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Geopolitics

Ukraine in geopolitical strategies of the European Union and the Russian Federation

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Abstract

Master thesis elaborates on the introduction, theoretical, methodological framework and empirical analysis parts that investigate the role of Ukraine in geopolitical strategies of the European Union and the Russian Federation, as a critically important geopolitical pivot. The importance of such pivot, like Ukraine, is derived not from its power and motivation but from its sensitive location on the geopolitical map and from the consequences of its potentially vulnerable condition for the conducting of the main geostrategic players. The main aim of the research is to find out interests of Russia and Europe in Ukraine that aggravate their relations, as such common interests between the geopolitical empires often can lead to the confrontation between them and to a tension situation in their coexistence. The inescapable actual and the same time alarming conclusion is that newly democratic Ukraine inhabits a betraying neighbours - powerful geopolitical players that pursue their own interests. With the indifference of the EU and not so covert enmity of the RF, the danger is today that it will end up stranded between two worlds, neither in East nor in West.

Key words: Geopolitical player, Geopolitical pivot, the European Union, the Russian Federation, Ukraine.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Both the European Union and the Russian Federation are weighty geopolitical players and are often called geopolitical empires. As long as strong geopolitical empires exist, confrontation exists between them. These two main geopolitical powers by competing among themselves for influence in different regions simultaneously affect and challenge directly and indirectly foreign policy; domestic development and stability of weaker countries (Shayan, 07-03-2009).

The significance of 1989-1991 is not that Communism collapsed, however it is first of all about European ideas triumphed. Since the Soviet Union collapsed, the European Union has won the easiest fight: on average one country per year has been absorbed in to the European Community (Khanna, 2008, p. 4). However Europeans are realizing that the Russian Federation is too close and too big to aggravate relations with it. Nevertheless Europe has a lot of points of common interest that often lead to a tension and conflict situation in their coexistence on Eurasia political 'chessboard'. For instance Kosovo, Chechnya and South Ossetia questions, where Russia and Europe has proved better at thwarting than assisting each other's geopolitical goals.

While the chief strategies are plotted in Brussels and Moscow, victories are won on the battlegrounds of 'second world', using all new weapons of globalization: money power, pipelines, political elites and the media (Khanna, 2008, p.16). Strong geopolitical players often decide the destiny of weaker politically and economically countries. Such politic and economic influence from the western Ukrainian neighbour – the EU and eastern one – the RF is well perceptible in Ukraine, especially now during the Ukrainian presidential election, second tour of which has to be held on February, 2010.

1.1. Aim of the study

Maybe Ukraine is just a corner of Europe, but it is more often seen as the middle of new geopolitical struggle between the EU and the RF. Even it is obvious that Europe and the post-soviet Russia have different views on what is better for Ukraine, the task of the research will be to answer the question: *What role does Ukraine play in geopolitical strategies of the EU and the RF?* Understanding the role of Ukraine and realising in which sense does this state matter for the EU's and RF's geostrategies will point out the road to the answer of the main research

question: *What common interests have Russia and Europe in Ukraine that aggravate their relations?*

1.2. Statement of purpose

Answers of these questions will help to realize if Ukraine is regarded as a battleground between the main geopolitical powers, rather than independent geopolitical actor. Such analysis of the role and place of Ukraine in geopolitical strategies of the main geo-players and its biggest neighbours is also vitally important element for the future formation of national strategy and an exact definition of geopolitical priorities of Ukraine.

Correct understanding of the place of Ukraine in geopolitical game is not only imperatives and decisive factors of country political and economical development, however it can help Ukraine to avoid the destiny of the Kosovo, South Ossetia or even Chechnya, where the knot of interests of major geopolitical players was interwoven.

1.3. Anatomy of the study

The aim of the research is to transport the reader from a point where something appears presumably illogic to the point where it emerges as understandable, even logic. After having presented the theory in the following part and the choices that preceded it, I raise a few methodological considerations of qualitative research. The ambition with the introductory text is to contextualize the larger, main body of the empirical text and to bring out to the reader the purpose and aim of the research question.

The latter section presents the central data that has been gathered in an account that is organized in consecutive order. The point of the analyse departure is to define the basic directions, objectives and aims of European and Russian geopolitical strategies and the role of Ukraine. Such section of the text will be followed by the analysis of the common political and economical interests, as main tools of new geopolitics of the EU and the RF in Eastern Europe – Ukraine.

Last, I sum up the picture with empirical and theoretical conclusions. The conclusion section has been enriched with a segment that accounts for some data that the theoretical model could not explain, and also suggests how it perhaps can be outlined by the researcher, that took position of neutrality and nominate objectivity as the aim of the study.

1.3. Definition and limitation

A first important point to bring out is an explication about comprehension of the meanings: the East and the West. In this research “East” or the eastern geopolitical player exceptionally reflects to eastern neighbour of Ukraine – the Russian Federation. At the same time “West” or the western geopolitical player is identified exceptionally with the European Union - the biggest western neighbour of Ukraine.

In this paper I have studied and compared both the EU’s and the RF’s geopolitical strategies, without making a distinction between them, even the first entity of international relation represents Union unit, while second is an example of the State entity. Such decision is based on theoretical framework of Zbigniew Brzezinski, as he equalizes the meaning of both, naming the EU and the RF geopolitical empires and strong geo-strategical players in comparison to the geopolitical pivot - Ukraine.

An important definition to make is to determinate the meaning of geopolitical empires and geopolitical pivots. However these definitions are presented in the following theoretical section, as these issues are a part of the theoretical framework. A focus on fewer theoretical elements presented below, I hope, only adds depth to the study.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Geopolitics, as a theoretical mode, was very popular from the late nineteenth century into the early part of twenty first century. If you have ever studied, what academics call now international relations, you would have been studied geopolitics. Geopolitical theory in the field of international relation can be definitely placed within larger research tradition.

