUENCES ARISING FROM INVOLVEMENT OF RUSSIA IN THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

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Abstract

The crisis in eastern Ukraine and Crimea is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of security currently facing the international community. In pursuing its objectives, the state is often guided by different motives, but the common denominator change in the approach to cooperation with Russia is now Ukraine. The author analyses the changing geostrategic situation surrounding Russia, which is the result of its involvement in the Ukrainian crisis. This has also been analysed by countries like China, Japan, India, Turkey and Middle East countries.

Keywords: Russia, NATO, Far East, Middle East, Turkey, France, Germany, European Union, Donbas, conflict in Ukraine, security challenges, geostrategic situation

Introduction

This article describes the consequences for the system of international security posed by the military involvement of Russia in Ukraine. The fears of some countries, as well as the possible reactions of the international community, are analysed.

Russia, by engaging in the conflict in Ukraine, violated the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and openly challenged the international order

formed in Europe after the Cold War. These changes occurred under "barrels of rifles". Russia, to lend credibility to international opinion, included Crimea within its borders and organised a referendum in which the majority of the inhabitants of the peninsula declared in favour of incorporation into the Russian Federation[1], although the vote took place without the international supervision desired in such situations [2]. In areas where voting took place, there were no observers from the UN, the OSCE, the European Union or even the Commonwealth of Independent States. Ukrainian authorities do not recognise the referendum results, nor did the vast majority of the international community. The UN adopted a non-binding resolution that the referendum held in March 2014 on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol is invalid.

The Kremlin, as an argument for the recognition of the official results of the referendum, evoked the current structure of ethnic Crimea[3]. Indeed, given the political situation prevailing in the Crimea, it is difficult to believe that the Russians representing almost 60% of the population of Crimea voted contrary to the official narrative of Moscow. The same argument is used by Moscow in relation to the situation in eastern Ukraine. However, in this case, the proportions (except for the eastern districts) are not as favourable for Moscow.

After the referendum in the Crimea, it was expected that Russia's main interest would return to the Far East and focus on integration with China, as well as with the countries of Central Asia, which in the recent past were republics of the former Soviet Union. It was also believed that more and more apparent rivalry

1 According to the official vote ended with the victory of pro-Russian option. It was attended by 83.1 percent of eligible residents of the Crimea, which was up 96.8 for connecting the peninsula to Russia.

2 Journalist American edition of "Forbes" Paul Roderick Gregory revealed that for a moment on the sides of the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights report bore providing a completely different outcome. According to an unofficial report, only 30 percent voted. Crimean residents, half of whom supported the idea of "unification" with Russia. This means that a total of only 15 percent. with the right to vote inhabitants of the peninsula was a connection; source: *Putin's 'Human Rights Council' Accidentally Posts Real Crimean Election Results,* http://www.forbes.com/sites/paulroderickgregory/2014/05/05/putins-human-rights-council-accidentally-posts-real-crimean-election-results-only-15-voted-for-annexation/, (access: 05.05.2014 r.)

3 In 2001, in the Crimea lived 58.5% of Russians, 24.4% of Ukrainians and 12.1% of Tatars.

between the US and China would cause China to turn to Russia in competition in the region. Fights erupting in eastern Ukraine quickly verified these predictions.

As a result of the Kremlin's policy, it can be argued that the situation of political detente that took place in Europe after the Cold War is a thing of the past. Russia's position as a predictable partner has changed along with the inclusion of Crimea within the borders of the Russian Federation and the granting of more or less hidden support to separatists in the eastern part of Ukraine. In early August 2014, Russia sent regular units of its armed forces to the fighting in Donbas. The soldiers bore no insignia, which resembled the situation observed in the Crimea at the time it was taken over by the Russian army[4]. The Kremlin does not hesitate to use volunteers from Russia and ethnic Ukrainians favouring Russia and, at the same time, hating NATO and still claiming the US as the main threat to their security.

The involvement of Russia in Ukraine allows the authorities in the Kremlin to force the western countries to treat seriously the demands formulated by President Putin about the political and geopolitical status of Ukraine and to take on their topic of conversation with Moscow[5]. The speed with which Russia annexed the Crimea[6], and then the reaction to the events in the districts of Lugansk and Donetsk, could mean that Russia was prepared for the operation. Therefore, this puts the Kremlin at a great disadvantage in arousing deep mistrust and distance in its partners. To regain the confidence of the West, Putin will have to offer real support and assistance in solving another problem faced by the countries of Western Europe and the United States. Issues that require decisive action are undoubtedly the civil war in Syria and war with "Islamic State". The key to solving this problem is in Russia, which is a very close ally of Bashar al Assad. Russia's involvement in the war with "Islamic State" seems to be an excellent opportunity to gain credibility in the eyes of the West as an ally capable and ready to cooperate with the international community in solving many pressing problems of the modern world.

