

A U.S. STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH RUSSIA - ACCOMMODATION & CONTAINMENT & ENGAGEMENT –

Ion PURICEL

**Col. PhD, Assistant Professor, NDU Carol I, Bucharest
/ student, NDU /NWC, Washington, US**

ABSTRACT

THE PAPER FORMULATES A POSSIBLE, FORESEEABLE AMERICAN STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH RUSSIA AS A CONSEQUENCE OF ITS ACTIONS IN UKRAINIAN CRISIS. THE STRATEGY WILL ASSESS THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, STATE THE US INTERESTS REGARDING RUSSIA, THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO THESE AND THE DERIVED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES NEEDED TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.

THIS FUNDAMENTAL SECURITY PAPER TRIES TO ACCOMMODATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES DERIVED FROM PRESERVING AND DEFENDING THE US'S NATIONAL INTERESTS WITH THE MEANS AND RESOURCES EXISTED OR TO BE BUILT ACKNOWLEDGING THAT, IN THE PRESENT, DUE TO THE WAR IN EASTERN UKRAINE AND RUSSIAN SUPPORT FOR SEPARATISTS, NOT ONLY EUROPEAN SECURITY IS DEEPLY PERTURBED BUT, TOGETHER WITH THE LACK OF TRUST BETWEEN THE GREAT POWERS IN MAINTAINING THE WORLD STATUS-QUO, THE WHOLE INTERNATIONAL ORDER IS AT STAKE AND THE SPECTER OF A CATASTROPHIC WAR IS BECOMING CLOSE. THIS PERSPECTIVE IN THE NUCLEAR ERA BEING TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE, ANY EFFORT, INCLUDING A THEORETIC ONE, TO INDUCE ANOTHER OPTION FOR RELEASING THE INTERNATIONAL TENSION, I THINK, IS WELCOMED.

KEY WORDS: *U.S., STRATEGY, RUSSIA, NATIONAL INTERESTS, SECURITY, THREATS, OPPORTUNITIES, GOALS, OBJECTIVES*

***The United States government has no greater responsibility than protecting the
American people***

US National Strategy Security, February, 2015

In setting up a strategy for dealing with Russia, the U.S. should start from assessing the international environment, state its national interests, identifies and analyzes threats and opportunities to these interests, develops objectives to address them, identifies comparative advantages, feasible and sustainable capabilities and orchestrate them in a way that achieves objectives, all these focused on Russia.

I. Assessing of Strategic Environment

1. International Conditions

In the present, the international security environment is very tense, many crises threatening not only the regional security but also the global one. The flash points are flourishing all over the world, the new crises such concerning the ISIS's bloody presence in Iraq /Syria and the bloody separatism in Eastern Ukraine added up to the old ones like Al Qaida terrorism, Nord-Korea nuclear unpredictability, the Iranian nuclear dossier, the humanitarian crisis in Syria, the tensions between China and its naval neighbors only to mention the most relevant to international security.

In my opinion, by far the most important event, in this moment, is the Ukraine's crisis which, behind the bloody war waged by separatists for independence in some Eastern Ukrainian regions and Crimea loss, threatens, by massive Russian involvement, to destabilize not only the entire region but the entire European continent and the whole world. The “cold shower” offered by Russia to international community by backing the separatists actions in Ukraine gives us a big clue of the game that a resurrect big power like Russia tries to play on the world stage by reshaping the international borders in the “near abroad vicinity”.

2. The U.S. Domestic Conditions

In the present, the U.S. economy is recovering but it is still far of being considered a very strong one - low growth, high joblessness, growing income inequality, high debt etc.

The Congress, dominated in both chambers by the Opposition members is strongly opposed to the US president in many issues like *Obama Care Program*, *The Immigration Bill*, even threatening him with the Impeachment Procedure.

Besides, the American population is tired of waging a continuous costly wars more than 10 years in Afghanistan and Iraq.

