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**SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA – ANY EFFECT ON RUSSIAN FOREIGN  
POLICY?**

Master's thesis

Programme International Relations and European-Asian Studies

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## ABSTRACT

Historically, both organizations and countries have extensively used sanctions as a policy instrument toward a targeted state to push for restoring a preliminary *status quo* or accomplishing other goals. The usual controversy about the efficacy of sanctions is still one of the most essential parts of the general debate in the field of international relations. The process of imposing a restrictive measure as well as the latter's desirable (let alone actual) effect are determined by many variables, such as the targeted state's politico-economic potential to sustain or even rebuff the pressure exerted or how effective the international system-bound coordination has been in the process of imposing and maintaining a particular set of sanctions.

Considering the declared context of the restrictive measures imposed on the Russian Federation due to its intrusion into and then annexation of a large part of the Ukrainian sovereign territory, this thesis aims at adding some value to the aforementioned debate, utilizing the postulates of strategic narrative theory to detect the actual impact of the sanctions on Russian foreign policy. This paper is to test the claim that Russia, since the moment when the restrictive measures were imposed on it, has managed to substantially diversify the scope of its foreign policy, shifting its prime interests from a limited number of geographic areas to a broader Asia, the Pacific, Africa, and, more comprehensively than ever, the Middle East. To the direct contrary from the perceived goal of the sanctions, the Kremlin has become more visible on the international stage, having been acting more often than before as a mediator (pretentious and real) or a balancer in a range of geo-strategically relevant disputes.

**Keywords:** restrictive measures, sanctions on Russia, Russian foreign policy, influence, target-state, international community, international system, strategic narrative theory.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

EU – European Union

UN – United Nations

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

CFSP – European Common Foreign and Security Policy

RSFSR – Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

BRI – Belt and Road Initiative

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

UkSSR – Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic

CoCom – Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls

IAEA – International Atomic Energy Agency

WHO – World Health Organization

OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation

BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa

LON – League of Nations

## INTRODUCTION

At present and in the past, considering the constantly changing and evolving world of international relations, it is important to keep searching for innovative approaches in analyzing conflictual situations and their consequences. After all, the essence of a conflict represents a core discussional element for the whole academic discipline. In addition, when it comes to the consequences, there is always a task on establishing a solid methodology-bound framework on measuring those and determining, for example, whether or not a range of certain restrictive measures (economic, military, diplomatic, and other restrictions) that are being taken against a misbehaved country have ever changed its behavior.

In order to better understand the meaning of the various restrictive measures, it is important to detect their roots and then be able to measure their effectiveness. For example, Stanchhev (2009, 1) described that the first known sanctions were used at the end of XIV and in the beginning of XV century – the Spanish word ‘embargo’ has been used in the English language latest in 1602 or, possibly, even in 1593. This word might be coming into the English linguistic realm due to the fact of Spanish embargo that was imposed in 1568 to 1573. Its meaning may be seen as aim at stopping something temporarily, especially in trading goods or accessing information.

Considering the context, a more contemporary notion that is used to describe the action is sanctions or restrictive measures. Both sanctions or/and embargos are usually about trade restrictions, which were placed against target countries in order to restore the pre-sanctions *status quo* or, on the grand-level, international peace and security. In relations between states, international economic sanctions tend to be a widespread and recurrent feature, for example sanctions of the League of Nations (LON) on Italy for invading Ethiopia (Baer 1976, 24). In particular, the United States of America (the USA or the United States) has been the country, that kept imposing different economic sanctions after the WWII more frequently than others. In general, according to Eriksson and Wallenstein (2015, 1388), since the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945, at least, 30 sanctions regimes have been established, and 27 since the end of the Cold War in 1991.

Scholarly arguments about sanctions as well as their proposed approaches to knowing and analyzing the phenomenon are different. The usual context for a serious academic debate on sanctions – a given foreign policy implementation or, even broader, a set of theory-framed particularities of an

international system. For example, O'Loughlin, Roselle and Miskimmon (2014) approach the phenomenon of sanctions from the economic and political communication perspective, while Waltz's (2014) approach is based on the use of force and hegemony. Factually, one of the main notions, which O'Loughlin, Roselle and Miskimmon use in their latest research is the notion of strategic narrative as a defining paradigm for soft power in the XXI century. Departing from Nye's (2008) seminal works on the concept of 'soft power' (rather from the concept's shortcomings), they describe how narratives shape international affairs and how major international actors adjust their foreign policies using formulating and projecting different strategic narratives. Closer to the point of this research work, the foreign policy of Russia is a phenomenon, which is studied broadly and almost by every major political scientist. Be it considered comprehensively or narrowly, but Russian foreign policy has always been touched upon in and by every school of political thought (McGlinchey, Walters and Scheinflug, 2017). Many credible analytical centers as well as all top academicians in the field fully or to an extent have been working on the phenomenon. Undoubtedly, the imposed sanctions after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 has had their direct impact on researching the subject. It is broadly studied in many respects, but the actual outcome of the sanctions and how those restrictive measures impacted Russian foreign policy are under-researched areas. Moreover, there is no commonly accepted opinion on how to measure the aforementioned impact. However, this is just the theoretical side.

On the practical side, there may be various reasons why one country imposes sanctions on another one, but, arguably, the main purpose of doing so is nearly all about influencing the affected country's actions or attitudes. It is particularly rare that sanctions do not affect the country in focus, and the impact is evident in most of the situations. For example, the United States has imposed sanctions on Iran on several occasions, the European Union (EU) and the USA imposed sanctions on Russia, and the EU's arms embargo on China is among the most sounding examples on the matter as well. Considering the underlying reasons as well as who and against whom, the impact of those sanctions presumably can be vastly different also. In the particular case of Russia, since it is the world's largest country as well as a powerful international actor, it may be more challenging for the international system as it could have been in the comparison of imposing sanctions on, for instance, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) or the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran).

Intriguingly, looking at Russia's responses on the restrictive measures imposed on it by different parties for the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, one may notice that the Russian side is able to deal with the situation in a specific manner. For start, as argued by Korhonen, Simola, and Solanko (2018), Russia is trying to overcome sanctions by coming up with sets of anti-sanctions towards the EU. However, in scholarly terms, there is something that urgently needs to be tested on this occasion. Placing the reason for the annexation outside of this analysis, this paper suggests that the sanctions imposed on Russia after the takeover of a sizeable part of Ukrainian sovereign territory made the Russian Federation, in a way, more creative in terms of formulating and implementing its foreign policy. At least, some old partners such as India, China, Syria, Nicaragua, and others from Africa, Asia and the Middle East have come much closer to the fore again.

Thus, this thesis claims that Russia, since the time when sanctions were imposed on it, **has substantially diversified the scope of its foreign policy**, shifting its prime interests from (Eastern) Europe to Asia, the Pacific, Africa, and Middle East. To the contrary from the perceived goal of the sanctions, Russia has become more visible internationally, acting more often than before as a mediator (pretentious and real) or a balancer in a range of geo-strategically relevant 'conversations' that also involve Turkey/Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Japan, China *et cetera*. Consequently, on the one side of the argument, this process can lead Russia towards solidifying its different strategies to compel and deter the United States, the EU, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and their partners or allies in the different areas in the world. On the other side, the process of pushing Russia into the arms of China, makes it easier for Beijing to 'march West' in the context of the BRI (Vernygora, 2017). With necessity, that would speed up the formation of a China-bound international system as well as a non-Western global infrastructural framework. The independent variable that does not depend on any factors in the present research is the EU sanctions towards Russia. On the other hand, a dependent variable such as Russian foreign policy depends on several factors like economic and diplomatic relations, military and strategic interests *et cetera*.

In order to conduct a contemporary observation-bound in-depth analysis on the issue, this paper raises the following research questions: 1) How has the approach of Russian foreign policy changed in the last decade, considering the Crimean 'affair'? 2) What are the core foreign policy-associated goals for Russia? 3) Do the strategic actions of Russia impact the US, the EU and NATO and satisfy Russian needs for recognition and belonging? Methodologically, to see the changes and shifts in Russian



foreign policy, it is crucial to use historiographic method being backed up by process tracing and discourse analysis because Russian foreign policy before 2014 sanctions tends to be based only on the two documents that were delivered and, probably, fully written by Vladimir Putin himself, namely his speech in 2007 at the Munich Security Conference and a 2012 article *Russia in the Changing World*.

As a side-effect, this methodological approach will be of assistance to distinguish the former Soviet Union- and Russia-specific issues, without mixing them up in a scholarly analysis. In addition, it has to be noted that we often debate on and analyze sanctions in terms of restrictive measure in political economy, and this approach is immensely popular in different schools of political theory. It can be noted, keeping in mind the current debate in the field, that the approach to the study of sanctions is primarily based on engaging plenty of statistical data or econometrics, where political economy prevails over everything else. The aim of this paper, however, is not to examine the monetary effect of Western sanctions against Russia, but to analyze how sanctions are making a difference in the context of Russian foreign policy. More explicitly, the enquiry is going to be on how different the Russian Federation's foreign policy has become since the imposition of the sanctions, how much the changes can be attributed to the fact of the sanctions' imposition, and how effective the restrictive measures have been, considering their natural focus on restoring the pre-sanctions state of affairs. Certainly, the point of effectiveness is all about detectability as well as measurability, and these will be provided by strategic narrative theory (Roselle, Miskimmon and O'Loughlin 2014), offering to detect and measure the prospective changes through the prism of Russia's strategic identity, strategic policy, and strategic system narratives. In principle, the methodological approach on detecting changes in terms of how Russia has been able to adjust its foreign policy-associated strategic narratives is this paper's value-added component for the general debate in the field of international relations.

