

IL BUONO, IL BRUTTO, IL CATTIVO? ASSESSING THE IMPERIALIST ASPIRATIONS OF THE EU, RUSSIA & THE US

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ABSTRACT: After the Cold War, three substantially different powers have emerged in international politics. While the United States has already established itself as a key international leader, though is attempting to limit an imperialist label, the EU and Russia struggled throughout the 1990s over their somewhat fuzzy and multiple identities. However, around 2000 the latter two began to have more distinct international images. While Putin made a concerted effort to reacquire Russian influence, EU Commission president Barroso compared the EU to the organisation of empire. The purpose of this article is to analyse the extent such imperialist claims correspond to the adopted ideal type of an empire and whether they are supported by adequate foreign policies. This article also aims to categorise the specifics of the foreign policies of each of the aforementioned actors, because a coherent foreign policy is a relevant indicator of actorness. This article tracks developments from 2000, which marked the elections of Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush and the enforcement of the EU Amsterdam Treaty, which supposedly shaped a more coherent foreign policy by introducing the position of the High Representative.

KEYWORDS: neo-imperialism, the EU, Russia, the US, conceptualising empire

INTRODUCTION

The unstable geopolitical conditions of the early 1990s and the breakup of the Cold War equilibrium resulted in the rise of regional conflicts and inter-state struggles for regional prominence in areas that previously had been frozen within the East-West confrontation. Since the conclusion of the first post-Cold War decade, three diverse powers have emerged and occupy important

positions within the hitherto “frozen” international arena. In academia and media circles the European Union (EU), Russian Federation (Russia), and the United States of America (US) are often referred to according to their foreign policy approaches. Despite similar objectives, even if dressed differently, the EU is often viewed as a benign normative power in contrast to the US, which is often regarded as a unilateral, hard-power. Alternatively, Russia’s foreign affairs image is tinted by undemocratic tendencies in internal decision-making which undermine its international legitimacy. Despite such contrasts all three must be considered as key actors in the post-Cold War Atlantic/Eurasian region due to their military and economic power, and all three either explicitly or implicitly have embarked on imperialistic aspirations.

This article pursues two objectives. First, it aims to outline the main features and dynamics of a post-Cold War empire. Second, it aims to understand to what extent the imperialistic claims of the three mentioned powers are based on the features of an empire and whether such claims may be adequately pursued via effective foreign policy. Particularly, close attention is paid to the issues of representation and decision-making of the EU, Russia, and the US. This article tracks the developments in the foreign policies of the three beginning from 2000, which marked the elections of Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush which subsequently altered the foreign policies of Russia and the US respectively, and the enforcement of the EU Amsterdam Treaty, which shaped a more coherent EU-wide foreign policy by introducing the position of the High Representative. In order to identify the foreign policy dynamics that mark the three actors, this article qualitatively analyses official documents, news reports, among other sources.

Despite visible imperialist ambitions, this article argues that none of those correspond to the adopted concept of an empire. Thus, as an empire is an exaggeration which may be appealing but does not appear to correspond to reality.

CONCEPTUALISING EMPIRE AND IMPERIALIST FOREIGN POLICY

After World War II the term “empire” gained negative connotations owing to the disastrous consequences of twentieth century

imperial competition which culminated in the two world wars and a spate of inter-ethnic and international violence during the period of decolonisation. However the imperialist label has begun to win its way back into political vocabularies and not necessarily with a negative implication. Despite the process of rehabilitating the term “empire” so that it is compatible with 21st century international relations, few contemporary scholars have offered adequate definitions of such a political actor. This intellectual gap has meant that researchers must turn to more popular definitions as the basis of enquiry. The standard dictionary definition holds that an empire is ‘a state with politico-military dominion of populations who are culturally and ethnically distinct from the imperial (ruling) ethnic group and its culture.’¹ At first glance – and keeping this definition in mind – empire is applicable to most modern, liberal democracies since globalisation has produced mass migration movements that have settled and been absorbed by a host community. Indeed, some leaders have begun to refer to their multi-cultural political entities as some kind of empire. This tendency is becoming more popular in academia² as more and more works regard the EU as an empire with adjective.³ However, while “imperialist” authors create new “imperialist” terms in reference to the EU, they do not always provide a definition or distinct features of what post-Cold War empires without adjectives look like. A broad definition of empire, including such features as control, force, coercion, domination, asymmetry and exploitation⁴ is a useful starting point for comparing political entities, however it can run into the dangers of so-called maximalist definitions.⁵ This section of the article elaborates on the features of an empire based on an evaluation of the current literature.

Considering the dominant liberal-democratic mood in the political sciences and consistent attempts by constructivism to challenge realism in international relations, the dictionary definition noted above is insufficient. Yet, it would be irresponsible to fully abandon some of its key elements since they do offer some important hints as to the configuration and impact of “empire” into the 21st century. The examination of the literature wielded several features that can be useful in defining “empire” and assessing the imperialistic ambitions of a potential empire (Table 1). One of the enduring characteristics of empires is the territorial size:

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'empires need to be big ... bigger is better.'⁶ The size of an empire however, is not constant, as empires tend to grow not only in population and territory, but also in expanding their spheres of influence. However, a modern empire would not (necessarily) expand through military action but rather 'through cooperation and negotiation with the elites'⁷ of its surroundings. The expansion may entail different security or economy related objectives with the ultimate goals of maintaining peace or developing trade opportunities, however for an empire it would mean acquisition of new territories and populations.⁸

To mobilise its own population and effectively represent itself internationally, an empire needs ideology⁹ and leadership;¹⁰ in this article understood as the charisma of a leader, enjoying popular support. Due to its elusiveness and complexity, here the notion of ideology is conceptualised as the self-perception of an aspirant empire stemming from its rhetoric. The type of ideology pursued by the empire is not expected to affect its standing in the short-term but the absence or obscurity of an ideology can have negative long-term implications on the actorness of the empire. Given the altered perception of military conquest, an empire would require a growing economy that can speak for the success of its objectives and strategies and popularise with surrounding territories. Along with these features additionally, this article suggests analysing foreign policy as an important feature of an empire and studies this proposition in great detail below. However, it is not expected that there would be a political entity that would fully comply with all the outlined features of a post-Cold War empire nor it is expected that all the political communities this work is based on would be equally disposed to all such criteria.

