

The Political Psychology in the Transatlantic Perspective – A Strategy Framework for Eastern Europe: the Case of Ukraine

Katerina Veljanovska Blazhevskaja, Oliver Andonov¹

Abstract: *Each nation tends to rationalize the situation, the past – the present and the future – in order to ensure normal living conditions and possible welfare. However, some internally and externally created policies aim to focus or defocus the public's attention in order to distort the real picture. In political psychology, lies and intrigues are often associated with political effects. All these additional attributes guide the policy into the desired direction. The situation in Ukraine is a real example of a kind of "psychological warfare" of citizens caused as a result of claims made by the neighbouring Russian Federation, political steps and tactics of the European Union and the NATO Alliance. In order to prevent future negative development in this field, there is a need to create a common security strategy for Eastern Europe, as a result of the creation of successful Trans-Atlantic relations and good-neighbourly relations with the Russian Federation. The purpose of this paper is to describe the need for encouraging the creation of a rational attitude of the nations in order to strive for the improvement of the region in which they are located. The theory of public choice is applied as a basis of encouraging a better future in public policies and strategies in a country/region. Political psychology is the main thread utilised to disclose the real picture of relations in Ukraine, and the final impact (results) need to be used in the area of creating a new security strategy for Eastern Europe. This work includes empirical research conducted within the Republic of Macedonia. The same applies to the theoretical frame of the paper.*

Keywords: *rationalization, political psychology, Trans-Atlantic relations, Ukraine, Eastern Europe*

Introduction

In political psychology, the notion of political manipulation and exploitation of the mass affection is especially important. Lies and intrigues are often associated with political effects.

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All of these are additional attributes to guide policy in the desired direction. It was also determined that the motives and emotions that drive the political scene are often personal, and not of a rational and social nature.

There is a need for a deeper analysis of the current phenomenon and causes of the usage of political psychology in Eastern Europe. The depth of understanding of the problem depends on the success of the method applied to solving problems.

The critique of the elements of political psychology - the cult of personality, conservatism, contempt and hatred towards people with different ideologies, religion, race and nationality - cannot bring the expected results, unless the reasons for these ways of thinking are unmasked and removed from the root.

The tendency for these ways of thinking and behaviour always occurs as a result of the rejection of responsibility for their own thinking and behaviour.

There is a conflict between nations, regardless of the ideals that they represent, if their culture and tradition act as a driving motive in everyday life.

The policy that Europe has imposed on citizens in Ukraine is an “if-if” type of policy, and thus could potentially create conditions for a war. Now, after the Treaty of Minsk, in Europe and in the USA, the experts think that sending military aid to Kiev can change the situation to the detriment of the Russian Federation.

The entry of NATO troops in Ukraine led to the entry of the Russian army in the country. According the Marshal Ogarkov, formal Marshal of the Soviet Union: „Victory in the first phase of conventional war is achieved by destroying the key targets deep behind the opponents from the first moment of the war, and then quickly winning opponent territory with progression of the ground forces.“ In this context, it is about modern war between the West and the Russian Federation in which it is difficult to allocate victory to one side, primarily due to the mutual observations.

However, what happens to the public and in its psychological view? Proclaiming alliances in the 21st century, the century of creating unity between nations, overcoming set boundaries and promoting globalisation is not a feature of the current reality in Eastern Europe, especially in the case of Ukraine. The Transatlantic Perspective creates a new future for Eastern Europe. On the other hand, Russia proclaimed its prospect for the European region. There is a need of great skills to predict the future of Eastern Europe, especially Ukraine. Therefore, political psychology can greatly contribute to the setting of the current and future projection of events.

This work includes empirical research conducted within the Republic of Macedonia. The same applies to the theoretical frame of the paper.