This paper's structure is as follows. In the first chapter, this paper reviews the actual types of the EU's sanctions imposed on Russia, their empirical 'suitability' for the most prominent International Relations theories like constructivism, neo-liberalism, and realism. The annexations of Crimea and subsequent sanctions are to be interlinked with the example of Karelian annexation in 1939-40 and the Cold War restrictions imposed on the Soviet Union. In the second chapter, this research will take a closer look at the legacy of the Soviet foreign policy in order to prospectively see the behavioral trends of Russia's foreign policy today. Are there any similarities or not? What were the goals of

foreign policy prior Crimean annexation and how they changed after? The third, discussional, chapter will then analyze the impact of applied sanctions and Russian foreign policy from the viewpoint of strategic narrative theory and its three elements.

# 1. THE PHENOMENON OF SANCTIONS AND BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

The UN Charter's Chapter VII (2020) notes that the UN Security Council may determine which measures not involving the use of military force are to be used and may invite the members of the UN to apply such measures. This means that only the UN Security Council has the authority by the international community to apply sanctions that must be complied by all UN member states. Unilateral sanctions imposed by individual countries to promote their strategic interests should not be confused with UN sanctions. In fact, there is one significant feature of sanctions, several studies have shown that sanctions have a weak track record, but they are still frequently used even then. Marcus (2010) quotes former UK Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock, clarifying that when it comes to threatening a specific government or country, there is really nothing between words and military action. Therefore, sanctions have been far more political declarations than anything else, regardless of whether it is a political background that is domestic or foreign. Emerson (2014) and then Dolidze (2015) discussed the balance and use of sanctions and found out that nearly 40 percent of sanctions genuinely worked against the real target.

The UN's predecessor, the LON, was established on 10 January 1920 by the victorious states who won the WWI (League of Nations 2020). The primary reason for the formation of the LON was that crimes committed against human society civilization were barbaric and violent such that should not be tolerated and accepted by others. Other reason was that the war had devastated many states and the pressure to find peace and end the suffering was growing. On 19 April 1946, the LON officially concluded *de jure*, being out of action *de facto* for many years before and, indirectly, passing its duties to the newly 'born' UN. Before the LON's era, there was no sanctions as we know today. Was the only reason that there was no such an international framework that would lead the world to be more peaceful? Differences between cultures, ideological views, and the lack of international law and solidarity may be the true explanation of why sanctions and the need to use them to preserve stability have never been considered. Arguably, explanations on why sanctions were not used may vary, depending on how history is presented and how (and by whom) it is interpreted.

For example, Reddy (2020) points that there are some sanctions what are necessary to point out like international sanctions and arms embargo against South Africa in the 1960-s, as a part of UN campaign

to support the freedom movement and to isolate the *apartheid*-bound South African political regime and its supporters. The campaign eventually led to the change when, by 1994, Nelson Mandela was elected as President of the Republic of South Africa to allow for the country's democratic transition.

There is, on the other hand, the failure of UN sanctions against Rhodesia. The UNSC acted according to Article 41 on 16 December 1966 and imposed obligatory import and export restrictions against Rhodesia on the grounds of the 1965 declaration of independence by the White Rhodesians. This was unfortunately one of the failures of their history. In that particular situation, the sanctions and measures used did not succeed, many blamed the UN because the measures did not go far enough. This was the first mandatory arms embargo agreed by the UNSC. On 21 December 1979, the embargo was lifted due the establishment of Zimbabwe as an independent and sovereign state ('UN Arms Embargo on Southern Rhodesia' 2012).

## **1.1. The EU sanctions: a classification**

In Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Art. 11 of the EU Treaty, the EU ('Sanctions or restrictive measures' 2008) has pointed out the key reasons why restrictions or restrictive measures are implemented. The EU adheres to the principles of the Charter of the UN, the Final Act of Helsinki, the Charter of Paris, the integrity and security of the Union, international relations, democracy, and the rule of law. Many various forms of restricting measures can be implemented by the EU, and the crucial thing is what measures are required to promote the desired outcome.

### **1.1.1. Diplomatic measures**

A prolific social constructivist Wendt (1999) points that the world is socially constructed. People act toward object on the meaning that the objects have for them. He continues that existing patterns, relations and even states depend on meanings, practices and routines that take place in a society. Rising tensions in the international arena make governments emphasize the need for greater engagement with states in focus. Martin (1994) and Maller (2010) discussed that diplomatic sanctions are used mainly because they are seen as a low-cost way to isolate targeted states and delegitimize

regimes. The military invasion might be more effective, but on the other hand, it costs times more and is more time-consuming compared to the diplomatic sanctions.

Diplomatic sanctions may range from more radical to lighter steps. Lighter sanctions can mean recalling the ambassadors of the targeted state, radical sanction escalation may lead to the closing of the embassy and cutting lines on a diplomatic level. Maller (2010) is referring to a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analyst, who said that “having an embassy is absolutely critical” and one “need[s] political staff that can go out on the street and talk to people, pick up the gossip”. Despite the financial cost of this sanction, it still is costly as foreign policy tools for governments. The main concerns are the lack of intelligence information which is harder to get. Maller (2010) described that, during the protests in the aftermath of the June 2009 Iranian election, the USA had to obtain information on the crisis largely via *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and other less reliable, informal sources due to limitations on intelligence. Diplomatic sanctions, for example, economic sanctions, may impact other steps enforced and make them less successful. Analytics are helpful because the local contact offer information and confirms whether the economic sanctions imposed are functioning as expected or not. If personnel are absent, it is more complicated to draw adjustments to ensure the sanctions work effectively to have the desired result.

### **1.1.2. Individual restrictive measures: asset freeze and travel restrictions**

It is possible to draw a line and summarize the meanings of the two in a few words. Colloquial name of restrictive measures is sanctions (European Commission 2020) and it is possible to use sanctions and restrictive measures interchangeably, meaning they can be used vice versa. Sanctions are used in the interest of influencing activities or policies, such as violations of international law, human rights, or democratic values, as instruments of a political or economic nature. Targeting third-country regimes or non-state organizations and persons, such as terrorist organizations and terrorists are subject to restrictive measures. They may comprise arms embargoes, other specific or general trade restrictions (import and export bans), financial restrictions, restrictions on admission (visa or travel bans), or other measures, as appropriate (European Commission 2008). Eckles (2014) brings out that in last 15 years the EU’s restrictive measures against natural and legal persons (targeted sanctions) have become a cornerstone of CFSP. More than 250 natural and legal persons have challenged their

listings in more than 120 cases before the EU courts. This amounts to roughly 20 percent of all those targeted.

A classic of neo-liberal institutionalist Keohane (2003) describes the transparency viewpoint of sanctions. He states that power relationships could detect whether a normal accountability system is effective or not. In the analysis, he specifies that power and results are important for both individuals and the circle near them. The reasons in intuitions and political grounds regarding the power-welders are different because the person can be accountable there, so it depends on the situation. Keohane (2003, 1136) suggests that meeting expectations that follow political norms is unrealistic for the UNSC. It is more important, in his understanding, that the UNSC follows pluralistic principles of transparency. There are eight mechanisms that exist, three of which do not conform to the Security Council, but five of which are relevant and adaptive. The key point is that even if they are not guilty themselves, they are responsible for the action taken if they are power welders.

### **1.1.3. Economic sanctions**

Economic sanctions are measures targeted at policy goals in the direction of the target state economy. Barber (1979) argued that these are used in multiple situations, often for various purposes. They can be part of broader sanctions packages which even involve military force or invasions, since they have operated against any consensus or moral standards, perhaps even international law. They can be used to target the target state economy.

Several studies are analyzing if and how trade sanctions operate. One aspect of these studies and experiments is that they perform as they should. They further point out that there is a disparity between how sanctions can act technically and how they function in real life. Some reports, on the other hand, argue that international sanctions work, and they need to be used. Maarten (2018) argued that the full intended outcome was not accomplished by international sanctions. Idea, how the economic sanctions is believed to execute objectives is based on reversal of the international trading theories. These theories are assuming that economic welfare is maximized through free trade conditions, which were offered by two economists from Sweden, Ohlin and Heckscher (*Ibid.*, 2018). Maarten have made empirical analyses to point out that economic sanctions are efficient only the first two years (*Ibid.*, 2018).

Waltz (2014), from the realism point of view, explains that desires to achieve the maximum power are important, but when you have more power than others at the moment, then is desire even bigger. He argues that the peace in the realm is fragile and destabilizing points are necessary for the development outcome. In the analytical part, he describes that in competitive mode to an important manner is a short step. An important manner might be a security dilemma, in that sense economic sanctions that the allies have imposed are comprehensible. They are in one way or another tied with the security dilemma, not in the one state perspective but the bigger picture. Allies would not do anything in that situation that would show the weakness and escalate with other invasions.