Understanding the mechanisms of foreign policy making and implementation is an "unfinished business" and entails numerous puzzles and exposes gaps in approaching it.¹¹ Foreign policy is understood as the development and management of relation with other actors,¹² to 'implement policies abroad which promote the domestic values and policies of the actor in question.'¹³ However, this definition does not differentiate between an empire and a state. Thus, to assess the imperialist ambitions of the cases in question this article adopts the concept of a missionary foreign policy. A missionary foreign policy has objectives that not only aim to

promote domestic interests and values, but also attempt to shape the political and economic environments of other countries. To clearly communicate its objectives, the aspirant empire needs a coherent decision-making procedure for adequate strategies and effective representation. Table I presents possible variations in the variables of this article.

TABLE I. CHARACTERISTICS OF POST-COLD WAR EMPIRE

	Good (empire)	Bad	Ugly
Population	regular growth	no growth	decline
Territorial expansion	regular with a specific purpose	no expansion	reduction
Economy	growth	no change	unstable/decline
Popular support for imperialistic ambitions	growth	decline/low support	absent
Charismatic leader	stable (over 50%) or growing popular support	unstable popular	declining popular support
Imperialist self-perception	obvious	obscure	absent
Missionary foreign policy	developed	underdeveloped	non-developed

SOURCE: Authors'.

While the ideal-typical empire, in other words a “good” empire would entail having a regularly growing population, expanding territory, growing economy and growing popularity of the leadership and imperialist aspirations, supported by a missionary foreign policy, this article acknowledges that there may be other “imperial” variants – the “bad” and the “ugly.” A “bad” empire would still have the imperial features; however they would be underdeveloped; while an “ugly” empire would simply lack such features. However, it is important to consider the “ugly” type because a polity that has imperialist ambitions might still in practice be classified as “ugly” (as well as “bad”) according to some of the imperialist features, but not all of them. Consequently, instead of labelling the polities under consideration as good, bad or ugly,

this article rather analyses the corresponding features and classifies them according to the mentioned categories to reveal the extent imperialist ambitions are justified.

The EU, Russia, and the US not only differ in terms of institutional structure but also in terms of their imperial past and consolidation as political entities (see Table 2).¹⁴ This variety is potentially conducive to highlighting the link between the actor's structure and its foreign policy approaches.¹⁵ The US consolidated its global leadership during the Cold War and emerged, after the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR), as the only remaining superpower. Russia has historically developed an imperial tradition which dates back to the Tzarist period and which was consolidated, although under a different ideological label, during the Cold War as a challenger to the US. Although usually viewed through its self-constructed normative prism, the EU emerged from the "peace pact" between the former European empires after World War II, and is increasingly regarded as a kind of empire, especially in regard to its candidates and sometimes neighbours.¹⁶ As expansion and foreign policy are important factors for the effective functioning of an empire, this article focuses on the relations of the cases US, EU and Russia with their surroundings and how they promote their objectives through their foreign policies. Thus, in the case of the EU focus will be paid to the relations with candidates and those belonging to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). In the case of Russia the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will be examined. Finally, in the case of the US, attention will be paid to both ENP and CIS countries.¹⁷ This strategy of analysis is supposed to show whether there is also an on-going competition between the "empires" for "spheres of influence."

TABLE 2. STRUCTURE OF GOVERNANCE AND THE IMPERIAL PAST

	EU	Russia	USA
Structure	Non-state	Federal state	Federal state
Imperial past	No imperial past / originated from post-WWII	Historical imperial past / Recent imperial rebirth	Recent empire / Only remaining superpower

SOURCE: Authors'.

HOW IMPERIALIST ARE THE EMPIRES?

The European Union

The imperial aspirations of the EU were recognised by the President of the European Commission, Barroso, as he noted that: ‘sometimes I like to compare the EU as a creation to the organisation of empire. We have the dimension of empire.’¹⁸ Following its double track of “widening” and “deepening,” the EU has regularly grown both in territory and in population since 1973.¹⁹ The enlargements of 2004 and 2007 were arguably the most ambitious and successful foreign policy initiatives of the EU to date. The accession of 12 new member states produced an increase of 25% in EU territory – from 3,157,000 km² (EU15) to 4,234,000 km² (EU27) – and a growth of more than 20% of its population.²⁰ Unlike the traditional process of imperial expansion (re: military conquest), in the case of the EU, enlargements occurs after the candidate country voluntarily adopts the *acquis communautaire* and complies with the Copenhagen criteria. In other words, the candidates reshape their internal structures in order to become increasingly similar and compatible with the EU and to eventually convince the latter to “conquer” them.