In the following section I will outline analytical tools of classical and new geopolitical approaches. The aim of such theoretical overview is to provide the modest part of theoretical background and also to outline the path that led to the choice of approach.

2.1. Classical geopolitical thinking

The term ‘geopolitics’ came from nineteenth century and today is an important part of everyday life for a country’s location, size, sovereignty and resources, which all affect how people that live in the country understand and interact with the wider world. Therefore geopolitics is a part of our everyday live (Dodds, 2008, p. 4).

The term ‘geopolitics’ brought a new meaning of geopolitical competition - the contention between great powers aspiring control over territory, resources and important geopolitical positions, wealth and influence. Classical geopolitics lighted out a way of looking at the world from the spatial-geographical aspects of international relations with the frequent problems of external political predominance by the means and tools of military power (Sheehan, 2005, p. 145). Classical geopolitical approaches stress that:

“...political predominance is a question not just for having power in the sense of human or material resources, but also for geopolitical military context within which that powers is exercised directly” (Sloan and Gray, 1992, p. 2).

If to look back, we will find that this kind of ‘hard power’ has been the driving force in the world politics and especially world conflicts in much of the past few centuries. The war in Iraq could be a good example of classical geopolitical power use that reveals that south-central area of Eurasia regards to be the central pivot of world classical power competition.

If to stay back for a minute and to return to the classical geo-political thinking of the early part of the last century, with an aim to see the role of Ukraine in classical

geopolitical strategies, the views of Halford Mackinder particularly should be taken into the consideration. In his geopolitical theory 'Heartland' Ukraine took main position, as a key geopolitical element. Mackinder claimed that who rules East Europe (Ukraine, Western Russia and Central Europe) – commands the Heartland. Who rules the Heartland - commands the World-Island (Eurasia). Who rules the World-Island commands the whole world (Gray, 1999, p. 27).

Special role to Ukraine was also dedicated by Swedish strategies Rudolf Kjellen. He argued that Ukraine is pivotal element not only according to Russian military geopolitical strategies, but also according to European one. He saw Ukraine as pivotal defender of 'cultural Europe' from Russian unlimited geopolitical will to military power (Khanna, 2008, p. 20).

But in new world order became obvious the necessity for the development of a 'new geopolitics' ideology contrasted to the classical geopolitics, as the strategies of international entities and their power expansion have changed a lot in globalized world. Such new ideology should be more independent from the complex of geographical determinism and hard power existence. It does not mean that basic components of classic geopolitics: territory, the role of the state in 'others' geopolitical strategies have to lose their centrality in international relations. Instead of that, the role of these two components has to be completed by a new broader geopolitical concept understanding. Therefore the analysis of the role of Ukraine in geopolitical strategies of the EU and the RF geo-strategies is important to be investigated in the following analysis part.

2.2. New geopolitics

Today we see considerable resurgence of geopolitical ideology. The purpose of new geopolitics is not to redraw the geopolitical map of the world or Eurasia chiefly with military power. The purpose is rather to embed power and dominance in the certain region mainly with economical and political tools of influence. That is why the research will also hold in analysis of the economical and political interest of the RF and the EU in Ukraine.

The new geopolitics of vital international entities or so called geopolitical empires is concerned with how geographical factors, including territory, population, strategic location, natural resource of weaker states, been modified by economics and technology, affect relations and aggravate the struggle for world domination between stronger geopolitical players.

Besides that new geopolitics of the 21st century is defined on the activity of subject of international relations in the context of expanding their control and power over weaker countries with new weapons of globalization: money, pipelines, media, political elites force and cultivating the various novel dimensions of power: technology, communications, information, as well as trade and finance (Tuathail, Dalby and Routledge 1999, p. 2).

In the case of this research the European Union and the Russian Federation represent strong geopolitical empires, whether Ukraine is seen as the weaker state, where political and economical expansion is possible. Such statement is based on Zbigniew Brzezinski theory represented in his book: “The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives”. First – geopolitical empires or so called geopolitical players and second - geopolitical pivots are described by Zbigniew Brzezinski in follow way:

“Active geostrategic players are the states that have the capacity and the national will to exercise power or influence beyond their borders in order to alter the existing geopolitical state of affairs”(Brzezinski, 1998, p. 40).

If by geopolitical players Zbigniew Brzezinski names Europe and Russia, to Ukraine he dedicates a role of new important geopolitical pivot:

“Geopolitical pivots are the states whose importance is derived not from their power and motivation but rather from their sensitive location and from the consequences of their potentially vulnerable condition for the behaviour of geostrategic players. Most often, geopolitical pivots are determined by their geography, which in some cases gives them a special role either in denying access to important areas or in denying resources to a significant player...”(Brzezinski, 1998, p. 42).

Named above features of geopolitical expansion of the 21st century are immanent to key geopolitical players from whose power suffers geopolitical pivots.

And if there is no military or any other hollow expansion and interest on the territory, it doesn't mean that political or economical expansion don't exist there, as new geopolitics are played mainly with new tools of economy and policy for the dominance in the region (Agnew, 2001, p. 31).

Eurasia is that 'chessboard' on which the struggle for power has been played, since the continent started to act politically, up to day. However the main task of the research is to do analysis by adapting new current realities of powers and geopolitical realities, rather than to enhance theoretical importance of Ukraine. As the identification of the central interest of key players and importance of central pivots, based on real events, helps to define grand policy dilemmas and confrontations between main powers, which could have a direct correlation to anticipate the potential major challenges on the Eurasian supercontinent (Brzezinski, 1998, p. 48).

3. METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

This section of the thesis deals with the methodological underpinnings of the study and the choices that led to them.

3.1. Qualitative methods

The whole research is based on qualitative methods, as the use of such methods in political sciences are an important contribution to correct understanding of political problems and right explanations of them. Qualitative research has its roots in social sciences and is more concerned with understanding why something happens, rather than “when”, “where” and “what” (David Marshal, 2002, p.197).