#### **1.1.4. Restrictions on economic cooperation**

Long-term or recurrent trading relations are among key factors for the economic success of the state. A range of opposed interests between several actors lead to conflict and represent the worst outcome for all involved. According to the nature of the prohibitions, restrictions on economic collaboration can vary due the different aspects. In certain cases, the selling or purchasing of services is forbidden, while in others, the sale or purchase of products is prohibited. There are also several choices on how these regulations should be enforced, as the restrictions can be aimed toward individual facilities or products. For instance, after the systematic human rights abuse in Myanmar/Burma, the EU prohibited certain economic collaboration with them. Kuznetsov et. al. (2017) argues that while the EU Member States have historical and geographical proximity and perhaps interdependence with certain countries and in certain areas, political views do not meet globally, making it more difficult to collaborate at the economic level such that both parties' benefit.

## **1.2 The Crimea's path and the Karelian case**

Skrukwa (2011, 137) noted that, despite its colorful history, Crimea did not formally lay within the borders of Ukraine from 1922 until 1954. In 1954, the Soviet Government decided to acknowledge the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Pereyaslav and administratively transferred the Crimea from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkSSR). Officially, this decision was made by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR at

the request of the Presidiums of the Supreme Soviets of both Union Republics, so the paperwork had been completed correctly. The whole idea was justified by the commonality of the economy, the proximity and close economic and cultural relations between the Crimean Oblast and the UkSSR. The news about it were published briefly in *Pravda* on 27 February 1954.

Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet transferring Crimea Province from the Russian Republic to the Ukraine Republic, taking into account the integral character of the economy, the territorial proximity and the close economic ties between Crimea Province and the Ukraine Republic, and approving the joint presentation of the Presidium of the Russian Republic Supreme Soviet and the Presidium of the Ukraine Republic Supreme Soviet on the transfer of Crimea Province from the Russian Republic to the Ukraine Republic. (*Pravda*, No.58, February 27, 1954, Moscow, Russia; *Pravda Digital Archive*)

Skrukwa (*Ibid.*, 139) continues that the attachment of Crimea to Ukraine became the source of crucial issues only during the decline of the USSR, and even more so after 1991. The conflict escalated in early 2014 when, during the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine, the Russian military annexed the Crimean Peninsula. However, the situation in Ukraine is not extraordinary, there are similar historic cases that also directly involved the Kremlin as well. The main emphasis is on whether Moscow is taking action when it needs to, has to take it, or there is some other strategic approach. For example, one very similar situation like the annexation of Crimea in 2014 is the annexation of Karelia in 1939. The Karelian annexation and the Cold War sanctions against the Soviet Union. The Non-Aggression Pact (Allison 1985, 6) gave the Soviet Union a free hand in the Baltic and it was not long before the Kremlin put plenty of pressure on Finland to allow for a Soviet military base on Finnish soil and move the Finnish-Soviet border westward to get further from Leningrad. The Finnish government's refusal to cede any territory, inspired in part by its hope of receiving allied support, precipitated a Soviet invasion of Finland on 30 November 1939. Finnish resistance was stiff, and the Red Army casualties were embarrassingly high, but what is known as the Winter War ended in March 1940 with a treaty ceding to the USSR the territories it originally had demanded plus the Finnish Karelia (Mannerheim 1954). On 14 December 1939, the LON voted to expel the Soviet Union from the organization due to its actions (Siegelbaum 2020).

On the time of the Cold War, sanctions were used mainly as the political resource to avoid nuclear war as military usage was limited. In 1948, the USA started economic sanctions campaign on Soviet



Union. In March 1948 export restrictions to the Soviet Union and its European allies were announced by the Department of Commerce. On 25 February 1949, the Congress formalized the Export Control Act (Export Control Act 1949). The initial idea was to keep strategic materials and arms away from potential enemies like the Soviet Union for a certain period. Everything changed when the Korean War started in 1950, and the measure became permanent. In 1951, the United States strengthened sanctions with Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act (Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act 1951). The main idea was that the United States would refuse to assist any nation that did not terminate all trades with the Soviet Union and its allies, including materials with strategic value, arms, atomic energy, oil etc. The United States accepted exemptions from this act under the pressure from its allies.

For several years, sanctions used against the Soviet Union were quite severe. The United States hoped that it would force the USSR and its allies apart if the sanctions are loosened in eastern European states. In the 1970s, restrictions to Soviet Union and its allies lightened, Soviet Union even granted permission to purchase wheat from United States but failed. Sanctions tightened again in 1979 December when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. In 1983, US President Ronald Reagan approved National Security Decision Directive 75 (National Security Decision Directive 75, 1983), these were more strictive sanctions against the USSR, they also lead to considerable conflict with America's allies on the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (CoCom), especially over the export of oil and gas equipment.

These two cases have their similarities, but of course every event has their own time and story. The main correlation is from takeaway point of view. Both, Finland and Ukraine are neighboring countries of Soviet Union/Russia, both of them used to belong to the former Russian Empire (Finland – entirely, Ukraine – partially), both annexations were mainly due to similar geo-strategic interests. It is impossible to confirm that President Putin now acts and thinks from a strategic perspective like Joseph Stalin in 1939. However, decisions made by the Kremlin and the situation in Crimea have generated many different discussions among researchers. These two annexations that were committed by the Soviet Union in Karelia and the Russian Federation in Crimea showed that both brutal force and geo-strategic dominance can also lead to an international response in the form of imposing restrictive measures: expelling the USSR from the LON and imposing sanctions towards Russia.

Presumably, as the Soviet Union collapsed, the ideological views that were the main source of national unity and identity were no longer present in the context of the post-Cold War Russian

Federation (by far, the largest and most influential of all titular republics of the former USSR). Whitmore (2020, 10) argues that the West does not have a 'Putin problem'. Meaning that, during the Cold War, the Soviet system was effectively sealed behind the so-called Iron Curtain, and since the 1990s, the newly independent Russia has established a new national identity and projected it to the world. He further points out, that the first set of hints on this matter came during the Yeltsin presidency. Breslauer (2009, 370) noted that we can attribute to both Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin common cognitive and emotional frameworks that can be distinctly distinguished from the essence of Vladimir Putin's foreign policy. Both Gorbachev in the Soviet Union and Yeltsin in Russia experienced an urge that their country be accepted by the West and be heard as equal in the international arena. By comparison, Putin's foreign policies were informed by a view of the new-found power of Russia and an emotion close to anger, a nationalism guided by a deep and widespread sense of grievance (*Ibid.*, 370). Many scholars describe the Russian strategy by a design that stresses a nationalist message to its target audiences and Russia's exercise of public diplomacy and soft power that differs sharply from most Western countries. Gvosdev (2020) outlines in his *YouTube* presentation that Putin tends to think in terms of decades, so that each decade he has been in power he has had a different set of foreign policy goals he is wanted to achieve. What seems to be noticeably clear is that Putin wants to put behind him and behind Russia, some of the preceding decade unpleasantness, which was specifically linked to the annexation of Crimea and the start of the war in eastern Ukraine. Therefore, a range of new approaches were created to diversify the Russian foreign policy's implementation.

### **1.3 Consequences of Crimean annexation**

Since the annexation of the Crimea by Russia and the start of Russo-Ukrainian war in the Ukrainian east in 2014, three waves of restrictive measures against Russia have been implemented by the EU, which are periodically updated.

### **1.3.1 The first wave of restrictive measures**

In March and early April 2014, the first round of restricted action was processed against Russia. Initially, the country that implemented a set of restrictive measures against Russia was the USA (Holland & Mason 2014). In the executive order on 6 March 2014, US President Barack Obama declared that the actions and policies of individuals undermining the democratic structures and institutions of Ukraine is not acceptable (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary 2014). Obama also pointed in the declaration that the steps to bring into question are: Ukraine's security, protection, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Considering all the previously mentioned information, this leads to the misappropriation of positioning an unprecedented and extraordinary danger to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

On 17 March, the US, EU, and Canada introduced specifically targeted restrictions against Russia (Myers & Baker 2014). The core EU restriction aimed at prohibiting the entry by Russia into Ukrainian territories in breach of its territorial integrity. The council of EU suspended bilateral talks on visa issues with the Russian Federation, in addition talks with the Russian Federation on a new comprehensive agreement to replace the existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The first round of sanctions imposed by the EU focused on the list of individuals, organizations and bodies whose assets and bank accounts are in the territory of EU and other countries have been frozen, travel ban's on them and their representative were issued as well.

The Council of the EU (further, the Council) has adopted all the decisions which are based on the Treaty on European Union, and, in particular, its Art. 29 (2016), which states "[t]he Council shall adopt decisions which shall define the approach of the Union to a particular matter of a geographical thematic nature. Member States shall ensure that their national policies conform to the Union positions". The sanctions of 17 March became the most wide-ranging sanctions against Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

On 18 March, Japan imposed sanctions against Russia, and, on 19 March, Australia did it (Gerkin et. al. 2014). Albania, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, and Ukraine (European Union 2014) placed sanctions on Russia at the beginning of April, even though Albania and Ukraine had strong and good long-term relations with Russia until Crimea was annexed. Although the dates of the first wave of sanctions vary between nations, the substance of sanctions is the same as the enforcement period dimension by the EU.