4 M. Menkiszak, R. Sadowski, P. Żochowski, Rosyjska interwencja zbrojna we wschodniej Ukrainie, http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2014-09-03/rosyjska-interwencja-zbrojna-we-wschodniej-ukrainie (Access: 03.09.2014 r.).

5 Ibidem.

6 The first actions of the Russian armed forces on the territory of Crimea were observed on 26th February 2014. Which was only four days after Viktor Yanukovych escaped.

After the collapse of the USSR, the USA and Western Europe sought the opportunity of rapprochement and cooperation with Russia. They expected to further develop political dialogue and economic cooperation. After the events in Ukraine, the positive image of Russia and its citizens, leaving substantial amounts of money, has significantly changed in the capitals of Western Europe. The period of mutual understanding and unfettered cooperation, introduced by Gorbachev and continued by Yeltsin, came to an end.

The following text concerns the geostrategic changes in the environment around Russia due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. In this study, the interaction of Russia with selected countries is analysed. Russia's relations with the United States resulting from the involvement of these countries in the affairs of Ukraine are also raised. That's a big issue certainly deserving separate attention.

Russia and the European Union – close neighbours

Russia's relations with the European Union reached their peak at the beginning of the first decade of the twenty-first century, when it reached agreement on the draft "common spaces" within which the Union had tended to cooperate with Russia in almost all aspects of their activity. After the Russia-EU summit held in the shadow of the Ukrainian events, cooperation with Russia has been reduced to the level of technical management in the field of energy policy and the transit of gas through Ukraine.

Some hope for alleviating frozen contacts at the highest level resulted in the appointment of Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, remaining on good terms with the Kremlin, and the appointment to the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of Federica Mogherini, known for their soft attitude to the Kremlin's policy. The large variety and divergence of views among countries in the European Union meant that it was impossible to see a significant breakthrough in relations between Brussels and Moscow. Russia, since the inception of the European Union, has traditionally preferred to talk of specific national governments contesting supranational organisations.

The European Union carries out a number of initiatives to support the countries of the former Soviet Union in their constitutional reforms and their potential efforts to integrate with the EU. As a result of the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, the EU has made the adjustment of cooperation in the framework of one of the most important projects, which is the Eastern Partnership of the European Union. In the final declaration of the EU summit in May 2015, it decided to include a provision on the recognition of the summit by the participants, "European aspirations and the European choice of partners, in accordance with what is stated in the association agreements." Clearly, the expectations of Ukraine and Georgia have not found acceptance among the summit participants. Because of the opposition in Belarus and Armenia, "illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol" is not condemned in the final declaration. There was only a provision regarding the recognition of the territorial integrity of the eastern partners of the Union. In addition, French President Francois Hollande stressed that the Eastern Partnership cannot "lead to a conflict with Russia"[7]. In the final speech, the President of the European Council stated that due to the current geopolitical situation in the region this was maximum of what we could achieve. The EU has never considered the Eastern Partnership policy as a way of automatic accession to the community[8].

Berlin – Moscow relations

The Russian presence in eastern Ukraine and the annexation of the Crimea evokes resonance not only among the countries located in the immediate vicinity. Current and further possible steps by the Kremlin also cause concern in the capitals of countries that do not directly border with Russia.

Since the 1970s, reinforced economic and political ties between Berlin and Moscow and then the unification of Germany in 1990, were to lay the foundation for a broader partnership between Western Europe and Russia. German business gained increasingly greater access to the Russian market, and the Federal Republic

7 Ibidem.

8 B. Wesel, *Unia Europejska hamuje Partnerstwo Wschodnie*, http://www.dw.com/pl/unia-europejska-hamuje-partnerstwo-wschodnie/a-18471246 (Access: 22.05.2015 r.).

of Germany has become a mediator between Russia and the European Union in ensuring stability and security in Europe, particularly in the post-Soviet area. The voice of Russia was taken into account in discussions about the future of Europe, and the German point of view of was important in introducing political and economic reforms in Russia[9].