In economic terms the EU represents the leading market place and largest economy in the world with more than 450 million consumers. In 2009 the EU generated an estimated gross domestic product (GDP) of 16.45 trillion (USD), representing 21% of the world’s total economic output.²¹ It is also the most significant trading partner of several great powers such as China and India. The EU’s GDP regularly grew from 2000 to 2008, with positive peaks in 2000 (+3.9) and 2006 (+3.2).²² The adoption of a single currency in 2001 and the expansion of the Eurozone²³ represent a factor of stability and convergence for the EU’s economy. As articulated by Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres, ‘Peter was the rock on which the church was built, so the Euro is the rock on which the European Union will be built.’²⁴

The Eurobarometer (EB) surveys provide the necessary information about the public support for the alleged imperialism of the EU. Interestingly, in its official survey the EU clearly avoids any reference to the status of superpower and does not investigate

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citizens' favourability towards this specific aspect. The EB's silence in this respect is likely to indicate the lack of political assertiveness and public awareness. Nevertheless, the recent EB (EB53, EB69) shows that EU citizens' maintain persistently high level of support for a more coherent common foreign policy and for a stronger role of the EU in international affairs. In 2000 64% and 73% of the respondents declared their support for a common foreign policy and a common defence policy respectively; in 2008 the level of public support for the Common Defence and Security Policy (CDSP) equalled 69%.²⁵

The leadership of the EU has been generally depicted as being far from charismatic. Given its decentralised nature, in order to effectively assess the level of public support for the EU's leadership, it will have to be evaluated against the level of support for national leaders. This further step will allow the comparison the attractiveness of two distinct and competing dimensions: the political *centre* of the "empire" (European Commission president²⁶) and its political *periphery* (national heads of state and governments). Since his appointment as the president of the European Commission in 2004, Barroso has enjoyed a fairly stable, but relatively low, level of public support, with an EU average around 35-40% (EB61, EB70). Over the successive four years the level of support never reached an average of 50%. The comparison between the EU and national leaders (of the five European "heavyweights") confirms the low level of Barroso's popularity. In 2009 the level of support for the national leader was higher than for Barroso in Germany (+23), Spain (+6), and the UK (+19); but equal in France (both 39%) and lower in Italy (-7%)²⁷, confirming the overall low support to the EU top.

The Russian Federation

After the break-up of the USSR Russia became the successor of the USSR seat in international organisations and treaties, but lost its unequivocal influence over 14 former Soviet states. On one hand, Russian political elites felt relieved of the burden of sometimes unruly and predominantly poor states, but on the other hand lamented the loss of their "sphere of influence."²⁸ The 1990s were marked by the "shock therapy" of the economy, armed conflicts

in the Northern Caucasus, the financial crisis of 1998 resulting in a further drop in GDP, the continual search for a stabilising prime minister, and the ever-declining role of Russia internationally. However, Russia retained the image of a democratising country and kept developing friendly relations with others, the “Bill and Boris” friendship being the most notable. Nostalgia for the imperialistic past and political influence became ever stronger after NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 despite strong Russian opposition. On New Year’s Eve 2000, Yeltsin announced his unexpected resignation, giving the presidential seat to (then) Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who inaugurated a “harder” approach to foreign affairs and economic development. Acknowledging that it would be unlikely for Russia to quickly become “liberal” as the US or the UK, Putin stated that Russia was, and is, a superpower and should further develop its economic, technological, and cultural power.²⁹ One of the first steps in pursuit of such an agenda was the restoration of the Soviet anthem, though albeit with new lyrics. The new anthem was meant to reconcile the Russian population with its own past and reassure them that despite the turmoil of the 1990s Russia would regain its international influence.

Putin’s steps increased caution among Western states that Russia was ‘breaking away from the core democratic values of the Euro-Atlantic community’ and ‘the return of rhetoric of militarism and empire.’³⁰ An influential figure in Russian politics, (former) Presidential Chief of Staff, Anatolii Chubais³¹ echoes this opinion but in a positive way, stating that Russia’s mission in the 21st century is to become a liberal empire. Seemingly an oxymoron, the liberal empire entails the promotion of Russian culture, the expansion of Russian businesses, and the safeguarding of democracy combined with respect for international norms and state sovereignty. While Putin’s rhetoric and his foreign policy doctrine of 2000 included similar points, he has been more cautious on the usage of the word “empire” and has opted for “great power”³² terminology, which stems from tsarist Russia. The traditional conception of an empire as a dominion over other nations also prompted opinions that ‘only minds accustomed to viewing reality in zero-sum terms and unfamiliar with dialectical thinking’³³ would perceive Putin’s Russia as an empire. However, alternative opinions claim, that Russia has become a full-fledged

empire because of its increased military power, increased corruption, and increased divergence between the poor and rich.

Though the largest country in the world with an impressive territorial area of 17,075,400 km², since the collapse of the USSR, it has not expanded its territories and cannot do so without violating others' territorial integrity. Russian influence stretches to many post-Soviet republics, however this influence is confined to the political or economic realms, and the latter retain their sovereignty. While, the territorial size of Russia has not changed since the early 1990s, its population has visibly decreased. According to the United Nations World Population Prospectus, the population of Russia decreased by 700,000 in the period of 2000-2005 and by 561,000 in the period of 2005-2010.³⁴ Despite the reverse of the demographic decline, Russia's population continues to shrink. Russia's economic growth, though not as radically declining as its demographics, has not been stable either. After a 10% GDP increase in 2000, it fell to 5% in 2001, 4.7% in 2002, rising to 7% in 2003 and 2004, and then falling again to 6% in 2005, with subsequent increase to 7.6 and 8% in 2006 and 2007 respectively.³⁵ However, what has been growing is the popular support for the institution of the president, its policies, and for Putin himself, showing that the Russian people have finally found their charismatic leader.

