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## Abstracts

EUGENIO DI RIENZO, *Passato e presente della crisi ucraina 1914-2014*

*For most of the second half of the 20th century, the Soviet Union controlled Eurasia from central Germany to the Pacific, as far south as the Caucasus and the Hindu Kush. When the Soviet Union collapsed, its western frontier moved east nearly 1000 miles, from the West German border to the Russian border with Belarus. Russian Power has now retreated farther east than it has been in centuries.*

*After the Soviet Union dissolved, Ukraine moved into an alignment with the United States and away from Russia – this was a breaking point in Russian history. The Coup d'Etat in Ukraine, in February 2014, was the moment when the post-Cold War world genuinely ended for Russia. The Russians saw the events in Ukraine as an attempt by the United States to draw Ukraine into Nato and thereby set the stage for Russian disintegration.*

*If the West had succeeded in dominating Ukraine, Russia would have become indefensible. The southern border with Belarus, as well as the southwestern frontier of Russia, would have been wide open. After what Russia regarded as an American attempt to further damage it, Moscow reverted to a strategy of reasserting its historic sphere of influence in the areas of the former Soviet Union. The great retreat of Russian power ended in Ukraine.*

*Defining the limits of Russian influence will be controversial. The United States – and the countries within the old Soviet sphere – will not want Russia to go too far. Russia will not become a Global Power in the next decade, but it has no choice but to become a Major Regional Power. And that means it will clash with Europe. The Russian-European frontier remains a fault line. It is unreasonable to talk of Europe as if it were one entity. It is not, in spite of the existence of the European Union. Europe consists of a series of sovereign and contentious Nation-States.*

*Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Poland and the Baltic States are in Nato and Ukraine has aligned with the West. The anti-Western government in Belarus is at risk, and were Minsk to change its loyalties, Russia's potential enemies will have penetrated almost as deeply toward the Russian core as the Nazis did during the «Great Patriotic War».*

*The United States now has a pro-Western government in Ukraine. If that government survives and is strengthened, the Russian position becomes entirely defensive, and the threat Moscow poses is gone. Now the Russian position becomes enormously difficult. Its principal weapon – cutting off natural gas to Europe – would then have to take into account Russia's strategic vulnerability. The future for Russia becomes the one thing no Nation wants: uncertain.*

*When the Cold War ended, many Americans and Europeans seemed to think that the most vexing geopolitical questions had largely been settled. With the exception of a handful of relatively minor problems, such as the woes of the former Yugoslavia and the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, the biggest issues in world politics, they assumed, would no*

*longer concern boundaries, military bases, national self-determination, or spheres of influence.*

*In Europe, the post-Cold War settlement involved the unification of Germany, the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, and the integration of the former Warsaw Pact States and the Baltic Republics into Nato and the Eu. In the Middle East, it entailed the dominance of Sunni Powers that were allied with the United States (Saudi Arabia, its Gulf allies, Egypt, and Turkey) and the double containment of Iran and Iraq. In Asia, it meant the uncontested dominance of the United States, embedded in a series of security relationships with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Indonesia, and other allies.*

*All these happy convictions are about to be tested. Twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, whether one focuses on the rivalry between the Eu and Russia over Ukraine, which led Moscow to seize Crimea; the intensifying competition between China and Japan in East Asia; or the subsuming of sectarian conflict into international rivalries and civil wars in the Middle East, the world is looking less post-historical by the day. In very different ways, with very different objectives, China, Iran, and Russia are all pushing back against the political settlement of the Cold War.*

*Russia has emerged as the middling revisionist: more powerful than Iran but weaker than China, more successful than China at geopolitics but less successful than Iran. Russia has been moderately effective at driving wedges between Germany and the United States, but Russian President Vladimir Putin's preoccupation with rebuilding the Soviet Union has been hobbled by the sharp limits of his country's economic power. To build a real Eurasian bloc, as Putin dreams of doing, Russia would have to underwrite the bills of the former Soviet Republics - something it cannot afford to do.*

*Nevertheless, Putin, despite his weak hand, has been remarkably successful at frustrating Western projects on former Soviet territory. He has stopped Nato expansion dead in its tracks. He has dismembered Georgia in 2004, brought Armenia into his orbit, strengthened the role of Collective Security Treaty Organization (Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan), consolidated Russian friendship with China, Iran, India, Afghanistan, Syria, Serbia, tightened his hold on Crimea, and, with his Ukrainian adventure, dealt the West an unpleasant and humiliating surprise. Putin doesn't believe «that History has ended», as Francis Fukujama has prophesied after the fall of Berlin wall, and from his perspective, he has solidified his power at home and reminded hostile Foreign Powers that the "Russian Bear" still has sharp claws.*

Keywords:

*Ukrainian crisis*

*Eurasia*

*Geopolitical Balance of Power*