1. Forming a rational attitude of the nation - the perspective of political psychology

No matter to which school of thought the theorists belong, they are trying to define the nation by establishing one or more constructive elements. Thus, for example, Anderson, Herder and Kautsky, emphasize common language for the basic condition, and Giddens

and Hastings, the control of a territory as a key element for the existence of the nation; for Stalin, Smith, Walker, the economy is that element and Habermas defined the nation as a pre-political unity of the community, whose members share the same fate. For Giddens, the nation exists only when the state has a unique administrative control of the territory over which sovereignty is declared (Smith, 2001: 431).

The establishment of the nation is a complex phenomenon and it must be considered in a way as it is considered by Levin, who is able to capture the interaction of mind, society and culture, which involves a special method of categorization of people in the context of complex social situations (Shkoric, 2004: 292).

In order to identify a nation the following are initially important (Brown 1997, in Haralambos: 2002, 234):

- 1) There must be a name that identifies the collective as a group;
- 2) The members must believe in a common origin. It does not matter whether the origin is real or whether there are some genetic links, it is important to believe in it;
- 3) The members must share the same beliefs;
- 4) They must have some degree of common culture, which is transmitted through the combination of language, religion, laws, customs, institutions, clothing, music, architecture, and even food;
- 5) The group must have a sense of belonging to a particular territory.

In psychological terms, the rational attitude of the nation is not always situational. The nation is the way that the world around us is observed, understood and experienced. Namely, it is a model of behaviour, understanding, and organization of social life. But, how do people understand and practice life in the group? In this context, it is important to emphasize social interaction. Some authors speak of a rational view of the nation as something that is created by individuals and groups to gain "access to social, political and material resources". Namely, people use their common symbols to achieve something, and the establishments of a common origin in order to more easily achieve the goal (Petrović, 2006).

At the beginning of the formation of modern industrial societies, in the 18th century, there was a need for a higher degree of standardization, which was achieved, and is still achieved through education of the population. Thus, the different cultural and ethnic groups, who were scattered across Europe, were homogenized in nations, i.e. large groups of people who are learning to share a history and mostly, one language. Industrialization led to the need for standardization in various fields, which can be understood as mutual homogenization, based on ongoing information and education about certain events and developments.

According to Eriksen:

„In that historical context, there is a need for a new kind of ideology: it should create cohesion and loyalty among individuals who form a huge social system. And that could be nationalism. He went from having imaginary community based on shared culture and located within a country, where the loyalty of the people, their sense of belonging,

should be directed to the state and the legal system, and not to the members of the group and their related village.” (Eriksen, 2004: 181)

In fact, most responsible for the creation of the nation as a social phenomenon are the political factors. According to the modernists, the survival of the nation is the existence of a kind of political autonomy, and preferably a state. Moreover, they insist it is the normative elements that support the formation of the nation.

French sociologist Shnaper emphasized that: “we cannot speak of the nation, if it is not a “modern community of citizens”, that is, if its members are not equal before the law and equal in the enjoyment of the common rights - civil and human” (Shnaper, 2003). The nation cannot be established by subjects of an authoritarian government, but the self-conscious, equal and free citizens, with guaranteed equal rights.

2. Transatlantic perspective in the role of creating a clear roadmap for the future of Eastern Europe

With the end of the Cold War, transatlantic relations entered a new phase and today, while strong and established, European Union (EU)-United States relations are in transition, reflecting global shifts, based as always on shared values. Regardless of the rise of emerging economies, today nothing is larger or more dynamic than the transatlantic economy. The ongoing efforts to reach an agreement on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership not only reflect a determination to better the way of life on each side, they also represent a vote of confidence in the strategic importance of the transatlantic relationship. But there is need for going further. Security concerns have always been at the heart of transatlantic relations, but over the last year developments in Ukraine have again brought this dimension visibly to the fore. Clearly, the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) remains vital for both Europe and the United States. However, it is important to underline that, individually and jointly as a union, EU member states are also developing their security and defence capabilities and cooperating increasingly in this domain with the United States and with NATO in Europe and elsewhere. It is about a true partnership and a truly strategic one, in which there is need for working together at every level to address shared challenges to peace and prosperity. With the innovations of the Lisbon Treaty – including the establishment of a European External Action Service and the development of an effective diplomatic network of EU delegations around the world – the EU is becoming a strong partner for the United States (De Wijk, 2010).

