

RUSSIFICATION IN MODERN DAYS: ANALYZING GEORGIA AND UKRAINE SEPARATISTS AS RUSSIA STRATEGY AGAINST NATO'S EXPANSION

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Abstract

Since the demise of the Soviet Union the cold war, a glimpse of hope in any improvement of Russia and the West relation sparked. However, it did not last as the relations between these two parties soured over times and tension rises. Under Vladimir Putin, Russia has three main goals to achieve: 1.) reassert Russian global great power status since the cold war; 2.) Gain supremacy over the former Soviet Union territories (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan) 3.) Establishing sphere of influence in the international system in order to achieve dominance. The tension between Russia and NATO back to the first attempt of NATO's enlargement by the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989 followed by Soviet acceptance of German reunification in NATO in July 1990. However, if NATO continues their enlargement, Russia might feel isolated from the European political and security sphere of influence. Moreover, since NATO's enlargement itself created clash of interest with Russia, conflict between Russia and NATO may ensue.

Keywords: *Russification, Separatists, NATO, Security dilemma, buffer zones*

INTRODUCTION

NATO began their expansion by inviting Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Then continues with Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria, followed by several Balkan countries and three Baltic states: Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. conflict between Russia and NATO ensued when these memberships expanded NATO's military presence on Russia's border (Marten, 2017). (Point 1 of revision). Behind the issue of NATO enlargement, there is fundamental disagreement between the West and Russia regarding the structure of security in Europe. This disagreement is based on the differences of their perspectives in

which Russia having geopolitical world-view (national sovereignty, power calculations, and National security) vs the West liberal view (free market transformational power, liberal political reform, and champion of human rights). Russia's foreign policy is centred on geopolitics and pragmatic steps to strengthen its power and security. As such, the NATO's enlargement creates security dilemma to Russia and pushes them into seeking for greater security. It would have not been an issue had NATO was primarily a political forum instead of military-oriented. Furthermore, Russia was not allowed to participate fully in managing the security of Europe by the West resulting Russia's growing mistrust. NATO have also widened its membership by excluding Russia in the decision-making process while maintaining their keeping their military presence in Europe such as supporting the democratic revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, proposing a European-based missile defense system, and forcing their liberal-inspired enlargement policy for the 'sake of Russia' (WOLFF, 2015).

Additionally, the expansion of NATO means that their military infrastructure is getting closer towards Russia's borders. Especially the ballistic missile defence systems deployment in the east alliance and the ongoing development of non-nuclear strategic systems done by NATO are seen by Russia as a threat to their security and undermining strategic stability between two parties. NATO has also consistently pursued unilateral foreign interventions in several cases, bypassing international legal channels that Russia has input in. The Russian seen the expansion of NATO and Western institutions such as the EU as limiting their political and economic sphere of influence. (Thomas Frear, 2018). Moreover, in 2008, NATO made a statement in the Bucharest summit that Georgia and Ukraine would be given NATO's membership (WOLFF, 2015). If both Georgia and Ukraine join NATO, the buffer zone in the middle of Russia and the West will vanish, leaving only NATO to border Russia. This is perceived as permanent attack to Russia status and influence (Matsaberidze, 2015). Moreover, surrendering Georgia to NATO means that Russia will lose its control

in energy resources and transfer ways and using them as a political weapon against their rivals and neighbours. Meanwhile giving up to Ukraine means that Russia might have to surrender to NATO's supremacy, as they are aware of the assumption of losing their power and influence to NATO (Uğur Özgöker, 2016).

Russia respond towards NATO can be identified and explained using the security dilemma theory. The security dilemma falls into the category of realism paradigm and one of the most important theoretical ideas in the international relations realm. The security dilemma can be defined as the situation of two realist states that distrust of each other's presence and perceive each other as potential threat. Since both believe that power is a means toward security, both states will seek to accumulate more power. However, when one side is seen to accumulate more power than the other, the other state will perceive its presence as threatening to their own security. This can lead to the rise of tensions and conflicts between the two states that can lead to unfavourable outcomes for both sides (Tang, 2009). The security dilemma between Russia – NATO can be seen from post-cold war where NATO started its enlargement and promotion of liberal values to the Western world and Eastern Europe, effectively growing its power and influence across Europe. The situation becomes more intense when Georgia and Ukraine got involved, when Russia finally goes direct confrontation in war between Georgia and Ukraine to counter NATO growing influence due to the NATO membership invitation threatens Russia national security (Maitra, 2021).

