The Ukraine crisis:
* A geopolitical power struggle between Russia and the US.
Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine Russia’s and the US behaviors and actions in the Ukraine crisis in order to understand why the conflict resulted in a geopolitical power struggle. Since the current debate is filled with biased information and propaganda, this thesis aims to observe the behaviors and actions from both sides objectively to get a comprehensive understanding of their involvement in the crisis. It is a desk-study since the data is gathered from books and articles. It is qualitative due to the fact that it investigates this particular conflict by using several sources to gain an in-depth knowledge of a two-sided perspective. The method text analysis is used on four chosen articles that will be observed in order to find the underlying reasons of Russia’s and the US ongoing involvement in the crisis. It is an abductive reasoning whereas the theory offensive realism is used as the theoretical lens in order to highlight the most essential information of the chosen articles that will be examined. The three categories diplomacy, economy and military have been applied to outline Russia’s and the US underlying reasons of their behaviors and actions in the Ukraine crisis in order to answer the research questions. The result shows from an offensive realism perspective that Russia and the US are involved in the crisis due to their strategic interest to dominate the Black Sea Region for personal gains. It is shown that both states acted upon self-interest to gain more power and to lesser their rival’s power in order to hinder one another to become a territorial hegemon in the Black Sea Region. It is suggested that the outcome of the Ukraine crisis could have been different without their involvement.

Keywords
Black Sea Region, Crimea Peninsula, Diplomacy, Economy, EU, Georgia crisis, Great powers, Hegemony, Military, NATO, Offensive realism, Power, Russia, Ukraine crisis, US
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1 Introduction

The Ukraine crisis can be understood as one of the most controversial events in the today’s global political debate. The ongoing conflict has come to affect and influence Europe’s as well as the rest of the world’s foreign- and security policies (Mearsheimer, 2014:6). From a historical perspective Ukraine has been torn between East and West ever since the country became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991. Its national identity has thenceforth been questioned due to the citizens’ fragmented attitude towards Ukraine’s future cohesion, i.e. whether to affiliate with the West or to maintain the association with Russia (Zuiderveld, 2015). In 2004 the Orange Revolution emerged whereas protests towards the invigorate corruption and the lack of democracy were the key incentives of the upheaval. It resulted in a political struggle between the pro-Western Victor Yushchenko and the pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovych about who should govern the nation and in which direction (Karatnycky, 2005:1-3, 16).

In 2010 the pro-Russian Yanukovych became president and the significant event that has been controversially debated was when Yanukovych declined the long-awaited Association Agreement with EU in November 2013. This agreement would have improved political as well as trade ties with EU, making Ukraine more westernized and thus a further independence from Russia. Furthermore, this event sparked the Euro-Revolution as well as the February-Revolution in 2014 and resulted in demonstrations against the Yanukovych regime. It led to that Kiev underwent its worst days of violence for almost 70 years whereas at least 88 people were killed within 48 hours. As a result of this Yanukovych himself fled to Russia for protection in 2015 (Motyl, 2013:52, 54, BBC, 2014).

As argued by Motyl, it has consequently been questioned why Yanukovych declined the agreement since a western influence and a membership of EU would have promoted improvement of economic and political reforms as well as democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, market economy, good governance and sustainable development (Motyl, 2013:46). Motyl further believes that there might be underlying explanations of why Yanukovych turned it down since it was at that time as external actors such as Russia and later on the US got involved in the crisis (Motyl, 2013:46-47).

Hence, the protests between thousands of right-wings extremists as well as nationalists and pro-Russians in Ukraine are seen as much more than a domestic political power struggle. The opposition has during the years received financial as well as political support from the US and the EU meanwhile the pro-Russian citizens have received support from Russia (Mearsheimer, 2014:3). In 2014 the Russian parliament approved president Putin’s request to use force in order to protect the
pro-Russian citizens in Ukraine. The US president Obama urged Putin to move back his troops in order to lower the tensions within the country but with no response and thereafter Putin annexed the Crimea peninsula, which now belongs to Russia (BBC, 2014, Taylor, 2014:92-93).

In other words, one can see that the Ukraine crisis has gone from being a national- into a geopolitical power struggle between Russia, the US and the EU. Despite the country's deep ethnical divisions, the faith of a unitary national identity has grown in its strength and permeated the political sphere. The struggle has fostered the emergence of a complex issue consisting regional- and minority distinctions at the national level and a struggle for power at a global level between Russia and especially the US. As argued by Orlando Figes, the convolution within Ukraine's identity is deeply rooted throughout the tension between East and West, both in terms of psychological and geographical issues (Figes, 2013:59-60). As Legvold, Cohen and Fouskas argues, the today’s confrontation between Russia and the US might lead into a new Cold War, which once again can put the world order at stake (Legvold, 2014, Cohen, 2014:22, Fouskas, 2003:12).

1.2 Research problem
Seeing that the Ukraine crisis takes place in Europe, it is reasonable to ask why the EU has been involved. The aim of a united Europe from West to East is one of its primary goals. This is clearly demonstrated by its commencement of the Eastern enlargement in 2004, when several Eastern states received memberships (DeBardeleben in Kanet, 2009:49, Asmus, 2008:96-99). However, it becomes interesting to observe why the crisis has developed into a geopolitical power struggle between Russia and the US, seeing that the US is located on the other side of the world and Russia, which does not seem to let go of its former Soviet states. Consequently, the relationship between Russia and the US may be one of the reasons of their involvement in the crisis since their historical events have influenced and shaped their current relationship and their behavior against each other.

On the one hand, the Russian military presence in Ukraine as well as the annexation of the Crimea has been considered as a behavior that violates the Western democracy as well as the human rights. As stated by Obama: “…This is seen as major violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty…” (The White House, 2014). He further means that this kind of intervention has forced the US to act and confront Russia, especially since the White House tried to collaborate with Putin by diplomatic means in order to find a solution for Ukraine (The White House, 2014). As argued by Niklas Bernsand, Russia’s tactics on crossing boarders threatens the world order and thus creates a fear for future interventions in neighboring countries such as Lithuania and Latvia, which both are members of NATO. Especially when a similar event took place in 2008 in Georgia, when Russia intervened
Abkhazia and South Ossetia and declared them as independent states (Treisman, 2014:87-90, Stiernstedt, 2014).

On the other hand, the US-led NATO’s enlargement Eastward has been seen as a threat to Russia. As Putin has stated: “...When the infrastructure of a military bloc is moving toward our borders, it causes us some concerns and questions. We have no choice than to take some steps in response... Having American military bases so close to our borders would affect Russia’s security as well as international interests...” (Anishchuk & Kiselyova, 2014). Putin further argues that the US endeavors to urge former Soviet-states, especially Ukraine, to choose between Russia and the West. This has forced Putin to take actions (Norbergh, 2015). As argued by Patrik Paulov, the question to detach Ukraine from Russia’s military sphere and link the country to the US-led military alliance has long been a priority seeing that the US former president George W. Bush openly expressed his desire that NATO should emerge as closely as possible to Russia’s borders. Pavlov further argues that a Ukraine membership in NATO would dramatically alter the balance of power in the Black Sea Region, BSR, especially since the Russian Black Sea Fleet is stationed in Crimea (Paulov, 2014).

For this reason, it becomes necessary to observe why Russia and the US involved in the dispute at first, since the crisis initially arose due to that the Ukrainian citizens began to question the Ukraine unitary nation identity. As argued by Paulov, there might be quite different objective from these external actors that has nothing to do with the Ukrainian people’s living conditions. Both Russia and the US seems to put more emphasis on who has done what rather than to focus on the fragmentation of the Ukrainian citizens with the identity crisis at the national level (Paulov, 2014). It therefore becomes interesting to include both sides of the crisis to be able to substantiate the actors’ behavior and thus finds the underlying reasons of their actions (Legvold, 2014).

1.3 Relevance
The relevance may be perceived as strong since the thesis examines a field of study that is an up-to-date topic in the global political debate, especially since it has been questioned whether the world order is threatened or not. As argued by Legvold, Cohen and Fouskas, a permeated fear has occurred within the global political sphere, i.e. that Russia will once again become a great power as it was during its Soviet years. In the future this can result into a serious conflict between Russia and the US and thus affect all the states position within the international system (Legvold, 2014, Cohen, 2014:22, Fouskas, 2003:12). This makes itself particularly relevant for the European states and especially former Soviet-states, since it has developed from a national crisis into a geopolitical conflict. However it can also result as an adversary affect towards other states and actors in general,
due to Russia’s and the US proceedings and the desire to dominate specific regions. Hence, it is of importance to observe if there is an existence of underlying reasons to their involvement in the crisis, in order to hinder for such conflicts to emerge in the future.

1.4 Literature review
The thesis is based on the assumption that the Ukraine crisis has become a geopolitical power struggle between Russia and the US. The Ukraine crisis is a sensitive as well as a complicated conflict to observe due to its angled propaganda from all parties concerned. Hence, the view of the crisis is varying depending on which party or side one may consider relate more closely to. In order to further illustrate this, the literature review will provide what has been written about the crisis and by whom.

A distinctive icon regarding the Ukraine crisis is the political scientist John J. Mearsheimer. He is referred as an international relations theorist and is also known for his work *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001). In one of his recent publications *Why the Ukraine crisis is the West’s fault* (2014), he argues that the foundation why Russia and the US got involved in the Ukraine crisis was mainly due to the expansion of NATO (Mearsheimer, 2014:3). In contrary to Mearsheimer’s statement, the American professor of Russian and Eurasian studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, Stephen Sestanovich argues in his article *Why the West Has Won* (2014) that the reason of Ukraine’s breakthrough was not due to NATO’s enlargement. Rather one must understand that the US has during two decades of its foreign policy stabilized Europe with NATO’s enlargement and thus reduced the extent of the current crisis. Furthermore, if NATO would not had grown to its current size and boundaries, the conflict in Ukraine would have been more dangerous than it is today (Sestanovich, 2014). Meanwhile the Russian Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy Sergey Karaganov believes that the US is afraid of Russia becoming a greater power than the US itself, which forces the US to act in the context to hinder Russia becoming one (Compare with Mearsheimer, 2001:140-141). Furthermore, he argues that it is clearly that Russia is the main reason why the US is acting as it does. One can see that the US would not gain by making the Ukraine westernized since the Ukraine’s economy is very weak, and the political as well as the social sphere are imbalanced. Hence, Karaganov argues that the conflict between the two great powers is due to geopolitical interests at BSR in order to prevent Russia becoming stronger and thus maintain the US power (Karaganov, 2014).

