

Russia-Ukraine War and Hybrid Attitude of European Union: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

This qualitative study aims to analyze the Russian-Ukraine War and the Hybrid attitude of the European Union and the conflict behind NATO and EU expansion. After the Second World War cold war started between USSR and USA. During this cold war, the world was divided into two blocks Capitalist Block and Communist Block, but in 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed, and many countries gained independence and Ukraine was one of them. The conflict between Russia-Ukraine is for two reasons: (a) Ukraine is a matter of strategic importance to Russia (b) There is a territorial conflict between Russia-Ukraine. The result of this study shows that Russia is against NATO and European Union expansion and Ukraine becoming part of it. Russia says that if Ukraine becomes part of NATO, it will become the battleground for the US and Russia. European Union supports Ukraine and expands sanctions on Russia, but many hidden aims are behind this, they want to increase their trade because when any state becomes a member of the EU there will be only one single market and common trade. The study recommends that Russia should skillfully manage the Russia-Ukraine issue it will arouse strong patriotic feelings instead of a national split that Russia can use for its internal cohesion.

Keywords: Russia, U.S.A, European Union, Hybrid War, NATO.

Introduction

After World War II, the cold war started between the Soviet Union and the USA, cold war means “conflict over ideological differences without military action and without breaking diplomatic relations”. During this cold war, the world was divided into two blocks American Block and Soviet Block, but in 1991 the Soviet Union broke, and many countries gained independence and Ukraine was one of them. Ukraine gained independence on 24th August 1991. Ukraine is the second largest European country after Russia and shares borders with Russia and European Union. The capital of Ukraine is Kyiv. Ukraine is a weak economic state but geographically most important for Europe (Samokhvolav, 2015).

Crimea is a peninsula in the Black Sea and geographically so important that it has been fought for centuries. The tension begins when President Viktor Yanukovich in November 2013 rejected a deal for integration with European Union, due to this rejection the protestor protested, and Russia backed Yanukovich in the crisis while the US and Europe support the protesters. In February 2014 anti-government protesters toppled the government of Yanukovich. Due to this situation, Russia invaded Crimea the next month. On March 16 Crimeans voted for their region to become part of Russia and the world sees Crimea’s succession as illegitimate. The armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine or Donbas started in 2014. The Donbas region (Luhansk and Donetsk) shares a border with Russia it is industrially very important with heavy mining, steel production as well as coal reserves. As Ukraine is divided into two groups pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian after 2014 mass protests in Ukraine toppled the down pro-Russian or pro-Moscow government. Moscow backed the separatist to take over the control of Luhansk and Donetsk. Between September 2014 and February 2015 Minsk agreement was signed between Germany, France, Ukraine, and Russia but the agreement was never implemented and turned the conflict zone into one of the world’s most mine-contaminated areas (Hopf, 2016).

Border tensions between Russia and Ukraine are all-time high now, but the main critical and concerning point behind Ukraine and Russia tension is the expansion of NATO and Ukraine becoming the part of European Union. Ukraine becoming part of NATO and the European Union is a Hybrid tactic of the USA and Europe to threaten Russian sovereignty. Hybrid means “use of conventional and non-conventional means within the battlespace. Ukraine is important for Russia it is the sea route to the Black

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Sea and an industrial hub for Russia. No doubt Russia and Ukraine share opposite political views but Russia's concerns about Ukraine becoming part of NATO is valid because USA and Russia are rival state and Ukraine share a border with Russia so it will be easy for the USA to hit Russia and the intention behind NATO expansion is Russian sovereignty destruction. The European Union is the same against Russia and imposes sanctions on Russia. By declaring that they want to protect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Cross, 2015).

Literature Review

Kuzio (2007) in *Ukraine-Crimea-Russia Triangle of Conflict* discusses Crimea's geopolitical importance and how separatism exists in this region. Crimea is important for Russia as it is the route to the Black Sea. Crimea is divided into two camps pro-Russian and pro-Western and the only region where inter-ethnic conflict exists between the Ukrainian government and ethnic Russian Crimean. And secondly, this study also highlights the second most important region "Donbas" after Crimea where pro-Russian influences are popular and autonomist ideas have been raised.