3. The Problem Parameters

The “problem” is not easy, rather it is difficult because is about Russia even Russia in itself. But, who is Russia? In the international arena, Russia is the legal successor of the former Soviet Union. Looking through the lens of real power, Russia could not be compared with Soviet Union: it is smaller in territory and population and, more important, lacks the Communist ideology force multiplier. However, Russia has the U.N. Security Council Permanent Member status, a huge size (still the largest country in the world laying on two continents), a huge nuclear military capabilities, an effective and large conventional military capabilities, its leverages in some international crises etc. Russia, also, has a long and glorious history, a recent Soviet superpower memories and a rich cultural heritage. Besides, Russia has economic and political partners /friends not only inside Eurasian Economic Union, BRIC, Syria, Iran, Venezuela, Ecuador, Cuba etc., but, also, even in NATO /EU countries like Hungary and at a lower scale Turkey, Germany, Italy and France.

Moreover, Russia has a pragmatic and undisputed leader - Vladimir Putin, acting in a clear cut Realistic approach on Russia's interests, whose “*Ars Politica*” could be better understood by looking at two of his sayings: “the collapse of the Soviet Union was the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the century[1]” and „Whoever does not miss the Soviet Union has no heart. Whoever wants it back has no brain[2]”.

The **Russia’s National Interests** to be taken into consideration for setting up the the US Strategy for Russia are, as follows:

- Maintaining sovereignty and integrity of Russia;
- Having a friendly Security environment in “near abroad”;
- Developing a strong diverse economy;
- Preventing the hegemony of any country in Global International Affairs and struggling for a multipolar world;
- Supporting and defending Russian minorities in “near abroad”.

The identified **Threats** to the Russia’s outlined National Interests are, as follows:

- The Eastward NATO / E.U. enlargements;
- The U.S. Unilateral military interventionism policy and its hostility to Russia;
- The Missile Defense developments;
- The U.S. / E.U. economic sanctions on Russia;
- The tendency of Russia’s economic and political isolation;
- The Russian minority discrimination in “near abroad”;
- The National & Religious separatism and extremism inside Russia;
- The Proliferation inside Russia of other than orthodoxy beliefs, of NGOs supported by foreign countries having an anti-national agenda.

4. Assumptions

In setting up a US strategy on Russia I will start from the following assumptions:

- Russia’s Nuclear capabilities will be used as a leverage and only as defensive weapons in a war;
- Russia won’t attack the U.S. /NATO countries neither nuclear nor conventional;
- Russia wants to stop NATO /EU enlargement toward its borders, in former Soviet independent countries;
- Vladimir Putin will stay in power at least a decade;
- Crimea will remain in Russia’s hands;
- Russia will support Pro-Russian minorities demands in “near abroad” if their governments /countries adhere to NATO /EU;
- Russia will exploit Pro-Russian minorities feelings and, if needed, will apply the same scenario /hybrid war in other countries from “near abroad”;
- The majority of Russian population will support Russia’s leadership;
- The Russian Government will keep a tight control /unity of the country;
- China will support Russia economically and politically.

II. The US Interests regarding Russia are, in my view, as follows:

- defending US /Allies /partners territories against any threat – remains the US primary security interest stated as such in any Grand strategy /strategy;
- assuring the American people’s prosperity through economic advantageous exchanges – is a fundamental interest, in the line of the US Constitution;
- preserving the International Status-Quo, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Europe’s states – is a fundamental interest that maintains the International Peace;

- spreading American values (liberty, democracy, human rights, free market) – a perpetual, defining and long lasting American interest.

III. Threats and opportunities to US interests

1. Threats (perceived)

- i. The Russia’s aggressive behavior regarding the former Soviet Union independent countries – is a threat to the entire Europe /world by putting under question mark the all security arrangements after WWII and the Cold War;
- ii. The Russia’s support for Pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine – is a direct threat to Europe /world security by triggering an full scale war between Ukraine and Russia;
- iii. The increasing Russia’s Nuclear and Conventional Capabilities – is an indirect threat to the whole international security by eluding the international treaties and accentuating the states security dilemma and generating a new arms race;
- iv. The Russian Capable Air Defense Systems potential Delivery to Iran – through creating a strong leverage in air warfare thus allowing Iranians to get nukes represents an direct threat to the Middle East Security and an indirect threat to the whole international security;
- v. The anti-American and anti-Russian Islamist – terrorist movements – by potential creating of an Islamist state laying from Chechnya to Saudi Arabia represents a direct threat both to US and Russia interests.