Transatlantic relations are not limited simply to contemporary events. They have a history, and a timeline of key events over the past one hundred years relating to European and American affairs helps to illuminate this. Inevitably the selection of events captured here cannot be exhaustive, but it shows how out of the political cataclysm of the First World War a previously isolationist America emerged as a newly important member of the international community. In the Versailles settlement it assumed responsibilities that the US was even more deeply involved in the second reshaping of Europe after the next great paroxysm in 1945. From then onwards the story is increasingly of the US as a hegemonic superpower relating not only to the states of Western Europe bilaterally but increasingly

multilaterally, through the United Nations (UN), NATO and the ever more integrated EU (Grosaru, 2010: 116).

The dissolution of the communist block did not only signal the disappearance of the red East and blue West dichotomy, but also the political reorientation of the former Eastern European communist states towards democracy. Ultimately, the need to maintain control over the security in the Euro-Atlantic area made NATO a natural and feasible choice for security insurance. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization plays a key role in the stabilization and defence of Eastern Europe and at the moment, an important part of this area that is already under the control of the Alliance. NATO promotes a policy centred on the concept of trusting neighbours. In this respect, it is worth mentioning its partnerships with Russia (1997), with Ukraine (1997) which resulted in the NATO – Russia Council (2002), the NATO – Russia Council Action Plan on Terrorism (2004), the NATO – Ukraine Commission (1997), the NATO – Ukraine Action Plan (2005), and the NATO – Georgia Commission (2008). As a result of the more secure and stable environment ensured through these initiatives, NATO's involvement in the region also plays a positive role from an economic point of view. The numerous civil wars, terrorism spread at international level, and other contemporary asymmetric threats proved that the security of Eastern European border regions is mostly a component of the overall Euro-Atlantic security. Therefore, NATO needs to intensely cooperate with the EU institutions and representatives, in order to solve the problem of the frozen conflicts in this region. The means through which such an initiative can be undertaken are: exerting the Alliance's entire influence over the external supporters of the secessionist movements; incentivizing and accelerating democratic reforms in Eastern Europe, enhancing the defence capacity of the states in the region against the external regional threats; establishing a number of general rules and norms aimed at encouraging and maintaining the interregional cooperation through market economy as a basis of conflict resolution and political relations, as well as ensuring a follow-up to their implementation; establishing a dialogue platform in the security field and developing targeted programs. Frozen/or current conflicts in the area are a barrier to increasing the collaboration between NATO and the states in the region, not to mention Russia's diplomatic, economic and military role. Currently, the Alliance's influence in the region manifests through the states willing to join NATO: Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, though Armenia also signed a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, and Russia that established a special relationship with the Alliance in the NATO-Russia Council. On the other hand, it is crucial to underline the importance of NATO's relations with Russia, especially towards Ukraine's and Georgia's situations. There is also need to pay attention to the new concept of Smart Defence. Its aim is to focus on a number of multinational projects targeting more efficient expenditures in the military field given the diminishing defence budgets. Such a project is the anti-missile one and its goal is to provide protection against any ballistic threats from states like Iran. Basically, this project is aimed at integrating the anti-missile defence systems developed by NATO member states (Brezezinski, 1999).

After the end of the Cold War the policy of the Alliance targeted political and strategic goals meant to grant the organization extended power and influence. Thus, immediately after the fall of communism, NATO promoted the open doors policy by accepting these states as members or promoting military reforms. For the future, this will continue to play a

major role in the joint approach to cooperation among allied and partner states in the Trans-Atlantic region in the security and stability fields. Its main contribution lies in the continuous dialogue between NATO and each participant that is established through common activities and consultations meant to encourage military and democratic reforms.