Guyer (2022) discusses and analyzes the reason that NATO is the main point for Ukraine - Russian crisis and as Ukraine is a former Soviet state and shares a border with Russia if Ukraine became part of NATO then according to the Article 5 most important of NATO treaty make a commitment that an attack on any country is treated as an attack on the entire alliance — meaning if Russia attack on Ukraine it would bring Moscow into conflict with the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the 27 other NATO members.

Russia will never let Ukraine join NATO and EU at any cost. Russia invaded Ukraine but if Ukraine did not step back from joining NATO and the EU the issue may become severe for the whole of Europe as already European Union is concerned about disruption in Europe's economy due to this issue (Faiola, 2022).

Russian membership in NATO would mean the end of Russia's dream of restoring its former superpower status. By joining NATO, Russia would be a part of the alliance and effectively become "just another large European country" on the same level as Germany, Britain, or France —, or great-power nationalists. As NATO is a military alliance and an American tactic, if Russia became part of NATO then it means that Russia is an ally of America which practically is not possible (Bohm, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Realism is a theory of Power Politics and provides a powerful explanation for the state of war and the rise and fall of major or great powers. The central theme of Realism is national sovereignty, security, and national interest as their main goal. The British Statesman Lord Palmerston formulated a realist perspective "We have no eternal allies, and we have no eternal enemies. Our interests are eternal, and those interests it is our duty to follow" (Frankel, 1970). Realism can be explained from 3 aspects: Classical Realism, Structural Realism, and Neoclassical Realism. National Interest is the main element of the Realist perspective because all states in the world rely on the same objective "National Interest". Realism and Liberalism are the two most important theories of international politics liberalism means complete freedom and realism means power politics to achieve their goals (Morgenthau, 2001).

Two sets of Explanations are important with reference to the Ukraine crisis. The first seeks to explain how this invasion was inevitable or who are the key players behind this invasion; this explanation has roots in the realist school of thought. The second explains how this was not given; this has roots in the liberal-institutional peace school. The first camp Pro-Realism camp insists that the U.S is responsible for the Ukraine crisis. "John Mearsheimer "is one of its main proponents argues that the West by pushing Ukraine towards NATO caused insecurity in Russia. He argues that NATO's expansion was not in consideration before, but it became in consideration only after Germany reunified and USSR disintegrate. The critics argue that today's world is run by international norms and institutions, not by power politics (Attallah, 2022).

The second camp argues that Russian President Vladimir Putin is responsible Ukraine crisis and disruption of the European economy. The critics say that all these sovereignty-based crises whether it is the Ukraine-Russia crisis or the Taiwan-China issue it is just because of the "Power Game" which is the realist approach. Moscow is aware that if Ukraine became part of NATO and the EU Russia will be in complete isolation because European and American influence will increase and they will not allow

Russia to resist if this happens then the world, in reality, will change from a liberalist perspective to realist perspective (Attaullah, 2022)

The "superpower" of America is the most benevolent state of liberalism, which encourages peace and freedom, but in reality, they operate from a realist point of view. (Miller, 2006). In Taiwan, the major interest of America is threatening China and the same tactic America is using in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The main reason for these two conflicts is China, and Russia are two major powers and both states don't have a good relationship with America. Extending NATO and making Ukraine a part of it is just to hit Russia and its sovereignty, same happens with Taiwan when Nancy Pelosi visits Taiwan and in both cases, sovereignty is hit which is not a part of the liberalist perspective but a realist. The main reason to create these conflicts is to maintain its status as a single "superpower" and doesn't want the world to change into a "multi-Polar" in which China and Russia will be declared powerful states (Martin, 2022).

Great Power Politics

The crisis in Ukraine is nothing but a "Great Power Competition". The current crisis in Ukraine once again revived the concept of great power competition and its impact on international relations and international security. After the collapse of the USSR USA alone became the superpower and the world order changed from Bi-polar to Uni-polar. Ukraine's issue or crisis is nothing but Hegemonic Influence the great powers want to maintain or revive their hegemony. USA's strategic role in the Ukraine crisis is very important and Russians criticize American direct involvement in Ukraine to influence them. The USA and European Union want Ukraine to be part of NATO and EU, the reason behind this expansion is to maintain its hegemonic character, when Ukraine becomes part of NATO and EU Russia will completely be under European and American influence and It is projected that because Ukraine is Russia's neighbor, attacking Russia will be simple for the United States. During the Cold war, USSR was a great power but after the Afghanistan war the USSR 1991 collapsed, and Russia became silent and start working for its revival as a great power. American interest in Ukraine is to make Ukraine another Afghanistan for Russia so that Russia cannot become powerful again and the world remains Unipolar (Briggs, 2022).