The objective of this research is to analyze the patterns of Russia strategy in preventing NATO from expanding its influence to Eastern Europe and potentially endangering Russia's national interests and security. This research will also analyze and explain the correlation of separatist and their involvement in assisting to Russia main strategy. Based on the background of the issue, the writer will create a hypothesis that Russia used separatist movement by converting their citizenship to Russia in order to assist in the permission to launch a military aggression in Georgia and Ukraine since one of the main

requirements of NATO membership is to ensure that the future member must be in stable political situation.

The Method used in this research is by using qualitative research method. This is because qualitative method offers understanding of peoples' or party's perceptions regarding certain event that occurred. In this case, this paper needs to be able to explain Russia's perspective in their complex relation between NATO, how does it tie to Ukraine and Georgia, and analysing the strategy used by Russia. The data used in this research is secondary data from past resear4ches, reports, and journal articles. The data are collected from documents and records of past researches related to this research, articles, media outlets, and news of past events leading up to the present state of the Russia – NATO relations, and case studies related to Russia – Georgia – and Ukraine to support the arguments in this research. This research is using mainly the perspective of Russia against NATO to analyse the dangers of NATO's expansion to Russia's national interest and security. Moreover, it is also used to analyse Russia's strategy and pattern in Georgia and Ukraine in how they prevent both countries in acquiring NATO membership to secure their power and security.

Literature Review

According to Brian Silver, Russification is a by-product of Russianization and Sovietization. Vernon Aspaturian writes that Russianization is the process of internationalizing Russian culture and language in the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, Sovietization was fostered by the Soviet regime of all nationalities as the process of modernization and Industrialization within the social, economic, and political behavior norms of Marxist-Leninist. Therefore, Russianization is the process of converting the non-russian people to Russia identity by transforming them objectively and psychologically (Silver, 2014). Petr Dostál & Hans Knippenberg described Russification as assimilation process where Russian culture and

language dominated the culture of minorities. This can be seen as a part of national integration in the Russian dominated Soviet state (Petr Dostál, 1979).

Separatism is defined in International Relations theory as a movement aimed at separating a portion of a state's territory and population. The primary goal of separatism is complete independence from an existing country., such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia, Crimea, Luhansk, and Donetsk from Ukraine. Meanwhile, separatist group is the term to refer the individuals that wish to exit their region and population from their current country. There are several factors as to why separatist desire to disintegrate themselves from their current country. In the case of Georgia and Ukraine, the main reason is ethnic heterogeneity. The separatist groups in both countries see themselves as one ethnicity with Russia (Vira Kachur, 2020).

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) is a treaty collective defense organization with the core identity of security organization as NATO's well-known passage is in the Article 5 that stated any armed attack against any NATO member in Europe or North America is considered to be attack against the whole member and organization (Ruud van Dijk, 2020). NATO was established in 1949 with it headquarter currently in Brussel. NATO is responsible with the mandate of safeguarding the security and freedom of its members (Martin Griffiths, 2002). Currently, NATO is facing crisis due to the Russia's occupation of the Crimea and their crisis in their expansion towards the Eastern Ukraine as they are facing major relations disruption between the member states of NATO and Russia. This is due to the fact that Russia feels threatened with NATO's continuous effort of expansion throughout the Eastern Europe (Böller, 2018).

Security in the general definition can be defined as to be secure or safe from danger. In the International relations perspective, the concept security derived from the realist view domination in the cold war. For the realist, state is the most important actors in the international relations system with their

primary objective is to protect their sovereignty. To protect their sovereignty, state must increase and ensure their security. However, no state in the world can feel secure entirely. This can lead into the situation called security dilemma. The situation of security dilemma is that when a country continuously increases and strengthen their defence preparations, suspicion will arise amongst other member states (Martin Griffiths, 2002).

Lionel Beehner and Gustav Meibauer write the loose definition of buffer zones as a protected zone with the aim of preventing public bad or tragedy of the commons by environmental plunder or war. Buffer zones can be installed in many forms, unilaterally, multilaterally, or by UN Security Council Resolution. Buffer zones in international system can serve as guarding passively and defensively against threats of two or more states, along with non-state actors. It can also be used to separate and guard two or more states who are in hostilities to prevent them from going on a war against each other. In this case, the buffer zone must not base any military hardware and personnel to maintain its neutral and grey area status (Lionel Beehner, 2016). Georgia and Ukraine are the prime example of buffer zones being used to prevent NATO and Russia into launching attack with each other due to their hostilities.

