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Russia's Aggressive Policy in the Struggle for a New International Order and Ukraine's Perspective

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Against the current backdrop of a struggle for a new international order whilst making concerted efforts to revive national potential, the Russian Federation attempts to legitimize the results of its military incursion in Ukraine followed by a military operation in Syria as well as inspiring disturbances throughout the Eastern Europe and far beyond. In so doing, the meaning of Russia's aggressive policy is actively cloaked by the ambiguous nature of modern Russian hybrid warfare.

There are numerous formal conceptual approaches with which to analyse the "energetic" policy being elaborated by Moscow as the main elements of the Kremlin's foreign policy strategy to be imposed on the West, namely:

- Dissatisfaction with the place allocated to the RF on the global political scene because of a weakened Russian position after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Moscow, pretending to be a world leading power, was openly neglected and ignored, being "unfairly" displaced towards the periphery of global politics;
- Repeated references to the new global tendencies to reorient attention towards the Middle East and other regions, where Russia considers itself to have predominant influence and is eager to implement its so-called "energetic" policy on an equal footing with the West;
- Implementation of "revisionist" approaches aimed at reconsidering the current international system based on the post-Cold War order, enshrining as it does the predominant role of Washington's interests within the framework of unipolarity;

- Confidence in the necessity of changing the main normative provisions and principles of the existing international security order with emphasis given to specific conditions for the recognition of state sovereignty.

There is also a concept concentrating on Russia's foreign policy as an integral part of the internal policy process, basic provisions of which are considered as a main motivator of Moscow external "energetic" behaviour oriented towards supporting the position of ruling political regime. However, Russian officials intentionally dismiss this concept as a secondary one.

Hence, the former Yalta-Potsdam system of international relations, which existed after the Second World War and was based on the division of spheres of influence between world leading powers, has been identified by Moscow as a rather useful one that needs to be reinstated. One of the so-called "advantages" of this international system that could be of great interest for Moscow is a shortage of strong legal foundations of the established security order.

At the same time, the Kremlin emphasizes the importance of maintaining and promoting international cooperation at both bilateral and multilateral levels, including with the use of existing international organizations, primarily the UN, which was founded as a crucial international element of the Yalta-Potsdam system.

And coming back to the Yalta conference of 1945, the importance of this historic event has been steadily emphasized by the Kremlin amid the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, being presented, among other

things, as a symbolic outset for reestablishing a new European and world order with active Russian participation.

The very perception of war has been changed to be considered by the Kremlin as a part of everyday life and as a main reason for establishing a new post-war international order. Moreover, war is also recognized as a normal status of international relations. Thus, Moscow has made an attempt to stress the inevitability of use of force in contemporary international relations. On the backdrop of hostile political rhetoric, the modern approach to use of force has been drastically modified so that to have multidimensional application not limited only by military dimension, but also covering economic, political, religious, and ideological areas.

Non-intervention in internal affairs/domestic jurisdiction, safeguarding equal rights and self-determination of peoples as well as co-operation among States (first of all, in the maintenance of international peace and security) could be declared among the most important formal principles for Russia when it comes to specific conditions for recognition of state sovereignty. Customary international law and the use of international precedents are those instruments comprising modern Russia's toolkit, being broadly used to reinforce and compliment implementation of international law, as interpreted by Moscow. At the same time, Moscow's reference to international precedents (especially in the case of Kosovo) undergoes constant changes depending on developments on the ground.

The principle of the inviolability of frontiers, which served as a core element for establishing the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975, is the most neglected within the framework of the current Moscow's "energetic" policy. This principle closely relates to the principle of territorial integrity of States. The latter is exclusively dedicated to maintaining the stability of the international order because nothing is more destabilizing than encroachment on the territorial integrity of States.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is also brought into question by Moscow amid its attempts to diminish the role of the U.S. in settling protracted conflicts, especially in the Middle East.

Russia is obviously not so supportive for the principles that do not contribute to the reestablishment of the former bipolar system. This might be also the reason for the ongoing crisis in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as it faces a deep divide amid failure to implement the Helsinki+40 process.

Russia's strategic approach over a short-term perspective could be evaluated against a possible multipolar scenario of international developments featuring elements of U.S. foreign policy at the top of the global security agenda. According to common perceptions, the above-mentioned multipolarity does not necessarily mean the reestablishing of the Westphalian international system within the framework of realpolitik that the Kremlin is keen on implementing. U.S. domination of global policy would most probably provide some background for a certain kind of limited bipolarity, being more relevant to Washington's relationship with Beijing. Such a situation would be also characterized by strengthening unified resistance of the peripheral States with homogenizing social-economic structures amid a shrinking Russian economy under continuing pressure of Western sanctions.