The different perspectives raises the issues on how to tackle the Ukraine crisis and the problems each actor involved in the crisis has against each other. This thesis will thus be based on various materials
from different perspectives in order to get a comprehensive view of the crisis as well as finding the underlying reasons of their actions and behaviors.

1.5 Objective
The objective is to provide a two-sided view and to observe Russia’s and the US behaviors and actions in the Ukraine crisis in order to understand how it is that the crisis resulted in a power struggle of geopolitical matters. This might further enhance a broader perspective of the two great powers involvement in the ongoing crisis.

1.6 Research questions
• What can explain Russia’s actions and behavior in the Ukraine crisis?
• What can explain the US actions and behavior in the Ukraine crisis?

1.7 Methodological framework
Both in reference to the research topic and the theoretical framework, this thesis is conducted as a Qualitative abductive desk-study based on the method Text analysis. Esaiasson et al. argues in the book _Metodpraktikan_ (2012) that the method text analysis helps the researcher to develop the main content of a chosen text by carefully reading the parts, the totality and the context it is included in. The different parts of the text enable the researcher to extract the most essential parts, which are perceived as central for the research (Esaiasson et al., 2012:210). By using this method, when carrying out an intense reading of the chosen diverse literature from a two-sided perspective of the crisis, it can thus contribute to find the underlying reasons of the two actors behaviors and actions that is not explicitly presented in texts.

1.8 Theoretical framework
If the contribution to the scientific relevance of this thesis can demonstrate Russia’s and the US behaviors and actions, it can further give some basis for a continued research of how similar incidents between the two great powers can be prevented in the future. Hence, this thesis becomes interesting given that the theory, offensive realism, will be used since it focuses on great powers behavior within international relations (Mearsheimer, 2001:335). The thesis can therefore explain the underlying factors by observing the three selected categories diplomacy, economy and military, which supplementary can improve, strengthen or weaken the theories or even contribute to an innovative approach for future researches. This can lead to new information and knowledge that have been missed in earlier studies of the same topic. In addition, the thesis can thus reinforce or challenge previous research.
1.9 Analytical framework
Seeing that this study is based on a qualitative research process one need to understand how the analysis will take its shape. The qualitative research process can be explained by three terms, i.e. method (Methodology), theory (Ontology) and analysis (Epistemology) (Bergström & Boréus, 2012:26). As argued by Creswell, it is important that the researcher must take into consideration its possible biases, values and personal experiences when making a qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2014:187). With this in mind, the thesis will thus try to be as objective as possible in the analysis chapter. This is important given that the Ukraine crisis is a perceptive topic. The text analysis as well as the analyzed selected sources from different perspectives and as well as applying the categories diplomacy, military and economy from the theory offensive realism can thus bring a comprehensive perspective regarding the thesis research objective and questions.

1.10 Limitations and Delimitations
In terms of limitations that may appear, it includes the lack of impartial sources about the Ukraine crisis. It is seen that it is a sensitive topic that is imbued with biased political opinions, which can impact the result of the thesis. Furthermore, the thesis focuses upon Russia and the US actions and behaviors regarding the Ukraine crisis. Hence, the Ukraine and the citizens’ perception are excluded, which can lead to that valuable information about the crisis itself is left out.

As for delimitations, the choice to focus on Russia and the US and their behaviors will not make any simplifications about the Ukraine crisis itself. One must understand that the crisis is too complex to find solutions by this thesis point of departure. It will however enable the understanding that the crisis has become a geopolitical conflict between two great powers and their relationship has adversely been affected. Furthermore, it can contribute to an overall knowledge about the relationship between Russia and the US, which can hamper such conflicts as the Georgian- and the Ukrainian crises to appear in the future.

The limitations and the delimitations are also due to the existing timeframe and the allowed extent of the thesis but for further research it could be of interest to expand it by including the perception within the Ukraine, which will make the thesis replicable.
1.11 Structure of thesis
The thesis will be structured accordingly:

Chapter 2, Methodology, will provide methodological considerations and the structure of the chosen method, text analysis and its disadvantages will be described. The methodology chapter also contains explanations of the material and the reliability of the chosen material.

Chapter 3, Theory, will contain an explanation of the choice of theory and a description of the theory, offensive realism as well as its critique.

Chapter 4, Findings, will present a background in order to get a deeper knowledge about the Ukraine crisis, NATO’s as well as EU’s enlargement and the Black Sea Region. Furthermore, it will contain a research result whereas the four selected articles will be answered by the chosen questions from the method, text analysis.

Chapter 5, Analysis, is intended to answer the research questions: What can explain Russia’s actions and behavior in the Ukraine crisis? What can explain the US actions and behavior in the Ukraine crisis? The research questions will be answered through the categories diplomacy, economy and military from the chosen material that is going to be analyzed.

Chapter 6, Conclusion, will present the results of the analysis answers to the research questions as well as suggestions for future research.

Chapter 7, References, will present the references that are used in this thesis.
2 Methodological Framework

The interest is to carefully read the specifically selected material about the crisis in order to obtain essential information. Hence, this thesis is a qualitative desk-study with the method text analysis since the aim is to go into depth of the two great powers behaviors and actions by cautiously reading the selected materials from different perspectives. This could hopefully highlight their specific characteristics and their relationship towards each other in the crisis. It also allows small components to appear that can assist to answer the research questions (Esaiasson et al, 2012:210-215). Another benefit of the chosen method is that the internal validity can become justifiable because the gathered information is detailed and not taken out of context (Esaiasson et al, 2012:57-58).

Furthermore, the thesis will be conducted as an abductive research. As argued by Danermark et al., an abductive research can provide an in-depth understanding of a specific case by re-contextualizing it in relation to general structures and theories. The logic of an abductive research is used to discover why the actors do as they do, and as well as discovering a case by uncovering largely implicit information (Danermark et al, 2001:88-90). Seeing that the Ukraine crisis is not directly observable due to its complexity and altering formulation through the years, it thus require one or several theories in order to create a deeper understanding of the two actors behaviors and actions. Hence, the theory, offensive realism, will be presented in the theoretical chapter.

2.1 Research design and Method- Text analysis

The method, text analysis, implies that the researcher qualitatively analyzes a given text material. The aim is to develop a main content of a text by carefully reading the parts, the totality and thereafter categorize the context it is included in. The different parts of the text are enabling the researcher to highlight and perceive the parts that are central for the research. By carrying out an intense reading of the chosen material makes it possible to find underlying information that is not explicitly presented in the text. The central approach of the method is that the text is read thoughtfully several times (Esaiasson et al, 2012:210).

The first step of conducting a text analysis is to ask a number of specific questions to the text and to ask questions based on the researchers theoretical categories. The chosen theoretical categories are diplomacy, economy and military. Furthermore, it is important to ask questions since these questions are being the fundamental analytical tool in order to gather material that fits the research. It is also argued that the answers to the questions constitute the solution of the research problem (Esaiasson et al, 2012:215-216).
Hence, the research design will consist of the following questions that will be asked to the selected material that the thesis will be based on:

- What is the text about?
- What is the purpose of the text?
- How does the researcher arrive at its opinion?
- What is the conclusion?

The second step is to decide how to respond to the possible answers the researcher gets from the asked questions. The two options one can use is either pre-defined categories, which is defined answers to the questions that are asked or to have an open approach where the answers depends on what the researcher finds in the chosen material. In the latter, it is the content of the text that controls the research. This thesis will have an open approach since it aims to be as objective as possible even though it is argued that the open approach can mislead the researcher as well as delude the result of the research (Esaiasson et al, 2012:217-218).

Regarding the material the researcher wants to examine can either be through a narrow or a wide selection. When it is required that the researcher needs to be detailed it may not be comprehensible to use the wide selection and thus safer to use a narrow selection (Esaiasson et al, 2012:220). The gathered material this thesis will be based on will be through a narrow selection whereas two articles about and from each country, Russia and the US, will be analyzed.

The third and last step is how to proceed with analyzing the chosen material. The researcher can either analyze the text’s manifest message (the direct message written in the text) or latent message (the message that is underneath the surface of the text and can not be read directly). The researcher should also take a stand regarding its interpretation of the text, i.e. what the text means for the researcher, what the text means for the author who has written it and what the text means for a group of recipients of more or less specified nature. It is therefore important that the interpretation of the text is done through the researcher's pre-understanding. The researcher's previous experience is thus significant to the material that will be interpreted (Esaiasson, et al, 2012:221-224). As argued by Gilje and Grimen as well as Bergström and Boréus, the pre-understanding is fundamental in order to carry out an interpretation of a text (Gilje & Grimen, 2007:179, Bergström & Boréus, 2014:31). Thereafter, the interpretations the researcher then conducts should be presented through citations, summarized abstracts and argued conclusions (Esaiasson et al, 2012:225).
2.1.1 Disadvantages of Text analysis
As mentioned by Esaiasson, the researcher’s pre-understanding is significant to the interpretation of the texts, but it is also mostly critique (Esaiasson et al, 2012:221-224). For instance, when conducting a text analysis some might criticize the pre-understanding of the researcher since the interpretation of the texts and the results could become too subjective. The critique is often directed towards that the researcher’s interest and values shapes and influences the extracted results from the text (Bryman, 2011). It is therefore important to create and follow a clear structure, such as the questions mentioned above. When conducting an open approach, the content of the text mostly control the results, which might increase the objectivity, but one must keep in mind that essential information could be excluded or missing in text analysis. To be able to achieve high credibility and a replicable research it is central to be clear and open about each and every step of the analysis and one might therefore avoid criticism about the interpretation of the texts (Esaiasson et al, 2012:219).