Findings

This study found that bad blood between Russia and NATO has existed since the cold war era and has continued to deteriorate to the present day due to their unending rivalry. NATO first offered friendship to Russia but then began their plan of expansion throughout Eastern Europe and ex-communist countries. The mark of the beginning of NATO plan was their actions against the conflict in Bosnia and Yugoslavia by launching military intervention without consulting Russia first. Russia took this as a threat to their national security by the West regardless the reassurance that the West gave to Russia that they are in no form is attempting to endanger Russia's National Security.

NATO continued to endanger Russia by executing their 3 phase of membership enlargement. They also invited Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic to join NATO, offering Russia conditions as to ease up the rising tension between NATO and Moscow. However, regardless of the conditions, NATO began discussing about moving their headquarter to North Poland where in the agreement between Russia and NATO, North Poland is in the red line that Russia had explicitly stated to not have any nuclear weapons or military forces being deployed in.

Despite the heavy tension between Russia and NATO, NATO continued to invite seven other states for their membership, earning warnings from Russia's foreign affair ministry that this is an act against Russia's National security and National interest. NATO offered a compromise to Russia that they will act equally instead of 19+1 method previously. Regardless, the US has expressed a desire to relocate several NATO military bases from Western to Eastern Europe. (Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland), putting their front-line defences against Russia territory in close proximity.

To counter this, Russia planned in creating buffer zone between their territory and NATO's territory. The last remaining countries that can become the buffer zone of both sides are Georgia and Ukraine. However, NATO made a pledge in 2008 Bucharest Summit that they will invite Georgia and Ukraine to NATO membership. This angered Russia and the relation between NATO and Russia drastically deteriorates for the worse. Russia began their support to the separatist groups in Georgia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Aside from disregarding the sanctions imposed on Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia also provided them other support, including providing them easy-access to Russia citizenship and passport. Therefore, Russia can launch a military aggression to Georgia under the pretext of "humanity and protecting Russia's citizens from Georgia's attack." The tension between Russia and Georgia broke when Russia

launched military aggression in 2008. While EU was able to mediate the conflict, Russia was able to establish buffer zone in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Russia continues their plan in Crimea after US and NATO invited Ukraine for a membership. Russia took advantage of the internal conflict in Ukraine between the pro-west and the pro-Russia, then took advantage of the separatist group in Ukraine called Euromaidan who is pro-Russia. Russia sent out their soldiers in Simferopol to protect Crimea and later on supported the Crimea referendum on reunifying with Russia, then declared their independence from Ukraine. The tension between Ukraine did not stop there. Russia continued to launched military aggression to Ukraine recently in 2022 with the justification of protecting Russia citizen in Luhansk and Donetsk.

This study also found that there are patterns in Russia's action towards Georgia and Ukraine. Russia have always used the justification of protecting their citizens residing in these countries before launching their military aggression. However, before proceeding to the military intervention, Russia converted the citizens in those separatist area into Russian citizenship through easy citizenship access and Russia passports. Therefore, this can be seen as an act of russification in the modern days. Russia used the ethnic heterogeneity in separatism, convincing the separatist areas in Georgia and Ukraine that they shared the same ethnicity with Russia.

DISCUSSION

The rivalry between NATO and Russia started as Western bloc vs Eastern bloc (NATO vs Soviet Union) until the fall of Soviet Union and the Berlin wall, marking the end of the cold war. The rivalry then continues to be Russia vs NATO post-cold war until the present day. The relations between Russia and NATO started off decently at the beginning. NATO has stated that they are a defensive alliance with the goal of protecting its member states in accordance with its principles and policies. One of their policies is 'NATO does not seek confrontation and poses

no threat to Russia'. They also claimed that their presence in the Baltic region and their missile defense are not going to threaten Russian security (NATO, 2022). At the NATO summit in London in July 1990, NATO first offered friendship and cooperation to the Soviet Union and countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The Paris Charter for a New Europe (Paris Charter) was adopted by European governments, Canada, the United States, and the Soviet Union on November 19 - 21, 1990 in Paris. The charter included a non-aggression commitment based on the Helsinki Accords, which was later amended in the 1999 European Security Charter. These documents formed the foundation of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (Iulian, A QUARTER CENTURY OF NATO-RUSSIA RELATIONS, 2017)