The close ties between Russia and Germany continued by Helmut Kohl, then Gerhard Schroder, recently underwent a significant correction. Through Medvedev's presidency, Chancellor Merkel also pinned pretty big expectations for further strengthening of relations with Moscow. However, hopes for normal cooperation with a democratic Russia were revised in 2011, after the re-appointment of Putin as president of the Russian Federation. Since that time, the basis for cooperation between Berlin and Moscow was business relations, which, as a result of the Ukrainian crisis, have also been subjected to a serious test. To say that political German-Russian relations were broken is certainly wrong. However, you can formulate a thesis that these relationships are no longer the nature of "special".

The idea of strategic German-Russian relations are weakened by the crisis in the euro zone and the conviction of the Russian elite about the weakness and unattractiveness of the European Union, perceived primarily as a German project. In contrast, President Putin has launched the construction of the Eurasian Union, not hiding that this will act as a counterweight to the European Union and will allow Russia to retain influence, especially in the post-Soviet area[10].

Russia's attitude to Germany is multifaceted. First of all, the impact of the current relations between Moscow and Berlin are the result of the situation in Ukraine, namely the lack of influence to resolve the crisis by close partners. An important factor influencing the level of Moscow-Berlin relations is Russia's elites and society's attitude toward Germany. In this area, statements of high officials and media publications appearing in Germany are important, which compare the Occupation of Crimea by Russia to the seizure of the Sudetenland in 1938 by the Germany. To alleviate some nervous reactions in Moscow, Chancellor Merkel

9 A. Kwiatkowska-Drożdż, *Niemcy wobec Rosji. Powiązania – TAK, Zbliżenie – NIE* [w:] Punkt widzenia nr 39, wyd. Ośrodka Studiów Wschodnich, Warszawa 2014, s. 5.
10 Ibidem, s. 6.

distanced herself from the words of Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble, who made this comparison. This example shows that the anti-German sentiment that did not exist in Russian society for decades after World War II could be seen. It is noticeable that the Russian media has been substituting politically correct terms with "Nazi" or "fascist" instead of "German".

Moscow – Paris, historically important relations

During the anniversary celebrations in Normandy, the leaders of Germany, Russia and Ukraine and President Hollande began the "Norman format", which led to the signing of the Minsk agreements concerning, among other things, the cessation of fighting in the east of Ukraine. This has improved the overall relations between Paris and Moscow. Unfortunately, the agreements did not contribute to solving the crisis due to the difficulties in implementing the provisions. Also, the decision to sell partially already paid-for Mistral warships to Egypt instead of Russia didn't strain Moscow-Paris relations too much. The Russian Foreign Ministry, in summing up 2015, singled out France as a country that, in the face of worsening general relations with the EU, takes a more realistic position regarding cooperation with Russia[11].

NATO and Russia – uneasy partnership

NATO-Russian relations since the Cold War went through periods of a clear improvement in relations and soon afterwards underwent collapse. Until now, the intensity and level of interaction was like a sine wave. Analysing the reasons for the improvement or deterioration in NATO-Russia relations over the past 25 years, it can be agreed that in a large proportion of cases, worsening or improvement of these relations was not the result of negligence on the part of NATO, but was the

11 *MSZ Rosji o wydarzeniach 2015 roku*, http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/msz-rosji-o-wydarzeniach-2015-roku-upolityczniony-kurs-ue-na-konfrontacje-z-rosja/mmw9cd (access: 29.12.2015 r.).

decision of Russian politicians, who recognise when change in the relationship is beneficial to the strategic objectives of Russia. It should be emphasised that Russia-NATO relations are largely the result of the bilateral relations between the United States and Russia.

Relations between NATO and Russia reached their upper limit for the last time in 2009–2010, when mutual strategic partnership was discussed and the possibility of building a joint missile defence considered. After this period, there were events related to the Arab Spring and the sine wave headed down before it reached its lowest position with the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine. A large accumulation of contentious issues cannot draw a thesis about the imminent improvement of bilateral relations between Moscow and Washington. In autumn 2015, the Kremlin made some effort to improve its image by deciding to support action against ISIS. Various sources have reported, however, that Russia is mainly interested in its own goals, among which the most important goal is to support the forces of President Bashar al-Assad[12].