Qualitative research allows the subjects being studied to give much ‘richer’ answer to questions put by the researcher. It also may give insights, in case of right and clear methods settings, which might have been missed by any other methods. However there are downsides of qualitative research. It is often criticised for: being subject to research bias; the difficulties in analysing qualitative data rigorously; the lack of reproducibility and generalisability of the findings. But proponents of qualitative research, like Nicholas and Pope (1995, p.49-70), argue that there are certain strategies available to protect research against potential biases and to enhance the rigour of the findings by correct interpretation of them.

3.1.1. Comparative analyse

The investigation of the Ukrainian role in consistent current geopolitical strategies of the Russian Federation and the European Union and their common interest in Ukraine demands comparative analysis. Qualitative research in the form of the comparative analysis attempts to maximize the number of comparison that can be made across the cases under investigation. The technique of such methods aims to alleviate the certain problem by allowing inferences to be drawn from the maximum number of comparisons that can be made across the cases under analysis.

Nevertheless one can criticise that, as different units are taken for comparison, accuracy of the available analysis can be inherently limited. Taken different variables for comparison (like the EU (union) and the Russian Federation (state)) I intent to compare their geopolitical interests and strategies, first of all and only as equal geostrategic players and the biggest geopolitical empires located in the border with Ukraine, regarded to be geopolitical pivot.

3.1.2. Analyse of documents and data

As the qualitative research has to demonstrate the plausibility of its interpretation, which was decided to be determined by using analyse of documents, data and text interpretation. By documents in qualitative research outlines following: case reports, books, agreements, pacts, reports, statistics, judgement, expert opinions, etc. Text interpretation analyse running through the research shows what text does to convey meaning; how patterns of content and language shape the portrayal of the chosen topic and how relationships between those patterns convey underlying meaning (Wolff 2004, p. 284). Not analysing documents mentioned above could definitely leave hole in my research, as such data of the analysis has strong validity. Documents reveal shows in the text what the EU and the RF value in their geopolitical strategies and points out their common interest in Ukraine. These facts occurred in natural settings, so the data is based on strong efficiency.

3.1.3. Online research

The last but not least approach that is used in the research is a qualitative online research based on Internet sources. The web is full of documents: institutional home pages, online books, articles, reports and journals. The Internet is the most comprehensive electronic archive of written material that represents the world and different entities' opinions, concerns and facts (Flick 2006, p. 266).

Even the online environment is not ideal for traditional qualitative methods techniques of the 21st century it is well adapted to take full advantages of the internet unique characteristics. With global Internet panels, online qualitative research can be conducted across time zones in multiple countries and multiple languages. Without doubts Internet online analysis is rich sources based on qualitative data.

3.2. Taking position, Level of Neutrality

For an argumentation to be strong the analyst, as a principle in qualitative analyse, has to defined taken position argued for. Through bringing forward inductive logic, as a point of the departure, objectivity in the collecting of empirical materials and analysis part is my obvious goal.

I, as an analyst, acknowledge that there is a bidirectional public opinion of understanding perception European and Russian foreign policy and interests according to their neighbour Ukraine. I, being Ukrainian and adhering pro-European views, decided to take a neutral position as an analyst, because adopting

such position will assist the objectivity of the research analysis and conclusion to grow up.

3.3. Material

A variety of published and online sources have been used all through the study. Academic empirical material presented in books, articles, reports and online sources, has been carcass of the research. A few rapports emanating from the social sciences, with focus on political and economical aspects of the geopolitics field, have had central meaning as framework of the study.

Theoretical framework was based on Zbigniew Brzezinski, Halford Mackinder, Rudolf Kjellen, Tuathail, Huntington, Dalby and Routledge theories. However methodological approaches were evolved from Flick, Wolff, David Marshal, Nicholas and Pope Main books. Articles and reports were presented by Swedish defence research agency, Baker III Institute Report for Public Policy of Rice University, the Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies, the Centre of European Reform, etc. Among articles and reports were analysed also published and online journals: RUSI, Wall Street, New Time, World Policy, Ukrainian Express, Geographical Journal, etc.

Nevertheless, all sources used in the study are not less 'valid' to use since they indicate the European Union and the Russian Federation geopolitical positions and because their views make up part of the story that I tell. Not only when using this central sort of account but when consulting secondary material in general, it is vital to look out for potential biases and keep critical of the material (Lundquist 1993:110-13).

4. GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY OF KEY PLAYERS – UKRAINIANS CLOSEST NEIGHBOURS

Friedrich Ratzel, the German political geographer, argued that at the turn of the twentieth century empires needed to expand in order to survive. Today's geopolitics is mainly about the same: winning perspective and probable influential countries, which reminds a lot human relations about 'winning friends and potentially important people'. Unfortunately, more often weaker geopolitically countries, like Ukraine, are seen as a good prey for key geopolitical actors or as the premier arena for comparing superpowers strategies to expand their global power base and undermine their rivals (Khanna, 2008, xxiv).

But if countries like human being can choose their 'friends', they can not choose their neighbours. If Ukraine can choose its beneficial strategical partners, it can not choose its geographically located neighbours. Geography and geographical location, being the permanent features of the country, are the most important factors in determining geopolitical realities in the territory of such unit (Spykman, 1944, p. 41). Understanding the role and meaning in geopolitical strategies of the 'neighbours', especially if they are main key geopolitical players, like in case with Ukraine, will help the country to understand its own importance and place in geopolitical realities.

4.1. Role of Ukraine in geopolitical strategy of the post-soviet Russia

With the collapse of communism Russia has suffered a huge crisis of identity. A bit later the Communist Russia was described as having been transformed from 'geopolitical extrovert' into a 'geopolitical introvert' (Gray and Solana, 1999, p. 244). Substantial geopolitical changes after the Cold War, has worked to the serious disadvantages of Russia, which could not no longer be regarded as a superpower, argues Goncharenko (1995).