2.2 Material
The Findings chapter consists of material from various articles and academic studies on the Ukraine crisis as well as NATO’s and EU’s enlargement and the Black Sea Region. Regarding the information about the Ukraine crisis, various prolific scholars such as Alexander J. Motyl, Keith Dadren, Adrian Karatnycky, Orlando Figes, Annabelle Chapman and Kathryn Stoner have been strategically selected from the book The Ukraine Crisis (2014) published by Foreign Affair.

Another prolific scholar on Russia and European politics is Rickard Sakwa. His main interest of research subject is Russia both in terms of national- and international state of affairs. Sakwa’s researches are often aimed to explain Russia’s relationship with the US and the EU in order to find understandings of the relationship’s structure and the reasons of their actions. Sakwa has written books such as The crisis of Russian Democracy: The Dual State, Factionalism and the Medvedev Succession (2011), Putin and Oligarch: The Khodorovsky-Yukos Affair (2014). His recent publication Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the borderlands (2015) will be examined since it discusses the Ukraine crisis from the two great powers perspective. In an attempt to confirm the complexity of the Ukraine crisis, Sakwa argues that the internal crisis was caused due to a clash of two ideological positions such as integral nationalism aiming for a homogenous state and pluralism clearing up the country’s historical- and ethnical diversity (Sakwa, 2015:8, 14-15). However, he points out the main message being influenced by the interaction between all actors involved both at national and international level such as the relationship between East and West (Sakwa, 2015:252-253). Sakwa further argues that this is one of the triggering factors why the conflict within the country is still going on, which he further demonstrates by comparing it with the Cold War (Sakwa, 2015:2-3, 35-37).
Another distinctive icon is the political scientist John J. Mearsheimer. He is referred as an international relations theorist and is also known for his work *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001), which consists of a theory called offensive realism. However, in one of his recent publications *Why the Ukraine crisis is the West’s fault* (2014), he questions if it is fair to blame the Ukraine crisis as a Russian aggression (Mearsheimer, 2014:3-4). In such manners, Mearsheimer emphasizes on the US and the West actions regarding the crisis. Furthermore, he believes that Russia annexed Crimea and committed an intervention of the eastern part of Ukraine as a provocative response towards NATO’s enlargement. Hence, his conclusion is based on that Russia’s behavior and actions are due to that the US and its European alliance have provoked and thus forced Russia to act as it did (Mearsheimer, 2014:39-46).

As a response to Mearsheimer’s critical work, the former ambassador and political scientist Michael McFaul argues that Mearsheimer’s approach towards the crisis has some weaknesses. Mearsheimer’s variant of realism only explains certain aspects of Russia’s and the US relationship. There are yet more aspects one must look at to understand why the outcome of the crisis created such an imbalance between the great powers. McFaul believes that one should rather look beyond the reality of the created image of the crisis and go into depth and observe the changes from within. For instance, in his article *The Crisis is about Putin and his Adventurism*, McFaul goes against Mearsheimer’s argument that the crisis breaking point was due to NATO’s enlargement. McFaul rather emphasizes on the changes in the Russian and American domestic policies as well as their cooperation and confrontation policies (McFaul, 2014:21-22).

The reasons why Sakwa, Mearsheimer and McFaul has been used is due to that all three provides distinct perspectives on the crisis itself. Hence, these articles and books are of importance in order to get a deeper understanding of what is actually happening in Ukraine but also due to that the Findings chapter would not become too biased.

*The Research result chapter* will consist of specific selected scientific articles focused on either Russia’s or the US behaviors and actions in the crisis and the underlying reasons of their involvement. These articles have been strategically selected in order to provide both sides of the conflict.

*Article 1:* *Putin’s Own Goal: The Invasion of Crimea and Putin’s Political Frame* (2014) written by Brian D. Taylor and published by Foreign Affairs. Taylor’s article has been chosen due to that he argues from a Russian perspective what Putin can loose if Ukraine becomes westernized. This makes it particularly interesting since it can contribute a deeper understanding of Putin’s goals with
having a greater influence in Ukraine. This further can in the analysis chapter provide an enhanced answer on the research question: *What can explain Russia’s behaviour and actions in the Ukraine crisis?*

**Article 2:** *After the Crimean crisis: towards a greater Russian maritime power in the Black Sea* (2014), written by Igor Delanoë. Igor Delanoë holds a PhD in Modern and Contemporary History from the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis in France. His research interests include Russian defense as well as security issues and the geopolitics of Russia and post-Soviet states. His article can thus highlight the most essential parts of why Russia finds Ukraine as one of the geostrategic significant countries in the Black Sea Region.

**Article 3:** *Ukraine’s Defense Engagement With The United States* (2009) written by Gary, D. Espinas. The article is chosen since it analyzes the trilateral relationship between Russia, Ukraine and the US. However, Espinas emphasizes on especially the strategic relationship between the US and Ukraine. Furthermore, this article can contribute to an American perspective of the crisis as well as the underlying reasons of why the US is influencing in a far-off region such as Ukraine. Hence, it can contribute to answer the Research question: *What can explain the US behavior and actions in the Ukraine crisis?*

**Article 4:** *Continuities and Raptures: Tracking the US Interests in the Black Sea Area in the Context of the ‘Pivot to Asia’* (2014) written by Sergei Konoplyov and Igor Delanoë has been selected since it highlights the US interests in the Black Sea Region and why it has become an American priority to increase its interest in that region. Seeing that Sergei Konoplyov is the Director of the Black Sea Regional Security Program and the US-Russia Security Program at Harvard University as well as Delanoë is as mentioned previously a prolific scholar on Russia and European politics, this article can contribute the underlying reasons of the American involvement in the Ukraine crisis.

**2.2.1 Validity and Reliability of Material**

The chosen articles for the analysis are secondary sources, which entails that they are influenced of the pre-understanding by the authors and therefore the objectivity might be questioned. In regards to that, the analysis is based on perspective from both the US and Russia in order to extract their different behaviours and actions about the Ukraine crisis. The analysis consist of a text analysis, which contributes to that the text is read thoughtfully several times and the questions are based on the theoretical categories, diplomacy, economy and military. This increases the credibility of the articles and their underlying meanings and therefore the perceived objectivity could to some extent be reduced (Esaiasson, et al, 2012:215-216). The articles are analyzed carefully by applying analytical tools, which are the following questions: *What is the text about? What is the purpose of...*
the text? How does the researcher arrive at its opinion? What is the conclusion? The analytical tools enhance the validity of articles since they determines that the researcher measures what it intends to measure i.e. extract the valuable meanings of the articles. Furthermore the degree of the reliability often depends on the ability of replication, since a text analysis is influenced by the researchers pre-understanding, therefore it is important to be clear and open in ones procedure in order to increase the reliability (Bergström & Borēus, 2014:40-43).
3 Theoretical Framework
This study emphasizes on observing a two-sided view of the Ukraine crisis and as mentioned earlier the research is an abductive study focusing on the diplomacy, economy and military aspects of the crisis. The idea is mainly to gather evidence such as Russian publications and statements opposed to the US, which will be used within the analytical framework to explain and contrast what is seen in the Ukrainian crisis from a Russian and an American perspective. Furthermore, the theory that will be used and that further will be of great importance for the analysis is Mearsheimer’s theory offensive realism. A review of the theory’s basic features and principles will be presented below.

3.1 The choice of theory
Seeing that this research has its origins in the Ukraine crisis and the interest is to explain Russia’s and the US behaviors and actions, the use of a theory can contribute to explanatory factors that further can result in a clarification why these two superpowers acted as they did.

Esaiasson et al. describes that a research can either be a theory consuming, a tentative theory or a developmental theory analysis. However, this thesis point of departure is a theory consuming analysis (Esaiasson et al, 2012:37). One can either use one or several theories as a means to one’s research. However, this study will be based on one theory even though there is a higher risk that the chosen theory might not find explanations of the current factors unlike if the research had used several theories (Esaiasson et al, 2012:41-42). The focus of this thesis is to observe the two actors behaviors and actions of the Ukraine crisis and thus use the chosen theory to confirm the results of the analysis, which thereby considers a theory consuming study more suitable (Esaiasson et al, 2012:41).

The theory’s main purpose is to find explanations in order to clarify the great powers behaviors and actions in the Ukraine crisis so that it will be possible to situate it into an understandable context. As Esaiasson et al., Svensson and Teorell argue, attaching a theory with one’s research can further contribute to a connection between the analysis and the research questions and thus legitimize the conclusion’s validity (Svensson & Teorell, 2007:44, Esaiasson, 2012:37).

The chosen theory, offensive realism, is based on how it describes and explains political phenomenon (Mearsheimer, 2001:5). Realism in general in this type of research is preferable since it focuses on how actors should best deal with political relations between one another. Furthermore, as Mearsheimer argues, offensive realism does not focus on individuals or the domestic political issues within a nation, it rather emphasizes on how much power a state has within the international system (Mearsheimer, 2001:11). Hence, offensive realism focuses on great powers within international
relations. The theory might not predict when war can occur but it can explain why a conflict arises and why some states are more volatile than others (Mearsheimer, 2001:335). As Mearsheimer argues, states seek opportunities to change the balance of power by strengthening their relative power at the expense of others. Furthermore, states have different approaches to their use of various means such as diplomacy, economy and military in order to shift the balance of power to their favor (Mearsheimer, 2001:33-34).

3.2 Offensive Realism

3.2.1 Basic outline
In his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001), Mearsheimer outlines offensive realism as a theory challenging the relationship between great powers. Mearsheimer believes that the main purpose with offensive realism is to envisage great power politics in the modern era; in fact he believes that all theories within social science should be used in order to envisage futuristic issues. To be able to predict favors the inclusion of information of the policy discourse and can further contribute an adversarial perspective that can shape one’s ideas and thoughts of an event further (Mearsheimer, 2001:8).