Following the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia and NATO began developing relations with each other. NATO approached and attempted to get close with Russia along with former member states of the communist bloc. Russia, on the other hand, was attempting to establish a special relationship with NATO that was distinct from its relations with the other Central and Eastern European countries, citing economic, military, and nuclear power as justifications. Several forms of collaboration were established between NATO and Russia. In December 20, 1991, North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was established and later renamed as Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in 1997. In 1994, Partnership for Peace (PfP) was and later perfected in 1999, giving Russia an equal footing. On May 27, 1997, Russia and NATO signed the Treaty of Cooperation and Mutual Security, and the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) was established, ushering in NATO-Russia special relations. On May 28 2002, it was replaced by NATO-Russia Council (NRC) (Iulian, A QUARTER CENTURY OF NATO-RUSSIA RELATIONS, 2017).

The cooperation between Russia and NATO went downhill on the first crisis in Bosnia, Sarajevo 1994. NATO intervened militarily by issuing an ultimatum to all forces fighting within 20 kilometers of Sarajevo to cease all attacks and

surrender their heavy weapons. If they failed to fulfil the ultimatum within 10 days, such as heavy weapons of any parties involved be founded within the designated area, they will be subjected to NATO air strikes. During the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, this was the first time NATO issued an explicit threat of using air strikes with no clear authorization from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and Russia was not consulted on the matter (Headley, 2003). As a result, Russia has delayed the signing of the partnership for peace's adhesion document. In 1999, NATO made the decision to start the bombing to Yugoslavia (Kosovo crisis) much to Russia's dismay (Iulian, A QUARTER CENTURY OF NATO-RUSSIA RELATIONS, 2017). Russia viewed NATO's military intervention as a geopolitical coup by the West. Regardless of whether NATO's missile defence strategy is aimed at a third country, Russia has identified it as an attempt by NATO to undermine Russia's ability to launch a second nuclear strike. (Syaiful Rohman, 2021).

NATO then began their 3 phase of enlargement that triggers and threaten Russia position in Europe and its National security. At the Madrid summit on December 10, 1996, NATO invited Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic (Baltic states) to join NATO. Russia felt betrayed and disappointed by NATO's actions because, until late 1994, there was no indication that NATO would expand. Gorbachev and Yeltsin made it clear that NATO expansion would be a source of contention indefinitely. Russia officially regarded NATO expansion in the Central of Europe as threat to their national interest and security. To ease Russia's growing animosity towards NATO enlargement, NATO proposed two conditions. In exchange for special status in NATO, Russia participated in the Partnership for Peace. The program meant that there is a visible reduction in the Western force. Russia's foreign ministry proposed a condition that Moscow will only agree to NATO expansion in Central Europe if no nuclear weapons or allied combat forces are deployed on the territory of the new member states (Maitra, 2021).

Tensions between Russia and NATO rose again during the Yugoslav conflict after NATO ignored Russia's warning at the first PJC meeting. Meanwhile, NATO began discussing the possibility of moving one of NATO's headquarters from Rendsburg, Germany to Northern Poland, despite the fact that Northern Poland is the redline area stated by Russia and a region that NATO had explicitly promised not to move to earlier. In 1998, Russia defence minister warned NATO that this decision would lead into a military confrontation. Although it did not escalate into a military conflict, Russia suspended ties and withdrew its representatives from NATO in March 1999, only to return to NATO for talks a few months later. By the end of 1999, Vladimir Putin rose to power and became the president of Russia. In the fall of 2002, NATO intended to invite seven new countries to join the alliance, resulting in again, the reaction of the Russia defence minister who warned NATO that it will be military confrontation if the Baltic states join. The compromise is that NATO and Russia will act equally and collaboratively as a side of twenty, rather than the 19+1 formula. Furthermore, they would concentrate their efforts on international terrorism. Of course, it cannot be dismissed that NATO enlargement has already been viewed to be a big threat to Russia national security (Maitra, 2021)

NATO's desire to relocate several military bases from Western to Eastern Europe (Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland) was later expressed by the United States. By relocating military bases, NATO's front lines of defence will be closer to Russia's territory (Syaiful Rohman, 2021). The third phase of NATO enlargement involves Eastern European countries (Ukraine and Georgia), where Russia's relationship with NATO has broken down, and this is Russia's first war with other states since World War II. Eastern Europe is an important region for the Russian Federation for buffer zone. During the Cold War, Russia was able to establish a buffer zone for the countries' strategic interests. Georgia and Ukraine are the last remaining countries that can maintain buffer zone between Russia

and NATO. Thus, Russia will do anything in its power to prevent them from gaining NATO membership.