The cooperation process facilitates NATO member states' access to the Trans-Atlantic structures, especially in terms of gains in the field of political and economic stability, as a result of employing the Alliance's and EU's available mechanisms, programs and initiatives. In conclusion, the Alliance's efforts must be supported by the endeavours of the countries from Eastern Europe that are committed to integrate into their political, economic and security structures the Western set of values through their accession into the European and Trans-Atlantic structures upholding this. Eastern Europe is under the influence of world security developments. Moreover, any future analysis of the geopolitical, geostrategic and security environment in the region should not neglect the role of NATO member states, the relations between Europe and the Caspian Sea area, the frozen conflicts in the proximity of NATO's area of responsibility, as well as the part played by EU and OSCE in the region.

The global challenges like immigration, development assistance and democracy promotion are clearly on the agenda. The creation of the Trans-Atlantic endowment for democracy may be an important step in promoting the liberal values of the West while immigration continues to challenge these values and remains a stalemated area on both sides of the Atlantic. The world beyond, especially in the Eastern Europe remains afflicted with major difficulties — from resource scarcity to resurgent authoritarianism, from insurgencies to the spectre of interstate conflict — which pose important challenges for the transatlantic policy. While Europe and America face major problems of their own, the transatlantic world still looks good in contrast to these regions and remains the hub of the global politics and security.

3. Psychological perception of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia in terms of Russia's policy in Ukraine and its policy as a global actor – Empirical research

When we analyse the role of Russia in terms of the geopolitical approach and its psychological impact (primarily in the context of a global actor), it is necessary to consider the views of the respondents, in this case, the citizens of Macedonia. These views are the result of the psychological impact of Russia on the perception of the citizens of Macedonia, but certainly in the context of trends for the Euro-Atlantic integration of Macedonia. The war in Ukraine has undoubtedly its own influence, but it's perceived only in the context of actions that Russia has taken towards the Republic of Macedonia and the Balkans, and lags behind other influences such as the internal political crisis in Macedonia; ethno-political conflict process between Macedonians and Albanians; the role of the United States; the role of the European Union; the refugee crisis; direct foreign interference and pressure on the Government and ultimately the Russian diplomatic activity in Macedonia (support for the Macedonian government).

The second approach to the role and the tendency of the Russian Federation in geopolitical relations can be seen through its attempt to establish multi-polarism in international relations

and destruction of US influence, NATO and the European Union, especially in so-called spheres of influence of Russia.

The third approach is the inherited foreign policy perception or rather strategy of Russia, which entails the creation of a “buffer” zone to potential threats to the security. This safety zone should actually be composed of neutral countries that are affected by Russia and bordering with the NATO member states and the EU, where the US has its area of influence.

All three approaches are essentially the main subject of this research, but primarily as different perception and assessment of the global Russian policy and its impact on the country. Actually, in the frame of the sociological research we could not implement a sample of research in Ukraine or one of the countries of Eastern Europe and therefore as a parallel comparative example we decided to take the Macedonian country. The second reason why we believe that this country is a good and appropriate sample of this scientific paper is the actual geopolitical situation of the country. At this point it is in the “line of fire” between Russia and the United States, as indeed most of the Balkans, and is highly related with the security development in the Middle East or in Syria and a door to transfer the crisis in Europe.

For these reasons, the research is conducted in the country on a sample of 100 respondents in two weeks during the month of October 2015 as an experimental research that we can use in terms of relevant indicators:

1. Strengthening the role of Russia as a global actor and its opposition to the hegemony of the US, by protecting their areas of interest, as seen in the perception of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia;
2. How to display success or failure of the Russian propaganda in the Balkans and especially in the R. of Macedonia through the acceptance or approval of Russian policy in the international arena;
3. How Russia’s influence from the position of a new global actor returning to the international scene in the perception of the citizens of Macedonia can be characterized as an alternative to the Euro-Atlantic integration.

