

Russian -Ukrainian relations and its impact on NATO

Abstract

The heritage of the Soviets continues to be reflected in Russian policy-making ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ukraine decided to be part of the west while seeking to join the European Union and NATO at the same time as the Russian authorities decided to regain Russia's international status. When Putin came to power, he was pursuing the expansion of Russian influence over post-Soviet space. Russia raised the idea of the multi-polar world and condemned the prevailing dominance of one country. Putin declared that Russia is going to take its role in a multi-polar international system.

In order to create a balance of power, Russia had to create its sphere of influence, Moscow identified the post-Soviet space as its sphere of vital interests, and thus Russian backyard became the first priority in Russian Foreign Policy. Ukraine appeared at the forefront of the political tension between the West and Russia.

Keywords: Ethnic-Crimea -Energy sector-Bilateral relations-NATO

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Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Ukraine, Russia set up diplomatic relations with the Republic of Ukraine on 14 February, 1992. The Ukraine possesses a sensitive position between Russia and NATO members and it also owns more than half the area of the "Eastern Gate" leading to Europe, which is the gateway to the historic crossing of the threats, targeting the continuation of operations and integration of the European and transatlantic partnership to reduce Russia's influence in the region, and to tighten control. As for Russia, which is disturbed by the arrival of the influence of the West in its wide borders, it cannot leave Ukraine to become part of the system of the Western economy and security; as well as feelings of Russian

ملخص

لا يزال تراث السوفييات ينعكس في صنع السياسة الروسية منذ انهيار الاتحاد السوفيياتي. لقد قررت أوكرانيا أن تكون جزءاً من الغرب بينما تسعى إلى الانضمام إلى الاتحاد الأوروبي ومنظمة حلف شمال الأطلسي في الوقت نفسه ، كما أن السلطات الروسية قررت استعادة المكانة الدولية لروسيا. فبمجرد وصول بوتين إلى السلطة، بدأ يتابع باهتمام بالغ توسيع النفوذ الروسي عبر الفضاء بعد انهيار الاتحاد السوفيياتي. وقد أثارت روسيا فكرة عالم متعدد الأقطاب وأدانت الهيمنة السائدة من قبل بلد واحد. وأعلن بوتين أن روسيا سوف تأخذ دورها في إقامة نظام دولي متعدد الأقطاب.

وبغية خلق توازن في القوى، كان لزاما على روسيا إنشاء مجالا لنفوذها، وقد حددت موسكو الفضاء ما بعد الاتحاد السوفياتي كمجال لمصالحها الحيوية، وهكذا أصبح الفناء الخلفي لروسيا من أولى الأوليات في "السياسة الخارجية الروسية". وأصبحت أوكرانيا في طليعة التوتر السياسي بين روسيا والغرب. الكلمات الدالة: الإثنية- شبه جزيرة القرم- العلاقات الثنائية- قطاع الطاقة-منظمة حلف شمال الأطلسي.

nationalism toward Ukraine, they are considered within the "zone of vital interests " and strategic isolation from the West and its allies.

Russia is a large state which links Asia and Europe, with political and economic potential, in addition to diplomatic and military capabilities. It seeks to employ these means for the purpose of achieving interests regionally and internationally while highlighting its role internationally as a great power, able to influence in the international

arena. Its foreign policy is thus based on the employment of all these means towards long term goals. In 1990, Russia witnessed a profound change in its foreign policy. The most important aspects of this final disposal of Marxism that was prevalent in the Soviet system, and a new Constitution adopted under President Yeltsin to promote competition on global markets

This research focuses on bilateral relations between Russia and The Ukraine, explaining the cultural, ethnic and energy sectors between two countries, and Russia's position on the expansion of NATO in The Ukraine. The main question dealt with in this research is : what are the dimensions of the relationship between Russia and The Ukraine, particularly after The Ukraine announced it's joining The European Union?