2. Opportunities (identified)

- i. The Pro-US /democratic governments in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova;
- ii. SUA - Russia Nuclear arrangements;
- iii. NATO & EU;
- iv. The favorable International public opinion;
- v. The huge economic potential /business market still offered by Russia;
- vi. The international negotiation frame and treaties signed with Russia in many issues;
- vii. The anti-terrorist /Islamist mutual support;
- viii. NATO – Russia Council (to be revived);
- ix. The Space Cooperation;
- x. The Arctic Ocean’s unfreezing and the economic consequences (boom).

- **Ends:** *Foster prosperous, responsible, nuclear Russia that has its security interests to be accounted, especially in the “near abroad”, obey the international law and treaties and cooperate with the US in solving the other crises in the World.*

IV. Objectives to address Threats and Opportunities in pursuit of Interests:

- i. To strengthen NATO in order to be ready for deterrence and action, if necessary;
- ii. To stop NATO enlargement toward Russia;
- iii. To foster the Missile Defense Shield in Europe with the last variant (lower range than first variant, built around Standard Missile);

- iv. To alleviate the Economic sanctions on Moscow;
- v. To convince the Ukrainian government to offer a large autonomy to Russian speaking regions in the East;
- vi. To offer to Russian leadership the possibility to really participate in solving the other crises around the world;
- vii. To prevent China in seizing all huge economic opportunities /advantages in an isolated Russia.

V. Comparative Advantages of US vis-à-vis Russia (Strength and vulnerabilities)

i. Society

The American liberal-democratic society, due to the values promoted – liberty, democracy, human rights, free market, is more united inside and respected and admired outside in comparison with the Russian authoritarian-democracy.

ii. Alliances and Friends

The US has more Allies and Friends than Russia. The U.S., due to its status in international arena, appealing national values, hard and soft power has succeeded since the end of WWII to have a lot of Allies and Friends all over the world. It is worth to mention here the 28th states NATO Alliance as being the most successful one in the whole human history. Proving its value during the Cold War and after, involving other two Security Council Permanent Members Nuclear Powers (UK and France), NATO remains a strong political and military organization meant to preserve peace in Europe and the Nord America by defending the territorial integrity of member states. The NATO Alliance also include Germany which is the largest economy in Europe and the fourth largest in the world. In the same time, the U.S. has another strong ally, Japan - the third largest economy in the world, having a strong Armed Forces at the eastern border of Russia and China. Moreover, the U.S. has the vast majority of Arab states in the Middle East and Israel – as Allies and Friends. In all, it could be said that the U.S. with its forward bases /presence and allies all over the world surrounds, geopolitically and geostrategic, both Russia and China.

iii. Economy and the Innovation capacity

The U.S., definitely, has a much stronger economy than Russia. The U.S. economy is recovering from the economic crisis. It is diverse, technologically modern and very flexible. Due to the new technologies in exploiting the natural gas - freaking, the U.S. is not only energy self sufficient but, also, has become an exporter. Meanwhile, Russia's economy is extensively based on exploiting its natural resources, needing international technology and financing.

iv. Demography

The U.S. has a much better demographic indicators than Russia. First, the quantity being a quality in itself, the US population is larger than Russia's population (319,000,000 vs. 142,000,000[3]). The second, the US population is distributed on the whole territory instead Russia is having large parts of its territory uninhabited or inhabited by compact national & religious minorities. The third, the gravest for Russia, while the US has a positive population growth, Russia has a negative one. Additionally, the U.S. remains a “dreamland” to attract not only ordinary immigrants looking for a better life but also the

most skilled scientists from the whole world, including Russia (not being the case for Russia).