The situation between Russia and NATO drastically deteriorated on 2008. In 2-4 April 2008, NATO promised Georgia and Ukraine membership in the alliance at the Bucharest summit. This infuriated Russia, prompting it to take various diplomatic, legal, and military actions to increase support for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Abkhazia and South Ossetia are considered as the territories of Georgia but are seeking for independence from the country. Georgia took this as a sign that Russia wanted to occupy its territory. In March, Moscow withdrew from the 1996 CIS treaty, which was intended to help regulate the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. This measure imposes trade, economic, financial, and transportation sanctions on Abkhazia, which Russia had already ignored and lifted the sanctions to prevent incremental progress in Georgian-Abkhaz bilateral contacts. Several days after NATO's meeting in Bucharest in April, Vladimir Putin directed the Russian government in fostering official ties with de facto counterparts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Furthermore, they are tasked with establishing mechanisms for the comprehensive defence of the rights, freedom, and legitimate interests of Russian citizens residing in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. (International Crisis Group, 2008).

Ambassador-at-Large of Russia Valery Kenyaikin stated that Russia will protect its citizens and interests in these two territories. In a detailed foreign ministry statement, Russia justified their actions on humanitarian and legal grounds, referring to cases of limited recognition of certain legal acts in international practice by de facto authorities. Tension arises in the air as Abkhaz de facto authorities followed by Sukhumi claimed to shot down two drones. Georgia admitted the loss in the second accusation, but blamed it on a Russian MIG-29 fighter by releasing drone video and radar records of the jet taking off from the Abkhazia military base in Gudauta. On April 23, 2008, during an emergency security council session, four western members of the UN Secretary-

group General's of friends on Georgia expressed their concerns about Russia's measure and asked Moscow to revoke it. On May, Moscow began moving troops into Abkhazia in order to rehabilitate the railroad from Sukhumi to Ochamchira. This earned protest from Georgia, accusing Russia doing military intervention unconnected to peacekeeping and annexation. (International Crisis Group, 2008).

On August 2008, the conflict between Russia and Georgia broke out. The conflict lasted for five days until a preliminary ceasefire agreement was reached on August 12, mediated by the European Union. The Russian troops were mostly pulled out of Georgian uncontested territories. However, they still established buffer zones in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Hamilton, 2011).

The situation again escalated for the worst on 2014 with the annexation of Crimea peninsula done by Russia under Vladimir Putin. The situation was sparked by a Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych's, whose reputation is infamous of being pro-Russia. He rejected an association agreement with the European Union in November 2013 in order to favour closer economic ties with Russia. His decision triggered a large protest from the Euromaidan (Eurosquare) movement in Kyiv. The Euromaidan demanded Ukraine to integrate itself with the Europe instead of Russia (Charron, 2016).

The movement expanded into wanting to remove Viktor Yanukovych from his president and his pro-Russia government. moreover, the Euromaidan advocated a notion that divided Ukraine into two different ideologies: *"forward to the West vs. back to the USSR"* The protest reached its peak on February 2014 when the protest clashed with the Ukrainian authority that sparked the protest even more. On 21 February 2014, Viktor Yanukovych fled from Kyiv. The Ukraine parliament assigned Arseniy Yatsenyuk for temporary president and government and it was recognized by the United Nations and European Union. Russia, on the other hand, refused to recognize the new Ukrainian government because it

is illegal, accusing the United States and the European Union of funding and mobilizing the Ukraine revolution. Russia was still fixated with Yanukovych as the president. (Kartini, 2014).