Mearsheimer argues that offensive realism is both a descriptive- and a normative theory. It contributes an explanation of how great powers behaved beforehand and how they will behave in the future. Simultaneously it becomes normative since it outlines how states should in a best potential way survive at the international arena (Mearsheimer, 2001:11).

Mearsheimer describes the theory’s basic features within five assumptions:

- The great powers are the most important actors within the international system, which is seen as an anarchical system.
- All states have offensive military capacity.
- States can never trust other states intentions.
- States primarily goal is survival in the life within the international system.
- States are rational actors and their main task is to seek opportunities that can maximize their power (Mearsheimer, 2001:30-32, Pashakhanlou, 2013:204-205).

3.2.2 Offensive realism vs. Defensive realism
A related challenger of offensive realism is defensive realism. The similarities of these two theories are that both describe the international system as anarchic and that great powers are doubtful of other states intentions. However, defensive realism advocates that states are far less aggressive in their foreign policy agenda due to their inherently security maximizations. Hence, states are
interested primarily in securing what they acquire and does not emphasize on what other states might obtain. In other words, defensive realism believes that great powers can accept the status quo in comparison to offensive realism (Mearsheimer, 2001:19). Furthermore, the main component that distinguishes between these two theories is the security dilemma.

Henry R. Nau and Robert Jervis portrays that realists’ believe that war is a consequence of the anarchic system. A realist sees the state as the primary actor and its main goal is to be able to defend itself with power, the greater power a state has the stronger the security. Hence, the distribution of power within the international system is uneven due to some states having more power than others (Nau, 2011:29-30, Jervis, 2001:36-37). When a state radiates a higher degree of power, the surrounding becomes threatened, which further creates a so-called security dilemma. As described by Nau and Jervis, a security dilemma often arises when a state intends to heighten its security by rearmament, which forces other states to respond with similar measures even though if none of them desires it. In order to deal with the security dilemma there must be a balance of power between them (Nau, 2011:30-33, Jervis: 2011:413).

Furthermore, the security dilemma has become one of the main statements of defensive realism. As described by Evan Braden Montgomery, defensive realism sees that the international system is being constructed as an anarchic structure and states will thus always try to maximize their own security in order to maintain the balance of power (Montgomery, 2006:151-152, Mearsheimer, 2001:19). However, from a contrary perspective as argued by Mearsheimer, there is another perspective one can keep in mind. In contrast to defensive realism, offensive realism describes states as antagonistic and will thus always strive to maximize their power rather than security. If a state can get advantage over another state, it will utilize that advantage. States ultimate goal is to maximize relative power in order to become a hegemon, which is their primarily goal (Mearsheimer, 2001:5-6, 22, Pashakhanlou, 2013:204).

Thus, offensive realism is considered being the most suitable theory for this thesis. It is seen that the Ukraine crisis has led to a power struggle between Russia and the US since their involvement clearly demonstrates who has the greatest impact. As Nau describes it, if great powers fall into the balance of power, it will create a polarity in the system, in this case a bipolar system (Nau, 2011:29).

3.2.3 Critics of offensive realism
As argued by Arash Heydarian Pashakhanlou, the general critique against offensive realism is that the focus is upon states balance of power, which is mostly explained through that states are rational in the sense that they act to fulfill their self-interests. Furthermore, offensive realism does not have
other explanatory causes for individuals as well as states actions, such as normative aspects that can contribute to an in-depth explanation of their behavior (Pashakhanlou, 2013:207).

Mearsheimer describes fear as purely materialistic since his definition of power relates closer to military power. The main reason why states fear each other is mainly due to states varying military forces, which they can use against each other. The great powers balance their power against states with strong military since a strong military is a threat to their survival (Mearsheimer, 2001:56). However as argued by Jack Donnelly, further critique of offensive realism is that the explanation of fear between states lead to an aggressive action whereas psychological studies describe fear as an emotional act and that fear rather leads to that actors becomes defensive, i.e. they flee in order to secure themselves (Donnelly, 2000:44). Therefore, it could be claimed that fear is not an explanatory cause of states behavior within international relations.

3.3 Operationalization

Seeing that this thesis uses the theory offensive realism, it is important to create a theoretical definition of the chosen theory. When creating a theoretical definition, one must choose already developed or modified categories so that it will suit one’s research. Thereafter, one must develop operational indicators of the chosen categories. These operational indicators may thus make a clear structure on how to proceed with one’s research. This thesis will thus limit itself to the categories diplomacy, economy and military (Esaiasson et al, 2013:54).

However, it should be kept in mind that the actual problem is within the operationalization process since there may be systematic and unsystematic errors that further can affect the measurements of the research. Hence, it is important to embody exactly what one wants to investigate and try to avoid abstract concepts that can lead to inaccurate measurements (Svensson & Teorell, 2007:55-56). As argued by Svensson and Teorell, validity is considered being one of the most demanding problems to solve within empirical social sciences. In order to achieve good validity, one must have completed a thorough operationalization of the chosen variables (Svensson & Teorell, 2007:55). Since the research limit itself to only three categories, the reliability and validity can be affected due to that it excludes other factors that can explain the crisis even further. Despite this, the assumption of the thesis is that these three are considered being the main explanatory factors in order to answer the research questions.
3.4 The categories
Mearsheimer argues that states have different goals and approaches in order to extent their relative power and it is therefore important to observe the states behavior and to understand their actions. Mearsheimer defines states behavior through different perspectives depending on their different positions at the international level (Mearsheimer, 2001:138, 140). This thesis will thus use three specifically chosen categories diplomacy, economy and military. They are considered most appropriate in order to answer the research questions. However, one must keep in mind that there are other categories that one can observe and further explain the actors involvement in the Ukraine crisis.

3.4.1 Diplomacy
Mearsheimer argues that great powers are engaged to achieve a number of objectives in order to become the dominant state of the international system. In spite of this, one must understand that the world consists of a lot of water, which further prevents a state to become a global hegemon. Mearsheimer believes that it is practically impossible for states to have control over such a great extent and for that reason states rather strive to dominate in a particular region. Great powers also aim to hinder other potential rivals to become hegemonies since they are afraid of changes in the balance of power that further can impinge their security and survival. On one hand as Mearsheimer describes it, they do support other hegemonies in far-off regions to contend with each other, in such a way the focus is directed on themselves instead of the distant hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001:140-141).

Furthermore, there are situations when a distant hegemon decide to involve in another region and that is mainly when the balance of power within a far-off region is uneven. Before an inference of a distant hegemon occurs, it considers if any other local great power is better suited to meet the threat that prejudices the balance of power. Mearsheimer calls this buck-passing, which is a preferred strategy before being forced to intervene. In other words, great powers prefer to abstain a balance with other dangerous powers as it can affect them adversely (Mearsheimer, 2001:141,159).

There are also situations when great powers can threaten each other across the ocean. It usually occurs when a regional hegemon gets into the balance of power with a neighboring state. In such a way, a distant hegemon can take advantage of the situation by helping the smaller state with military assets such as troops. Furthermore, Mearsheimer argues that great powers in this case the distant hegemon, if strategically appropriate, can give up its profit in exchange for a loss of the counterparty (Mearsheimer, 2001:3, 142-143).
3.4.2 Economy
Great powers seek to achieve an amount of world wealth since wealth in general generates economy and thus a strong military power. In practice, this means that great powers are aiming for a good economy. Mearsheimer argues that the ideal stage for a great power is when it has achieved a strong economic growth simultaneously as other rivals economy has either been weakened or stagnated (Mearsheimer, 2001:143-144).

However, great powers do not only focus on their rivals but also on other potential threats, which is done by keeping track of the potential threat’s economic growth, i.e. the latent power. Mearhseimer believes that a state that has an increased latent power can in the futuristic aspect become a serious threat to its surroundings since a greater latent power favors a greater military power (Mearsheimer, 2001:55-56, 144). Mearsheimer believes that great powers also seek to hinder other great powers to dominate specific regions that can enhance their economic growth. Such areas of the world are either industrial countries or underdeveloped countries that have natural resources that external states can take advantage of. Furthermore, if a great power does not become a dominant power of that region, it will do whatever to hinder others to take over (Mearsheimer, 2001:144-145).

3.4.3 Military
Mearsheimer believes that great powers also seek to pursue a domination of land power since it is the best possible way to maximize control of a region. This thus means that states most important military asset is the ground forces, which further is reinforced through strong air- and naval forces. In other words, states pursuit to enhance their military power in order to compete in a world that consists of territorial hegemons (Mearsheimer, 2001:85-87, 145).

Furthermore, great powers seek to achieve nuclear superiority over other competitors. However, Mearsheimer argues that it is almost impossible to achieve such a stage of superiority since its competitors will automatically aim such a superiority themselves in order to not feel threatened, i.e. a balance of power. Moreover, great powers will still continue to aim for nuclear superiority even though it is almost impossible to achieve since they believe that if other great powers have nuclear weapons, they will become vulnerable. In other words, they end up in a vicious cycle whereas the great powers believe that the best possible way to eliminate such a threat is to maximize one’s own power (Mearhseimer, 2001:145-147).
4 Findings

4.1 Ukraine crisis- Historical Background
Analysts and researchers that have studied the Ukraine crisis have arrived at different conclusions due to Ukraine’s historical complexity. Along with numerous occasions, the country’s geopolitical position can be seen as one of the leading explanatory factors for the arisen disputes. Furthermore, from a historical perspective, one can identify and explain that even though Ukraine received its independence in 1991, it has belonged to the former Soviet Union since 1922, which thus explains its strong ties to Russia (Kubicek, 2008:119).