1-Cultural and Ethnic situation between Russia and Ukraine

The ethnic situation in the Ukraine has represented a big problem and a significant effect to decision-makers in Ukrainian politics. It is also a way for Russia's intervention in the affairs of Ukraine under the pretext of protection of Russian ethnic minority stationed in Ukraine and that what is happening now from fighting and conflict in southern and eastern Ukraine, by pro-Russian and rejectionists of Kiev policy which refuses the closeness to Moscow, while intending to draw closer to the west. Officially, around 17.3 percent of Ukraine's population is Russian. The largest concentration of Russian speaking community is in the south-eastern part of Ukraine. Though it a big population over the whole country, however in Crimea more than 50 percent are Russians. Crimea is important for Russia, because of the city of Sevastopol, where the Russian Black Sea Fleet is located. There is a noticeable Russian influence on the ethnic population in the region, because local Ukrainians generally speak Russian. They also support Ukraine's pro-Russian politicians; hence the support for Yanukovich's controlled Party of Regions comes from there (1).The ethnic composition in the Ukraine is characterized by a great deal of diversity. Despite the presence of a large majority of the Ukrainians (about 77% of the population), there is a minority of Russians which is relatively high; significantly (about 17.3%), in addition to Bulgarian, and Tatar minorities, while other racers are limited. As for languages, two-thirds of the population speak Ukrainian, a quarter speaks Russian, and the rest speaks other languages, notably Romanian.

Religions are numerous in the Ukraine as well, where 50% of the population belongs to the Orthodox Church in Kiev, and 26% belong to the Russian Church, while the rest follow other churches, and the presence of Jews and Muslims is very limited. As for the Ukrainian elite, it has a clear role in the division of Ukrainian society, there is a part of the old elite that has existed since the eighties and nineties of the last century, and are closely associated with Russia, mostly having nationalism ideas, while the new elite appears western and call for greater integration within the European Union, and for the adoption of the entire policy of Western capitalism. Some politicians are trying to gain more votes and win the election by emphasizing the good relationship with Russia, while Russia also uses its ethnic population whenever it needs to influence politicians. It is a powerful tool in political affairs. Russia also uses the pro-active groups in Ukraine and support is offered to them by the Russian intelligence. These groups, like "Nashi" and "Eurasian Youth Movement", are to influence in political decision-making inside the Ukraine for the benefit of Russia. According to the Security services of the Ukraine, that are controlled from abroad, represent a threat to Ukrainian integrity, and have to be banned. After Putin's arrival to power, many of the pro-Russian organizations, funded by the Russian political institutions, were established in the Ukraine. These organizations have a common aim, which is to "increase cultural cooperation with Russia; nurture of a Russian consciousness and identity; promote Russian language, literature, culture, to increase Russian influence within Ukraine's territory, and to use those groups as a tool in its favor. Russia actively plays "anti-Russian" cards in the post-Soviet countries. Politicians, together with media, are emphasizing the violation of the rights of ethnic Russian communities thus trying to attract the international attention. (2)

However, the Russian intervention in Ukraine is not always welcome; Russia used the siege of energy towards the Ukraine, more than once, and the Russian actions were considered hostile acts directed against the Ukrainian people and created a stand for rejecting this policy from most of Ukrainian people, when Putin declared the goals of the foreign policy. The final goal was a status of a "modern great power". As one of the means to achieve that, he emphasized the use of a soft power. He also called to use the Russian cultural influence on the surrounding nations as a key to become a global actor. Thus reinforcement of the cultural ties with Ukraine remains one of the most important national interests. Language is used as a tool by Russia in spreading its culture and propaganda about the "good old days". "...there is a range of new Russian consumer products, a burgeoning popular culture spread through satellite TV, a growing film industry, rock music, Russian popular novels and the revival of the crowning achievements of the Russian artistic tradition. (3) Russian language is dominant on Ukrainian television and broadcasts about Russia and the USSR are common. According to some researchers, it is mostly propaganda. Noteworthy is that in 2011, the Ukrainian government announced that on the 9th of May, everybody will be able to go to the cinema for free and watch movies about the victory in 1941-45 "Great Patriotic War". These movies are really and truly Russian propaganda. Moreover there is a growing number of Russian-speaking classes in schools and Russian-language newspapers, radios and TV channels. These are activities in favor of Russia. (4)