On February 2014, armed people in unmarked uniforms appeared in Simferopol, the Crimean capital. These people were tasked with protecting the Russians in the regions and the Russian speakers. The Russian authority claimed that these people are local self-defence unit consisted of Crimean volunteers. However, later on, Putin stated that they were actually Russian military forces. These men took control of the Crimean Supreme Council building. They dissolved the Crimea's government at that time and appointed deputy Sergei Aksyonov a pro-Russia as the new Crimean Prime Minister. On March 6, the Supreme council held a vote to declare Crimea as the sovereign territory of the Russian Federation. Following by 16 March illegal referendum to confirm the decision of Crimea status. The Crimean authorities stated that the result of the referendum showed overwhelming mandate for unification with Russia. On 17 March, Crimean authorities declared Crimea's independence and issued a formal request for acceptance to the Russia Federation. The Agreement of Accession of the Republic of Crimea was signed by three representatives of the newly formed Crimean and Sevastopol governments, as well as President Putin (Charron, 2016).

Since the annexation of Crimea and the 2019 election of the president Volodymyr Zelensky, the tension between Ukraine and Russia failed to ease. In September 2020, Ukraine's new National Security Strategy was approved by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. It provides development of the distinctive partnership. The aim of this new National Security Strategy is to gain the membership of NATO (ORGANIZATIONS, 2022). This sparked alert on the Russia as it was demonstrated on Spring 2021 that around 90.000 Russian troops were stationed near Ukraine border areas under rebel controls in Ukraine's East, Luhansk and Donetsk (Amiel, 2021). Russia has been continuously opposing

NATO's expansion to reach Ukraine. While Russia has no veto rights in NATO since they are not an official member, Russia has demanded formal veto rights in Ukraine's membership. Vladimir Putin has clearly stated that Ukraine's aspiration of joining NATO pose a direct threat against Russia and their influence (Finnis, 2022). In December 2021, Biden and Zelensky had talk regarding the Russian troop movements near the Ukraine border. Biden assured Zelensky that the decision of Ukraine (Kyiv) joining NATO is in the solely in the hands of the Ukraine people to decide. (Zinets, 2021).

NATO had shown their support to Ukraine by supporting the capability development and capacity building in Ukraine. Moreover, NATO condemned and will not acknowledge Russia's illegal action of annexating Crimea and their aggressive activities in the Eastern Ukraine and Black Sea region (ORGANIZATIONS, 2022).

On 19 February 2022, Duma Vyacheslav Volodin announced that they will evacuate the Russian citizens residing in Luhansk and Donetsk and 26 of Russian regions will receive refugees from these two areas. At the same time, the Russia, the Donetsk People's Republic, and Luhansk People's Republic delegations declined to attend the Trilateral Contact Group meeting to discuss the tensions in Eastern Ukraine that has been de-escalating. The LNR amplified report that the Ukrainian troops are trying to harm citizens who are evacuating from Luhansk and Donetsk (War, 2022).

On 21 February, Putin formally recognized the Donetsk and Luhansk as independent and signed mutual cooperation treaty and deployed peacekeeping forces into LNR and DNR (War, 2022).

On 22 February, United States announced two sanctions on Russia and halt the Nord Stream 2 certification process. The UK also imposed sanctions against Russia for the first round. The EU and NATO condemned Russia decision of recognizing DNR and LNR along with their troop deployment. The NATO-

Ukraine Commission held an extraordinary meeting prior to the security shenanigans in Ukraine (War, 2022).

On 23 February, Russia withdraws their diplomatic staffs from Ukraine. Pulling diplomatic staffs from a country indicates that there is tension between the relation and that the other party is preparing to conduct large combat operations. The Donetsk and Luhansk urged Russia's support to expand their borders in overcoming the Ukrainian forces while The Ukrainian government declared a state of emergency to respond to Russia acquiring legal authority to deploy troops in Ukraine. Western states began to follow US, UK, and the EU by imposing sanctions against Russia and restricted Russian trade with DNR and LNR (War, 2022).

A full-scale military assault was launched by Russia on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, declaring it a special military operation. The assault began on Thursday with the use of long range-artillery and series of missile attacks (air and land) (CNN world, 2022). Their military attacks target several Ukraine cities but Kyiv is their main objective. Several cities have been reported to have explosions heard such as Odessa, Kharkiv, and Mariupol. Putin's goal is to achieve demilitarization of Ukraine and that Russia did not plan on occupying Ukraine's territory (Ellyatt, 2022).