However, one chapter of the book "Geopolitics" by Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Solana speaks for itself: "Russia will not be trifled with geopolitical facts and fantasies". Being an empire for a long time, Russia is not going to hand over so easy, declare Gennady Zuzanov, leader of post-Soviet Communist Party, in his book "Geography of Victory".

Today Russia is not playing around - it is playing its cards carefully to restore the geopolitical superpower status and to re-establish its geo-position in the world arena, lost after the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the USSR (Menon and

Motyl 2007). These two mentioned above geopolitical ambitious in addition to the growth of power of Russia's rivals, like the European Union and vulnerability of the new geopolitical realities in 'near abroad'¹. Good example of such 'vulnerability in near abroad' is Orange Revolution in Ukraine that determines today the main direction of the geopolitical strategy of the Russian Federation according Ukraine.

Russia's 'loss' in the Orange Revolution plunged it into tantrum diplomacy laced with diatribes against Western meddling in the post-Soviet space. One of the Russia's immediate reactions to Yushchenko's² victory was to raise gas price threefold and to blockade Kazakh oil shipments to Ukraine (Khanna 2008, p. 20). As well as it also has made Russia to revise its geopolitical strategy in the 'near abroad' space to more tough foreign policy. Michel Mayer (2005) argued that Russia geopolitical liberalism ended where Ukrainian independence and democracy began in 2004 after the Orange Revolution.

As it was already mentioned above, Zbigniew Brzezinski named Ukraine a geopolitical pivot for Russia, because without it, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire at all. Of course the RF still can strive for imperial status without Ukraine, but then it will become an Asian imperial state, says he. However Ukraine is not only Russia's stumbling stone in the question of being Eurasian or Asian empire and the recovery of superpower status or the formation of a new Eurasian power bloc on the territory of the former USSR.

The analysis of different reports and internet home page of the Russian Federation and its official geopolitical strategy provide us the light on the actualities of role and important place of Ukraine in some another Russia's geopolitical strategies like: the reunification of all 'historical Russian territories'. Moscow is grudgingly accepting that its former 'satellites'³ one by one orbit a different, new one capital Brussels (Khanna, 2008, p. 25). Therefore Russia's efforts are directed in reunion former historical territories, in the plot of which Ukraine is regarded as a younger brother of the current Russian Federation, rather than an independent state. A closer look at the potential of Ukrainian-Russian relations from the perspective of the

¹ Near Abroad (*blizhneye zarubezhye*) - is a term used in Russia and some post-soviet countries. The term is used since the early 1990s, usually to assert Russia's right to have major influence in the region, which is mainly about that Russia has never truly regarded its former soviet republics as an independent foreign countries.

² Yushchenko is a pro-western politician, leader of the Orange Revolution, current president of the Ukraine that wants to see the future of Ukraine in membership in the European Union.

³ The word 'satellites' is used in this context as allegory of former Soviet Union's republics.

Russian Federation shows deep historical, cultural and mentality roots, that goes back to more than one thousand years whereas called Kiev Russ (Kanoun 2009).

Another important axe of geopolitical strategy of the Russian Federation is about joining of the "G-7" and active counteraction to NATO expansion. Here Ukraine plays important role in the second part of the dimension, as it is seen first of all in this aspect as a profitable buffer state that prevents Russian 'european' border from being directly exposed to NATO power and force. NATO 'open door' policy, which is bearing directly on several dimension of RF's national security interest, with the first wave of its expansion into a central and Eastern Europe, presented a direct military challenge to the RF sphere of influence, which formerly of course includes Ukraine, as a means of isolating and weakening Russia (Hillen and Noonan, 1998, p. 32).

The next axes of the Russia's geo-strategy is dedicated and orientated toward the formation of a new strategic bipolar relation with another main geopolitical actors, nevertheless strengthening cooperation and collaboration with the Commonwealth of Independent States⁴: as Russia dependence on CIS energy and raw materials resources increase more and more for the last years, making Russian access to these reserves and to markets a vital interest, where in CIS, far away not the last role, is dedicated to Ukraine (Isakova 1997, p. 17).

Urgent necessity has geopolitical strategy directed to counteraction of separatist movements inside the Russian Federation and the support of the Russian speaking population abroad, by the creation of conditions necessary for the political control and domination of Russia in these states over their Russian speaking population. The largest single Russian diaspora in the world is located in Ukraine, as well as Russians form the largest ethics minority in the country. Around 20% of Ukrainian population identify themselves as Russians and support the policy of the Russian Federation.

The geopolitical decomposition of Ukraine or at least so called 'finlandization'⁵ of it, implementing aggressive policy towards the country (Herpen 2008, p. 2), play not the last meaning for the Russian Federation ambitious. Russia's interest exist in Ukraine also because of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, based at Sevastopol (Crimea) and in the access to Black Sea, as it is one of the most strategically important

⁴ Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a regional organization whose participating countries are: name of countries - former Soviet Republics, formed during the breakup of the Soviet Union.

⁵ Finlandization – is the influence that one powerful country may have on the policies of a smaller neighbouring country.

regions in Europe, providing, in particular, a major trade link and transit routes for Caspian energy supplies (Hedenskog 2008, p. 52).

Mentioned above geopolitical priorities wholly correspond to traditional Russian imperialistic strategy. Viewing itself as the USSR's sole successor and in a wider sense the successor of the idea of world domination, Russia is more often providing economic, social and cultural expansion into all independent states on the territory of the former USSR. Furthermore Russia has repeatedly not once expressed territorial claims toward Ukraine. For the last decade Russia tries to increase its influence in the region and to prevent strengthening of the EU role, as the enlargement of the EU is increasingly seen as a source of new challenges.