### **1.3.2 The second wave of restrictive measures**

The first to act against Russia this time was the Council of Europe, while some sources pointed that the second wave was started by the United States in March. Indeed, the second wave referred by some reports to the USA was not just a second wave, but the same extent of EU sanctions. According to Harding (2014) on 10 April 2014, the Council suspended the Russian delegation from the Council's work. The decision consisted of withdrawing voting rights from the Russian 18-member delegation until the end of 2014. Furthermore, the privileges of the Russian delegation to participate in election observation missions and prestigious commissions have been determined. That was not the first time from 1996 when Russian delegation voting rights had been suspended in the Council of Europe, the last time was from April 2000 to January 2001 over the situation in Chechnya.

On 28 April, the United States (Baker & McKenzie 2014) imposed a ban on business transactions on with in its territory on seven Russian Officials and 17 companies, on the same day EU issued ban for further 15 individuals who were related way or other with the actions taken place in Crimea. EU ban covered arms embargo, asset freeze, visa, and travel ban. On the context, the EU ('EU restrictive measures' 2014) has stated the following:

EU sanctions are not punitive but designed to bring about a change in policy or activity by the target country, entities or individuals. Measures are therefore always targeted at such policies or activities, the means to conduct them and those responsible for them. At the same time, the EU makes every effort to minimize adverse consequences for the civilian population or for legitimate activities.

### **1.3.3 The third wave of restrictive measures**

The third and longer wave against Russia began on 17 July 2014. The State exceeded transaction ban for two big companies as well as two banks (Razumny 2014). On 16 July, already leaked the EU sanctions draft to the public, on 25 July (Council Implementing Regulations No 810, 2014) EU added additional 15 individuals and 18 entities to the sanctioned lists, followed eight individuals and three entities on 30th July (Council Decision 2014/508/CFSP). On 31 July, the EU (Council Regulations No 833, 2014) announced sanctions which included an embargo on arms and related material, and embargo on dual-use goods and technology intended for military use or a military end user, a ban on imports of arms and related material, controls on export of equipment for the oil industry, and a

restriction on the issuance of and trade in certain bonds, equity or similar financial instruments etc. In August many countries announced that they would be adopting the tougher sanctions against Russia: on 5 August, it was Japan, which was followed by Australia on 8 August and then Norway on 12 August. On 11 September, President Obama stated that they will join with the EU on tougher sanctions on Russia's financial, energy and defense sectors.

The goal of the EU sanctions in all three waves has been to halt Russian actions in destabilizing the situation in Ukraine. Russia has breached all the principles regulating relations between participating states by taking action in Ukraine, as defined in the 1975 Helsinki Accords (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act, 1975). The document specifically sets out the topics and the definition of their content, including the USSR, of which the participating parties had signed the act. These were the subjects accepted by the participants: sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty, refraining from the threat or use of force, territorial integrity of states. Emerson (2014) discusses that the European security order's requirements agreed in Helsinki were not a Western creation but were signed as a pan-European act of historical importance with the Soviet Union of Brezhnev, since Russia, in the context of the UN, is the legal successor of the collapsed Soviet Union, they should also comply with this agreement.

These three waves that have been mentioned previously did affect Russia generally in all aspects and worked in a way they were supposed to, but they also made Russia more creative, more diverse than Russia was before in the contexts of its foreign policy. The sanctions led Russia to find more cooperation points with old partners and start looking for new partners. For example, new agreements were signed with the DPRK, Vietnam, India, Syria, Iran, Libya *et cetera* (Wang 2015, 5). With some of the countries the agreements were mainly economic but with others aimed at military aspects. Beside the so to say creativity in foreign policy Russia also implemented countersanctions to EU. Keohane (1984, 51-57) describes that both the EU and Russia act as hegemons who want to affect each other and cooperation is possible but under certain circumstances.

## 2. RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY: THE PUTIN'S TOUCH

The approval ratings of political leaders in liberal democracies in Treisman (2011) view have been shown to track citizens views of the state of the economy. Leaders are frequently assumed to boost their legitimacy in illiberal democracies and competitive autocracies by leveraging nationalism, exaggerating external threats, and manipulating the media. In 1990, in the final period of the Soviet Union's failed reformation by Mikhail Gorbachev, Russia's presidency was introduced, and Boris Yeltsin stood as the first President of Russia in June 1991. High hopes were placed on restoring Russian power and economic strength by deployment of various tactics and instruments, but undoubtedly many scholars and academic works find, that years of Yeltsin presidency were a disaster and did not live up to its expectations. The roots for that, as Shevtsova (2007, 78) argues, lay within Yeltsin's Russia as he helped to dismantle the Soviet state system without altering Russia's highly personalized nature of power, with society still subject to political authority. Instead of leading Russia, Yeltsin responded to events, and he gave no new vision for the future. Vyacheslav Kostikov (1997, 347), former press-secretary of Yeltsin, concluded that "he had no ideology other than power".

Political and economic drift has resulted from this philosophy of influence. The Kremlin was significantly weakened by a long political struggle with the Communist opposition. The approval ratings of Yeltsin dropped to a single digits and changes were needed. Based on Lipman (2016, 39) in 1999 Yeltsin stepped down and named Putin his successor which made Putin the President of the Russian Federation. When Putin came into office, 9 years had passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union and there were still many separatists movements across the county. He understood that many Russians wanted someone who brought back the feeling of old strength and authority.

Once in office, Putin put himself a task to reunite Russia together and ensure that the ruling elite would never again risk losing power. Lipman (*Ibid.*, 40) describes that firstly multiple changes concerning television, local governors and factions were made. The Kremlin subjected state control to television networks and curtailed administrative authorities. The governor's faction in the Duma was forced to merge with the pro-Kremlin party which led the then newly created political party United Russia to become the main instrument of the Kremlin. Corruption was at its greatest height, and threats of prosecution yielded impressive results. Advantage of the incestuous relations between government officials and new business owners, particularly television magnates took place.

In 2003, the arrest of Russia's then wealthiest magnate, Mikhail Khodorkovsky was based on Lipman's (*Ibid.*, 40) argument an exception: Khodorkovsky continued to follow his own strategy, unlike other major players in politics and industry who had resigned themselves to Kremlin domination. His arrest was a warning to Russian oligarchs and only safe strategy was loyalty to Kremlin.

Putin's re-election in 2004 provoked modest protest between 2005 and 2008. Organizers were lucky if they could assemble a few thousand participants but more frequently only few hundreds participated. Compared to 1990's the first decade of this century showed political stability and growing prosperity for Russia. In 2008, Putin was forced to step down by term limits, and became prime minister, anointing Dmitry Medvedev as his successor. According to Lipman (*Ibid.*, 40) Medvedev was no reformer and even in Putin's new position, Putin remained the country's most influential man. Despite the unrest of 2011 local elections scheming, in 2012 Putin maintained the support of Russia's conservative majority and easily won reelection. After third presidential term he continued with the fourth term in 2018 remaining president till present.

## **2.1.Elements of Russian foreign policy in Putin's era prior to the Crimea**

There are three main elements that are detectable in Russia's foreign policy prior the annexation of Crimea in 2014: Russia's 'communication' with the United States, Russia's place in the international system, and Russia's attitude and approach to the so-called 'near abroad'. These three key elements are well portrayed in Putin's speech at the 2007 Munich Security Conference and Putin's article *Russia in the Changing World* (2012). These two sources will be used to base the present analysis and discussion. It could be argued that these two elements formulate the grand scheme of Russian foreign policy, but they do so in the opinion of the present research author.

### **2.1.1. 'Talks' with the United States**

The beginning of the 2007 Munich Security Conference speech was very informal and featured some jokes. However, soon after that, Putin expressed important points about the future course of politics.

He argues on global economy, overcoming poverty, economic security, developing dialogue between civilizations and many more including a long list of concerns about the supremacy of United States on the field of foreign affairs. It can be evidently argued that this particular speech in its entirety can be viewed as indirect talk to the United States. Right in the beginning he refers to Franklin D. Roosevelt saying:

This universal, indivisible character of security is expressed as the basic principle that “security for one is security for all”. As Franklin D. Roosevelt said during the first few days that the Second World War was breaking out: “When peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries everywhere is in danger”.

Roosevelt, a prolific US President who was the only office-holder to serve four terms. By the time of speech of 2007, Putin was finishing his second term as president. Jahn (2015) points out that Putin rejected a constitutional change in 2007 that would have required his re-election as president of the state. He wanted to impose Dmitri Medvedev as his successor. To this day it remains unclear what informal methods have been used in the presidential power structure to guarantee Putin's dominance over President Medvedev in 2012 as Putin returned to office. In 2018, Putin began his fourth term after another re-election, making him the longest serving ‘boss’ of the Kremlin after Stalin. Why not bring as an example somebody else? Elbasy of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev or Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Hosseini Khamenei? Neither of them served exact terms of presidency, but both are among the longest-serving non-royal leaders. Speculatively, Putin extrapolated the Roosevelt’s presidential longevity on himself, making himself almost equal to the former American, across the time. Only his death prevented Roosevelt from finishing his fourth terms, and Putin then was visualizing to his four terms as well. Putin then continues:

Only two decades ago the world was ideologically and economically divided and it was the huge strategic potential of two superpowers that ensured global security.