International Relations rely on Foreign Policy and every state make its foreign policy to fulfill its national interest and protect its sovereignty. Russia is a great power and most analysts considered that it is not the Ukraine-Russia conflict it is the Russia-USA conflict; Russia blames the USA for direct involvement in Ukraine. Russia views on Ukraine's step toward NATO and EU is backed by the USA, and if Ukraine became part of NATO, then Russia will be in complete isolation because then Russian borders will be under the complete influence of capitalism. That is why Russia says that declaring war on Ukraine is nothing but the protection of sovereignty which is the main element of the state. And another reason behind this war is to revive its hegemony like before the collapse of the USSR because many analysts believe that the world order is going to transform from Uni-polar to Multi-polar and Russia and China will be the new great powers (Briggs, 2022).

NATO vs Russia

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) is an international organization founded in 1949 as a security alliance of 30 nations from North America and Europe. The fundamental or primary objective of NATO is to uphold or defend the independence and security of its allies by political and military means. After World War II, NATO's primary objective was to halt Russian expansion in Europe. Many of the Soviet Union's allies in Eastern Europe joined NATO after its fall in 1991 (Goswami, 2022).

Russia declared war on Ukraine on 24th February 2022, Vladimir Putin (Russian President) sent its troops to two regions of eastern Ukraine -Donetsk and Luhansk. The main reason or critical point behind Ukraine -Russian crisis is NATO. Russia opposes Ukraine's desire to join NATO. The US and the Soviet Union were the two superpowers in the bipolar world order that emerged after the Second World War. Only the US remained the superpower with the fall of the Soviet Union. As a result, NATO, which the US leads, continued to grow, and former Soviet Union nations began to join it, such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in 2004. Georgia and Ukraine were also eligible for NATO membership in 2008, but they were unable to sign up. Be completely encircled and isolated, which is unacceptable for protecting Russian sovereignty. Russia demands to stop NATO expansion and demands a guarantee from

NATO that Ukraine would never be a part of NATO. Also, Putin wants NATO to retreat to its pre-1997 status and stop the deployment of weapons in the Russian neighborhood (Goswami, 2022).

European Union and Hybrid Attitude

The European Union or EU is the political and economic cooperation among sovereign states. The European Union is the process of integration of European countries, which currently consists of 27 member states from the promotion of peace, prosperity, and economic stability across Europe has been aided by Central and Eastern Europe. The European Union's members participate in a customs union, a single market with unrestricted trade in goods and services, and a unified trade policy. 19 of the 27 states use a single currency (Klinke, 2012).

The European Union condemns unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. European Union leaders demanded that Russia should cease all military operations, evacuate all troops from Ukraine, and respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The European Union has increased sanctions against Russia in response to its military aggression against Ukraine and provided Ukraine with humanitarian, political, financial, and military support (Averre, 2007).

In the eyes of Russia European Union and NATO is a threat to Russia because European Union and NATO are strategically linked with each other. European Union completely supports Ukraine, provides aid to them, and says that "Ukraine is an independent country they have the right to make decisions for themselves", this is what a "Hybrid Attitude" is. Hybrid means "using conventional and non-conventional means within the battlespace. European Union and NATO both have hidden aims regarding the expansion, NATO expansion means American bases and complete American control in Ukraine which is the neighboring state of Russia (US Rival), and European Union expansion means a common trade, a single market with Ukraine which is hostile for Russia. Ukraine is important for Russia in all three means: Strategically economically, and politically. The whole process is held unconventional to isolate Russia so that Russia cannot revive its position as it was before USSR's disintegration (Foxall, 2017)

The Ukraine-Russia crisis is hostile to the Europe economy and may push many into poverty. European Union is extremely concerned for its economy because Ukraine and Russia both are economically important as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine European Union expanded Russian sanctions and ten European countries heavily depend on Russia for oil and gas imports. For these countries more than half of the gas and oil imports from outside the EU come from Russia., so Russia no doubt is an important supplier of oil and gas to the international market, so any trade disruption and sanctions translate into a high price. European Union wants to achieve its strategic interest, but it is more concerned for Europe's economy because of this conflict (Ahmed, 2022).