v. Strong Leadership staying longer in power

Russia has a historical tradition in preferring strong leaders who will function as a catalyst /linchpin capability for the whole Russian energies. A strong leader like V. Putin, if necessary, will find ways of staying in power a longer period of time than the Constitution stipulates by avoiding or even changing it with overwhelming Russians approval. Instead, in the U.S., Constitution being the Bible of the Nation, this would not happen. Moreover, the continuous election cycle and the separation of powers in state (U.S.), offers to Russia a more clear advantage in following its goals on longer terms, in taking strategic decisions and more rapidly going to action in comparison with the U.S.

vi. Tradition and Cultural Heritage

The Russian tradition and Cultural heritage, based fundamentally on the Christian Orthodoxy and family values will continue to keep the Russian people more united in comparison with American people.

vii. Russian patriotism and enduring sacrifices

It is said that every Russian is patriot, a word which has special contents for all Russians. That incorporates the love for Russian land and language, for Slavs and Orthodoxy. That means, also the respect for their heroes, praising their past sacrifices and glorifying the Russia's greatness. A common, but profound expression for all these is "*The Mother Russia*". So, these beliefs which could bring both unity and easily accepting the sacrifice, including potential death for a common cause - Russia's happiness /greatness could be considered an advantage from Russia.

viii. Resources

Russia, according with its size, is, roughly, the richest country in the world in natural resources. Even than some important resources can't be exploited safely it is only a matter of time till the necessary technology would be available for Russians. Moreover, the Global Warming will add to Russia's riches other huge resources together with the easier exploitation. Taking into account that the majority of natural resources are controlled by the state companies, that reality offers Russia the possibility to use them as a political weapons

ix. Espionage

The advantage for Russia results from how both societies are functioning – one, where freedom is guaranteed and the other one, where freedom is limited /controlled. The Espionage in Russia has a long tradition starting with Czarist Okhrana followed by NKVD/ KGB /FSB and GRU. Due to the Russian State tight control on the one hand and the freedom consequences in the US with all security /economic weaknesses on the other hand, FSB /GRU could be considered more effective in comparison with CIA /FBI in developing espionage networks /intelligence gathering.

x. Russian minorities living “near-abroad”

The Russian minorities living “near-abroad” is another advantage for Russia in comparison with the U.S. in the countries surrounding Russia. That Russian Minorities presence in Russia’s “near-abroad” vicinity are consequences of the Soviet Union collapse. After the bitter realities suffered by those Russians living in other countries, now, Russia raising again, offers them the hope, even the possibility to return to “Mother Russia”. As could be seen now, they are very valuable in Vladimir Putin’s plans for stopping NATO /EU’s (Western) advance toward Russia.

VI. Feasible and Sustainable Capabilities (DIME)

Diplomatic

The diplomatic means, should be the primary capability of the US in addressing the resurrect Russia. Through open and covert negotiations Russia should be convinced that it would be much better for it and the whole world to give up the bellicose posture and return to a peaceful approach in defending its national interests. The US should obtain the Russian commitment for the continuing dialogue in the European format for the autonomy of the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk inside a sovereign Ukraine and, also, for assuring equal rights for all minorities in Crimea. Moreover, the US should obtain the Russian commitment to start the bilateral negotiations with Ukraine over the annexation of Crimea by Russia in terms of economics, resources, individual properties and level of compensations. In the same time, the US should receive assurances and determine Russia not to intervene in the democratic process of the countries situated in its “near abroad vicinity”. Instead, the US should give assurances to Russia that the NATO’s enlargement process won’t go further toward East. Moreover, The US should assure Russia that the US needs Russia in solving other international crises. However, the US should make very clear to Russia that any Russian interference in NATO countries will have a costly price for it.

Information

For a better understanding of the situation in the whole area, the US should have a strategic and effective communication with its allies, partners, the Ukrainian government and mass-media and, also, a permanent contact with Russia’s leadership. In order to avoid any strategic surprise, the US has to keep an eye open on any Russian movement /action in political, diplomatic, military, economic fields, especially in Western and Eastern Russian extremes.

Military

The U.S. should push for strengthening the military relevance of NATO Alliance as the main tools to assuring security in Europe including to fight Russians if they attack any NATO country. The NATO Alliance has to rise its capabilities and readiness to the level of deterring any Russian adventure and affirm its commitment to defend any member in compliance with the no.5 Article of the NATO Treaty.