After the annexation of the Crimea, there was a return to a situation known from the times of the Cold War. The NATO-Russia Council, whose task was to prevent crises, was suspended except for matters related to Afghanistan. The relationship will probably not alter NATO's decision on the deployment of its military bases in countries that are new members of the Alliance. This decision is a consequence of the seizure of Crimea and the crisis in Ukraine that, without the support of Russia, would not have taken place. However, Russian politicians and the public perceive this move as the approach of NATO to Russia's borders, and, consequently, it is invariably presented as a direct threat to the country.

Far East – a new strategic Russia's partner

For Russia, the Far East has become an alternative at a time when it was realised that further rapprochement with the West was impossible. Changing the orientation of Russia's geopolitics started a few years before her visible acceleration. The

12 Mohammed al-Khatieb, *How the Syrian regime forces are attacking opposition under Russian cover*, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ru/originals/2015/10/syria-hama-regime-attack-opposition-russian-cover.html#ixzz3ywyFQ2Sa (access: 21.10.2015 r.).

intensification of diplomatic efforts towards the Far East was caused by criticism from the West after the annexation of the Crimea by Russia in the spring of 2014.

China, as a result of the alienation of Russia by the US and the EU, is trying to get better terms for themselves from Gazprom and wants to direct participation in energy projects in Siberia and the Arctic. In May 2014, Putin visited Shanghai, where the heads of Gazprom and the Chinese energy company CNPC signed a negotiated contract for many years for supply of Russian gas to China[13]. The contract provides for delivery to China of 1.14 trillion cubic meters of gas in 30 years. The base price will be USD 350-380 per 1,000 cubic meters. The Moscow newspaper calculated that Russia can thus receive 400 billion dollars[14]. The validity of the contract is comparable to the contract of 1960, which first brought gas to the Federal Republic of Germany. Both sides agreed to intensify mutual economic exchanges. According to the ministries of foreign affairs of Russia and China, the two countries will increase trade in the coming years to reach $ 200 billion by 2020[15], accounting for half of their current exchanges with the European Union.

China does not like the power change in Ukraine and they do not support any changes of borders in Europe. Beijing also appears to distrust the road to democracy preferred by Washington. The deterioration of US-Russian relations as a result of the Ukrainian crisis brings with it a number of challenges for China. Beijing will have to be careful not to tie up too much of one of the competing countries as this could provoke a worsening of relations with the other. However, analysing account potential losses and benefits in this game involves risks, and China can gain a lot.

Sanctions imposed on Russia by the West, while China abstained, put this country in the position of an independent economic power, able to articulate its own opinion. China is already Russia's biggest economic partner. Closer relations with Moscow and Beijing over time will force Russia to respect the interests of its

13 S. Kardaś, *Gazowe „partnerstwo" wschodnie: kontrakt Gazpromu i CNPC na dostawy gazu do Chin*, http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2014-06-16/gazowe-partnerstwo-wschodnie-kontrakt-gazpromu-i-cnpc-na (Access: 16.06.2014 r.).

14 Ibidem.

15 ANGIEGIZA, Współpraca gospodarcza Rosji i Chin, https://azjacentralna.wordpress.com/2015/01/19/ wspolpraca-gospodarcza-rosji-i-chin/ (Access: 19.01.2015 r.).

partner. Russian deliveries of military equipment to China will equal the potential of these countries. Gradually increasing Russian dependence on China and access to natural resources and military technology may in the near future elevate China to a role of hegemony in the region. It will be a qualitatively new strategic situation in this part of the world.

With another partner in the Far East, the intensification of political cooperation and trade has not been arranged as in the case of China. Putin's visit to Japan, scheduled for autumn 2014, was aimed at attracting investment and new technologies to Russia, but, because of the crisis in Ukraine, has still not taken place. Japan's relations with Russia can still be decisively impacted by the still unresolved problem of the Kuril Islands, located off the coast of Hokkaido, seized by the Soviet Union just before the end of World War II.

Hope for building strategic relations between Russia and Japan and for a solution to a territorial dispute re-emerged with the election of Shinzo Abe as prime minister of Japan in 2012. Negotiations on the issue were quite advanced and seemed to have reached agreement, but the obstacle in resolving the dispute became Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian crisis[16].

Japan expects the return of these islands but also counts on admission to the exploitation of natural resources in Siberia. Russia would like to acquire Japanese investors and gain the position of a state stabilising situation in the region. Will a return to negotiations take place? This remains in doubt, especially because of the inflamed situation between Russia and Turkey. The Government of Japan recently chose, however, a pro-American direction, and the benefits of the bilateral cooperation could be much greater than the uncertain economic futures in Siberia[17].