Through saying this, he arguably means the United States and the Soviet Union. He extrapolates Roosevelt on himself by referring to Roosevelt and continuing the saying of the separation of two superpowers, representing himself as equal. Back in time, especially during the Yalta Conference in 1945, the contact between the USSR and the USA was very strong, the Russian President wants it to be this way again. Putin refers to a unipolar world in which there is only one central authority and



power, as well as one decision-making core. But that kind of system can become destructive not only from the inside but also from independence. He argues that the democratic values are getting taught by the so-called “teachers” who do not follow the rules themselves:

Unilateral and frequently illegitimate actions have not resolved any problems. Moreover, they have caused more human tragedies and created new centers of tension.

He specifically pointed out that legal norms shift similarly to one state legal structure, to the USA, of course. He is saying that the United States overstepped all imaginable national borders in every way. The reflection that seems to glow behind that, is why the USA can step over the national borders and do all that, and if Russia does it, it will get punished? There cannot be one state that is exempted regardless of its size or influence level.

During the Munich Conference, Russia and the USA agreed to reduce their strategic nuclear missiles capabilities between 1700-2000 warheads by 31 December 2012. Putin clearly refers that Russia is strictly going to fulfil the agreement and jokes that US will do the same and will not hide them in abandoned warehouse or “under the pillow”. This is important topic, much wider and not only for the Russia and US to handle but others as well. Not only the nuclear topic, but also arms and troops problem was bothering Putin.

In 1999, the adapted Treaty of Conventional Armed Forces in Europe was signed, it took to the account the new geopolitical situation, but only four states have ratified it. NATO member states declared that they would ratify that after Russia has removed its military bases from Georgia and Moldova. At the same time so called frontline US military bases appear in Bulgaria and Romania. Putin also notes that NATO expansion to Baltic states is not satisfying Russia because, the expansion is coming near to their border, and they do not understand the reason.

The process of NATO expansion has nothing to do with modernization of the alliance. Russia have the right to ask, against whom is this expansion directed?

In Russia’s opinion the expansion of NATO bases was led by the USA. The Russian Federation sees it as the United States imposed their will to push NATO closer to the Russian boarder even when the line originally had end with Germany. Putin quotes the speech of NATO General Secretary Manfred Wörner in Brussel on 17 May 1990:

“The fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory to give Soviet Union a firm security guarantee”. Where are these guarantees?

In the 2012 article Putin points out that the USA has developed a peculiar interpretation of security that is different from Russian. In Putin’s opinion, the United States got obsessed with the idea of becoming invulnerable and that it is the root of the problem. The NATO-led international military contingent has not met its objectives.

US announced withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 but they have been building military bases without a clear-cut mandate, objectives or duration of operation. Understandably, this does not suit us.

Putin says that the instability of the partnership with US is due in part to the tenacity of some well-known stereotypes and phobias, particularly the perception of Russia on the Capitol Hill. Main problem is bilateral political dialogue and cooperation do not rest on a solid economic foundation. In Putin opinion it is necessary to protect Russia-US relation for the ups and downs. Even while this article is devoted to portray Russian plans for foreign policy, it features a view of anti-Americanism and describing the threats to international stability and towards Russia itself from United States. From the Russian point of view, the USA is good enough to be the antagonist for Russia. At the same time, on the international stage where the USA is, Russia would like to be as well:

It is through this prism that Russia perceive some aspects of U.S. and NATO conduct that contradict the logic of modern development, relying instead on the stereotypes of a. Everyone understands what I am referring to. [ ...] Our arguments are well known, and I will not spell them out again, but regrettably our Western partners are irresponsible and are simply brushing them aside. [ ...] It seems that NATO members, especially the United States, have developed a peculiar interpretation of security that is different from ours. The Americans have become obsessed with the idea of becoming absolutely invulnerable. This utopian concept is unfeasible both technologically and geopolitically, but it is the root of the problem.

The main reference point of the speech of 2007 and article of 2012 is the west. In Russia's interests, the political West was at the top of the list. It may be seen as source of foreign issues or possible ally.

Analyzing Putin speech in 2007 at Munich and article in 2012, at first both are more or less focused on wider scale of states and bigger problems. However, analyzing and thinking about the speeches, it seems to the author that on the wider scale of problems Putin refers in many aspects indirectly to US. The problem what Putin seems to be expressing is that the USA does not take them into so called “big boys sandbox” to play, due the fact that they are not so powerful as they were back in the time when he was young. Putin claims, that before there were two powers, the USA and the Soviet Union, which assumed the international system-bound responsibility to ensure the global security, at the moment the sole leader is the USA, and Russia is placed on the bench as an observer. The message is objectively obvious – the Russian Federation gathered enough power and is ready to exhibit it, if necessary.

### **2.1.2. Russia’s place in the international system**

Putin is saying that Russia can be acceptable and equal partner to other like the USA. However, that is not all that bothers Russia and its President, stones and segments from the Berlin Wall had been sent as souvenirs to other states but not in Russia, despite the fact that Soviet Union was involved in that act of ending the WWII (not to mention its beginning):

[...] one that was also made by our people, the people of Russia, openness and a sincere relationship with all the member states of the big European family.

Has the Russia forgotten by accident or is it intentionally? From the speech it seems like Putin wants to get the respect as well as acknowledgment to Soviet Union for the work it has done. Before there was physical wall between two Germanys which divided it to different societies, at the moment for Putin it seems that virtual walls have imposed to Russia. These “walls” cut the European continent through and through, Putin claims, and that it will take decades and many generations of politics to dissemble or dismantle these walls.

In the speech at Munich Putin declared that the US and Russia has made agreement on nuclear warhead reduction. Bigger problem is actually other states who are working to grow the number of nuclear warheads. Russia is dedicated to being the leader in this question and wants to lead the nuclear warhead reduction talks.

Not only the nuclear warheads are important, even more important is the nuclear energy. Many states are doing it on good will as the cornerstone of their energy independence. Situation becomes problematic when it can be transformed to nuclear weapon quickly and easily, due to that, the situation can create serious international tensions. The situation surrounding the Iran nuclear program acts as a clear example.

If the international community does not find a reasonable solution for resolving this conflict of interests, the world will continue to suffer similar, destabilizing crises, because there are more threshold countries than simply Iran.

In 2006, Russia forwarded the initiative to establish international centers for the enrichment of uranium. Intention here not only to establish that kind of centers in Russia, but in other states where is a legitimate basis for using civil nuclear energy. These centers operate under IAEA strict supervision. Putin proposed that US and Russia should strengthen the regime of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their deployment, he points that this is their responsibility as states who have leading nuclear and missile capabilities to develop new strict non-proliferation measures. Idealistic outcome should be policies and political incentives and economic stimulation, so that states do not have interests of building up their own nuclear fuel cycle but use already existing ones.

Putin continues with the oil industry and gives understanding that the oil prices cannot be outcome of political manipulation, speculations or blackmailing. He explains that about 26 percentage of the oil extraction in Russia is done by the foreign capital. He argues that there isn't any example of that kind in the world. From there he moves on the OECD rating improvement and Russia final stage of joining the WHO. But more important is the poverty topic, Putin explains that the poverty is created artificially, for some states there is no access to high-tech products, and he states:

And let's say things like the are – one hand distributes charitable help and the other hand not only preserves economic backwardness but also reaps the profits thereof.

Due to that, the social tensions are increasing in turbulent regions like the Middle East. Terrorism grows as well as local conflicts and radicalism and therefor the risk of global destabilization. He pointed that the leading states should build more democratic fairer system of global relations, system that should give everyone the chance and the possibility to develop. President Putin continues that people are trying to transform the OSCE into vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy

interests of one or group of states. He argues that this task is being accomplished by the OSCE bureaucratic apparatus which is absolutely not connected with the state founders in any way. Decision making procedures and the involvement of so-called non-governmental organizations are tailored for this task. These organizations are formally independent, but they are purposefully financed and therefore under control. Putin argues that OSCE has no right to interfering in the internal affairs of other states, especially imposing regimes, that determines how these states should live and develop. Such interference does not promote the development of democratic states at all. The outcome of that kind of interference is politically and economically unstable state.

Putin concludes in his Munich speech with following:

Russia has realistic sense of our own opportunities and potential. Of course, Russia would like to interact with also independent and responsible partners with whom they could work together in constructing a fair and democratic world order that would ensure security and prosperity not only for select few, but for all.

With these strong words Putin ends the third paragraph of his article in 2012.

[...] I am convinced that global security can only be achieved in cooperation with Russia rather than by attempts to push it to the background, weaken its geopolitical position or compromise its defenses.