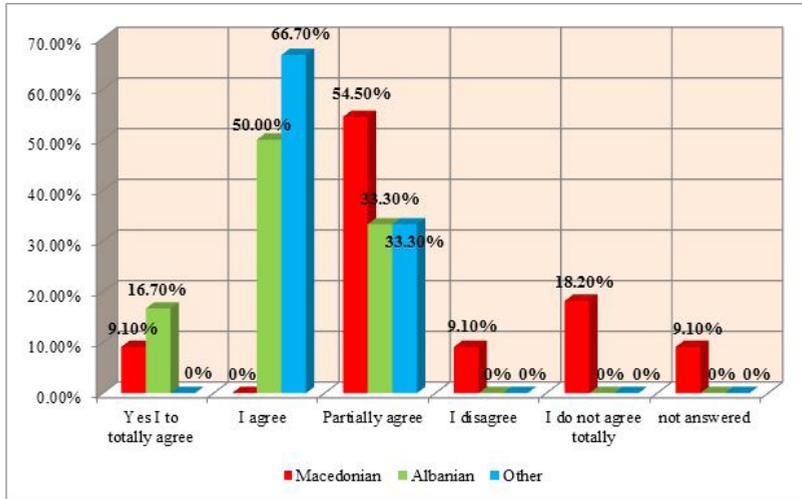
These three key indicators will be looked through the distribution of answers to the three questions that were included in the questionnaire as a tool that we used in the study. In the frame of the analysis will be used the variables of ethnic and religious affiliation of the respondents considered as significant.

The first question refers to the strengthening of Russia’s role as a global security actor and challenging the unipolarism of the United States, and through the example of the war in Ukraine and perceptions of it by the citizens of the state of Macedonia: “The war in Ukraine demonstrates the power of Russia in order to influence and destabilize the countries in the sphere of its interests” The question is formed in the form of claim within the Likert scale and is offered five possible answers: Yes totally agree, I agree, partially agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

The distribution of responses can be seen in Chart 1, according to the ethnicity of the respondents.

Chart No.1

Summary of the distribution of answers to the question “The war in Ukraine demonstrates the power of Russia in order to influence and destabilize the countries in the sphere of its interests” by ethnicity of the respondents



Source: Authors' own research

The distribution of answers to this question indicates that the majority of Albanians or 2/3 of them agree or strongly agree with the statement that through the war in Ukraine, Russia has demonstrated its power to influence and destabilize countries in the field of its interest. The situation is the same with other respondents. The situation is completely opposite within the responses in the Macedonian participants, 9.1% of them fully agree with the statement. In the category of “partially agree” answered 54.5% of Macedonians and 1/3, each of the Albanians and the other respondents.

The distribution of responses suggests that respondents of Albanian ethnicity and others perceive that Russia reinforces its role as a global security actor directly affecting the security in the regions by its own interest, and through the example of Ukraine. Unlike them, Macedonian respondents are the most likely to partially agree with this perception and consider Russia as an important global actor, but not as a key actor on the international stage.

This distribution of the responses leads to the conclusion that 80% of respondents fully or partially consider Russia a global actor who returns to the international scene. This is one of the key psychological perceptions that Russia has achieved in the international community over the war in Ukraine.