Similarly, as in the case of attempts to improve relations with Japan, Russia did not manage to intensify cooperation with India. Relations between those two countries, seen as extremely stable, are not without some tensions, caused by the close cooperation of Russia with Pakistan and China. The result is a noticeable

16 P. Behrendt, *Reset rosyjsko-japońskiego resetu?*, http://www.polska-azja.pl/2015/11/27/p-behrendt-reset-rosyjsko-japonskiego-resetu/ (Access: 27.11.2015 r.).
17 Ibidem.

distancing of India from the concept of partnership between Russia-India-China. Mutual relations are based on the exchange of economic and military cooperation covering a wide range of exercises and research into new technologies. An example is even the International Commission on military-technical cooperation. Although Indo-Chinese relations are currently good, the course of the common border and the rivalry with Pakistan play a much more prominent role. Indian foreign policy is not only focused on Russia, the best example is the cooperation with the US or the European Union[18].

Currently, Moscow expects Indian cooperation in the field of technology and hopes to overcome the reluctance of New Delhi and publicly praised India and China for restraint in assessing the situation in Ukraine. India was not pressured by the international community and does not intend to give up cooperation with Russia. An example is the statement about the possibility of continuing cooperation in the supply of Russian nuclear fuel to Indian reactors, announced in January 2016, and on the possibility of replacing Turkish companies on the Russian market[19].

In addition to China and India, Russia is also interested in cooperating with other economically developed countries in Asia, such as South Korea and Singapore. These countries, however, due to their high dependence of the US, have reacted to Russian involvement in Ukraine as Washington has and imposed sanctions on Russia.

Due to the similar approach to the threat to the stabilisation of Afghanistan, the crisis in Ukraine does not substantially affect the cooperation of Moscow and Washington. However, political and military support granted to Ukraine by the United States could result in the withdrawal of Russia's support for US military operations in Afghanistan.

18 A. Piwońska, *Przyjaźń indyjsko-rosyjska*, http://www.stosunkimiedzynarodowe.pl/przyja%C5%BA%C5%84-indyjsko-rosyjska (Access: 09.05.2012 r.).
19 A. Sanzhiev, *Russia offers Turkish slot to India*, http://in.rbth.com/economics/cooperation/2015/12/09/russia-offers-turkish-slot-to-india_549161 (Access: 09.12.2015 r.).

Middle-Eastern countries reaction

Moscow's relations with Iran, one of the most important countries in the region for some time, were not the best. Russia supported the resolution for fiercer sanctions against Iran at the UN Security Council. This indicated the increasing willingness of the Kremlin authorities to cooperate with the West in overcoming the crisis around the nuclear program carried out by Tehran. The cooperation of Russia and Iran, especially in the sphere of nuclear energy, was daunting Western countries for many years – especially the United States. The following years showed that Russia was an important partner in the Iranian nuclear program[20]. On the other hand, at a certain phase of the program, the Russians began to be approached with caution by its Iranian partner, and Moscow chose not to completely rupture beneficial relations with Teheran.

Russia's alliance with Iran based mainly on the nuclear program proved to be fragile. Saddled with many differences and a relatively high dose of mutual suspicion could not stand the test of time. Recent decisions on the abolition of restrictions on oil exports by Iran indicate a significant correction alliance between Moscow and Tehran. An issue that has a significant impact on the level of Russian-Iranian relations is the more than correct relations between Russia and Israel. The Kremlin does not intend to give them up despite the support that Jerusalem gives Washington on the crisis in Ukraine.

Another key issue for Russia is the support provided to the government in Damascus. Bashar al-Assad visited Moscow in autumn 2015 for the first time since 2011. During the meeting, Putin said that the Syrian people are "almost alone" in resisting the jihadists[21]. This was undoubtedly an announcement of further support for Damascus by Moscow, which is involved in the conflict through the support they give the forces loyal to President Assad.

20 Important partners in the development of Iran's nuclear program were also: China and North Korea.

21 M. Jastrzębki, *Tajemnicza wizyta prezydenta Syrii w Moskwie*, http://www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/1533981,Kreml-prezydent-Syrii-spotkal-sie-w-Moskwie-z-Putinem (Access: 21.10.2015 r.).