The expansion of NATO has left a mark to the EU and NATO relations with Russia. Expansion includes the deployment of new military infrastructure with its US plans to establish a missile defense system in Europe. Putin claims in the 2012 article that this topic would not be here if the location would not be near to Russian borders and undermine Russian security and global stability in general. In the article Putin says that Russian-Western partners are irresponsible and are simply brushing Russia aside. In the article, Putin says that the partners of Russia in the political West are irresponsible and are simply brushing Russia aside. Later in the following article, he accuses the West of spreading democracy by means of rockets and bombs in the Arab Spring, imposing West's own political and economic interests.

People in Russia sympathized with those who were seeking democratic reform. However, it soon became clear that events in many countries were not following a civilized scenario. Instead of asserting democracy and protecting the rights of the minority, attempts were being

made to depose an enemy and to stage a coup, which only resulted in the replacement of one dominant force with another even more aggressive dominant force. Foreign interference in support of one side of a domestic conflict and the use of power in this interference gave developments a negative aura. A number of countries did away with the Libyan regime by using air power in the name of humanitarian support. The revolting slaughter of Muammar Gaddafi – not just medieval but primeval – was the incarnation of these actions.

The EU was viewed as being in turmoil and questioned as Russia's major partner, but many positive assessments were made of China and the Asia-Pacific regions.

Last year China moved into second place in the world in terms of GDP and it is poised to surpass the U.S. on that count, according to international – including American – experts. [...] I am convinced that China's economic growth is by no means a threat, but a challenge that carries colossal potential for business cooperation – a chance to catch the Chinese wind in the sails of our economy. [...] Another rapidly growing Asian giant is India. Russia has traditionally enjoyed friendly relations with India, which the leaders of our two countries have classified as a privileged strategic partnership. Not only our countries but the entire multipolar system that is emerging in the world stands to gain from this partnership.

Putin states that Russia needs a prosperous and stable China, and China needs a strong and successful Russia. In the article, Putin also points that Russia has had good relations with representatives of Islamic world and state is ready to develop relations further under the current situation. Russia is interested in stepping up political, trade and economic relations with Arab states. In his opinion that should preserve Russia leading position in the Middle East.

Nuclear topic like in the 2007 Munich conference but in new perspective is described in the 2012 article as well. Pyongyang has mistaken against the non-proliferation regime, but they claim that they have right to develop the military atom. That is not acceptable that North Korea has nuclear status. Russia is exclusively through political and diplomatic means pressurizing Korean peninsula denuclearization. Putin says that active dialogue with North Korea leaders for good-neighborly relations is ongoing process, but the nuclear issue must be finished as soon as possible.

Based on these two documents, the speech of 2007 and article of 2012, it seems like it is all well if Russia is involved or have a word of current timely issues. Maybe just involvement is not enough for

Russia, the approval from other and recognition as a superpower is also necessary as being a part of something big and understanding others cannot do these things by themselves.

### **2.1.3. Russian attitude to the near-abroad (*Ближнее зарубежье*)**

In different speeches and documents, Russian authorities frequently use the term near abroad. Some scholars say that this term is in some way a special policy or a view of Russia on nearby zones. Why it is a special policy or a view? Not any other country refers to its former territories this way. For instance, England, France, or Spain. It would be remarkably interesting to see how Italy calls Libya near abroad. But how to define near abroad from Russian perspective? Based on Dawisha (1996, 330) the former Soviet republics, in which Russia pursues great power interests, are so-called near abroad. This terming was firstly used in Yeltsin's presidency by his Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozarev by referring to the fourteen Soviet successor states.

Rotaru (2017, 1) describes that the idea of soft power has become increasingly popular with Russian analysts, policymakers, and politicians. The same scholar continues (*Ibid.*, 1), that this principle was used for the first time in February 2012 by the then presidential candidate Vladimir Putin. He drew attention to the fact that soft power "set of tools and methods to achieve foreign policy goals without the use of arms but by exerting information and other levers of influence".

As described in the previous chapter, Putin understood that many Russians wanted someone who, following the fall of the Soviet Union, brought back the feeling of old strength and authority. The nations that became independent after the fall of the Soviet Union continue to feel the influence of an earlier order. For instance, a citizenship or language issues. Older generation frequently characterize Soviet times as better than they are today and Putin takes advantage of these minorities by speaking out on those issues.

Russia are determined to ensure that Latvian and Estonian authorities follow the numerous recommendations of reputable international organizations on observing generally accepted rights of ethnic minorities. Russia cannot tolerate the shameful status of "non-citizen." How can Russia accept that, due to their status as non-citizens, one in six Latvian residents and one in thirteen Estonian residents are denied their fundamental political, electoral and socioeconomic rights and the ability to freely use Russian?

Putin has this big vision on how to portray Russia as strong and powerful to other countries especially on near abroad. Most commonly many Russian or pro-Russian media channels are used to promote this image. He himself stated it in 2012:

[...] this is just one aspect of our efforts to promote our international and diplomatic activity and to foster an accurate image of Russia abroad. Admittedly, Russia have not seen great success here. When it comes to media influence, Russia is often outperformed. This is a separate and complex challenge that Russia must confront.

Former Soviet countries have been viewed with suspicion and mistrust instead of growing ties and increasing confidence. Russia sees some of the former titular republics of the Soviet Union as antagonists as well, because they are more focused on the west than Russia. In both, the speech of 2007 and article of 2012 Putin mentions his nuisance on presence of NATO forces near the Russian border.

The process of NATO expansion has nothing to do with modernization of the alliance...Russia have the right to ask, against whom is this expansion directed? (Putin 2007)

[...] an expansion of NATO that includes the deployment of new military infrastructure with its U.S.-drafted plans to establish a missile defense system in Europe. I would not touch on this issue if these plans were not conducted in close proximity to Russian borders, if they did not undermine our security and global stability in general. (Putin 2012)

This can be argued, but the relentless desire to satisfy others and to be accepted by others may cause you to look for other possibilities in other ways. The desire to satisfy others is more focused on partners where Russia sees bigger opportunities for itself. This may be the reason why Putin made so many positive assessments of China and the Asia-Pacific region in the 2012 article.



## **2.2.Elements of Russian foreign policy in Putin’s era after the Crimea**

Over the last decade, Russia has proven itself to be a significant global force in the international community. Based on Gurganus and Rumer (2019), it is a major improvement for the international community because Russia has been out of the game since the 1990s. In the presence of Russian President Vladimir Putin, it may also be considered a modern phenomenon. All though the use of Russian foreign policy had its basic and political point of views even before Putin became Russian President for the first time. Originally from the mid-1990s, the fundamental and strategic points originated from Yevgeny Primakov, known as the Primakov Doctrine, from his foreign minister time. The doctrine's actual idea was that the West no longer led Russia, but that Russia would take its own path and obey it. Since then, Russia has succeeded in pursuing the basics and political perspectives. The need to extend and spend in extending the foreign policy point of view difficulties in the internal economic sector has not yet answered a view.

For more than a century, Russian foreign policy has focused on ensuring that it is buffered against external challenges from neighboring states and powers, leading Russia to a territorial extension to avoid threats. According to Gurganus and Rumer (2019), for Russia, after Muscovy's principality, the challenges have been at the top of the list, and the challenges have remained the same. Only the international order and the aggressive southern, eastern, and western states have shifted. This has not been a convenient feat for an accomplice, given Russia's scale and geographical position (*Ibid.*, 2019). These geopolitical problems, complicated relationships, and big aspirations for recognition are its predecessor's historical legacy. Alongside these more nuanced points, the predecessor gave Russia an outdated but still workable foreign policy toolkit. Depending on the span of time, items in the toolkit are used or misused. For starters, several toolkit elements were not used when Russia encountered domestic crises in post-Soviet times.

The talks between Russia and the USA dominate the national security discourse after the imposition of sanctions, driving unprecedented tensions in the trans-Atlantic partnership. After the imposition of sanction imposed by the EU and the USA, Russia has initiated countersanctions against the various types of sender nations, mainly affecting the EU and began strengthening relations with western opponents such as Syria, China, Venezuela, and Iran, as well as growing ties between BRICS and a

high number of African countries. An important fact is that relations between Syria and the Soviet Union were very close (Relation between Syria and the USSR, 1976) and based mainly on military equipment and economic assistance which makes a good base on strengthening ties today. Also, in 2019 first ever Russia-African Summit took place where Putin pointed on Russia's willingness to offer air or trade deals without conditions (Russia-Africa Summit 2019).

Based on OECD report (2020) Russia has showed positive growth in 2019 and 2020 despite designations and the development of the list of sectoral sanctions at the Russian economy in 2014. Bhatiya (2019) points that since 2016 In order to raise prices, Russia has worked closely with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to manage production cuts, although this partnership has recently shown signs of fraying. Bhatija continues that Russia is also expanding its share of the natural gas market in Europe, ensuring that there are US partners, such as Germany, who when considering new Russian sanctions, need to consider a vital economic relationship. This means that amount of control the US has over Russian economy is reduced by that. Although additional aggressive steps were considered towards Russia by Congress, they had to balance the steps against other market pressures on global energy markets, including similar coercive economic campaigns targeting crude oil from Venezuela and Iran.

