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Security Paradigms in Conflict? The Problem of Russian Military Intervention

***Introduction***

Having survived the deadliest war in history, in 21st century humankind seems to realize that there is an acute need to maintain peace and security on every level taking actions every time needed. Firstly, The United Nations was founded in 1945 as an intergovernmental organization having a maintenance of collective security and preventing a new world war as main goals. After 9/11 we could observe the emergence of the most influential international actor - United States as a ‘national security state’ with The Bush doctrine delineated in National security strategy of US which initiated the Global War on Terror. Another action that reshaped world politics was the adoption of R2P in 2005 accepting a responsibility to take collective action in extreme circumstances, where the state refuses to protect its population from gross human rights violations.[[1]](#footnote-1) However, even though today classic war battles with formal declaration of war are rare and the legal condition of ‘the state of war’ have disappeared, it didn’t stop military operations justified by self-defense or ‘international community interests’ from happening[[2]](#footnote-2). Moreover, it led to the emergence of not state-centered ‘New wars’ creating a range of security threats.[[3]](#footnote-3) In spite of collective attempts to fight terrorism, terrorist’s attacks are remaining a security issue of today. Finally, R2P which was to maintain human security led to the problem of intervention threatening state sovereignty. As we can see, actions taken to preserve security on one level lead to its undermining on another and there is a substantial contradiction between three security paradigms.

In this essay I’m going to concentrate on the problem of intervention and use Russian intervention in Ukraine as a case. This analysis will help me to explore the contradictions between security paradigms and to explain the nature of the conflict between them.

***The Problem of Intervention***

Firstly, let’s explore the nature of intervention and the causes of the problem and answer the question why Russian actions in Ukraine can be considered an intervention to further explain how Russia justified its actions and what kind of contradictions between security paradigms they raised.

Allison in his article defines ‘intervention’ as a political act where the military means are used and which conducted in order to change or maintain the structure of power and authority in a foreign state.[[4]](#footnote-4) According to MacFarlane intervention can take different forms, for example removal of an uncooperative or hostile government by supporting its internal rivals or external assistance to allied government struggled by its domestic dissent.[[5]](#footnote-5) Still intervention is a ‘political form of behavior’ - it is motivated by the state and alliance interest.[[6]](#footnote-6) Those political acts are justified by legal or normative claims and constrained by international law, however, military interventions are usually not requested and accepted by the intervened state’s authorities.[[7]](#footnote-7) So how can those actions be justified?

This question opens up the nature of the intervention problem. According to the United Nations Charter, Article 2(4)[[8]](#footnote-8), all members must avoid the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of other states, however there are legally recognized exceptions. Under Article 51[[9]](#footnote-9) acts of war can be a measure of last resort of individual or collective self-defense, and can be authorized by UN as a response to the international security threats.[[10]](#footnote-10) Even the necessity of a mandate from the UN is not undoubted which was shown by Kosovo case.[[11]](#footnote-11) The thing is, that not only laws, but also norms -emerging from those legal precepts- justify interventions. Norms are shared principles that define appropriate behavior and interest for actors, however they create permissive conditions for actions rather than insure them.[[12]](#footnote-12) In 2005 ‘Responsibility to protect’ became a new normative framework that both formally respected the sovereignty of states and elevated human security concerns to the level of an international responsibility.[[13]](#footnote-13) The problem is that states often justify their actions in terms of such normative principals and gain international legitimacy just to mask politically driven self-interest.[[14]](#footnote-14) As Allison claims, in this terms humanitarian intervention is a military intervention justified by human-focused and ethical principles, and in reality political and material objectives in such cases still play a key role. [[15]](#footnote-15) MacFarlane emphasizes the fact that humanitarian interventions are also politicized as they include coercion designed to alter the behavior of political actors as a claim to achieve humanitarian ends.[[16]](#footnote-16)

That is why military interventions are a subject of international controversy. Those controversies have challenged established principal of international order and weakened the integrity of international community.[[17]](#footnote-17) Through this problem we can notice a conflict between security paradigms as when one state considers its national security and interests the main value it undermines international security and security of individuals both in a state-invader and interfered state. To prove it we need to study the case of Russian actions in Ukraine, but firstly let’s make sure those actions can be objectively called an intervention.

Do Russian actions meet the main criterion of intervention – the presence of coercion with military interference? And did Russia neglect other state’s jurisdiction over its territory? It seems to be a common knowledge that Russian actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine between February and September 2014 involved using coercion and force to destabilize and take control of the territories of the state which did not only undermined its sovereignty, but also challenged international order and security.[[18]](#footnote-18) That is why we can call these actions an intervention.