The current president of Egypt – Abd al-Fattah as-Sisi is renewing good relations with Moscow. As-Sisi remembers the support Putin gave him at a time when it most needed. During the meeting, which took place in Moscow in September 2015, Putin stressed that the two countries intend to exclude the dollar and use their own national currencies in bilateral trade settlements. Trade between Russia and Egypt increased by 86% in 2014 compared with the previous year, reaching US $ 5.5 billion[22].

Russia has not given up the other partners in the region. In June 2014, Su-25s were delivered to Iraq fighters, purchased in order to strengthen the capacity of the Iraqi armed forces in the fight against terrorists. Russia is trying at all costs to be a credible actor, capable of realistically and relatively quickly supporting its traditional partners in the region who use the same rule to use overwhelming force and determination in the pursuit of their goals. Russia's diplomatic offensive in the Middle East and other regions can be explained by setbacks experienced by the east of Ukraine.

Turkey – a difficult partner?

Turkey adopted an attitude of moderate involvement towards the crisis in Ukraine. On the one hand, Ankara has supported Kiev, advocating the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and on the other Turkish authorities' statements were very restrained and testified to the fact that Turkey does not want the Ukrainian crisis to worsen its relations with Russia[23]. Not without significance is the fact that about 300 thousand Tatars live in Crimea, who have strong support from its Diaspora in Turkey. Russia's change of attitude towards the Tatar population in Crimea did not take place as expected. As a consequence, it has not changed the distrustful and sometimes even hostile attitude of the Crimean Tatars to Russia.

22 M Połoński, *Czy Rosja będzie głównym rozgrywającym na Bliskim Wschodzie?*, http://fede.org.pl/polonski-czy-rosja-bedzie-glownym-rozgrywajacym-na-bliskim-wschodzie/ (Access: 15.09.2015 r.).

23 S. Ananicz, *Turcja wobec rosyjskiej interwencji wojskowej na Krymie*, http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2014-03-05/turcja-wobec-rosyjskiej-interwencji-wojskowej-na-krymie (Access: 05.03.2014 r.).

From Ankara's perspective, the occupation of Crimea by Russia violated the existing relative balance in the Black Sea region, and deepening the destabilisation of Ukraine will constitute a threat to the security of Turkey. Turkey's economic exchange with Russia reached about $ 33 billion in 2012 and may be five times greater than with Ukraine. In recent years, Ukraine was not for Turkey as an important partner as Russia because of the political instability and corruption. In bilateral relations with Ukraine, Turkey was confined to courtesy visits[24].

From these facts, it can be concluded that Ankara will probably not seek to tighten relations with Moscow. This situation radically changed in the fall of 2015 after Turkey shot down a Russian aircraf, performing raids on positions of jihadists in Syria. Turkish President Recep Erdogan deplored the shooting down of a Russian bomber, but did not apologise for the incident, which Putin clearly demanded.

Conclusions

The annexation of the Crimea challenged the norms of international relations since the end of the Cold War and forced the European Union and NATO to re-evaluate relations with the Russian Federation. The Ukrainian crisis rocked the international order and definitely changed the sense of security in Europe and changed the approach to Russia by many of the countries mentioned in this report. Events in eastern Ukraine and the Crimea openly suggest that Russia has not given up its traditional sphere of influence and does not intend to withdraw from the territories already occupied. Steps taken in the area under the control of separatists incline to the thesis that we have to deal with a further escalation.

As a result of the events in the east of Ukraine, countries that were recent reliable partners and even allies of Russia changed their attitude to Moscow a little and even, as in the case of Turkey, began to feel a threat to their interests. It can therefore be argued that in the near future there may be even greater changes in the geopolitical orientation of countries in Russia's neighborhood. The change may be the balance of power, particularly in the Far and Middle East. Russia is

24 Ibidem.

in a tight spot with these countries due to unfavorable attitudes and sanctions imposed by the West.

By joining the Crimea to Russia, Putin won huge credit from Russian society. In the international arena, he has created a serious obstacle to future agreement with the European Union, the United States and all the countries surrounding Russia. It is therefore unlikely that, without the settlement of the issue of the Crimea and the withdrawal of Russian forces from the Ukraine, a "reset" of Russian relations with the West can happen. Russia will also need time to regain trust in the strained relations with other major players such as China and India. Any agreement will certainly be the result of a long process and without the firm stance of the international community is a big challenge to international security.

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