Combating Russia's malicious activities has raised geopolitics in both Europe and Asia. There are several high-profile conflicts between the Trump administration and traditional European allies, including over the Iran nuclear deal, the Paris climate change agreement and military expenditure by NATO members. Different scholars point out that sanctions pressure is paving the way between Russia and China. Corcoran (2018) says in his article that Moscow relied on a Chinese-sourced bailout of the Yamal liquefied natural gas project after Western sanctions scared away a lot of foreign investment in Russia's energy sector. Both the China National Petroleum Corporation and the Silk Road Fund, a BRI financing vehicle, provided enough capital to help the Russian firm Novatek complete the project (Bhatiya 2019).

Any country that uses internet need to be aware of cyber threats, attacks, and vulnerabilities in their system. Allegedly Russia has conducted several cyber-attacks in order to gain desired information and influence the situation including Estonia, France, Georgia and other countries. Not only the attacks are important but manipulation of the events that cyber-attack may cause also (Ashmore 2008/2009).

The allegations of Russian manipulation on several elections like Ukraine and US have been studied broadly but there is no rock-hard proof of that (Shinkman 2020).

In view of the above, the US finds itself in an unenviable strategic position. US is angering its allies, harming but not deterring its intended opponent, and pushing that same opponent towards a closer embrace of another rival who is much more dangerous and capable based on Bhatiya (*Ibid.*, 2019). In his March 2018 speech, Putin (2018) points out many things that need to be considered. He talks a lot about the economic situation and how Russia's economic position can be approved. However, he speaks about the 1990s and the aggregation of the port's capacity potential, which has decreased since the USSR split apart by almost a half. In the last 17 years, the aggregation capability has risen three times. In that part of his speech, Putin pointed to the expansion of the Black Sea port, which would give Russia even greater capacity.

Putin points out in his speech operation in Syria and talks about the improvements that the Russian Armed Forces have made in recent years. The strength of firearms has risen 3.7 times, more than 300 new equipment joined service in the Armed Forces and Navy. He points out that the changes have been so big that Russia and even the foreign community are familiar with Russian equipment's current names. High-tech equipment placed into service in recent years is essential for fixing the big holes that emerged when the USSR collapsed.

Putin pointed out the nuclear topic in his 2007 speech, 2012 article and again in 2018 speech. He talks and shows how successful Russia has been developing nuclear-powered missiles. At the end of 2017, Russia successfully tested the latest nuclear-powered missile at the central training center. He not only talks about the nuclear-powered missiles but as well as the nuclear-powered ships and submarines. It seems like Russia has moved a big step ahead and uses nuclear power as fuel for the new generation of equipment that they have and are developing. In the previous speeches, there was nothing mentioned about that kind of development.

Putin quotes himself in a 2018 speech from a previous delivery in 2004, and it is targeted to the United States and European partners who are members of NATO. Putin's idea was and is still the same, that Russia will take actions to neutralize threats like the United States global missile defense system. Putin quoted the following:

As other countries increase the number and quality of their arms and military potential, Russia will also need to ensure it has new generation weapons and technology.

In the last part of his speech, Putin talks about cooperation. He does not talk about specific details but lets the international audience know that Russia is developing relations everywhere. He mentions the Russian partnership with the People's Republic of China and the privileged strategic relationship between Russia and India. Following Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union partners, to make it a globally competitive group and work on greater Russian and Eurasian partnerships.

Once again, Putin discusses Russia's positivity to the international organizations but mentions that Russia is hoping for constructive cooperation with the United States and the European Union. They are hoping for an honest and equal working environment. The positive attitude is welcoming, but Russia's problems with the annexation of Crimea will not disappear anywhere soon.

### 3. ANALYSIS ON THE CHANGES OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

In the general sense of the world and to the study of a wide variety of texts, narratology has proved to be the source of many key concepts and analytical tools. Much research has been done on the topic and definition of narrative, but what is the concept and definition of narrative? And most importantly what is strategic narrative? Is it something that is strategically intended or is it a soft power in the XXI century as Roselle, Miskimmon and O’Laughlin claim? It is crucial to understand it before we begin to dive deeper in the present analysis.

Jose Angel and Garcia Landa (1990, 3) define narrative as semiotic representation of a series of events connected in a temporal and causal way. They refer to films, plays, novels *et cetera*. On the other hand, Rudrum (2005, 196) argues that definition of Landa and Angel is a bit too simplistic and certain amount of variation is detectible with this representational view. In his paper he brings out a lot of different definitions and examples on how narrative can be explained or viewed. By the end of his paper, he concludes that there is a fundamental problem with the very idea of a definition of narrative and there is no clear and strict definition of it.

Narratives may have different definitions and examples, but they shaped the way humans understand and see the world. Barbatsis (2011, 329) point out that there is a beginning, a middle and an end to the stories and living through them we experience an environment that is generated or arranged in a specific way, and narrative is actually open-ended. Sequences of events have significance in the narrative because they are linked to a point of change from which there is no return to what it was. In other words, narrative is like a big idea within what you may have lots of stories, stories about what one or another do not have, what they want or how they are going to get that to illustrate the point.

Roselle, Miskimmon and O’Loughlin (2014, 74) argue that narratives are important to the structure of the communication process in chaotic world for ordering the chaos– and many scientists suggest that this is, in part, hardwired into humans. They continue saying that a compelling narrative can be a power resource, as people may be drawn to certain actors, events, and explanations that describe the history of a country, or the specifics of a policy, for example. Second, narrative communication as a process is one way through which power resources can be understood to work more broadly. They

state that soft power is central to and understanding of international relations today, but what is soft power? Nye (2008) describes that soft power is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment. A country's soft power rests on its resources of culture, values, and policies. Roselle, Miskimmon and O'Loughlin (2014, 71) state that strategic narrative is soft power in the XXI century, because it brings researchers back to the core questions of the international relations by raising questions of means and methods of persuasion and influence.

The reason why this paper has previously discussed importance of understanding the meaning of narrative and strategic narrative is because the best way to detect the changes in Russian foreign policy is through understanding the changes in narratives. Further analysis of the changes of Russian foreign policy narratives before and after sanctions will be analyzed through three interconnected forms. First identity narrative will outline how Russia is positioning itself in the international system. Second, system narrative will dive deeper into the actions and part old and part new alliances of Russia. Finally, policy narrative will examine how Russia is manipulating political actions like elections in order to gain favorable positions on international arena.

### **3.1.Strategic identity narrative**

It does not matter whether we are talking about the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, or present-day Russia in a wider picture. They always wanted to be powerful, audible, and respected. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia was very weakened, and a wish to draw a better picture of a stronger and bigger Russia grew behind Kremlin's walls every day. Putin (2014) has pointed in his speech of 2014 at Russian Security Council meeting that much of the Russian foreign policy has been embedded in the concept of international affairs as a competitive struggle (*конкурентная борьба*). Putin wants to envision Russia as one of the emerging powers that challenges Western hegemony in the international arena.

Conceptually and from the real policy-making point of view, the near abroad has always been a quivering topic for Russia, and everything that is happening in this so-called near abroad, whether it would be Ukraine or Latvia or any other country, has in some way bothered Russia. Putin has expressed on several occasions in his speeches and articles discomfort on the expansion of NATO's

bases alongside the Russian border. In 2007, Putin pointed out that the NATO expansion is not favorable to Russia, mainly because NATO is on their borders. Moreover, Putin pointed out that in 1990 NATO promised not to expand outer Germany borders to give Russia the security guarantee.

Back in the 2007 speech, Putin reflected indirect conversation with the United States, although he also touched on important topics from other fields. Russia associates itself with the United States in several ways and often criticizes them at the same time. The Russian state seeks to encourage audiences both at home and abroad to have a positive narrative about itself. The reasons behind the Crimean annexation in 2014 raise many questions till the present day, but one thing is certain. Imposed sanctions made Russia more creative in some aspects of their foreign policy and made Russia more protective and promotive in their self-identity.

The usage of the conceptual framework of strategic narrative in Russia is clearly seen in official statements and articles which demonstrate anti-western plotlines which bring Russia to the forefront of the idea of Russia as great power. On domestic level Russian national television, which is broadcasted all over Europe and beyond, often demonstrates Russia as a “good guy” and dragging other actors down. For example, on 1 June 2014 Russian news Vesti Nedeli (*Вести недели*) showed a screenshot (*Figure 1*) of US President Barack Obama meeting Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk with a title *Запад-спонсор геноцида* (The West – a sponsor of genocide). Important to mention that due to Russia’s actions in Crimea, the first round of sanctions was implemented on March 6, 2014. Russian television is not the only source through which Russia or in other words Kremlin convey their views.

Modern social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, VK (*ВКонтакте* – InContact) and others are another example. According to statistical data (Watson 2020) adults between the age 18-29 were the least likely to use cable TV networks as a daily source of news. According to Watson 42% of respondents never watch cable news and only 15% watch daily. Younger consumers prefer to stay up to date on social media or online-only news sites, while their older peers more frequently turn to cable and network news (*Ibid.*,2020). Besides the fact that through social media, the state can quickly update its citizens on the news, it also has negative consequences. For example, by saying something misleading, wrong, or bad, will get viral immediately. On 7 September 2020 (VOA News 2020), Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova apologized for Facebook post about Serbian President in which she compared a photo of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic during a meeting with the US President Trump to a scene from the thriller *Basic Instinct* (*Figure 2*). Not only

Zakharova apologized, but also Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to Serbia's president.