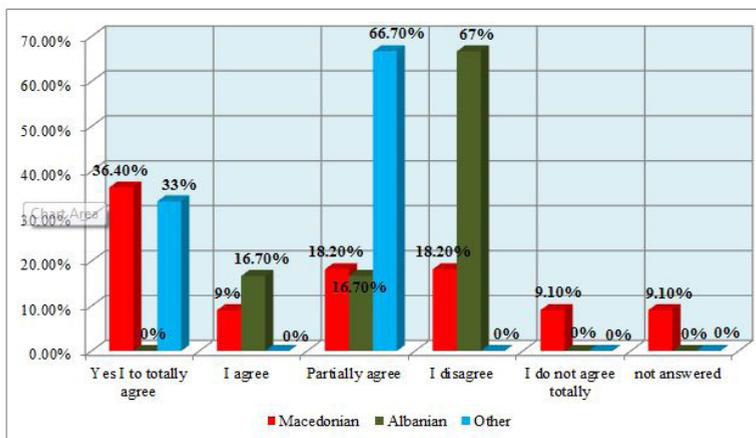
The second issue concerns the strengthening of the success of Russia's approach in terms of raising its reputation and viability of action in international relations before the

international community, and especially in the Balkan region and it states: “Russia protects its interests and is fully right in respect of the activities of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine”. The question is presented in the form of claim within the Likert scale and is offered five possible answers: Yes totally agree, I agree, partially agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

The distribution of responses can be seen in Chart 2, according to the ethnicity of the respondents.

Chart No.2

Summary distribution of answers to the question “Russia protects its interests and is completely right in terms of the activities of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine” by ethnicity of respondents



Source: Authors’ own research

The extent to which Russia has managed to influence the public perception of the justification for their actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine is shown by the distribution of responses in which respondents agree or disagree with the statement that Russia protects its interests.

The distribution of answers suggests that the actions of Russia in Ukraine are justified by 45.4% of the Macedonians (or approximately ½ or 1/3 of the others) and 16.7% of Albanians, while 67% of Albanians do not justify these actions of Russia.

We may say that 60% of respondents think that Russian policy managed to create the perception of partial justification or excuse their actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, but it is mostly Macedonians and others, while the Albanians are in extreme disagreement with the statement.

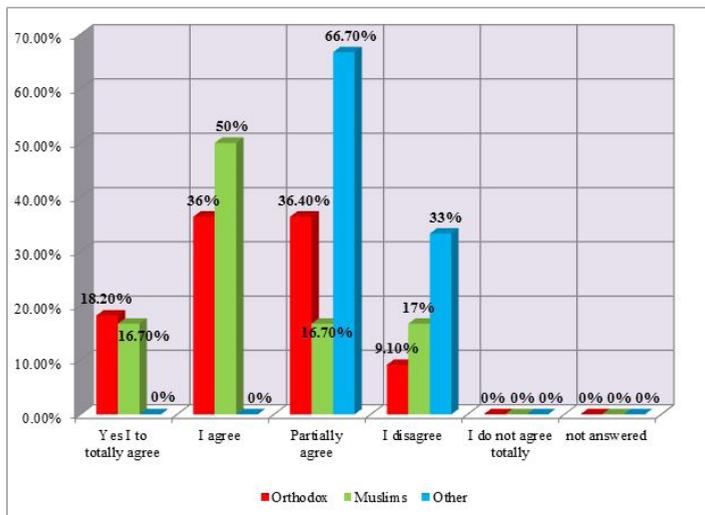
In conclusion, given this distribution of answers, the ethnicity of the respondents obviously has an impact on the creation of the psychological perception of the justification for Russian actions in Ukraine.

The third question relates to the impact of the behaviour of Russia in the international arena on the perception of the necessity or justification for membership in Euro-Atlantic associations, and as a personal perception of those who can have an impact on the creation of state policy aimed at opening up the possibility of selection alternative alliances and it reads as follows: “The behaviour of Russia on the international scene affected my personal perception regarding the necessity of Euro-Atlantic integration of Macedonia.” The question is posed in the form of claim within the Likert scale and is offered five possible answers: Yes totally agree, I agree, partially agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The same can be perceived as a negative behaviour that reinforces the perception towards the necessity of quick Euro-Atlantic integration or as positive behaviour, offering alternatives and requiring no haste for Euro-Atlantic integration.