4.2. Role of Ukraine in geopolitical strategy of the European Union

After the end of the Cold war and victory of the West⁶ the main dimension of western geopolitical strategy was directed toward the prevention of the formation of a new geopolitical power or bloc that could be opposed to the ideology of the West, like Soviet Union was. But today the RF is considered to be potential candidates for such role. Therefore the European Union main task is to exclude any of the possibilities of a split inside the European Community and to strength regional cooperation, especially with the former Soviet republics. This is a dominant estimation lying under the European regional defense strategy, where Ukraine plays not the last role. It imposes as a necessity of the EU to prevent any hostile power from dominating actors in any region, whose resources and power of control under consolidation can be sufficient to general global power (Rozoff, 24-11-2009).

One more important priority among geopolitical strategy of the EU is a new emphasis on bilateral relations, not only with 'strategical beneficial partners', like China, USA, Japan, but also emphasis on strengthen relations with other important pivots, like Ukraine - the closest neighbours and direct 'security defender' of the external border (Smith, 2008, p. 83).

Especially now, after the war in Georgia in August 2008, the EU will have to be more vigilant and will have to revise its geopolitical behaviour to the eastern border. Tomas Valasek argues in his article that the EU will need to become more active geopolitical actor in this volatile region, in which of course Ukraine is the

⁶ In this sense not only the European Community and its ideology, but the content take broader meaning and cover broader dimension, like Euro-Atlantic entity with it ideology.

largest and the most important element. If Ukraine successfully is 'Europeanized', it will serve as an inspiration to the entire eastern neighbours (Valasek, 2008, p.49).

Furthermore the EU has also to work harder to find solution about the existing and potential regional conflicts in near abroad, such as the Ukraine-Russia disagreement over Crimea, as the prevention of the transformation of regional conflicts into international conflicts, is also one of the main axes of the geopolitical strategies of the European Community. In the 'EU Security 2020' report, presented by the European institute of reforms, European community speaks about necessity to minimise the influence of geographical affinity of the Russian Federation in the continent, and especially in the region of Easter Europe, as it [Russia] is the state using mainly authoritative principles of political management.

To neutralize such factor, by the European Union was initiated the European Neighbouring Policy (ENP), as a geopolitical strategy. Within it the European Community would like to see Ukraine as stable country and reliable geopolitical partner, anchored on NATO member and the EU , but entering the last one in 'a wing of friends', without full membership (Shayan, 07-03-2009). In addition to that Stanislaw Komorowski, Defence Minister of Poland, was quoted as saying 'We [Europe] need and want to tie Ukraine closer to Western structures, including military ones as well' (Rozoff, 24-11-2009).

It is important task for the old Europe to preserve western civilization and the strengthening of the basic values and institutions of this civilization: democracy, liberal-democratic ideology, mechanisms of the free market, by the support of social institutions and groups oriented toward western values, interests and lifestyles, with the aim of stimulating the entry into the EU in the coming future. However the formation of a new world structure based on those principles into Ukraine is perceived as 'socio-cultural expansion', not only by the Russian Federation, but as well by eastern population of Ukraine.

Zbigniew Brzezinski speaks in his book 'The Grand Chessboard' as well about Europe and about world civilization, future of which mainly depends on a clear European position in its relations with the former USSR countries (1998, p. 240). The author believes that any attempts and efforts of the Russian Federation to isolate and one more time subdue Ukraine with the help of Moscow's 'fortresses' in the Crimea peninsula as well as intervention in the Baltic States, must be strongly regarded as a reason for full-scale European help. Moreover the support of Baltic Sea and Black Sea states has to become a geostrategic priority of the European Union.

From sagacious geopolitical sense it is important that Ukraine has the opportunity to stabilize its position as a powerful and independent state of Central Europe, As a consequence it strengthens the hope about the evolution of the RF into a democratic European state. For these reasons the economic, political and geostrategic consolidation of Ukraine, as an important geostrategic element, is today becoming a vital component of European strategy in Central Europe.

5. UKRAINE: A TUG BETWEEN THE WEST AND EAST

“Europe ends somewhere in the Ukraine and... then Russia begins. Literally, the Ukraine means borderland or frontier, and a frontier is what the country is today”.

Peter Lodenius: “The Ukraine is in a tug between East and West”

History has never been clement to countries, which are located on the border of the greatest empires, as great geopolitical players often have common interests about such countries. What destiny then can be expected for Ukraine that apparently carries already its destiny in the name? Traditionally the name ‘Ukraine’ (originally Ukrayina: [ukra'jina]) is interpreted as borderland. Even furthermore went Samuel Huntington in his book by predicting the ‘Clash of Civilizations’ in cutting right through Ukraine (Huntington, 1996, p. 159-170). Many analysts, politicians, observers really see Ukraine as a deeply divided country to pro-European and pro-Russian areas of influence.

Nevertheless the history of Ukraine goes back to the ninth century and dates with the beginning of the Kiev Russ. After centuries of rule over the current Ukrainian territory by Mongol, Russian, Austrian or the Tatars empires, the country finally became independent in 1991. Today it is exceedingly young nation. Alex Reiserer argues that for the first time of the whole history the nation of Ukrainian had reason in 1991 to hum Woody Guthrie’s song ‘This land was made for you and me’ (Reiserer, 13-05-2008). As it turned out later, in the period from 1991 till 2004, adapting to a new world order and establishing real independence was rather more difficult than any had expected.

Therefore after the Orange revolution, to the same line of Guthrie’s song was added question mark and it loudly sounded again, but this time in publicly ‘Is this land still made for you and me?’ Or paraphrasing: Is this land [Ukraine] finally belonging to Ukrainians - its nation, or is it still a battleground, but this time between modern empires for a new media, political, economic, etc. influence over the territory?

5.1. The Russian Federation and the European Union: a new tension

The six-day Russia's destabilizing military action in South Ossetia, Georgia in August 2008 and the fortnight gas conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine in January 2009 became clear causalities for new wave of tension between the Russian Federation and the European Union in the East Europe region. A lot of European politicians and analysts indicate these events as renewal of neo-imperial ambitions of the post-Soviet Russia. As a result of Moscow willing to renew the predominant political and economical force status in post-Soviet area, the EU, as the leading geopolitical actors, had reverse negative reaction pursuing its own interests in Caucasian and East Europe region (Shayan 2009).