Economic

The U.S. should release the economic sanctions in order to rise trust of Russians in US /EU partners, to determine them to abandon their bellicose position and bring them to an active role in the international arena for solving other crises where they have a good

leverage (Syria, Iran). In the same time, the US should let open the possibility for Russia to rejoin to the G8 trade club.

VII. Orchestrate capabilities

The U.S. capabilities should be orchestrated in a way that achieves its objectives in a coherent manner.

The capabilities found feasible for applying this strategy will be put in action in the same time, the American Vice-President, responsible to the American President, having the primary role in applying it. Due to the potential damage to the Global Security environment posed by Russia's actions in the Ukrainian crisis, this strategy should be assigned the highest priority.

Diplomatic

The U.S. should use its leverage in UN /UNSC, NATO and bilateral relations with Russia to bring back Russia to a responsible, great power behavior. The first step in this field, is to determine Russia to retreat its soldiers from Ukraine and second to stop helping militarily the separatists there.

Meanwhile, the U.S. should slow down /postpone the process of NATO's enlargement toward East and use its influence /leverage over the governments in the Russia's "near-abroad countries", especially in Ukraine, to offer a peaceful satisfactory solutions for Russian minorities living there in accord with European standards in force.

In the same time, the U.S. should firmly reaffirm its commitment regarding its obligations to defend allies within NATO, and the other treaties signed.

Information

In order to have a clear situation about Russia's involvement in Ukraine, its intention regarding "near-abroad" and in whatever place, the U.S. should continue to monitor Russia in all domains and gather the information needed from all the sources available especially – HUMINT, SIGINT, CYBINT etc.

Military

For increasing the readiness and military capabilities of NATO Alliance, the US should ask NATO countries to spend more money on their military expenditures and preparedness. In the same time, the US should stress the need for NATO headquarters to be more effective by drawing sustainable military plans, by doing more training, and having more standardization. Meanwhile, showing to Russians its availability to take into consideration Russia's sensitivity to the so called "strategic unbalance" due to the existence of the former Missile Shield, the US should continue to build the new Missile Defense Shield in Europe, according with its perceived threats. In the same time, in military field, the US support for the Ukrainian government should manifest by providing to Ukraine some military non-lethal equipment and intelligence. The NATO Alliance has to rise its force capabilities and readiness to the level of deterring Russia in launching any military adventure on NATO countries.

Economic

The U.S., by gradually releasing the economic sanctions, should give more chances to Russia to abandon its bellicose position and return to a responsible great power behavior.

In the same time, if Russia agrees to take necessary actions to really contribute to the Ukraine’s peacefully crisis solving, the US should announce a strong economic and financial package for the Eastern Ukraine Relief and the readiness of the biggest American and international companies to invest billions in Russia’s development. Additionally, the US would help Russia to rejoin the G8 trade club.

VIII. Risk assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis in applying this Accommodation & Containment & Engagement Strategy

The **risks** involved by this strategy could be:

- A remaining hostility of a mighty nuclear Russia;
- An invitation for other potential future Russia’s aggressive demands;
- The International Status-Quo severely compromised and damaged;

The **benefits** for applying this strategy are:

- Avoiding a potential war between US /NATO and Russia;
- Focusing on the present day NATO strengthening;
- Bringing back the mighty nuclear Russia to the normality in the international affairs;
- Easing the international climate;
- Giving more chances to solve other international crises /dossiers (Syria, Iran);
- Stopping the bloodshed in the Eastern Ukraine;
- Preventing a Russia-Ukraine general war with the potential to spread in NATO’s area;
- Prevent strengthening the Russia - China ties;
- Offering the chance for American companies to take advantage of the huge Russia’s natural resources.

The **costs** for applying this strategy are:

- A broken hope for a NATO /EU’s rapid membership of some of the countries supposed to choose their destiny (Ukraine, Georgia);
- Accepting Russia’s annexation of Crimea as a “fait accompli”;
- The U.S.’s loose of some regional support /international credibility;
- A failure of the American administration in the perception of a large parts of the American public opinion.

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