According to the survey data of the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (WCIOM)³⁶ when asked to name politicians the respondents trust most, consistently more than 50% of the respondents have named Putin since the day of his presidency until the expiration of his term. During his second term, Putin's approval ranking increased from 50% to 57%. Similarly, the approval rating of the presidency,³⁷ as an institution, increased during Putin's presidency reaching a peak of 74% at the end of Putin's term and declining to 50% following Dmitri Medvedev's inauguration (WCIOM). Russian public opinion is also increasingly in favour of regaining the status of a superpower like the one of the Soviet Union.³⁸ While in 2003 12% of respondents considered Russia a superpower, in 2008 the number increased to 16%. Likewise in 2003, 40% of respondents considered that Russia was capable of becoming a superpower, while in 2008 the number increased to 50%.³⁹

The United States of America

In terms of territory, the US is the fourth largest country in the world, with an area of 9,826,675 km². While its territorial size is practically unaltered since the admission of Hawaii in 1959,⁴⁰ its population registered a significant increase over the past decade. In 2000 the US population was 281,421,906, while in 2008 it reached 304,374,846, registering a growth of approximately 7.5%.⁴¹ The US has a capitalist mixed economy, which has been historically fuelled by abundant natural resources, a well-developed infrastructure, and high productivity. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the US GDP constituted (2009)24% of the gross world product at market exchange rates. The US has the largest national GDP in the world, which was about 5% less than the GDP of the European Union in 2008. The country ranks seventeenth in the world in nominal GDP per capita and sixth in GDP per capita.⁴² From 2000 to 2008 US GDP increased from \$ 9.8 to \$ 14.29 billion (USD) (+30,9%).⁴³ The US is the largest importer of goods and the third largest exporter, though exports per capita are relatively low.

The assessment of public based super-power attitudes shows that the US has been generally described as the super-power *par excellence* and as the only remaining global power after the Cold War. The representation of the US as a super-power seems to have a wide support and the level of favourability seems extremely high and fairly stable. In 2007, 80% of respondents answered positively to the question 'How desirable is it that the United States exerts strong leadership in world affairs?' In 2000, 83% gave positive responses to this question.⁴⁴ When asked about US involvement in establishing democracy in third countries however, a clear majority of respondents (56%) did not support this option in 2007. In this respect, the impact of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq on the attitudes of the US public is evident. In 2005, 52% of the sample responded positively to this question.

The experience of the recent wars in Middle East seems to be related to the public support for George W. Bush in his role as US Commander-in-Chief. In 2007 only 36% of the US respondents approved 'the way the President of the United States George Bush is handling international policies;' while 59% disapproved of

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Bush's approach.⁴⁵ From 2001 to 2008 support for Bush decreased from 52% approval following his election to an embarrassing 24% in December 2008. The peak in Bush's popularity was reached after 11 September 2001.⁴⁶ The attacks transformed American public opinion and fundamentally reshaped Bush's image. His approval rating reached 86% by late September that year. The public expressed abroad willingness to use military force to combat terrorism. But controversies over the build-up to war in Iraq, among and other Bush policies took their toll. In other words, over the long term the President Bush was unable to produce a sustained 'rally around the flag.'

MISSION: BUILDING AN EMPIRE?

The European Union

The development of a common foreign policy for the EU is a relatively recent phenomenon. Only with the end of the Cold War, the EU realised that a more coherent foreign policy approach was necessary to prevent instability and conflicts at its borders.⁴⁷ The intergovernmental negotiations which preceded the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty initiated this process. The first version of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was defined by the Maastricht Treaty, within the framework of the three-pillar system. The intergovernmental CFSP pillar was based on unanimity of the member states through the European Council giving broad guidelines for the CFSP action and the Council of Foreign Ministers implementing those. The Amsterdam Treaty (1999) allowed qualified majority voting (QMV) and constructive abstention in the Council, slightly reducing the role of unanimity.⁴⁸ The Amsterdam Treaty also created the position of the High Representative (HR) for the CSFP to coordinate and to represent the EU's foreign policy. The HR, as part of the EU troika with the foreign minister of the country presiding in the European Council and the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, had to put a "name and a face" on EU foreign policy. However, due to presidency rotation the composition of troika changed every six months, thus creating inconsistencies in policy cooperation.

The lack of coherence in the CSFP was supposed to be solved by the Lisbon Treaty, which eliminated the pillar system and established the position of the HR for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, merging the HR and European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy.⁴⁹ Within the newly designed framework, although the HR has the key jurisdiction over the CFSP, the European Council President and the rotating Council President can also represent the EU internationally. The Treaty states that the European Council President shall represent the EU on the matters of external relations ‘without prejudice to the powers of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Affairs’ (Art 9b). However, the limits of the prejudice to HR are not clarified. At the same time the Commission can represent the EU in external matters apart from the CFSP, and again there is no clear dividing line between the two, and along with the HR makes proposals on external action to the European Council. Despite high expectations derived from the Lisbon Treaty, EU foreign policy seems neither coherent nor consistent, leaving the question of “who represents what” open to debate.

While the Maastricht Treaty outlined the objectives of the CFSP, the European Security Strategy entitled “A Secure Europe in a Better World,”⁵⁰ developed in 2003, was the first foreign policy strategy of the EU outlining its challenges, objectives, and strategies (see Table 3). This is an indicator of the EU’s intention to assume responsibilities and undertake a more assertive international role. It is worth noting that among the strategic priorities identified by the EU, two are the basic components of a developed foreign policy: activeness and coherence. Most of the threats and their respective objectives – international terrorism, transnational organised crime, and regional conflicts – aim to shape the surrounding environment of the EU. The document also acknowledges that ‘acting together, the European Union and the United States can be a formidable force for good in the world’⁵¹ and promotes closer relations with Russia.⁵² Keeping the image of a normative power, the EU defined a longer and more detailed list of objectives in the Lisbon Treaty, again with the aim of influencing the political and economic environments in neighbouring countries.