An emergence of confusion concerning the country’s national identity has been present due to its multicultural society consisting of minority groups such as Belarusians, Moldavians, Crimean Tartars, Bulgarians and Russians (Minorityrights, 2005). Consequently, Ukraine has been at a stance whether to keep its relationship with Russia or to alliance with the EU (Motyl, 2013:46-48). One may argue that Ukraine should proceed as a pseudo democracy and continue its strong ties to Russia’s hegemony. On the other hand, a counterargument may include that Ukraine should become a westernized democracy and maintain its independence by strengthening its relationship with the EU (Darden, 2014:74-75).

According to Karatnycky, the Orange Revolution during 2004-2005 can be summarized as an emergence of a rebellion against the Ukrainian political system, i.e. a resistance against corruption and the greediness of those in power. The political opposition and its supporters joined forces to protest against the ruling elite due to the falsification of the voting for the presidential election. The electoral fraud was considered as an election being rigged to Victor Yanukovich’s advantage. Further, a demand for a second presidential election was required which later on declared Viktor Yushchenko as Ukraine’s president (Karatnycky, 2005:1-3).

To behold this election on a global level, the two presidential candidates received support from oppositional external actors. Putin and Kremlin image-makers provided support to Victor Yanukovich by strongly backing his campaign, which designates Yanukovich victory in the first runoff (Karatnycky, 2005:16). The EU and the US gave their support to Viktor Yushchenko with their interest to overturn the election and install a western-oriented regime and thus break the previous link with Russia. Simultaneously at the national level, the country’s deep ethnical division has become extensively increased (Karatnycky, 2005:17-19).
Hence, a significant fragmentation occurred within Ukraine where the eastern and the southern citizens acclaimed Yanukovich, while the northern and the western citizens shored Yushchenko. A faith of a unitary national identity begun to grow in its strength and permeated the political sphere between the pro-Ukrainians and the pro-Russians (Minorityrights, 2005, Figes, 2013:59-63).

4.1.1 The Ukraine crisis- from a national to a global issue

The presidential election in 2010 resulted in a victory for Viktor Yanukovich, which prompted the Yushchenko’s supporters to a retrospective consideration by seeing the Orange Revolution as futile. During his time as president, he got the opportunity to sign an association agreement with the EU in 2013, which would have given the possibility to bring Ukraine closer to the EU and an increased voter support for himself in future elections (Darden, 2014:74). As argued by Motyl, one could state that he got the opportunity to transform his presidency from only representing a minority to representing approximately the entire nation (Motyl, 2013:51).

In spite of this, he rejected the long-awaited agreement, which demonstrated a secondary upheaval called the Euro-Revolution with its main obligation to integrate Ukraine with the EU. However, it was not only a desire to join the EU; it was rather a willingness to defend democracy, national dignity, human rights and freedom within the country. Eventually, the revolt reached its culmination and forced the Yanukovich regime to flee the country and hence got replaced by a pro-Western government (Motyl, 2013:52-53, Chapman, 2014:64-65).

Ever since the election in 2004, the balance within Ukraine has swung back and forth, which further contributes permanent political crises within the country. In the aftermath as a result of the Euro-Revolution, a Russian annexation to seize the Crimean Peninsula ensued. The Russian-speaking citizens on the island demanded independence since they felt aggrieved with the new oppositional government. The Crimea parliament declared in 2014 the island's independence, which only was recognized by Russia (Stoner, 2014:83-84).

From a global perspective, Putin got instructed by the Russian parliament’s upper chamber to intervene militarily in the Crimea. Simultaneously, the upper chamber adopted a referendum, which gave Putin the right by law to declare the Crimea as a part of Russia. This Russian incursion created a fear whereas the US, NATO and the EU blamed Russia for threatening the peace and precautions within Europe (Darden, 2014:76-77). Further demonstrations by pro-Russians and anti-government groups emerged in 2015 at the Donetsk and the Luhansk oblasts in Ukraine. These demonstrations escalated into an armed conflict between the pro-Russians and the Ukrainian government. Once again, Russia provided with combatants and crossed the borders without the Ukrainian
government’s permission. This fostered the US and its European allies toughening their troops in the Eastern Europe (BBC, 2015).

4.2 Russia and the US
As argued by Ondrej Ditrych and Sergei Karaganov, by observing the relationship between the two great powers during one of the most serious crises since the Cold War, can contribute with an understanding that the two great powers are in a risky position that could affect all the states at the international arena in the future (Ditrych, 2014:76, Karaganov, 2014). There is a deep-seated distrust between Russia and the US that continues to linger in the Cold War spirit. This simulated relationship between the two great powers prejudices in particular international politics, seeing that every step each actor takes is being questioned and interpreted as a strategic move towards becoming a global dominant power (Ditrych, 2014:76). As argued by Sakwa, the Cold War did not result in a peaceful relationship, it rather led towards a cold peace between them (Sakwa, 2015:4).

4.2.1 NATO’s enlargement
About fifty years ago the Soviet Union (USSR) achieved the status as a great power. The USSR’s success along with the country's huge military power has been seen as triumphant. However, the American victory of the Cold War and the dissolution of USSR 1991 resulted in that Russia’s territorial integrity with its 15 republics got demolished, which further led to an economic disintegration and a political instability within the country (Webber, 1993:691, Sakwa, 2015:6).

Simultaneously, the US-led NATO’s enlargement began to take place eastward, which led to that countries such as Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania received membership. Some of the new member states were in a military alliance with USSR during the Cold War, i.e. the Warsaw Pact (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland) and other were post-Soviet states such as the Baltic region (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). This led to a grievance by Russia, especially when NATO began to take over the Baltic region (Mearsheimer, 2014:4-5, Sakwa, 2015:4-5).

Despite Russia’s warning that NATO should not expand eastward, the enlargement continued. In 2008, NATO announced that Ukraine and Georgia will become members, which Russia considered as a strategic threat especially when Gorbachov, the leader during the Soviet years was promised that NATO would not proceed to the east (Sakwa, 2015:4, Mearsheimer, 2014:44-45, Rühle, 2014:235-236). The main reason why Russia reacted so strongly regarding the enlargement of Ukraine and Georgia was due to geopolitical reasons whereas having a military base so close to Russia’s borders would affect the country’s strategic security interests (Mearsheimer, 2014:4-6, Weaver, 2013:3).
4.2.2 EU’s Enlargement
It was after the Cold War and the collapse of the Berlin wall when several countries from Central and Eastern Europe wanted to be incorporated more and more with the West. The interest of an entry in the EU was mainly due to ensure a complete independency from Russia and the ambition of a change, which they believed the EU could possibly provide. A full membership would, among other things, access to the EU’s liberal market economy, which would improve their economic growth and strengthen their relationship with the West in the future (DeBardeleben in Kanet, 2009:48).

Although Russia has been critical of NATO’s enlargement, it has also begun to raise objections towards the EU’s enlargement (DeBardeleben in Kanet, 2009:47). In the context of the EU’s extension of east (consisting of post-Soviet states) in 2004, created further tension between Russia and the EU. Russia saw this as a strategic step towards a European superiority meanwhile the EU argued that the dissolution of USSR made it possible for Europe to increase its integration and thus secure it from war to occur in the future (DeBardeleben in Kanet, 2009:48, Asmus, 2008:95-96).

However, simultaneously as the EU’s enlargement expanded eastward, Russia made an effort to strengthen its regional integration, i.e. the Eurasian Economy Union, EEU. The geopolitical issue that has permeated Russia’s and the EU’s boarders regarding the acquisition of their neighboring countries has created an indirect competition between them. As argued by Joan DeBardeleben and Ronald D. Asmus, the EU is aiming towards achieving a united Europe meanwhile Russia is aiming towards integrating the post-Soviet states to involve within EEU and is thus demonstrating its territorial integrity with the pursuit of a superiority of the former USSR region (DeBardeleben in Kanet, 2009:49, Asmus, 2008:96-99). This could thus be seen as an aim from Russia and the EU to have territorial integrity in order to become a regional hegemon over a certain area (Compare with Mearsheimer, 2001:140-143).

4.2.3 The Black Sea Region (BSR)
According to the EU commission, the BSR is seen as a geographical area rich on natural resources and a strategic position whereas Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East encounter. Furthermore, the EU commission argues that there are significant opportunities in the BSR that requires coordinated action at the regional level. It is of importance to strive for a decision of common purpose about energy, transport, environment, movement and security in order to stabilize the current issues there (KOM, 2007:2).

During the 1990s the BSR was not much of an interest for many stakeholders. However, in recent years the importance of the region has increased in the context of the globalization process. As
argued by Carol Weaver, the Black Sea has evolved and become one of the world's most critical intersections by the West and the East, i.e. the region has become a geographical issue, which enhances a strategic interest of both regional and far-off actors. Furthermore, the current situation has thus demonstrated and created a combat zone between Russia, the US, NATO and the EU with their contradictory interests (Weaver, 2013:63, 65).

4.2.4 The Russian Black Sea Fleet
Before and during the Cold War era, the Black Sea Region practically belonged to Russia but became an insecure region after the dissolution of USSR. However in recent years a pressure from the US and the West has enforced Russia to enhance its power by securing the region in order to avoid loosing it (Delanoë, 2014:370, Klare, 2008). Furthermore, the advantage with BSR from a Russian perspective is that the region is an opening for the Middle East in which Russia has a partnership with a numerous of countries. Hence, the region is a very important economic asset for Russia (Delanoë, 2014:370).

It is seen that the Crimea, especially Sevastopol plays a very significant role for Russia since the Russian Black Sea fleet is stationed there. The consequence that followed after the Ukrainian independency was that Russia had to share its naval fleet and bases in Crimea with Ukraine and thus needed to lease its Black Sea Fleet’s center of operations and its airbases. However, the problematic that arose in context with the Ukraine crisis was the fear that if Ukraine would accept the EU-Agreement in 2013, it would in the long run affect Russia’s influence on the Black Sea (Sanders, 2014:65-66). As argued by Mearsheimer, Russia thus begun to pressure and threaten Ukraine not to merge itself with the West. Furthermore, in order to prevent a Western influence Russia gave weapons, advisors and diplomatic support for the pro-Russian regions of Ukraine, which triggered the domestic conflict between the nationalists, the extremists and the pro-Russians even further (Mearsheimer, 2014:9).
4.3 Research results
In this chapter the four chosen articles that will be analyzed in the analysis chapter, will be presented here below one by one. The interpretation of the articles will be conducted by the four questions in order to approach the chosen texts in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of them.