From the situation, it is clear that there are noticeable patterns between Georgia and Ukraine that Russia took deep interest in. It is the separatist movement involved in Russia plan to stop Georgia and Ukraine from obtaining NATO membership. Russia strategy in Georgia begin by how they undermine Georgia's territorial integrity. Russia utilized the separatists and citizens in two breakaway regions that is pro-Russia by offering them Russian passports (pasportizatsiya) (Laure Delcour, 2015). This policy is called passporization. The policy went into effect on May 31, 2002, following the adoption of the Russian Federation's federal law on citizenship. Article 14 of this law allows people who

have had USSR citizenship, resided and residing in states that have formed part of the USSR, but have yet to become citizens of these states, leaving them stateless, to obtain Russian citizenship through a simple procedure (Elia Bescotti, 2022). The process is fairly simple. People send their documents (old Soviet passports) to a special Russian consulate in Sochi. After the process is done, the bearers become Russian citizens (Artman, 2014). Many former Soviet Union citizens living in the contested states (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) turned to Russia for the freedom of movement and higher social benefits afforded by the Russia passport. The moment the citizens obtained Russia passport, they also obtain Russia citizenship and becoming compatriots.

People with Russian citizenship who are compatriots are eligible for protection from the Russian Federation under Federal Law 1999 Article 15 on the Russian Federation's State Policy in Relations with Compatriots Abroad and the Law on Citizenship. Russia's law "on defense" states that the responsibility to protect could justify and legitimize deploying Russian troops (Elia Bescotti, 2022).

In 2008, by the time the war began, 90% of Abkhazia and South Ossetia had Russian citizenship (Artman, 2014). Russia has also repeatedly threatened to use their military capability to protect the alleged "Russian citizens" in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It was to the point of adopting a non-binding resolution in the Duma, 2008. The non-binding resolution urges the government to step up efforts to protect the security of Russian citizens living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as to consider reinforcing Russian peacekeeping troops to protect the citizens. Later in August 2008, Georgia's attack on South Ossetian provided justification for Russia to use military intervention in Georgia (Pal Ahluwalia, 2022).

The passporization strategy used by Russia is the key to their operation in Georgia because they created confusing and treacherous pattern of sovereignties

that overlapped with each other. The territory belonged to Georgia legally. However, the population formally belonged to Russia. Once Georgia made an attack against South Ossetian separatists in Tskhinvali, they gave green light to Russia to launch massive invasion with the claim that Georgia is slaughtering innocent Russia citizens (Artman, 2014). Russia then moved to sever diplomatic relations with Georgia, precipitating a break in Georgia's rapprochement with NATO.

In the case of Ukraine, Russia used similar but slightly different strategy. Russia exploited the EU's strategy in the rise of authoritarian tendencies, isolating Ukrainian authorities during Yanukovych's presidency. Due to the economic crisis and high energy prices in late 2013, as well as economic and political pressure from Russia, Yanukovych did not sign the Association Agreement during the Vilnius Summit in November 2013. Later, in the context of Ukraine's growing fiscal crisis and presidential elections in 2015, Russia offered him a 15-billion-dollar financial bailout, which he accepted. Yanukovych's position of being isolated from the West as authoritarian leader is advantageous to Russia because it put Yanukovych in a position that Russia offer is the best for him and the country. Following the regime change, Russia used hard power to counter the rise of pro-Western leaders in Ukraine. Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014 in response to economic and energy pressure, further undermining Ukrainian statehood. Moving to the second phase of Russia's strategy, they repeat the same strategy used in Georgia (passporization) in South-Eastern Ukraine, a region with historical links to Russia, Novorossiia (Kharkov, Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, Nikolayev, and Odessa) (Laure Delcour, 2015).

Over 441,000 Russian passports were issued, and over 1.2 million Luhansk and Donetsk passports were facilitated the issuance in the occupied Donbas territories. In 2019, Putin expedited naturalization for Ukrainians living in East Ukraine who work in Russia, as well as any Ukrainian and their families

who were born in Crimea but fled before the annexation of Crimea. In Spring 2020, Russia passed an amendment of removing the restrictions on dual citizenship for Kazakhstani, Ukrainian, Georgian, Moldovan citizens applying for Russian passport. The passportization strategy in Donbas is part of the Russia grand scheme of things in their plan to launch military offense in the name of Russia new citizens should Ukraine launch offense backed by the West. The second is to return the provinces back to Kyiv as counterattack. The campaign conducted by Russia has fuelled anti-Russian sentiment in Ukraine, while the campaign of information in Donbas has portrayed Ukrainians as fascists in the public's mind. This is to give Russia justification to capture Novorossiia, while preventing Ukraine from joining NATO. (Levitan, 2021).