TABLE 3. THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE EU

Challenges	Objectives	Strategies
Terrorism	Promote democracy and regional cooperation	Activeness
Proliferation of WMD	Build security in the EU's Neighbourhood	Capabilities
State failure	Promote an international order	Coherence
Regional conflicts	Promote economic development and market economy	Multilateralism
Organised crime	Eradicate poverty in the developing countries	

SOURCE: Authors', based on the Maastricht Treaty, the European Security Strategy, and the Lisbon Treaty.

Within the framework of the new CFSP, the EU has been able to define a more assertive role beyond its borders, especially in the Western Balkans,⁵³ and to a lesser extent in the area defined by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). However, the most effective imperial powers of the EU are noticeable with respect to candidate countries. During accession negotiations, the EU is able to impose costly changes of a political, economic, and/or institutional nature to the governing elites of those countries following a consolidated "take it or leave it" formula and the threat of failure in membership negotiations. In the eyes of the ruling elites of candidate countries, the EU's quasi-imperial approach and the rigidity of its conditionality is justified by the attractiveness of the final prize, that is, accession to the "club." On the other hand, the EU proved less successful exerting the same influence on ENP countries. As evident from the Action Plans between ENP countries and the EU, the ambitions of the EU requests are far more limited.⁵⁴ Due to the inability of enforcing rules that it attempts to promote to the ENP countries, the EU cannot produce effective conditionality towards these governments.

The Russian Federation

The Constitution of Russia adopted in 1993 grants the executive with exclusive foreign policy making powers, making the legislative a noticeably secondary actor.⁵⁵ The president decides on the direction and objectives of Russia's foreign policy based on the Constitution and the federal law. As the tradition dictates the president formulates the country's foreign policy in the annual addresses to the Federal Assembly. The president also exercises leadership in the implementation of the foreign policy, represents Russia in international negotiations and signs international treaties, directly controlling the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As part of the executive, the government headed by the prime-minister, "takes measures" for the implementation of foreign policy, thus assisting the president. The foreign policy strategy of 1993 states that Russia is a great power with the foreign policy objectives of ensuring national security; protecting the sovereignty and unity of the state; protecting the rights of Russians abroad; providing favourable external conditions for internal democratic reforms; mobilising international assistance for the establishment of a Russian market economy and assisting Russian exporters; furthering integration of the CIS and pursuing beneficial relations with other neighbouring states. In the early period of formation of Russia's foreign policy diplomacy was regarded as the main strategy.

The foreign policy strategy approved by President Putin in 2000, though retaining similar objectives as his predecessor's, is less cautious; openly pointing to the US as a threat to a multi-polar world and Russian interests as a great power (see Table 4). The "pragmatic and predictable" foreign policy of Putin is supposed to advance the interests of great power Russia, which gravitate around the formation of a new world order under the auspices of the UN, the strengthening of international security and stability, the development of the national economy, the protection of human rights, and the clear communication of Russian interests to the world. Making clear that Russia has awoken from its hiatus and is determined to become a great power again, the 2000 foreign policy strategy names the dominance of the US, international terrorism, the promotion of regional groupings (one of the objectives

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of the EU CFSP), and the globalisation of the world economy as its main challenges. While Russia's foreign policy aims to advance its national interests, it does not claim the ability to influence the environments of other countries and calls for working under UN guidance. At the same time, understanding that the battle for influence over Central and Eastern Europe is long lost to the EU, Russia decisively turned to the post-Soviet countries, giving them priority in its foreign policy strategy. The close attention to the post-Soviet countries became even more obvious in Putin's (annual) address to the Federal Assembly, which included seven paragraphs on the post-Soviet countries out of nine dedicated to foreign policy.

TABLE 4. THE FOREIGN POLICY OF RUSSIA ADVANCED BY PUTIN, 2000

Challenges	Objectives	Strategies
Unipolar world led by the USA	Forming new world order based on UN	Constructiveness
	Strengthening of international security and regional stability by reducing the power factor	Consistency
Globalization of the world economy	Development of the national economy	Predictability
International terrorism	Protecting human rights	Pragmatism
Development of regional integration resulting in military-political rivalry	Communicating Russia's foreign policy to the world	Joint decision/multilateralism

Though Russia's first president, Boris Yeltsin, was at the centre of the USSR's dissolution, his foreign policy in the early 1990s sought to reclaim Russia's influence over the newly independent states, usually referred to as the "near abroad."⁵⁶ The primary occupation of Putin's Russia is assertion of the great power status and yet again recognition of the post-Soviet area as its sphere of influence.⁵⁷ Created in 1991, the CIS became the cornerstone of Russia's foreign policy doctrine of keeping its sphere of influence, however weakened by the absence of any financial aid.⁵⁸ This approach could not lure the Baltic States, which were offered the

material and social incentives of the EU. However, other post-Soviet states whose economies shrank even more than that of Russia, to varying extent remained within Russia's sphere of influence, immediately becoming Russia's debtors and allowing it to enter their markets. In the same manner, the leadership of most CIS countries were "elected" with Moscow's blessing. However, this sphere of influence has constantly been challenged by the attractiveness of EU incentives and the democracy-building programmes of the US. In his 1999 proposal for the 21st century Russia, Putin mentioned *derzhavnost*⁵⁹ as Russian tradition and took the road of increasing integration of the CIS countries. In 2005, President Putin established presidential administration's directorate for inter-regional and cultural contacts with the main mission to 'promote Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space.'⁶⁰