In the Ukraine, the Russian minority is not only supporting the culture and the influence of Russia, for some represents the collapse of the Soviet Union, the greatest tragedy and all ethnicities in the Soviet Union were equal in rights. Ideology was creating a new community – Soviet people. In 2011, Ukraine was celebrating 20 years of independence, but many people were not happy at all. More than a half of Ukrainians expressed nostalgia for the “old days” of the USSR. Absolute majority of these people are pensioners. They claim about better former living conditions concerned with sustenance, social security, recreation. People praise cheap or free services and great necessities. People complain about unemployment, alcoholism, instability, disrespect and disorder. They all emphasize former respect for government, for offices and each other. Now people consider that soviet propaganda about capitalism as true. People now believe that capitalism is good just for the rich and powerful, as the Soviets said. (5)

In contrast, many Ukrainians feel concerned about the return of control of Russia, Russian propaganda, and the Russian intervention in the affairs of the Ukraine. They consider Ukraine as a nation and an independent state and has the right to choose policies that serve the interests of the Ukrainian people, and must move away from Moscow and the integration with the West.

In Ukrainian case, however, the perception that Ukraine is not a “European” power that was dominant among the Eastern people. Hence the Ukraine’s geopolitical orientation should not forget the Russian influence. Thus, it is widely acknowledged that the EU has the capacity to bring various benefits to Ukraine which is unwanted, the feeling of belonging to a Russian culture is dominant. On the other hand, the western people in Ukraine feel the belonging to a western culture which is dominant, as an apparent division within the country is an element that must be taken into consideration, making the European integration accepted as long as it does not hamper the relations with Russia. Hence the accession of Ukraine to NATO is also perceived negatively.

2-Energy sector - Leverage Tool toward Ukraine

Russia is aware of the growing importance of energy in the international arena, especially since the energy sector is the mainstay for the advancement of the Russian economy from collapse and be held upon it in the hopes of further economic growth and social development in the future. There is no Real future to Russia without insurance for a minimum of oil prices and the global availability of Russia from which returns are sufficient for the development of the rest of the production sectors and achieve the desired improvement in the income of the Russian citizen and the upgrading of the various services provided to him by the health and education level, transportation ,also to ensure its independence in external decisions and the development of its defense and its ability to achieve the influence and exercise an active role on the international and regional levels .Russia has a large diversity in energy sources such as gas, oil, electricity and coal ,Nuclear energy also has a huge wealth of natural energy from renewable untapped Optimal , until the present time there has been a trend toward a critical survival. Energy industries under almost

complete control of the state and the monopoly of the state of the energy sector in Russia, state-owned companies to try use that control to exert influence elsewhere.

Russian oil and natural gas industries are increasingly important players in the global energy market, particularly in Europe and Eurasia. Russia has by far the largest natural gas reserves in the world, possessing over 30% of the world's total. It is the second-largest oil producer and is eighth in the world in reserves, with at least 10% of the global total. The Russian Federation is a major player in world energy markets. It has more proven natural gas reserves than any other country and is among the top ten countries in proven oil reserves, it is the world's largest exporter of natural gas, the second largest oil producer and exporter, and the third largest energy consumer.

Another key trend has been the concentration of these industries in the hands of the Russian government in the past decade, and for the Effects of Russian Economic Power toward Ukraine, the Energy resources are the most effective economic tools that Russia uses to influence former Soviet Republics and the EU, that pipeline politics and energy resources are at the forefront of Russia's foreign policy agenda, Energy is a key factor in Russian-Ukrainian relations. Ukraine is heavily dependent on Russia for its energy supplies. In the recent past, about 80% of its oil and natural gas consumption came from Russia.