In 2002, Russia also began establishing various compatriot organizations and cultural centers in Ukraine. They also supply these organizations with financial, logistical, legal, and organizational support. Preceding to the Orange revolution, illegal and semilegal organizations in Ukraine were established by Russian citizens. They provided paramilitary training for their members (Grigas, 2016). In Donbas, Russia supported the separatist movement while also denying any involvement. They portrayed the separatist movement as a grassroots local rebellion. Russia's hybrid warfare has blurred the distinction between state-controlled regular armed forces, mercenary forces, and rogue local (Laure Delcour, 2015).

In addition to Ukraine and Georgia, Russia is involved in the Syrian intervention. Political protests and constant growth of violence by Bashar al-government Assad's sparked the armed conflict in early 2011. This sparked civil war between the Syrian government and the opposition. The opposition was made up of secular and Islamist armed groups like Al Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). The rise of ISIS as a terrorist organization poses a threat to many countries' security and political stability. As a result, the international community and countries are being encouraged to

intervene in the civil war. Russia has been a long been an ally of the al-Assad's government. Al-Assad formally requested Russia to help in combating the anti-government group. In September 2015, Russia launched its military campaign. Russia justified its involvement in Syria as a fight against global terrorism (AKA ISIS). However, there is more to that. Russia has its own agenda in terms of keeping its long-time ally in power and maintaining access to the Tartus naval base. (Irina Grigor (Khaldarova), 2021).

Although Georgia – Ukraine and Syria are different cases altogether, there are similar patterns in the cases that Russia objective remains the same: which is to maintain their superpower status and influence globally by asserting their position, this includes to even using their long-term ally. Moreover, since the civil war also involved US on the opposing spectrum, it is also clear that just like Ukraine and Georgia, Syrian civil war is just another way of Russia to compete with US in terms of power and influence.

CONCLUSION

This study found that to protect Russia's National interest and Security against NATO, Russia must take a drastic measure to prevent losing Georgia and Ukraine to NATO. Russia's used similar strategies in Georgia and Ukraine that can be called as "modern Russification". First, Russia took advantage of the separatist regions who are in conflict against their countries (Such as in Georgia are South Ossetia and Abkhazia and in Ukraine are Crimea and South Eastern Ukraine) by offering them Russia citizenship and passport to the citizens who wish to convert their legal identity to Russia. This method is called the passporization method. The passporization method is a win-win strategy for both the separatist regions in Georgia and Russia. The separatist group can integrate themselves with Russia, meanwhile Russia was able to create a situation of overlapping sovereignty between two countries. In Ukraine, aside from the passporization strategy, Russia was able to influence Crimea referendum to be

favouring Russia and also built compatriot organizations and cultural centres to further integrate the people in Ukraine separatist region to Russia. With the overlapping sovereignty, Russia gained access to launch military aggression to both countries, justifying it as protecting Russia's citizens and successfully countered NATO's expansion to Georgia and Ukraine.

This study may add more perspectives and insights into the pattern of how Russia moved and counterattack NATO. This study is also supporting and confirming the previous researches regarding NATO's expansion as a threat to Russia's National interest and security. Through this study, the pattern of Russia's movement in preventing Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO is by taking advantage of the people who wished to integrate themselves with Russia. Moreover, this study can contribute insight of how despite using the same strategy as Georgia, Russia is capable of adapting and modifying their strategies smoothly in order for it to be applicable with the recent situations and regions regardless of NATO's current power and influence in Europe.

Lastly, there are still limitations in this study and therefore, need further research in the future. This study has yet to include the future implications of Russia's Russification strategies not only to Russia itself, but also to the separatist groups in terms of their diplomatic relations with NATO and other countries that are involved in this matter. Moreover, this study has yet to include the estimation of Russia's current strength against NATO after successfully preventing both countries memberships with NATO. Therefore, the writer recommends more throughout research regarding Russia and the separatist group future effects after the use off modern Russification strategy.

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