Even, if to judge not only from European and Russian sources, but also from world media, Ukraine being the largest country between the EU and the RF have been 'tension element' of their relation, definitely reminds today a post-Cold War political battleground between Moscow and Brussels (Murphy, 29-11-2004). During the last decade it appeared to be obvious that Ukraine matters not only to the RF, but as well to the EU, which is extremely difficult for the Ukraine - to approach simultaneously both Europe and Russia (Batory 2005, p. 44).

Even it is true that the West, with its talasocratic principle⁷ and Russia with its telurocratic⁸ principle have different views on what is better for Ukraine, this does not mean that Ukraine has to become the tug between East and West in a new geopolitical great game, argues the president of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko in one of his speech: 'Incident of the EU, Russian and Ukrainian conflict united Ukrainian Nation', published on the official president web-site of Ukraine.

So far the EU has persisted its position well, speaking in 'one single voice of 27'. But nevertheless the EU now faces serious problems and new tension with the Russian Federation, in its already strained relationship. In particular, the European Community definitely needs to stand up for its ideology of democracy, market relations and non-interference in other countries' affairs, but the same time not to damage relationship with Russia. So to say, Europe needs to persuade Russia that they should work in cooperation to sort out all problems of their common neighbourhood Ukraine.

⁷ Talasocratic principle – principles based mainly on marine power, dynamic development, market relations, individual initiative, ethical flexibility, etc.

⁸ Telurocratic principle – principles based on power on land, the stability of civilization's main features, social traditions, ethical norms, etc.

But, the problem is that many of Europeans are concerned about Russian conduct during and after Ukraine's presidential elections in 2004 and Russian new conduct before and during the president election of 2010 that has reveal an alarming tendency to return back to Cold War type of thinking and acting.

In to the addition most of Russians affirm that the EU's current position is to attempt the control over Ukraine by placing 'its men' in Kiev. Such propaganda, that have taken up the idea that a new so called Cold War is tearing Ukraine apart, has been fuelled by Kremlin and some media in Ukraine, which was a new spark for tension in the EU-Russian relations (Barysch and Grant, 1-12-2004). Such facts definitely give some plausibility to the tug-of-war subject in general public.

Even though the EU and Russia still have disagreements regarding the August 2008 conflict in the Caucasus, both need to maintain a dialog, said Javier Solana during the summit in Brussels, February 11 (Solana, 12-01-2009). But tension that began in 2008 between these two sides does not seem to diminish in the question concerning Ukraine. During their last summit both Europe and Russia geopolitical players openly disagreed over Ukraine in the issues trade, energy cooperation and the fight against terrorism. A lot of Russian politicians now see the EU as a power that is absorbing ex-Soviet countries and currently expanding into Russia's traditional sphere of influence - Ukraine. Moreover Europe has become strongly concerned about the RF shaping democratic standards and weak regard for human rights.

5.2. Ukraine: a stumbling stone for Russian – European relations

As a starting point of the department of this analyze part is accepted fact that Ukraine is located in the knot of the European Union and the Russian Federation interests in the Eastern Europe. These two geopolitical players, competing among themselves for the political and economic power influence in the Eastern European region are synchronously affecting directly and indirectly the welfare of Ukrainians.

Both the EU and the Russian Federation are integral participants of world society and key geopolitical players. However the aim in this part of the paper is to move to common denominators of these players and to focus on Ukraine, looking at the country through the prism of the common interests of the Russia and the European Union geostrategies.

Moreover it is possible to present visually short table of the main political and economic interests that aggravate European-Russian relations.

	European Union interest	Russian Federation interest
Political aspects	Ukraine in “a wing of the European Union friends”	Ukraine – a Russian Federation’s satellite
Economic aspects	Import of 40% of the Russian gas to the EU countries	50% of the budget of the Russia’s derives from export of gas in EU

5.2.1. Political aspect of common interest

“... today the battleground in Ukraine is where it ought to be: in the political arena”.

Axel Reiserer: Ukraine: this land is your land

Whereas Ukraine is the Russian Federation current space of influence and interest, called a former ex-soviet satellite, for the European Union Ukraine is a wing of friends. But for both of the geopolitical players Ukraine is closest neighbour and direct ‘security defender’ of the external border. Therefore both of them need a functioning relationship with the Ukrainian government. Only a stable government in Kyiv would give the EU (mainly the eastern members of the EU) peace of mind,

as they might be separated from the 'Russia imperia' by a strong, big and stable country (Valasek 2008, p.3).

Originally, the idea of a 'wing of friends' is behind the European Neighbourhood Policy. Ukraine is the major eastern neighbour to the ENP framework. Evidently, today the country's reality lies predominantly in the East rather than West, as well as it is clear that the Kremlin would try block not only Kiev's entry into the EU but also all types of rapprochement alliance with the EU (Pabst 2009, p. 6). Because, first of all, if Ukraine successfully Europeanizes, it will definitely serve as an inspiration to other ex-satellites of post-soviet Russia, that are located in the EU's eastern neighbourhood.

As the presidential election of Ukraine 2010 has already begun, where not only electoral process has features of deep geopolitical implications, but much more this result of election second tour will have on the world's balance of western and eastern powers, presented by the EU and the RF. Mostly Ukrainian politicians believe that battle on Ukrainian soil approaches, will be repeated once again since the 2004 and once again will be fought, between pro-European and pro-Russian forces.

During the last election 2004, so called 'Orange Revolution' election, won pro-Western coalition led by Viktor Yushchenko with it party 'Our Ukraine' over the Party of 'Regions', led by Viktor Yanukovich - pro-Russian representative. After the 'Orange Revolution of Democracy' Kiev definitely distanced itself from Moscow and its wills to join the EU has become a priority of Ukrainian foreign policy. Furthermore pro-European Yushchenko future coalition first clearly stated: 'The European integration is a key and irreversible priority of Ukraine's foreign policy'.