The distribution of responses can be seen in Chart 3, according to the religious affiliation of the respondents. It is important to note that the distribution of responses in terms of religion and ethnicity of respondents is not drastically different and reflects a combined and very strict ethnic-religious approach or perception of the respondents.

Chart 3

Summary distribution of answers to the question “The behaviour of Russia on the international scene affected my personal perception regarding the necessity of Euro-Atlantic integration of Macedonia” according to religious affiliation of the respondents



Source: Authors' own research

Just as we pointed out, there is double interpretation of this issue by the respondents. The same could be subsumed under the wrong query, but only if we had extreme divergence in terms of responses, especially between the two main groups of respondents Orthodox and Muslims (Macedonians and Albanians).

However, from the psychological aspect it can be observed that the behaviour of Russia in the international arena does impact the citizens of Macedonia.

Namely, we have a situation in which 54.2% or more than ½ of the Orthodox believe that Russia's behaviour influences their perception regarding the necessity of Euro-Atlantic integration of Macedonia; or as regards the Muslims, this percentage is 66.7% or 2/3 of the Muslims' respondents. Whether this psychological perception is given positive or negative approach, we can observe that the behaviour of Russia on the international scene affects the personal perception of the citizens.

Therefore, the conduct of Russia on the international scene causes attention and reinforces the personal perceptions in the international community, thereby impacting the need of the Euro-Atlantic integration.

Conclusions

Is this the only way to fix the situation in Ukraine - continuing fierce military conflict? What message will this send to other countries in Eastern Europe that are also concerned about their future? The 21st century, the century which tends towards globalization, economic, political and educational relations and exchange of crucial information, shouldn't allow this type of dismissal relations. All this leads to the creation of a policy which is inadequate and incompetent in certain circumstances to offer a solid resolution of the situation. For this purpose there is need for strategic positioning of the interests of Russia, America and the European Union in terms of resolving the situation in Ukraine, because these three players are crucial in the current events.

According the empirical research, we can indicate the following conclusions:

1. The psychological perception of citizens in the country is that one of the key objectives of Russia towards Ukraine is the creation of a strong impression that Russia is back on the international stage as a key geopolitical actor, especially in regions that are in the area of this country's interest. At the same time it restores the concept about the creation of "buffer" zones between its national territory and the member states part of NATO's security and defence strategy, at the international stage. Thus begins the implementation of its strategic policy to counter the United States and challenge the model of unipolarism and establish multipolar relationships in the international politics and security.

2. The Russian propaganda, that creates perception and psychological status in the international community to justify its actions in Ukraine, in particular in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, is much more successful in the Slavic population in the Balkans, especially viewed through the prism of the R. of Macedonia. In this way it can be seen also the geopolitical position of the Albanians as a partner of the US and their disapproval or rejection of the

legitimacy of Russia's actions in Ukraine. This is an excellent example of a dual perception in similar situations in comparative international relations. The same applies to the case of Kosovo where Albanians supported by the United States created an international perception of separate action against Serbia and the separation of part of its territory, while there is no such perception in relation to the Crimea when it comes to the interest of Russia. In this context, the impact of global actors such as Russia and the United States in the Balkan region that represents the "line of fire" between the two Great Powers or the implication of the impact of the centres of power in the pragmatic geopolitics is noticeable.

3. It is obvious that Russia's behaviour on the international scene affects individual perceptions in the public and creates an image of the need for amplification or reduction of efforts to join Euro-Atlantic integration. In this way Russia is successfully offered as an alternative, while the European Union and NATO stand stuck against the refugee crisis and the situation in the Middle East, the actions of ISIL and the dangers of global Islamic radicalism. In the opposite direction, we can conclude that the strengthening of the Russian presence in the international community and its return to the international scene as a global security actor (including the war in Ukraine) impose the need for faster Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of the region, in order to accomplish regional influence by the United States and the European Union.

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