The United States of America

The end of the Cold War not only influenced Russia's foreign policy but also the US's, traditionally marked by the concept of American exceptionalism and following an internationalist ideology (since the end of WWII). With the disappearance of the threat from the USSR, US foreign policy makers were left "searching for purpose" between internationalism and isolationism.⁶¹ 'The vision thing' of President George H. W. Bush did not produce a coherent policy, leaving the Clinton administration with the debate over "Kennan sweepstakes," to find a foreign policy doctrine matching the one of Kennan's containment.⁶² The debate ended with the choice of multilateralism and democratic enlargement, a concept defined by National Security Adviser Tony Lake and was supposed to promote the democratic peace theory. Clinton's second term also concentrated on the promotion of economic globalisation, regarded as a threat by Russia. The US president, having Constitutional powers, defines and directs foreign policy on the advice of the Secretary of State, and represents the state, and negotiates international treaties.⁶³ However, the election of George W. Bush and the September 11 terrorist attacks changed the liberal direction of US foreign policy to a more neo-conservative orientation.

The National Security Strategy approved by Bush in 2002, less than a year after 9/11, outlines the security and foreign policy

objectives, and laid the ground for the so-called Bush Doctrine of pre-emptive strikes as noted earlier.⁶⁴ Unlike Russia's desire to regain its great power status, the US National Security Strategy is void of such statements and simply declares its 'unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence' ready to defend not only itself, but also its friends. The strategy clearly identifies terrorism and rogue states as threats to the US, which should be addressed through pre-emption and new multilateralism; by building and strengthening global alliances, diffusing regional conflicts, and promoting economic freedom and democracy (see Table 5). Unlike Russia's foreign policy strategy the US Strategy mentions that they are 'no longer strategic adversaries.' Though the National Security Strategy of 2006 emphasises international cooperation, it still sees states not sharing US visions as threats. It reasserts the status of the US as a global leader and mentions that terrorism should be fought against, not only by directly targeting terrorist organisations, but also by changing the conditions that create them.

TABLE 5. US FOREIGN POLICY. ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGIES OF 2002 AND 2006

Challenges	Objectives	Strategies
International terrorism	Strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism	Pre-emption
Rogue states	Work with others to defuse regional conflicts	New multilateralism
Regional conflicts	Prevent our enemies from threatening us	Military supremacy
Catastrophic technologies of the embittered few	Promotion of free markets and free trade	Democracy promotion
WMD proliferation	Promote democracy	Unilateralism (whenever necessary)

Unlike the EU and Russia, which underscore their regional priorities and increasingly focus their foreign policy efforts of broadening their spheres of influence, the US stretches its initiatives virtually around the world. Interestingly, it not only targets

developing states with its policies of economic and democratic development, it also considers the expansion of the EU as a means to serve *its* interests and further weaken Russian influence, at least in the post-Soviet spaces.⁶⁵ Within the territory covered by the CIS and ENP projects, the US actively deploys its foreign policy instruments to further its political and economic dominance and prevent any challenges to its leadership. For example the GUAM group⁶⁶ for energy projects favoured by US presidential administrations directly targeted the vitality of the CIS.⁶⁷ Extensive democracy promotion programmes, embraced by the majority of post-Soviet countries, aim to change the regime of governance, bringing them more in line with the US interests and promoted values.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

Given the shock of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the US had to react to the sudden realisation that other actors had challenged its seemingly global supremacy. Following Putin's new imperialistic aspirations, Russia seems to have awakened as a potential global power after a decade of hiatus under Yeltsin. The EU seems to have provided itself with more effective foreign policy tools and appears to have developed a more coherent approach to its neighbours, increasingly acting as a normative empire in the Western Balkans. Among others, these developments prompted academic and professional circles to discuss the re-emergence of empires.

This article aimed to analyse whether these concerns and the actual imperialist ambitions of the chosen three cases correspond to the adopted concept of an empire. Based on the analyses of the EU, Russian, and US demographic, political, and economic dimensions, this article argued that none of the cases fully correspond to the concept of empire (see Table 6). Looking at the performances of the three entities with respect to the imperial features proposed, interestingly what emerges is the preponderance of the two antipodal categories (good and ugly) over the median one (bad). The analysis of foreign policy strategies revealed that while the EU and the US aim to shape their surrounding environments, Russia is struggling to shape its internal environment,

thus, demonstrating that it is still under construction and itself in search of purpose.

TABLE 6. IMPERIALIST FEATURES OF THE EU, RUSSIA, AND THE US.

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	Good (empire)	Bad	Ugly
Population	EU, USA	N/A	Russia
Territorial expansion	EU	N/A	USA, Russia
Economy	EU, US	N/A	Russia
Popular support for imperialistic ambitions	Russia	US	EU
Charismatic leader	Russia	N/A	EU, USA
Imperialist self-perception	USA, Russia	N/A	EU
Missionary foreign policy	USA	EU	Russia

While the EU corresponds to the concept of empire within the population, territorial expansion and economy dimensions, it lacks charismatic leadership, and imperialist ideology supported by public opinion (see Table 6). Its foreign policy demonstrates features of a missionary foreign policy, however its attempts to build a coherent foreign policy speaking with one voice still requires development. Thus, calling the EU an empire solely based on its relations with candidate countries is to be an exaggeration. Likewise, Russia and the US are featured in some dimensions of an empire but not in others. However, the analysis of their foreign policies, demonstrates a clear missionary feature in US foreign policy that is absent from Russia's.