4.3.1 Article 1: Putin’s Own Goal: The Invasion of Crimea and Putin’s Political Frame.

4.3.1.1 What is the text about?
Brian D. Taylor focuses on Putin’s perspective in the article in order to understand the situation in Ukraine. He emphasizes that the way out of the crisis requires an understanding both in terms of Putin’s actions in Ukraine and how it adversary would affect his regulation if the country becomes westernized (Taylor, 2014:92). Hence, the Ukraine crisis is seen as the newest episode in a long-term competition between Russia and the US. From a historical perspective, Taylor argues that similar incidents have happened in former Soviet-states such as in Georgia, 2008. Taylor further states that the Russian view of the West could be understood since the US and its Western alliance has reinforced the Russian view when NATO committed to eventual membership for both Georgia as well as Ukraine (Taylor, 2014:93-94). The Ukraine crisis has thus become a zero-sum game in which a win for Russia is a loss for the West and vice versa. Taylor arrives at the conclusion that Russia and the West should end the confrontational moves and rather use diplomatic means in order to compromise a solution. If this does not occur, this vicious cycle will continue and affect all the neighboring states as well as the rest of the world (Taylor, 2014:97-98).

4.3.1.2 What is the purpose of the text?
The purpose is to highlight what Russia can lose if it cut its ties with Ukraine. Taylor argues that Putin's main goal is not to reunite the Soviet Union even though his involvement with the EEU indicates it. Rather, the events in Ukraine are to demonstrate that the Russian-speaking people have to understand how important it is to have internal stability. In other words, Taylor believes that Putin wants to maintain the current political system with him in the lead (Taylor, 2014: 92, 95). Thus the underlying meaning of the text is to explain Russia’s approach to maintain its power is by getting as many Russian-speakers on its side. He indicates this by explaining that Russia’s economy has degraded in recent years, especially after the financial crisis in 2008. Putin had 80 percent of the popular rating in previous years and economic growth had increased by seven percent per year. In the current situation Putin still has a high popular rating even though it has decreased to 60 percent. However, the economic growth has been affected negatively and in 2013 it has been estimated that the economy has decreased to 1.4 percent per year. Hence, Russia and especially Putin is afraid that the economic stagnation is not temporary rather systemic (Taylor, 2014:95-96).
4.3.1.3 How does the researcher arrive at its opinion?
Consequently, it is reasonable how Taylor arrives at his opinion. Putin’s tactics to maintain his power despite the economic stagnation is by upholding the popular ratings by mirroring a facade that it is the Russian natives that are in focus. But when observing Putin’s actions and behavior in practice it rather demonstrates the attempt to maintain his power since it is seen that the economic stagnation can create dissatisfaction by the citizens, which can hamper Putin’s position of power (Taylor, 2014:97).

4.3.1.4 What is the conclusion?
Taylor therefore states that Russia thus feels threatened by the West. The Ukraine crisis has resulted in a zero-sum game whereas the gain is an increased power (Taylor, 2014:97). He further argues that the solutions for the Ukraine crisis should consist of negotiations through diplomatic arrangements rather than confrontational moves that further trigger the zero-sum game (Taylor, 2014:97-98).

4.3.2 Article 2: After the Crimean crisis: towards a greater Russian maritime power in the Black Sea.

4.3.2.1 What is the text about?
The scientific article that is written by Igor Delanoë, aims to explain Russia’s actions regarding the annexation of Crimea. The researcher first examines what affiliation Russia has to Crimea and further states that it is noticed that Russia has a greater interest to obtain its power over the Russian Black Sea Fleet, which is stationed in the capital Sevastopol rather than to protect the Russian-speaking citizens in Ukraine. Hence, the prominent reason why Russia annexed Crimea has primarily been in order to increase Russia’s maritime power in the BSR (Delanoë, 2014:367, 379).

4.3.2.2 What is the purpose of the text?
Delanoë argues that the BSR has during its recent year attracted both regional as well as external actors such as Russia, Turkey, the EU, the US and NATO. This is mainly due to that the region is rich on natural resources and is seen as a strategic position whereas east-west and south-north encounter. Delanoë explains that the actors desire to dominate the region since it is seen that it is beneficial for transit routes. Hence, he argues that this has created a competition field between the actors with their conflicting interests to obtain power in the region. The BSR has in other words become a zero-sum game, in particular between Russia and the US (Delanoë, 2014:367-368). Therefore the purpose of the article is to highlight the underlying reasons of Russia’s behavior as well as its actions in the Ukrainian crisis by examining Russia’s geopolitical interests as well as its engagement in the region after the annexation of Crimea (Delanoë, 2014:370).
In 2010 the Ukrainian president Yanukovych and at that time Russian president, Dimitri Medvedev, signed the Kharkov Agreement consisting a lease contract of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, which implied an extension from 2017 to 2042. In return, Ukraine received a discount on Russian gas imports, which corresponded up to 40 billion dollars. Delanoë believes that this strategic move was predominantly due to not loosing the Russian sovereignty of the fleet, if Ukraine would become westernized (Delanoë, 2014:374). The underlying meaning of the text is not shown straightforward. The research examines what strategic plans have been done after the annexations of Crimea and what Russia has benefited from declaring Crimea as a part of Russia. In such way, even if Delanoë does not mention it explicitly, one can still see that the latent message is that the Russian involvement in Ukraine was not due to stabilize and reduce the disturbances in Crimea. It was rather to secure its maritime power in the BSR as well as to secure its dominance over the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol in order to eliminate potential threats that could jeopardize Russia's influence in the region (Delanoë, 2014:370, 374-375).

4.3.2.3 How does the researcher arrive at its opinion?
Delanoë argues that Russia has had a major economical influence within the BSR since it is an important transit route for its energy exports to Europe. Over 25 percent of Europe’s total oil consumption is provided by Russia and approximately one third of this is transported by oil tankers from the Black Sea. The region is thus an opening for the Middle East in which Russia has a partnership with a numerous of countries. Hence, the BSR is seen as a very important economic asset for Russia (Delanoë, 2014:370-371). Delanoë arrive at his opinion by arguing that Russia has secured its maritime power due to the annexation of Crimea. Russia’s further naval plans are to developing one of its biggest and important transport harbors, i.e. Novorossiysk. The Novorossiysk port will from an earlier stage as a timber terminal develop into a container handling facility, which further will double Russia’s export transit. Another additional plan is to upgrade the Russian Black Sea Fleet, which thus in the future will be assumed as one of the most ambitious developments so far. When these plans are achieved, Russia will enhance to ensure navigation and sea lines of communication in the Black Sea. Furthermore, it will increase the exercise of military and political control and thus hinder potential domestic conflicts to emerge that can threaten Russia. In such manner, Russia will achieve to promote and protect its economy as well as its security interests in the Mediterranean and thus improve its economical growth (Delanoë, 2014:371-374).

4.3.2.4 What is the conclusion?
Delanoë arrives at the conclusion that Russia with its new territory, i.e. Crimea, could now begin to upgrade its bases at the BSR and thus enhance its military power without the Western or the Ukrainian influences. The reconstruction of the Black Sea Fleet will enable sovereignty of
Sevastopol as well as in the BSR, which will open up Russia's possibilities for future developments such as improved and upgraded military hardware, coastal missiles, land based forces and aircraft and transit routes (Delanoë, 2014:379-380). However, Delanoë believes that even though the annexation of Crimea resulted in an advantage for Russia, it has created an environment within the BSR with new risks of confrontations and conflicts from both regional and external actors against the Russian engagement in the region (Delanoë, 2014: 367).

4.3.3 Article 3: Ukraine’s Defense Engagement With the United States.

4.3.3.1 What is the text about?
Gary, D. Espinas argues in his article about the American perspective on the Ukraine crisis and the importance of continuing an American-Ukrainian relationship. Furthermore, Ukraine does not only face internal disturbances such as a deep economic crisis and an unstable political system but also an external threat such as Russia. He further argues that the European stability and prosperity are best served by a Ukraine that is democratic, secure in its borders and integrated with Europe and Euro-Atlantic institutions. However, Russia considers the US involvement in Ukraine as a confrontation disturbing Russia’s sphere of influence. Despite this, Espinas argues that the Ukrainian interest of a greater European integration, the US needs to continue its effort to assist Ukraine (Espinas, 2009:53). He further argues that it is not only important for Ukraine to integrate with Europe but also important for the US to not forfeit Ukraine. Hence, the conclusion is that if Ukraine engages with the US and NATO will contribute a greater and modern Ukrainian military as well as a greater Euro-Atlantic security for the US (Espinas, 2009:61).

4.3.3.2 What is the purpose of the text?
The purpose with the article is to highlight why Ukraine as well as the US needs to collaborate and what kind of outcome it will lead to if they do. Espinas argues that it is of importance for the US to involve in Ukraine due to its geostrategic significance. Ukraine is seen as a crossroad between Europe and Asia and is also a key transit for European energy. Hence, it is a significant country in the BSR in order for the West to continue its influence there. Furthermore, if Ukraine becomes a NATO-member it will thus contribute to an American control of Russia’s engagement in the BSR as well as an American military presence close to the Russian borders (Espinas, 2009:54-55).

4.3.3.3 How does the researcher arrive at its opinion?
Espinas states that the US has for several years been committed to Ukraine due to it’s underlying reasons, seeing that a Ukrainian NATO-membership would contribute to a more stabilized transatlantic community. Furthermore, to integrate Ukraine with NATO would strengthen bilateral as well as multilateral ties that would enhance NATO’s security as a affluent community (Espinas,
2009:55). Hence, Espinas arrives at his opinion since it is seen from a historical perspective that the US engagement has been due to the key incentive to secure its capacity in the region by initiating a strategic relationship with Ukraine (Espinas, 2009:57).