***Security Paradigms in Conflict? The case of Ukraine***

It is important to start with a claim, that Russia had a range of political and material objectives to conduct this act of intervene. The Ukrainian crisis started with students’ demonstration against the government’s decision not to sign an agreement to establish a closer link with the EU which several months later resulted in Maidan Revolution - a violent overthrow President Yanukovych in February 2014.[[19]](#footnote-19) Putin planning to establish a Russia-led Eurasian regional order and having hopes for Ukrainian participation in Russia-led customs union was deeply shocked by the overthrow of Yanukovych by Ukrainian populist leaders orientated on Europe.[[20]](#footnote-20) That’s when we can talk about Russia prioritizing its national security over international.

*National / international security*

Self-interest and strategic objectives of national security of Russia were masked by a worthy mission of maintaining stability. Putin characterized Russia as a central power in a global clash of values, advocating for Eurasian social conservatism, tradition, religion and a focus on state authority to generate as a guarantee of social stability against liberal values and ideas of the West. [[21]](#footnote-21) According to Buzan, national security is a complex of state’s Idea, physical base and its institutional expression.[[22]](#footnote-22) This model of security challenges the realist perception of a state security as an external defense. As we can see, in Russia’s case it is the Idea of state that played a key role in terms of national security. Putin’s legitimacy highly depends on the state’s idea, that is why the idea of conservative tradition, responsibility to defend brother-nations, combating fascism in any form highly emphasized in Russian Mass media could not be neglected. Russia had to show itself as a superpower both on the international arena and within its citizens. A vivid proof of this statement is that according to VTsIOM (Russian Public Opinion Research Center), in 2014 The presidential approval rating of Putin after the annexation of Crimea reached 86% compared to 62% in December 2013[[23]](#footnote-23). The key is, that a unity of negatives based on creating an image of enemy out of a foreign power can successfully cover a multitude of domestic problems.[[24]](#footnote-24) At the same time Russia attempted to create a self-defense claim for the use of armed forces in Crimea justifying it by danger of seizure of Russian military infrastructure by extremist organizations on the peninsula.[[25]](#footnote-25) However Russia could not offer any evidence of the threat.

So how did Russia led by state security purposes undermine the security of the world community? International Security is foremost a security of all international actors and compliance with the international law having UN responsible for its maintenance. UN Council plays a role of a jury, determining when member states can be authorized to use force and enforcing its resolutions to defend international security.[[26]](#footnote-26) Russia violated the UN Charter for the benefit of its state security which means it undermined international security, by denying the international law. However, Russia claims that it didn’t break the law, saying that new Ukrainian authority -overthrown democratically elected president Yanukovych- was not legitimate, even though this president fled Kiev and left the presidency himself.[[27]](#footnote-27) Russia denies the very fact of intervention, claiming, that military forces were not engaged in aggressive military action against a sovereign state.[[28]](#footnote-28) Even if we accept this claim, article 2 (4) of the UN Charter prohibits states from engaging in not only the use of force but any threats of such use against other states. Russian actions in Crimea fit this category of coercive activity[[29]](#footnote-29).

Buzan sees the conflict of those two paradigms in a fact that in anarchical system national security cannot be fully obtained and therefore, any attempt to move towards complete security will stimulate reactions with a threat proportional to the measures taken.[[30]](#footnote-30) Here the prospects for international agreement and security are weakened by the power-security dilemma effects of a national security strategy, so basic conditions for an international strategy cannot be met.[[31]](#footnote-31)

*National / human security*

We have already discussed how Russia have interfered with national security of Ukraine, however its claims over human security seem to be reasonable, considering the fact that in 2015 Ukraine cut off trade with and supply of irrigation water and electric power to inhabitants of the peninsula placing their lives in danger which shows its attitude towards human security.[[32]](#footnote-32) With the change of power in Ukraine Russia claimed that the human rights of the large Russian minority in Crimea, were threatened by an extreme nationalist program, however international community didn’t accept this claim due to the lack of evidence. [[33]](#footnote-33) Russia insisted that it retains the right and responsibility to protect its interests and the Russian-speaking population of those areas harassed by new Ukrainian government. [[34]](#footnote-34)

Legally Russia justifies the ‘annexation’ of Crimea by the referendum on March 16, 2014, where over 95% of residents supported it, however, international community didn’t accept it as ‘free and fair’.[[35]](#footnote-35) This referendum was not legal according to international law and violated national security of Ukraine. However, the very definition of ‘annexation’ includes the collocation ‘forcible transition’. It indeed was not ‘forcible’ if we consider people’s will as central in terms of human security. Several (not Russian) studies show that residents of Crimea approve of joining Russia.[[36]](#footnote-36) That’s when we can observe a conflict between human and national security paradigms. They can’t exist in harmony, while the state provides security to the individuals it also imposes threats of efforts to maintain national security.[[37]](#footnote-37)

***Conclusion:***

In this essay by exploring the nature of intervention problem and studying

Russian intervention in Ukraine we identified the contradictions between security paradigms and explained the nature of the conflict between them. Security paradigms do prioritize different policy objectives and political actors do need to choose between them. Yet the question whether the human security should come first or can it be sacrificed for the needs of national security remains unanswered. It is also unclear to what extend should a state preserve its national security not to interfere with the security of global society.

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