Though none of the three analysed entities emerge as full-fledged empires, as defined by the ideal-typical model, they all share a number of imperial characteristics. Subsequently, while to some analysts this might imply that the EU, Russia, and the US are still struggling to acquire a status of a real empire; others may rightfully suggest that in the post-Cold War environment the concept of empire no longer provides the best analytical framework to define today's struggle for global power status at the international level, and that other concepts like hegemony and international leadership, which also entail some of imperialistic

features might be of better use to describe current dynamics.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the proposed categorisation can be taken as a starting point to address this open question. Future research should endeavour to understand the interaction between the dimensions of an empire reveal which of those features impact the sustainability of the entity, cause its decline and/or drive its growth.

*Imperialist
Aspirations*

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NOTES TO PAGES 79-99

- 1 Oxford English Dictionary (2001), Oxford: Oxford UP, p. 461.
- 2 See Ole Weaver (1997), 'Imperial Metaphors: Emerging European Analogies to Pre-Nation State Imperial Systems,' in Tunander, Ola, Pavel Baev, and Victoria Einagel (eds), *Geopolitics in Post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity*, London and Oslo: Sage and International Peace Research Institute, pp. 59-93; Thomas Christiansen and Knud Erik Jorgensen (2000), 'Transnational Governance "Above" and "Below" the State: The Changing Nature of Borders in the New Europe,' *Regional and Federal Studies*, 10:2, 62-77; Christopher S. Browning (2005), 'Remaking Europe in the Margins: Northern Europe After the Enlargements' (Ashgate).
- 3 See Jan Zielonka (2008), 'Europe as a Global Actor: Empire by Example?' *International Affairs* 84:3, pp. 471-484; Timothy Garton Ash (2007), 'Today's European Union is 27 States in Search of a Story,' *The Guardian*, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/jan/04/comment.eu>>, (accessed 8 May 2010).
- 4 See Angelos Sepos (2010), 'Imperial Power Europe? The EU's Relations with the ACP Countries.' Article presented at the workshop entitled Imperial Power Europe, 17 May 2010, Manchester, UK.
- 5 See Gerardo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen (2002), 'Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices' *Comparative Political Studies*, 35:1, pp. 5-34.

- 6 Alexander Somek (2005), *The Benign Empire: A Post-Colonial Legal Study*, Discourse, Politics, Identity Working Paper Series No. 5, Lancaster University, p. 9.
- 7 Bohdana Dimitrova (2010), 'Remaking Europe's Borders through the European Neighbourhood Policy', *CEPS Working Article* (327), p. 6.
- 8 See Ole Weaver (1997), pp. 59–93.
- 9 See Bohdana Dimitrova (2010).
- 10 See Robert Cox (1987), *Production, Power and World Order*, New York: Columbia UP; Arrighi, Giovanni & Silver, Beverly (1999), *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; and Angelos Sepos (2010).
- 11 See Alexander L. George (2006), *On Foreign Policy: Unfinished Business*, Paradigm Publishers.
- 12 See Karen Smith (2008), *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, 2nd ed., Polity Press.
- 13 Hazel Knowles Smith (2002), *European Union Foreign Policy: What it is and What it Does*, Pluto Press, p. 7.
- 14 Some academic works pursue the idea that the EU and the US are similar due to their nature as compound democracies. See Sergio Fabbrini (2007), *Compound Democracies: Why the United States and Europe Are Becoming Similar* 1st ed., Oxford: UP.
- 15 This article does not suggest any hypothesis in relation to the likelihood of imperialistic ambitions and the type of governance, i.e. democratic, authoritarian etc.
- 16 See József Böröcz (et al) (2001), 'Empire's New Clothes: Unveiling EU-Enlargement,' <<http://aei.pitt.edu/144/>>, (accessed 10 May 2010).
- 17 This rather large categorisation for the US approach stems from its unique international presence without giving specific grouping of countries unlike the EU and Russia.
- 18 See <<http://euobserver.com/9/24458>>.
- 19 In 1973 Denmark, Ireland, and UK joined the EU.
- 20 In this respect, it is worth noting that while in the old member states the birth rate is constantly decreasing, it is far higher in the New Member states from CEE.
- 21 Retrieved from 'World Economic Outlook Database, April 2010 Edition,' *International Monetary Fund*.
- 22 Similarly, the economic growth of the bloc seems to have benefited from the Eastern enlargements, given the more relaxed fiscal policies and more dynamics economies of the new member states from the CEE. In 2004 and 2007 EU25 and EU27 scored +0.2 GDP (if compared to EU15).

- 23 Slovenia joined in 2007, Malta and Cyprus in 2008, and Slovakia in 2009.
- 24 See 'German foreign Minister floats idea of elected EU president,' in *The Financial Times*, 7 July, 2000.
- 25 A clear majority of Europeans also believe that in the area of defence and foreign affairs decisions should be taken at the EU level, rather than by national governments (64% vs. 32% in 2008). Citizens' awareness of EU's role clearly increased over the past ten years as evident from the fact that in 2000 only 49% of the respondents (vs. 46%) favoured a shift of competences in this respect.
- 26 The EC president has been chosen as this figure represents what can be identified as closer to a head of government at EU level. In this respect, it seems too early, given the lack of data, to assess the public image of the newly created positions of High representative and permanent president of the European Council.
- 27 Harris Interactive / France 24 / International Herald Tribune / Leaders Barometer 2008.
- 28 See Michael Rywkin (2003), *Moscow's Lost Empire*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.
- 29 See Vladimir Putin (1999), 'Россия на рубеже тысячелетий [Russia crossing the Millenia],' *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, <http://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millenium.html>, (accessed 13 May 2010); Vladimir Putin (2002), 'Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации [Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation],' *President of Russia*, <http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2002/04/18/0001_type63372type63374type82634_28876.shtml>, (accessed 13 May 2010); Vladimir Putin (2003), 'Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации [Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation],' *President of Russia*, <<http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2003/05/44623.shtml>>, (accessed 13 May 2010); Vladimir Putin (2004), 'Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации [Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation],' *President of Russia*, <<http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2004/05/71501.shtml>>, (accessed 13 May 2010).
- 30 See Urban Ahlin (2004), 'An Open Letter to the Heads of State and Government Of the European Union and NATO,' <http://www.eurojournal.org/more.php?id=159_o_i_o_M13>, (accessed 14 May 2010).
- 31 See Anatolii Chubais (2003), 'Миссия России в XXI веке [Russia's Mission in the 21st century],' *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, <http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2003-10-01/1_mission.html>, 10 January, (accessed 13 May 2010).
- 32 Verlikaya derzhava (великая держава).