4.3.3.4 What is the conclusion?
Espinas argues that the main reason of the US involvement in Ukraine has been mostly due to Russia's influence. The Ukraine endeavor to become westernized has challenged Russia’s desire to become a regional hegemon, which can be demonstrated with the disturbances between Russia and Georgia in 2008, where Russia indicated that if necessary, Russia will use military forces (Espinas, 2009:59). Consequently, Espinas believes that such interventions on sovereign states needs to be taken seriously since it threatens democracy, human rights as well as the world order. Hence, Ukraine should become integrated with Europe since it would provide the best guarantee of security and prosperity. Additionally, a strengthened relationship with the US and NATO could contribute to an important component for the Ukrainian military forces to become stronger as well as modern. Furthermore, Espinas argues that even though if a NATO membership is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future due to Russia’s and the Obama administrations collaboration with solving global issues, Ukraine should consider in the future to alliance with the US and NATO since it would result in a win-win for all parties concerned (Espinas, 2009:61).

4.3.4 Article 4: Continuities and Raptures: Tracking the US Interests in the Black Sea Area in the Context of the ‘Pivot to Asia’.

4.3.4.1 What is the text about?
Sergei Konoplyov and Delanoë tries to highlight the US interest in the BSR and the reasons behind its actions. They believe that the US increased interest in the Black Sea is to create as well as to secure a passage in the Black Sea, which will enable influence and military presence towards Central Asia and the Middle East (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:357). Furthermore, it shows that there are several reasons of the American involvement in the region. It is not just about securing the American energy resources and to reduce Russia's potential threats to re-emerge as a main regional hegemon in the area but also to secure the Black Sea-states in order to prevent them to become safe havens for terrorist groups. This is explained by a historical retrospective whereas Konoplyov and Delanoë argue that the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US resulted in the creation of War On Terror in order to cease terrorist groups. Hence, the BSR has become an American priority due to the Black Sea intersection since it is connecting the Middle East, Eurasia and Europe, which makes it accessible for terrorist groups to spread (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:359).
4.3.4.2 What is the purpose of the text?
The purpose of the article is to emphasize on the underlying reasons of the US involvement in the BSR. Konoplyov and Delanoë argue that the US main resource is energy, which is seen as the main resource that enhances the US and its European partners economical growth as well as stability. Hence, energy is the driving force of the American Foreign Policy and a priority to secure its accessibility and affordability in order to maintain it (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:357). However, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 affected the US foreign policy as well as priority and interest in the Black Sea and thus created a further incentive to the US involvement in the region. The BSR became a platform of influence and power projection for the War on Terror. This influence was mainly due to that the region’s strategic position increased the risks of organized crime and various illegal trafficking activities that could further promote international terrorism. Konoplyov and Delanoë argue that the NATO’s enlargement in the region was predominantly to secure and provide stability and to enhance NATO’s capacities of intervention for future potential terror attacks (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:358). The underlying meaning of the text is therefore to illuminate that the increased American interest in the region is mainly due to secure and stabilize the region for external threats such as terrorists as well as to secure its energy resources and to hinder Russia’s potential ability to become a regional hegemon, which can hamper the US economical growth. The dilemma for the US is on the one hand, that it needs Russia's support due to the global threats simultaneously as it on the other hand wants to prevent Russia to become a regional hegemon (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:359-362).

4.3.4.3 How does the researchers arrive at its opinion?
When Barack Obama became the US president, he decided to put the relations with the Arabs at the top of his policy agenda and thenceforth aimed to rebuilt confidence with Russia. This could only be done if the NATO enlargement would be put at the back burner, especially with the commitment of a potential membership of Georgia and Ukraine (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:361). Furthermore, the US needs an improved relationship with Russia in order to obtain support due to key international issues such as Iran’s nuclear program and arms control (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:362). Hence, the US did not seek to challenge Russia openly, especially with Georgia and Ukraine. Their relationship has thus improved globally since 2008 whereas the progress on global issues such as the events in Afghanistan is still a common objective. However, the US security agenda in the BSR has not changed, which makes their bilateral relationship still tense (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:362).
4.3.4.4 What is the conclusion?

Konoplyov and Delanoë argue that the US foreign policy has changed and is now less driven by the promotion of democracy. Rather, it has become a strategic as well as a security interests eastward, such as the issues with Iran and East Asia, hence the priority has become to solve its foreign policy issues. However, while the energy still remains as the main resource and direct investment, the US still controls from behind by using NATO and the EU as channels in order to continue its security control over the energy (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:363). After the US withdrawal from Iraq and the upcoming pullout from Afghanistan, it is likely to understand the involvement of the US in the BSR. Konoplyov and Delanoë describes the US actions as the ‘pivot to Asia’ since the main goal has been to secure and stabilize the BSR due to the activities after the terrorist attack. Hence, they believe that the US does not have any interest in challenging Russia in its privileged sphere of interests. Therefore, the disturbances in Ukraine and the involvement of the US has not been to confront Russia, rather the incentives has been to ensure the BSR for security reasons (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:365-366).

4.4 Research result summary

By means of the four questions this study has referred to, the four articles has contributed to the essential content of the texts as well as the latent message of each article. The analysis chapter will be based on these four articles, Article 1 and Article 2 will answer the research question: What can explain Russia’s actions and behavior in the Ukraine crisis? And Article 3 and Article 4 will answer the research question: What can explain the US actions and behavior in the Ukraine crisis? This chosen strategy is due to that the articles have been strategically selected from a Russian and an American perspective, which therefore can contribute to a broader and deeper insight of the two actors behaviors and actions in the crisis.
5 Analysis
The research questions will be answered by means of limiting the research through observing the two-sided view simultaneously as the theory offensive realism will be the theoretical lens the gathered information of the chosen articles will be viewed from in order to highlight the most essential and underlying factors of Russia’s and the US involvement in the crisis. Hence, the analysis will consist of the three selected categories: diplomacy, economy and military.

5.1 What can explain Russia’s behavior and actions in the Ukraine crisis?

5.1.1 Diplomacy
Mearsheimer believes that it is practically impossible for states to have control over the whole world rather a state strives to dominate in a particular region (Mearsheimer, 2001:140). This can be interlinked with Delanoë’s argument in Article 2 that Russia is trying to maintain as well as enhance its maritime power in order to ensure its position in the BSR by dominating over certain areas such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia as well as the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine. The escalated tension in the BSR between the regional and the external actors can be seen as one of the occasions why Russia fears other external threats trying to deteriorate Russia’s dominance. As argued by Mearsheimer, great powers aim to hinder potential rivals to become hegemonies in the same region. Hence, it is seen that the underlying causes why the BSR has become a zero-sum game between rivals (Mearsheimer, 2001:140-141).

This may also declare the reasons why Russia annexed Crimea. Its strategic position in the Black Sea would benefit Russia in order to gain further dominance as well as a greater influence in the competition field. As argued by Delanoë, the annexation of Crimea was rather a profit-making interest in order to secure and to strengthen the Russian sovereignty of the Black Sea Fleet (The Kharkov Agreement) in Sevastopol and its transit routes for energy exports to Europe and Asia (Delanoë, 2014:379). Hence, Crimea as a part of the Russian Federation has reduced potential external actors pressure such as the US and NATO influences (Delanoë, 2014:370, 374-375).

One may consequently argue that the latent message of Delanoë’s article explains Russia’s behavior and actions in Ukraine, especially in Crimea. Through this perspective, Russia’s engagement was not to reduce the disturbances at the domestic level in order to protect the pro-Russians. Instead as Taylor argues in Article 1, the situation in Ukraine regarding the pro-Russians has favored Putin, which has given him a reason to intervene. In practice it was rather about maintaining Putin’s popular ratings in order to continue as a leader and thus secure his position and influence in the Black Sea (Taylor, 2014:92,95).
5.1.2 Economy
As Mearsheimer argues, great powers seek to achieve an amount of world wealth since wealth in general generates economy and thus a strong military power. In practice, this means that great powers are aiming for a good economy (Mearsheimer, 2001:143-144). As argued by Taylor, if Russia loses its influence in Ukraine it could hamper its degraded economy since it has been estimated that the Russian economical growth has decreased from 7 percent to 1.4 percent per year after the financial crisis in 2008 (Taylor, 2014:95-96). Hence, one may see that the underlying reasons of Russia’s influences in the crisis has been to approach and to get closer to the BSR, which is rich on natural resources and thus a favorable strategic area to dominate in order to access beneficial transit routes to Europe as well as to Central Asia. The annexation of Crimea has thereby created the possibilities for Russia to boost its economy further since it has increased its influences in the region. As Delanoë argues, Russia’s major economical influence in the BSR is due to its important transit routes for energy exports to Europe since it provides over 25 percent of Europe’s total oil consumption (Delanoë, 2014:370-371). Seeing that Crimea now belongs to Russia, one may thus argue that another underlying reason why Russia annexed the island was due to economical stability as well as improvements.

5.1.3 Military
Mearsheimer believes that great powers also seek to pursuit a domination of land power since it is the best possible way to maximize control of a region. This further means that states most important military asset is the ground forces, which is reinforced through strong air and naval forces. In other words, states strive to enhance their military power in order to compete in a world that consists of territorial hegemons (Mearsheimer, 2001:85-87, 145). The Kharkov Agreement of extending the lease to year 2042 has given the possibility to modernize and expand the Russian Black Sea Fleet. As argued by Delanoë, the annexation of Crimea as well as the signed Kharkov Agreement has increased Russia’s sovereignty of the fleet and has given the possibility for Russia to commence the Black Sea Fleet development, which is estimated to become one of the most ambitious developments in the region so far. This will in the long-term perspective further increase Russia’s maritime power (Delanoë, 2014: 374).