Putin and Russia's Imperial Identity

Putin's forays into the past, when they are not roundly criticized as outright lies, often leave Westerners scratching their heads. However, the notion that Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians are "one people" has a long history among Russia's upper crust. Indeed, it continues to shape not just the language of the elite but also the actions of those in positions of power. Russian professionals have been blissfully naive of the changes as Ukraine has become more "Ukraine field" in recent years (Seddon, 2022).

The governing class of Russia has cast doubt on the viability of Ukraine. Even though Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was "well-nigh half Ukrainian by birth," he agreed with imperial Russian authorities that "talk of a distinct Ukrainian people existing since something like the ninth century is a recently constructed fake." Solzhenitsyn, who had long been an outspoken critic of the Soviet system for its violent suppression of traditional Russian culture and identity, advocated for the formation of a "Russian Union" made up of the Soviet Union's East Slavic core—Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and northern Kazakhstan—while allowing the Baltic, South Caucasus, and Central Asian states to declare independence. His impression of standardized Ukrainian was that it had been "distorted," "unrelated to everyday usage," and "choked full of German and Polish terminology" due to Austro-Hungarian influence. In light of Ukraine's "painful severance" from Russia, Solzhenitsyn predicted further waves of secession inside the nation. Putin portrays himself as the living embodiment of Russia's imperial past, and the language he employs when describing Ukraine and the ties between Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus

is reminiscent of that of his emperors' era. Putin claims that NATO and the European Union are working to separate Ukraine from its "true" character and alignment with Russia by implementing "the old basis of the Polish-Austrian ideologists to construct an anti-Moscow Russia" in the country. In his presentation on February 21, Putin stated that post-Soviet Ukraine's leaders had "attempted to construct their nation on the rejection of everything that unites us" with the support of "external forces" (Seddon, 2022).

Recent Development

Russia supplies 40% of natural gas to Europe, due to the Hybrid attitude of the world Russian gas producer Gazprom has said that Russia suspends the natural gas flow through the Nord Stream pipeline 1 but after three days the operation restores on the Baltic Sea and Gazprom said that "The suspension was due to technical fault". The fear in Europe, however, is growing that Russia intends to further reduce supply before the winter. By acquiring more natural gas from nations like the US, European states have been attempting to diversify their gas supplies. Two main routes, one through Ukraine and the other through the Black Sea, are used by the Nord Stream to transport Russian gas to the EU. (Seddon, 2022).

Conclusion

Russia and Ukraine are two independent states, after the collapse of the USSR Ukraine gained independence. The reason behind the conflict between two states is "Sovereignty" the most important element of the state. Russia is against NATO and European Union expansion and Ukraine becoming part of it. Russia says that if Ukraine becomes part of NATO, then it will become the battleground for US and Russia. The US will Ukraine territory against Russia and Russia will be under the complete influence of Europeans and Americans. European Union supports Ukraine and expands sanctions on Russia, but many hidden aims are behind this they want to increase their trade because when any state becomes a member of the EU there will be only one single market and common trade. In the eyes of Russia European Union and NATO is a threat to Russia because European Union and NATO are strategically linked with each other. Many financial analysts believe that Ukraine-Russia crisis is extremely dangerous to the Europe economy and may push many into poverty. European Union is highly concerned for its economy because Ukraine and Russia both are economically important. International Relations rely on Foreign Policy and every state make its foreign policy to fulfill its national interest and protect its sovereignty.

Recommendations

1. America should declare that there will be no more expansion in NATO because this is main reason behind this conflict.
2. European Union instead of achieving its strategic interest. Should be concerned about the European economy because Russia suspended its gas supply and after COVID Europe may face a severe economic crisis once again.
3. Russia-Ukraine issue should be skillfully handled by Russia it will arouse strong patriotic feelings instead of a national split that Russia can use for its internal cohesion.
4. Russia should start the supply of Gas because it is an immoral act and will have severe implications.

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