Such European allies in the post-Soviet space seriously alarmed Moscow and strained European-Russian relationship. If Europe was one of the first to except the result of the election 2004, the Russian Federation was one of the last. Such changes were evidently a major setback for the political interests of the RF, that grudgingly is accepting today the fact that its former 'satellites' one by one orbit a new European capital - Brussels (Khanna 2008, p.25).

Furthermore western media later declared 'The Western-sponsored Orange Revolution, is about Russia first, the victory of Ukrainian democracy - second...' that frankly means that the main goal of the West was to head an unconditional regime in Ukraine, which directly would dismantle and isolate the Russian Federation from European Community in future (Trabanco, 09-01-2009).

That ideas and ideology is extremely new. However Jose Trabanco argues that its roots were originally plotted in 20th century by Polish officers and called as 'prometheism'. In core of this ideology lays the idea to break Russia into pieces from outside by the support of separatist politician groups and politician elites beyond the borders of the country – territory of ex-soviet satellites [e.g. Ukraine] where Russia still has influence.

Ukraine now, during election 2010 faces a clear-cut choice between East and West. From that what will be a result of the president election 2010 in many respects Ukrainian's foreign policy and nation future depends. If prime minister of Ukraine Timoshenko, win, it won't only shock the Moscow, but as well it will be a significant set-back for Russia's tightening power in 'near abroad'. However the win of the the Yanukovich, leader of the Region party, will mean opposite. Ukraine will draw near back to Russia.

Election 2010 is a question: towards Europe or back to Russia? Peter Lodenius argues in his article that it is possible that Ukraine will become after the election of 2010 or pro-Western, or rather pro-Eastern (Lodenius, 09-11-2004). And there is no choice of one alternative between both. That is why the tension grows up not only between the Ukrainian nation, divided to western and eastern oriented parts, which cause a lot of intestine war inside the country, but tension also grows up between expectation of geopolitical players presented by the Russian Federation and the European Union.

As according to Edward N. Luttwak theory, main geopolitical players are playing a new geopolitical game for influence in the territory of so called pivots not only in political arena, but also in the 'geo-economic' area, the next part of the research will be followed by the geo-economic analyze of the European Union and the Russian Federation economical aspect of common interest (Luttwak, 1999, p. 125-129).

5.2.2. Economic aspect of common interest

It is impracticably hard to separate politics from economics. Especially in this case when the most important fact for both the EU and the RF is that Ukraine first of all is transit land for most major Russian Siberian gas pipelines to Germany and the rest of the European Union (Engdahl, 20-01-2005).

Oil pipeline political economy is for sure involved in the tension fight for control over Ukraine. The control of gas pipelines could be easily regarded as a key element of tension between the EU and Russia. Until the gas conflict 2009 between

Ukraine and the Russian Federation, the fact for the European Community that all Russia's gas pipelines lead to the Europe appeared to be just an axiom.

This gas conflict, during which Europe has been in a situation of gas hunger, let the EU to realize that the Russian Federation is 'playing hard' to resort to the scenario 'zero sum game'. In the case of the repetition of such gas conflict again can threaten easily the image of the democratic governments of the EU in the Easter Europe – Ukraine (Shayan, 07-05-2009). Besides that Russia's pricing dispute with Ukraine, which has until now twice disrupted natural gas supply touched immediate Europe, as raised strong concerns in the EU capitals (Myers Jaffe 2009, p. 8). Therefore European policy is not only about the direct control over the gas and oil flows from the Caspian region but also about diminishing Russian influence in Ukraine. In taking control over Ukraine, Brussels would take a giant step to encircle Russia country for the future.

However the Parliament of Ukraine voted in July 2004 to open an unused Ukrainian oil pipeline to transport oil from Russian Urals fields to the port located in Odessa on the Black Sea, which was protested by European and also American administrations, as an event that makes Kiev capital more dependent on Moscow. But already in 2001 the Government of Ukraine decided to complete this 674 kilometer oil pipeline from Odessa to the Western Ukrainian city Brody. Now it can carry up to 240,000 barrels of oil per day (Batory 2005, p.61).

Later in spring 2004, the Government of Ukraine agreed to extend Brody to Gdansk - the Polish Port in the north of the country. Because the question of whether oil will be delivered through Ukrainian territory or not is a very important one for Poland and Europe. Such turns of events were very positively greeted in Brussels, as from now the pipeline would carry Caspian oil directly to the European Union (Engdahl 2009).

William Engdahl also argues in his article that this situation is the one when Ukraine can be regarded to become dominated by a pro-EU, the same time pro-NATO regime. But the same year 2004 in July, the government of Ukraine reversed itself and voted to reverse the oil flows in Odessa – Brody to allow the transport crude to the Black Sea. By the significance of such events it became clear that Kremlin understood threat from Odessa – Brody to deal a fatal blow of Russia's near abroad monopoly on Caspian energy. As this 3 years project of the pipeline to Poland directly makes Poland a main new hub, but with definitely non-Russian influence. This decision, taken by the Ukrainian governmental to reverse the pipeline, slowed down the shift of Ukraine to the West Community.

Such interprets of moves shoves one more time that the RF fights strongly using its vast energy reserves to rebuilding and to strength its geo-political role. Especially knowing that energy relation have given Russia a platform for international influence and created openings for the Russia Federation to assert it power on the international arena (Myers Jaffe 2009, p. 8).

The excessive focus on energy in European-Russian relations is mainly Russia's fault, because Russian are now more than ever before dependent on oil and gas exports to the West countries. This fact has appeared to be a significant problem for foreign policy and domestic development of the country today. Therefore president Medvedev's represented proposals on European security on 5 June 2008 and on energy on 21 April 2009. Even this proposal was met with 'silence' by the EU, Europe is well advised to take Russia's policy regards seriously, as the power of the Russian Federation grows and Russia still keep strong position of main geopolitical player in the region (Pabst 2009, p. 4).