Ukraine, as well as several other former Soviet bloc countries, received energy at prices markedly below market rates. In 2005, Gazprom raised gas prices to Ukraine by 400 percent. When Ukraine refused, Russia cut off the gas supply, which also curtailed the supply to Europe. The cutoff only lasted two days once the new agreement was signed. When Russia increased prices in 2006 and 2009, conflict arose again, and led to the cutoff of Russian gas traveling to Western Europe. The 2009 gas cutoff occurred in January when no agreement was signed, and it lasted fourteen days. The situation was resolved after pressure from the EU to reevaluate its relationship with both countries. The conflict and cutoffs have historically occurred in the fall, when demand is high, and when the annual contract is renewed between Russia and Ukraine. The 2009 gas cutoff was the result of several unresolved issues. First, there was no agreement on the price of gas to Ukraine, and Gazprom alleged that Ukraine had an unpaid debt to Gazprom. Second, the supply to Europe was curtailed when Gazprom alleged that Ukraine was diverting the supply to Europe for its own use. (6)

However, Gas disputes between Russia and Ukraine are common phenomenon in the last decade; the first cut off of supplies to Ukraine was made in January 2006. It was soon after Ukraine declared about its NATO and EU ambitions, because an "Orange revolution" in 2004 and pro-Western leader came to power. This was not in favor of Russia, so Gazprom was used as an instrument of Kremlin. Gazprom, the Russian energy giant, 51 percent of which is owned by the state. (7)

In this sense, Russia uses energy power as a main instrument of influence and dominance in the near region. It is a geo economic issue for Russia. In this regard, Russia is not an exception. Every nation uses its political connections, economic relations, military capacity and other available means to strengthen the nation's position in the international arena. (8)

Moscow has focused on the policy of bilateral relations with each one of the CIS. In fact, Moscow successfully focused on the development of offensive policy in the defense of its interests in the strategic sectors of (energy, transport, military industry), where it is supposed to provide to Russia a deep impact and sustained within these countries.

Therefore, since Putin took power, the Russian economy benefitted from high oil and natural gas prices. This made Russian economy highly dependent on export of energy. In this context, Russia cut off supplies to many former Soviet Union states as in the cases of Ukraine, Belarus. As long as many countries are dependent on Russian energy, the Russian foreign policy is in favor of "Multipolar" against US "Unipolar". Moscow designs all its foreign policy strategies in accordance with its energy weapon capacity to punishment as a foreign policy tool. It uses it anytime it feels a threat against its national interest or regional strategy that is what occurred in the case of Ukraine.

3-Russia and NATO's Expansion: The Ukraine Question

The Russian government in the period of President Yeltsin is unable to work to stop the expansion of NATO, because the need for economic aid from the United States and its dependence to the International Monetary Fund and the economic crisis. It voluntarily waived its influence in regional and international surroundings. It agreed to the expansion of NATO to the former republics. It was calculated that the Soviet Union and bordering Russia, such as Estonia, Latvia, and Georgia, has become a candidate for NATO membership. Russia is aware of NATO's eastward expansion. In the era of Putin, particularly in the second phase of assuming power, to resist the American strategy in the expansion of NATO and began moving from the simple defense to the attack to ensure the positions of geopolitical more vital relying on the growing economic and military power, technological and possessing energy sources. Russia has worked to keep CIS far from the influence of NATO and the influence of American policy, and strengthened ties with the CIS by signed the agreements and economic cooperation. Several factors explain why Russia focuses on maintaining her influence in the post Soviet Union region, including Russia's attempt to maintain prestige, history in the region, economics, and security concerns and worked to influence them to prevent them from entering into NATO and stand against NATO expansion. As opposed to Russia entering the Baltic States into the alliance which Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania also declares Moscow that has the right to intervene in the Baltic States to the presence of Russian minorities in this region. This Russian action in its regional environment indicates that Russia is in conflict and competition with the United States; also Russia practiced various forms of pressure to prevent it from NATO's eastward expansion. Russia also was aware of the importance of the Caspian region's oil, for this considered one of NATO's expansion foci. Serious tension conflict between NATO and Russia, And confirmed by the events of the war in Georgia, where Russian forces launched a swift and decisive war on August 2008 in response to the occupation of Georgian troops to South Ossetia in August 2008, a sudden war launched by Russian forces, have had great results in the region for the benefit of Russia and directed Russia through this blitzkrieg messages to several countries, including Ukraine, which has plans to join NATO, confirmed the results of the war that Russia was able to stop the encroachment of NATO eastward. Tensions