The Russian state is attempting to portray a set of positive narratives about itself not only through news or social media platforms but also through speeches. Putin in his speech in 2007 clearly pointed out the nuclear question because this is one of the issues that Russia has come in before the United States. The intentions and wish of Russia to be seen as a big global political power and actor has not changed, but the strategies of doing so have.

### **3.2.Strategic system narrative**

The narratives of Russian foreign policy in the international system serve as a public deliberation on the role of Russia in the world as projection of state power. At 2007 Munich speech Putin pointed out several times that the cooperation is important in all fields, despite the topics. Alliances are important part of the global security, economy and cooperation perspective. He clearly points out in several cases that there may be circumstances where the partnerships are not functional, or Russia has been set aside. The UN, the UNSC, NATO, and the EU Commission are important players in making choices on the aforementioned subjects. The only thing that really interferes with Russia is the massive overflow of things led/managed by the United States. He clearly points that even the system of law is beginning to take over the shape of what is used in the United States system. This is just too much for Russia, and they see that in the future it will grow as a problem.

First slight changes in system narratives are seen already in Putin's article of 2012 which is focusing more on China and the South Pacific friendly neighborly ties, economic and political collaboration. In his article, he clearly explains the importance and effects of Russian Chinese relationship. He points out that it would surely not be easy for Russia to do so, but it is important, because of the global situation. By the time of the publishment of the article nobody put serious attention into the statements which were made, but after the actions of 2014 and follow up sanctions it seems like a prophecy.

Just a few months after the imposition of sanctions, Russia showed signs of new agreements and possible alliances. According to Wang (2015, 5), in April 2014, Putin signed a bill in order to cancel



90% of North Korea's debt to the former Soviet Union. Also, in June 2014, Russia and North Korea agreed to use the ruble as a trade settlement to promote economic and trade cooperation between the two countries, and North Korea agreed to simplify the protocol for issuing visas to Russian citizens investing or working in North Korea. Wang (*Ibid.*, 5) also points that in November 2014, the General Secretary of the Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam visited Russia, and the two sides issued a statement to advance the comprehensive strategic partnership by signing series of documents to cooperate on fields of energy, trade, communications, technology, media *et cetera*. In addition, Wang (*Ibid.*, 5) continues that in December 2014, while visiting India, Putin signed with India 25 bilateral cooperation documents related to the fields of energy, aviation, chemicals, and so on. One notable agreement was Russia's invitation to the Indian Oil Corporation to explore and exploit Siberian and Yamal oil and gas resources and participate in developing the Arctic Continental Shelf and Project for liquefied natural gas plants in the Far East.

Beside Asian region, Russia has also signed more than 20 agreements with states on the African continent for military collaboration purposes and assured six of these states of the prospect of establishing military bases. That may be the Russian ambition to keep up with the United States and prove that Russia is taking the African continent under its wing. It seems like Russia is behaving in Africa like the United States in Europe. The African continent may become a weapon or instrument for Russia to wield economic, political, and military influence over the United States. More precisely, relations with Syria and Iran are becoming stronger, with Russian assistance. For example, by supplying weapons to them. Russia is now the largest supplier of arms on the African continent, two and a half times greater than the United States. Relevant alliances have not been officially carried out however Russia continues to move on with the proposal to build new African alliances.

### **3.3.Strategic policy narrative**

Russia's political regime is often seen as providing a coherent and conformable paradigm, leaving no space for diverse views. Seems that Russian foreign policy, since the fall of the Soviet Union, was focused on the Western world in general and the relationship with the United States.

There are a lot of speculations and theories as well as studies on Russian interference in United States election. As well as speculations on the United States elections, some documents analyze and dive deeper into the Russian interference in Ukrainian elections. All of the materials primarily agree that the purpose of such interference was to increase political and social disharmony aiming to put Russia in favorable positions.

There are reports on high profile cyber-attacks, as well as claims of participation in elections. Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service (2020, 16) noted that Russia conducts cyber operations against foreign organizations specifically in order to steal confidential information about what political roles countries hold, which countries can be affected in Russia's desired direction, and how and whom to target in information operations with their narratives.

Will Russia continue cyber-attacks and participation in different states election, probably yes, will this ever change or find concrete proof, probably yes. But as long as there is no concrete proof these allegations remain as speculations.

**Table 1. Changes of identity, system, and policy narrative in Russian Foreign policy.**

Narrative	Russian Foreign policy	
	Before sanctions	After sanctions
Identity Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putin’s idea of two great powers/global players (Russia and USA).</li> <li>• United States and Russia indirect talks.</li> <li>• Russian need for US approval.</li> <li>• Discomfort of NATO’s expansion (Baltic states).</li> <li>• Russia is seeking international approval (to get rid of negative image).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger cooperation with China (not easy for Russia).</li> <li>• Military expansion in South-African regions to become stronger player (like USA in Europe).</li> <li>• More creative Russia in foreign policy point of view.</li> <li>• Russia as one of the emerging powers that challenge west.</li> </ul>
System Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia was membership in the UN and the UNCS G8 group.</li> <li>• Discomfort with NATO’s alliances and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of military bases in south Africa to become strong partner/player on the continent.</li> <li>• Agreements with states on the African</li> </ul>

	<p>bases location in Europe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership in the EU Commission.</li> <li>• Russia wish to make cooperation on every possible way.</li> <li>• Wish for friendly and neighborly ties with China and South Pacific.</li> <li>• Wish for economic and political collaboration with China and South Pacific.</li> </ul>	<p>continent for military collaboration purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russian assistance in Syria and Iran.</li> <li>• Largest supplier of arms on the African continent.</li> <li>• EU commission membership temporarily paused.</li> <li>• Suspension from G8 group of UNCS.</li> <li>• Russian cooperation with India and Vietnam.</li> </ul>
Policy Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitude to near abroad.</li> <li>• Relations with United States and Western world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyber-attacks.</li> <li>• Influencing elections (USA, Iran, Georgia 2020, Latvia, Ukraine 2019).</li> <li>• Counter sanctions.</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSION

Many historic events have had an impact on the foreign relations of Russia and history may not be the perfect guide in analyzing Russian foreign policy, but a broader pattern throws some light on the general behavior. Since the Crimea, Russian foreign policy has dramatically changed, and these changes are detectable through looking at the changes made to the country's strategic narratives. Some of them on a bigger scale on some not so much, but all these narratives connect with prevalent views of the world and Russia and the US position in it. Through these Russia resonates the dominant frame which is portrayed to the world. The tendency to highlight intervention of the United States in other countries in order to refer to the USA as a destabilizing player in the world affairs is also clearly notable. Connection of tighter ties with Asia and the Middle East as a result is also clearly notable. Via bilateral efforts, Russia threatens the penalty sender states and their alliances. A reasonably clear image of the world as a turbulent place and of Russia as a stabilizing country inside it is the end result.

One thing is certain, Russia would not alter its goals regarding its core interests. New agreements and alliances show that clearly. Russia has always had good relations with China, even in Soviet times. However, several cooperation documents were signed after imposition of sanctions, including trade, energy, technology, military, *et cetera*. Closer ties with Iran, India, Vietnam have also risen more to the surface. Interestingly Russia has started to show similar strategic moves to the US. US has NATO military bases worldwide and Russia has started to expand and build its military bases on the African continent. One of the main foreign policy priorities is to block NATO's expansion alongside the Russian border and confirm Russian status as a great power near abroad. Alleged participation in elections in different countries has proved Russian intentions to manipulate political events to gain favorable positions.

Imposed sanctions have had their impact but not on the desired level. Many strategic divergences than convergences led to the break-up between Russia and the US and pushed Russia to find new partners and remind the old ones in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Intensified political and security cooperation between Russia and its new allies led to stronger cooperation in BRICS, SCO, and the Eurasian Union. Russia has shown significant creativity in its foreign policy and ability to get out of complex and dampening situations.

Further research can be based on Russia's media channels influence of Russian public according to imposition of sanctions or for instance the measurement of the impact of the sanctions but not from their negative but positive impacts. This would benefit the understanding of sanction application for key decision-makers.

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## APPENDICES

**Figure 1: Screenshot of Russian news channel about story: West - sponsor of genocide.**



Source: Россия1, Вести недели, Эфир от 22.06.2014; Retrieved from:  
<https://vesti7.ru/video/1497868/episode/22-06-2014/>

Notes:

Russian national television news channel broadcasted story with a title West - a sponsor of genocide.

**Figure 2: A comparison of the Serbian President with the actress from the movie Basic Instinct by Zakharova.**



Source: Putin Apologizes to Serbian Leader for ‘Basic Instinct’ Post, Sep. 11, 2020; TheMoscowTimes; Retrieved from: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/09/11/putin-apologizes-to-serbian-leader-for-basic-instinct-post-a71415>

Notes:

Maria Zakharova “If you were called to the White House, and the chair was placed as if you were on an interrogation, sit down as in photo #2. Whomever you are. Just believe”. This Facebook post made not only Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova apologize but also Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to Serbia’s President.



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