The West is concentrating now on getting dialogue with Russia back on track to reduce tensions while executing a pragmatic effort to find principles that would enable an agreement based on shared interests and obligations without having common values. There was a suggestion to start with issues where it would be easy to reach an agreement with Russia that would help to build mutual confidence and trust, and then build on these to tackle more complex challenges. International terrorism and illegal migration have been identified among the most urgent transnational threats requiring a unified approach.

In order to curb Russia's expansion, the West would most probably be concentrated on gradually applying "soft power" measures while formally supporting old principles and norms of the post-Cold War international order, and promoting its values based on sustainable governance, anti-corruption activities, human rights protection, strengthening democracy and supporting unified moral norms.

Nevertheless, Moscow would be more liable to use "hard power" methods in protecting its far-reaching ambitions for gaining a foothold among the world's major powers, not caring so much about agreed principles and norms as such, but interpreting them on a case-by-case basis, unless facing adequate countermeasures. Therefore, the Kremlin's strategy would go in line with the Yalta-type bipolar security order characterised by the absence of clearly declared norms and principles. The first manifest example proving this conclusion was the neglect of the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances of 1994 that resulted in the illegal annexation of Crimea as a dress rehearsal to start the process.

According to the Russia's president, military power is and will remain a vital instrument of the Russian international politics. And that is the nuclear weapons to

play a crucial role here, especially when we are speaking about nuclear saber-rattling aimed, inter alia, at legitimizing results of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, particularly the illegal annexation of Crimea. Another example of using nuclear weapons' issue by Moscow is an attempt to be on a par with the U.S. while proposing an idea of re-establishing control on strategic offensive arms that used to be a main pillar of power's balance in a bipolar world.

Based on the current Russian perception, period of peace as such is dedicated to secure and maintain the existing balance of force. From the Moscow's point of view, this balance comprises now the Russian Federation from one side opposing Ukraine with its Western allies from the other. Thus, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been recognized by Moscow as both regional and global one directly related to the Russia-West confrontation. At the same time, Ukraine is presented by Russia as a "main obstacle" in re-establishing dialogue with Western countries not contributing to their "constructive position" towards the Kremlin.

Therefore, current mission on re-establishing of the West-Russia dialogue without Ukraine-Russia rapprochement could hardly be completed successfully. Thus, it should be of paramount importance for both the Russia and the West to find compromise first of all with Ukraine and not on Ukraine, as a country "in-between". While maintaining political dialogue both sides should take due account of direct interests of and possible implications to the developments in Ukraine to prevent further escalation and avoiding obscure civic reaction to possible arrangements that could impede their implementation on the ground.

Generally, there is no reason in the near future to expect changes for the better in Kremlin's policy towards Ukraine being mainly focused on the destruction of Ukrainian statehood. As a result of Russian aggression, Ukraine has suffered huge territorial, human and eco-

nomical losses. These losses created background for a new political-ideological reality in the relationship between Ukraine and Russia that needs to be reviewed and newly evaluated.

There are following basic questions in bilateral relations between Ukraine and Russia reaching compromise on which is currently impossible, namely: the illegal annexation of Crimea; European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine.

As a way forward to facilitate Ukraine-Russia rapprochement could be proposed the following:

- Further developing of informal contacts between representatives of Ukrainian and Russian civil societies, including academic and think tanks institutions, aimed at restoring trust and mutual interest for peaceful coexistence of both states with respect to the choice of the political system and the vector of civilizational development, having in mind current differences on systematic and normative levels;
- Elaborating and adopting a format of so-called "restricted coexistence" based on the hard defending of Ukrainian national interests with a reasonable compromise not exceeding the above-identified margins.

Hence, currently frozen conflict in the illegally annexed Crimea and a possibility of conservation situation in the Eastern Ukraine to be another protracted/frozen conflict will together define the atmosphere and character of bilateral relations between Kyiv and Moscow for the years to come. Under these circumstances as a possible model of Ukraine's "restricted coexistence" with the totalitarian Russia could be a model, which duly takes into account current realities on the ground triggered by Russia's "energetic" policy as well as future development of bilateral relations, including the position of Western partners and all international organizations involved.

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