between Russia and NATO escalated in the wake of Russia's August 2008 invasion of Georgia, after which the two sides suspended formal ties in the NATO-Russia Council. Russia's actions sparked a strong debate within the alliance over how Europe should react to what many considered a new, more aggressive Russian foreign policy intended to reestablish a Russian sphere of influence along its border with Europe. (9)

Shaping an effective security policy is one of the Russian goals, and Ukraine is a Russia's national security issues, Russia has tried to take advantage of the opportunities offered by her strategic place and political heritage. The desire to strengthen its geopolitical role in the Eurasian continent, eliminate Russo-phobia and elaborate closer relations with the member-states of the (CIS) has been high on the agenda for the Kremlin, It is not only a matter of prestige for Moscow to sustain a leading role among the post-Soviet countries, but also a way to secure stability in its near abroad, where it has enormous national interests. (10)

That was confirmed in the crisis of Ukraine. Russia's annexation of Crimea to the sovereignty of Russia after it was within Ukraine, after Russia felt the intention of Ukraine to join NATO and the importance of Ukraine for Russia in general, and that of Crimea in particular, where the Russian Black Sea Fleet, after Putin's statement that his country was forced to respond to the expansion of NATO, by annexation of the Crimea and added that Russia was forced to move because of NATO expansion in the East.

The project of the anti-ballistic missile defense system, which was intended to be installed by the United States in Poland and the Czech Republic, was another challenge to the relations between NATO and Russia. It raised Russian fears; in particular after the expansion of the NATO has advanced its influence towards Russia's borders by welcoming the membership of many Eastern European countries.

Russia believed the missile shield was directed against its homeland, and refuted U.S. allegations that the missile shield was intended to defend against Iranian missiles. This is because Russia recognized that Iran did not have a rocket technology that is capable of hitting European countries, as the United States claimed. Missile defense remains one of the problems that persist today.

Russia stepped up pressure on the US to prevent it from erecting the missile shield. However, the United States did not stand for Russians pressures and the issue escalated militarily. In 2007, the United States moved from the theoretical to the practical, and accordingly, Russia considered that to be American escalation on the ground, creating a political crisis between the two countries about the construction of the missile shield. That being said, Russia warned that it would take the necessary measures if Bologna agreed to develop a new missile shield. Medvedev threatened that if America did not provide Russia legally binding guarantees that the missile defense system would never be used against Russia, Moscow would withdraw from the new START treaty, deploy missiles to the Kaliningrad Oblast, and develop the capacity to destroy the missile defense system. (11)

The Russian warning was a challenge to American plans. It soon transformed into practical steps to confront the missile shield. On December 25th, 2007, Russian forces

conducted a successful test on a ballistic missile fired from a devastating new nuclear submarine. (12)