However Ukraine today plays a role of an economically strategic battleground in geopolitical tug-of-war between Brussels and Moscow, as Ukrainian pipeline routes account for 75% of EU oil imports from Russia and Central Asia and 34 % of its natural gas import. Besides that the energy imports of the European Union via Ukraine are set to expand in coming future significantly with the opening of oil and gas fields in other Eurasian countries as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Engdahl, 20-01-2009).

To say the least Ukraine territory is a key piece on Brzezinski's Eurasian chessboard. Even the European Union has the tradition of treating smaller countries in democratic way as equals in comparison to the Russian Federation the EU pursues first of all its own interests. At the same time it is clear that the Russian influence in former post-Soviet satellite republics will continue to grow on such issues like energy trade and political ties. Without doubts today energy trade security is an important economic challenge for both, as for Brussels, as much for Moscow, in politics of which Ukraine play the role of the important geopolitical pivot.

6. CONCLUSION

As long as geopolitical empires exist, disclose or close confrontation exists between them. Two geopolitically important territories, like the European Union and the Russian Federation are separated by the 603, 628 km² area – new independent country Ukraine. History has never been clement to the countries, which are located on the border of the greatest empires, as such as the European Union and the Russian Federation have often common interest according to it [Ukraine]. If there is no military or any another expansion of having power in the sense of human or material resources on the outlandish territory of geopolitical pivots, it does not mean that there is no confrontation or conflicts for influence over it, as expansions of new geopolitics are more and more often carried out with the economical and political tools.

Theoretical framework of the study lighted out that states, which usually are affected directly and indirectly by the strong geopolitical countries, are called geopolitical pivots. The part of the analysis confirmed that Ukraine is geopolitical pivot. It also lighted out important role of Ukraine as a new vital space; important regional player; evident geo-strategic element for the EU and the RF. Ukraine as an independent country can transform Russia to democratic state. Without Ukraine the Russian Federation ceases to be Eurasian empire. However the importance of Ukraine can't be overestimated for the security and stability of the European Union. For the EU Ukraine is a part of a wide European pattern of active democratic regime change in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and a main defender of the eastern border. Besides that if Moscow regains back control over Ukraine, with its 46 million people, major resources land and direct access to the Black Sea, 'Russian empire' automatically regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state of the world. Both the EU and the RF understand that who has influence on its largest neighbor Ukraine, has influence on an important transit corridor for oil and gas from the East to the West, Brussels or Moscow.

However there are flashpoints in European-Russian relations and 'Ukraine- in between' them. Such tension between Europe and Russia is based on knot of common interests. Both the EU and the Russian Federation, integral participants of world society, have two main interests in Ukrainian land: political and economical. Political interest displayed well now, during the Ukraine election 2010, as it is not only about Ukrainians voting for the future pro-western or pro-eastern geopolitical strategy axis, as some magic formula to open the door to the future membership in the European Union or to rapprochement relations with the post-soviet Russia. The

result of the presidential election will have a considerable impact on the world's balance of power, which the EU and the RF pretty well realize.

Oil pipeline economy is directly without doubt involved in the tension fight for control over Ukraine. Economic common interest displayed in transit corridor for major Russian Siberian gas pipelines to Germany and the rest of the European Union through Ukraine. The control of gas pipelines could be easily regarded as a key element of tension between the EU and Russia. Until the gas conflict 2009, the fact that all Russia's gas pipelines go to the West (Europe) appeared to be a self-evident statement. During the gas conflict Europe has been in a situation of gas hunger. It let the EU to realize that the RF is 'playing hard' to resort to the scenario 'zero sum game'. Gas conflict and common interest of Odessa-Brody pipeline is one of the issues that can easily tie into the longer-term possibility of 'new war' in the territory of Ukraine by the new weapons of globalization, as methods of influence.

Therefore European policy is not only about the direct control over the gas and oil flows from the Caspian region but also about diminishing Russian regional economic influence in Ukraine. In taking control over Ukraine, Brussels would take a giant step to encircle Russia country for the future. The same wish of diminishing European power, especially in the Western part of Ukraine, has post-Soviet Russia. Russian with their post-imperial thinking still can't accept an independent status of former 'satellite' Ukraine. For the post-Soviet Russia this status is not yet settled and Moscow does not view the current borders as set in stone. Therefore today Russia is 'playing hard' and is competing with the European Union to restore the geopolitical superpower status and to re-establish its geo-position in the world arena, lost after the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the USSR, where influence in 'near abroad' is an important fact.

This study is a good example that confrontation exist today between geopolitical players and as it was pointed out in theoretical framework and later proven in analysis part: this confrontation is based first of all on common economical and political interests that sharp relations between geo-empires. At present there are no common institutions or frameworks to deal with weak states that appeared to be battlegrounds between main geopolitical players, failing states and shared security threats. All the existing organisations have changed significantly since the end of the Cold War, but at present neither the OSCE nor NATO can play this role alone. Unfortunately Ukraine today, been a weak economically and politically country, is faced up the choice between the East and the West in favour of a more balanced approach that delivers closer cooperation with the EU or the RF. And unfortunately

there is no choice of one alternative between both. The EU membership is not on the horizon, but better ties with Moscow will not solve all domestic economic and political problems either. However the status of a tug-of-war or so called geopolitical battleground, because of common interests, is not the solution either.

The inescapable conclusion in all this is that newly democratic Ukraine inhabits treacherous neighbours, flanked by powerful regimes of geopolitical players that pursue their own interests. With the EU's indifference and Russia's not so covert enmity and strong common interests of both in Ukraine, bring the danger that it will end up stranded between two worlds, neither in East nor in West.

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APPENDIX: UKRAINIAN GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION



Map: Position of Ukraine

Source: http://www.bizpartners-ukraine.org/images/ukraine_map_401.jpg