Additionally, the reconstruction of the Black Sea Fleet will enable sovereignty of Sevastopol and thus open up Russia's possibilities for future developments such as improved and upgraded military hardware, coastal missiles, land based forces and aircraft (Delanoë, 2014:375). Hence, this could be seen as another underlying reason of Russia’s behavior and actions in Ukraine.
Consequently, the balance of power in the Black Sea ever since Russia annexed Crimea has altered. Russia has now managed to secure the region and thus created a wider and better coastline, which will enhance the Russian military power in the future and therefore reduce external actors influences in the Black Sea (Compare with Mearsheimer, 2001:85-87, 145). As argued by Delanoë, Russia can now improve to ensure navigation and sea lines of communication in the Black Sea. This will further increase the implementation of military and political influences and hinder potential domestic conflicts as well as external pressure to emerge that can intimidate Russia (Delanoë, 2014:371-374). One may therefore argue from a futuristic aspect that Russia will achieve to promote and protect its economy as well as its security interests in the Mediterranean.

5.2 What can explain the US behavior and actions in the Ukraine crisis?

5.2.1 Diplomacy
Mearsheimer argues that there are situations when a distant hegemon decides to involve in another region and that is mainly when the balance of power within a far-off region is uneven (Mearsheimer, 2001:3, 141). This can be related to the ongoing situation between Ukraine and Russia. However, before an inference of a distant hegemon occurs, in this case the US, it considers if any other local great power is better suited to meet the threat that prejudices the balance of power (Mearsheimer, 2001:141-143). As argued by Konoplyov and Delanoë in Article 4 the EU appears to be the main channel of the American involvement in Ukraine (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:364). However, when Yanukovych declined the Association Agreement with the EU it resulted in that the US had to involved in the conflict itself. Especially when Russia began to send sanctions to Ukraine and threatened to annex Crimea.

Mearsheimer further argues that a distant hegemon will take advantage of such a situation by providing a state with military assets, such as troops in order for the potential rival to not become the territorial hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001:3, 141-143). One can thus see from a historical perspective the reason why the US-led NATO has been trying to commence a relationship with Ukraine. Furthermore, as argued by Espinas in Article 3, NATO enlargement eastward has been extensively prioritized in order to reduce the risks of an increased Russian influence within the country. This is due to that it can adversary affect the US strategic interest with Ukraine (Espinas, 2009:57-58). He argues that a Ukrainian NATO-membership would have contributed to a more stabilized transatlantic community for NATO as well as an American control of Russia’s engagement in the BSR since a Ukrainian membership would have contributed a military presence closer to the Russian border (Espinas, 2009:54-55).
Furthermore, Sevastopol and the Ukrainian port of Odessa are considered to be significant for Russia and through a Western involvement in the country as well as a NATO membership would undermine Russia’s influence in the BSR. This could cut its access to the Mediterranean that further could create an economic loss for Russia and thus hinder it to become a greater hegemon in the region (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:359-362, Mearsheimer, 2001:142-143). This could be seen as a strategic movement from the US since it aims to hinder Russia to dominate a specific region, i.e. Ukraine, especially the Crimea and the Black Sea.

5.2.2 Economy
Seeing that energy is the main resource for both the US and its European partners the BSR thus become an important area to influence. As argued by Konoplyov and Delanoë, the energy resource is a priority since it contributes to a greater economic growth. If the US looses its energy access, it will from a futuristic aspect sustain instability as well as an economic loss for both the US and Europe (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:357). This can be understood when connecting Mearsheimer’s statement, since great powers aim for a strong economy (Mearsheimer, 2001:143). Hence, the ongoing zero-sum game at the BSR can be interlinked with the US involvement of the Ukraine crisis.

Mearsheimer further believes that great powers also seek to hinder other great powers to dominate specific regions that can enhance their economic growth and thus decrease the other great power’s economy. Such areas of the world are either industrial countries or underdeveloped countries that have natural resources that external states can take advantage of. Furthermore, if a great power does not become a dominant power of that region, it will do whatever to hinder others to take over (Mearsheimer, 2001:144-145). As argued by Espinas, the US key incentive with the influence in Ukraine has been to secure its capacity in the Black Sea by initiating a strategic relationship with Ukraine through a NATO and a EU-membership. The US is afraid that a stronger influence by Russia would adversary effect the US economic growth and thus military capacities in Europe (Espinas, 2009:57).

One can see that the US main economic livelihood is energy resources. The strive to ensure its access, availability and affordability of energy is mainly due to secure its economical stability and thus having the interest to firmly establish the Black Sea towards the West and maintain its European power (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:357-358). As Mearsheimer argues, the ideal stage for a great power is when it has achieved a strong economic growth simultaneously as other rivals economy has either been weakened or stagnated (Mearsheimer, 2001:143-144). Consequently, the US involvement both in Ukraine as well as in the Black Sea can explain its underlying reasons of
hindering Russia to increase its economical growth since it would contribute Russia to become a regional hegemon that can threaten and hamper the US influence in that region and thus its own economic growth (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:359-362).

5.2.3 Military
As mentioned previously, Ukraine is seen as a geostrategic significant country due to its position in the BSR for external actors, such as the US and Russia (Espinas, 2009:54-55). As argued by Mearsheimer, great powers seek to strive a domination of land power seeing that it is the greatest way to maximize control of a region. Furthermore, this is achieved when a great power maximizes its military assets such as ground forces as well as air and naval forces (Mearsheimer, 2001:85-87, 145).

From a historical perspective the US has for several years been committed to Ukraine, seeing that a Ukrainian NATO-membership would contribute to a more stabilized American military presence in the region (Espinas, 2009:55). Thus, one may argue that the NATO enlargement Eastward could be seen as an underlying reason in order for the US to secure and maintain its influence in Europe as well as the American and European interests in the BSR. As mentioned by Konoplyov and Delanoë, another underlying reason of extending the American military capacity has been to secure the BSR since it is seen as a safe havens for terrorist groups (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:359). Thus, the US has increased its interest to enhance a military presence in the region due to geopolitical reasons such as maintaining its influences on energy resources as well as confronting the global issues with external threats. One may consequently argue that a NATO enlargement eastward would contribute to a double profit for the US both in terms of the geopolitical interests as well as security reasons (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014:359-365). In other words, states will always strive to enhance their military power in order to compete in a world that consists of territorial hegemons, in this case Russia (Mearsheimer, 2001:85-87, 145). Furthermore, if a great power that sees another great power having strong military capability, it will feel threatened due to that it increases the chances of a potential overtake. Hence, states can never be sure about others states intuitions since there are many triggering factors for a state to act aggressively (Mearsheimer, 2001:30-31, 42-46). With this in mind, the Ukraine crisis as well as the BSR has created a vicious cycle between two great powers that believes the best possible way to eliminate one another’s influence is to confront as well as to control the situation by maximizing one’s own power (Mearsheimer, 2001:145-147).
6 Conclusion

Russia and the US have experienced a tumultuous relationship as great powers and witnessed a variety of events that have influenced their behaviors and actions in the Ukraine crisis. Survival is the main goal for great powers since states always tries to maintain their territorial integrity and autonomy of their domestic political order. Furthermore, the US involvement with NATO’s extension, the EU’s enlargement and Russia's integration with the EEU, clearly demonstrates that states are rational actors who are aware of their environment and will thus always think strategically on how to survive at the international sphere. Seeing that the Ukraine crisis arose due to that the Ukrainian citizens began to question the Ukraine unitary nation identity as well as the pro-Russian Yanukovych regime, Russia’s and the US behaviors and actions have not demonstrated to secure the disturbances between the pro-Western and pro-Russians citizens. It becomes clearly that the Ukraine crisis has developed into a geopolitical power struggle between Russia and the US whereas their incentives have further divided the country. Their behaviors and actions could be explained as to increase their dominance in the BSR. Hence, it is seen from a two-sided view that both of them have an economic interest in the region due to the enhancement and securitization of the energy resources as well as the transit routes.

From a Russian perspective, the underlying reasons for its behavior and actions in Ukraine has thus been to continue to control its sovereignty of the Black Sea Fleet and expand its maritime power eastward. This in return would lead to an economic growth, which will contribute to an increased popular rating for Putin that further will secure his presidential position and as a greater power seen as a regional hegemon at the international level. From an American perspective, its behavior and actions in Ukraine are mainly due to maintain its influence in Europe and thus hinder potential external threats. The US foreign policy has changed after 9/11, which has led to an increased security and military agenda in order to protect itself. Its operation with the NATO enlargement can therefore explain its increased interest in the BSR since it is argued to be a safe havens for terrorists due to its strategic position. Furthermore, from a two-sided view it is thus seen that both of the actors behaviors and involvements have clearly demonstrated that the focus is not to enhance the situation for the citizens within Ukraine but rather to fulfill their self-interests.

6.1 Further discussion

As mentioned previously, the Ukraine crisis arose do to that the citizens wanted a change within Ukraine, i.e. an improved democratic system as well as the human rights, a reduced corruption and a unified nation where all citizens are included. One may thus argue that the outcome of the crisis could have been different without the Russian and the American involvement in Ukraine. It would have rather been preferable for them to use diplomatic means in order to solve the conflict from
within instead of making confrontational moves against each other to secure their position at the international level. Furthermore, the focus on how to gain or lesser each other’s power has created an imbalance in the world order. If this relationship between Russia and the US is not taken seriously, there are high chances of similar events to happen in the future and thus another cold war to occur that may flourish and affect not only the former Soviet states but also the rest of Europe.

Since this thesis has extracted the behaviors and actions of Russia and the US, it is important to understand that this research has only contributed to one perspective of the Ukraine crisis. Hence, it may be preferable to replicate it and develop it further by including other causes and external actors such as the EU, but also the Ukrainian citizens. This would further contribute to a greater perspective of the ongoing crisis and a potential solution on how to prevent similar conflicts to occur in the future.
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