Russian military sources confirmed that the missile was capable of penetrating the American missile shield. Russia has also conducted successful tests on missile systems capable of penetrating and overcoming all missile defense systems. It is expected to set up systems in the Russian military zone in the North Caucasus in Kaliningrad, which will cover all areas of these systems in the South Caucasus and Poland in order to counteract the American missile shield. In another attempt to confront Western threat, Russia established the (CSTO). CSTO was founded in 2002 as a Russian-controlled military security alliance and interstate instrument to fight regional military threats. The foundation of the CSTO is the Russian military system; Russia is also a weapons supplier for the organization. In 2009, Medvedev proclaimed that CSTO will fight terrorism, transnational crime and drug trafficking, thus elevating the prestige and attractiveness of the organization. In 2009 Russia also proclaimed that cooperation within the CIS was a top foreign policy priority and that CSTO aims to protect their security). (13) Russia rejected Ukraine's accession to NATO, and invited Ukraine to join CSTO instead. Russia is so keen on enticing Ukraine that it invited the country to participate in any form. In 2010 the CSTO General Secretary said, "It is impossible to provide security in the Western direction without the participation of Ukraine." (14) Using CSTO in order to reinforce Russia's influence in its "near abroad" and enhance its global status has proved fruitful. These practical steps undoubtedly confirm the evolution of military capabilities and technology as well as the restoration of its vitality and force to impose its role, presence, and will on its regional and international surroundings. As a result of its strong position, Russia forced the American administration to negotiate on the missile shield. President Obama visited Russia on July 6th, 2009 to meet with Russian President Medvedev on regional and international issues, including the construction of the missile shield. The American administration pledged to postpone deployment of the missile shield and continue negotiations. This move demonstrates how Russia was able to regain its role and influence in international politics, maintain its conventional military and nuclear capabilities, leverage its technological and natural resources, and exercise its economic power. These strengths have enabled Russia to become a superpower on the international stage, parallel to America. It is capable of restoring the balance in international relations and building a multipolar international system. The Obama Administration pledged to pursue arms control negotiations with Russia and, specifically, negotiate a new treaty to replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). The statement signed by Presidents Obama and Medvedev during their meeting in London in April 2009 indicates that the new START Treaty will focus on strategic offensive weapons. The statement also stipulates that this Treaty will be the first step in an ongoing process to reduce nuclear weapons, an indication that reductions may be modest and that limits on nonstrategic weapons and non-deployed weapons would be left to a subsequent treaty and negotiated at a later date. The presidents also indicated that, although the two sides would continue to discuss their differences on missile defenses, these discussions would not be linked to the negotiations on a new START Treaty. (15)

Conclusion

In all cases, it seems that the Russian influence in the Crimea and in Eastern Ukraine extended there to stay without retreat. What Moscow is doing until now in Ukraine, enters in the context of imposing facts on the ground, in an attempt to refuse the unipolar system, the hegemony of the United States on the world, and to stop the expansion of NATO to reach Russia's borders and restore the concept of the balance of power by keeping Ukraine under Russian influence, and thwarting any Western plot to threaten Russia or undermine its role in the international arena, that Russia cannot be undone in the Ukraine or to leave it to become a part of European Union or NATO; as well as the Russian nationalist sentiment towards it, and considered it as vital interests and also located on its immediate neighbourhood which makes Ukraine a last strategic fort which isolates Russia from the West; then Russia is ready to use all the means and possibilities even to send the last Russian soldier in order to maintain its influence in Ukraine. However, Russia and the West may resort to negotiation, but will be on defusing the crisis, through agreement on the calming, but the core problem between the West and Russia, is a geopolitical concept which will not find a negotiating solution, because the problem related to the interests and the extended influence, in addition to Russia seeking to create a new international order based on the balance of power and the United States trying to keep the unipolar system, continuing its dominance over the world. The annexation of Crimea have confirmed Russia's rejection to the policy of containment by the west, and the falseness of the metaphors used to describe the world order "the decreasing significance of territory as strategic resource," phraseology of the liberal unipolar system no longer sounds convincing because it actually deprives the world of relative certainty and stability.

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