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- 33 Andrei Tsygankov (2005), 'Vladimir Putin's Vision of Russia as a Normal Great Power,' *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 21:2, pp. 132–158, 134.
- 34 Within the period of 2000–2005, Russia had a negative growth rate of -0.48% and -0.4% in 2005–2010.
- 35 World Economic Outlook Database, April 2010.
- 36 See <<http://wciom.ru/novosti/reitingi/doverie-politikam.html>>
- 37 See <<http://wciom.ru/novosti/reitingi/odobrenie-dejatelnosti-gosudarstvennykh-institutov.html>>
- 38 Currently the institution of presidency holds 71% approval ranking, and the one of the prime-minister 72%. Putin is leading in personal approval rankings by 49%, 5% more than Medvedev.
- 39 Interestingly, within 2003–2008 the number of respondents considering political instability in Russia as an obstacle to superpower status decreased from 19 to 11%, while the number of respondents considering the West as an obstacle increased from 8 to 19%. See <http://wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/10954.html?no_cache=1&cHash=8e3b869e7e>
- 40 A largely irrelevant border change took place in 1970, when the village of Rio Rico was ceded by the US to Mexico. This represents the most recent cession of land by the U.S. from a state to a foreign country.
- 41 See <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPopulation?_submenuld=population_0&_sse=on>
- 42 See <<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2010/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?sy=2007&ey=2010&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=111&s=NGDPD%2CNGDPDPC%2CPPPGDP%2CPPP-C%2CLP&grp=0&a=&pr.x=40&pr.y=10>>
- 43 See <http://zimor.com/chart/Nominal_GDP>
- 44 Transatlantic Trends, 2004–2008.
- 45 *Ibid.* Transatlantic Trends, 2004–2008.
- 46 See <<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1063/bush-and-public-opinion>>
- 47 This became even more evident after the devastating experience of the Yugoslav wars and the uncoordinated recognition of the former-Yugoslav republics.
- 48 Indeed the QMV was possible only for the policy implementation but not decisions.
- 49 The HR is provided with a “double institutional hat” as it is member of both the Commission (vice-president) and of the Council of Ministers (chairman of the Foreign Affairs council).
- 50 See <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>>.
- 51 Council of the European Union, 2003.

- 52 For further details on Member States' perception of Russia see Stefano Braghiroli and Caterina Carta (2009), 'An Index of Friendliness Towards Russia: An Analysis of the Member States and Members of the European Parliament's positions,' *Pan-European Institute Electronic Publication Series*, See <http://www.tse.fi/El/yksikot/erillislaitokset/pei/Documents/Julkaisut/Braghiroli_and_Carta_1509_web.pdf>, (accessed 15 May 2010).
- 53 The EU's imperial aspirations are particularly evident in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The two countries are *de facto* EU protectorates governed by EU officials (provided with outstanding political and institutional powers) with the assent of the UN. For further details on the EU's alleged neo-colonial approach see Jan Zielonka (2008), pp. 471-484.
- 54 See Nelli Babayan (2009), 'European Neighbourhood Policy in Armenia: On the Road to Failure or Success?' *CEU Political Science Journal*, 3:4, pp. 358-388.
- 55 The Constitution of the Russian Federation has so far been amended in 1996, 2001, and 2008, while substantial amendments were introduced only in 2008, prolonging the terms of the president and the State Duma from four to six and five years respectively.
- 56 Blizhnee zarybezhye [ближнее зарубежье].
- 57 See Stanislav Secrieru (2006), 'Russia's Foreign Policy under Putin: CIS Project Renewed' (English), *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, No. 10, January 2006, Madrid.
- 58 See Michael Rywkin (2003).
- 59 Status of a superpower [державность].
- 60 Ivan Krastev (2005), 'Russia's post orange empire', *Open Democracy*, 19 October 2005, p. 2.
- 61 See John Dumbrell (2008), pp. 88-104.
- 62 See Douglas Brinkley (1997), 'Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine', *Foreign Policy*, 106, pp. 111-127.
- 63 An international treaty enters into force after being approved by two-thirds of the Senate. Though the power to declare war is constitutionally vested in the Congress.
- 64 See George W. Bush (2002), 'President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point', <<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/print/20020601-3.html>>, (accessed 17 May 2010).
- 65 See Zbigniew Brzezinski (1998), *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy And Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books.
- 66 GUAM Organisation for Development and Economic Development includes: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

67 See Rick Rozoff (2009), 'Former Soviet States: Battleground For Global Domination,' *Center for Research on Globalization*, <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=16243>>, (accessed 20 May 2010).

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68 See Angelos Sepos (2010).