

THE UKRAINE IMBROGLIO: DOES IT IMPACT INDIA?

CHANDRA REKHA

INTRODUCTION

The recent developments in Ukraine have once again brought the region to a critical juncture in international affairs. What started as anti-government protests soon transformed into intense ethno-political mobilisation with the demand for secession becoming contagious in eastern Ukraine. While analysts are busy examining the triggers for the intense protests, the need of the hour is to evaluate the failure of Kiev to address the underlying factors that have fostered the uprising of ethnic groups in Ukraine since its independence post Soviet disintegration in 1991. Hence, it becomes imperative to explore the factors that have contributed to the making of the conflict in Kiev in order to gain a better perspective of the Ukraine imbroglio and the impact, if any, it may have on India. This paper is an attempt to explore the breadth of Russia's reengagement in the former Soviet Republics, the relations between Ukraine and Russia since the post-Cold War era, how Ukraine's membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) or European Union (EU) in the future is seen as a strategic catastrophe by Russia and the failure of Ukraine to strike the right balance between relations with Russia and relations with the West in its foreign policy approach.

Chandra Rekha is a Research Associate at the Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi.

CATALYSTS FOR ETHNO-POLITICAL CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

Signing of the Agreement

After a severe decade-long recession following independence, the economy in Ukraine grew satisfactorily from 2000 to 2007 on the back of a high demand for exports of steel and other commodities, and a burgeoning consumer sector. However, the global financial crisis hit the economy hard as demand for its exports dried up, and the economy has struggled to grow consistently since then. The economy's reliance on heavy industry, poor business conditions and high levels of corruption continue to impede its achievement of long-term sustainable growth. A large budget deficit and insufficient resources meant that the government was in need of a substantial bailout.¹ Consequently, in November 2013, Viktor Yanukovich, the then president of Ukraine and pro-Russian leader, postponed a planned association agreement of the EU trade deal in favour of the Russian trade deal. This escalated fears that he would throw Ukraine back into Russia's grip. As a repercussion to finalising the deal with Russia, protests ensued in Kiev by pro-EU supporters that lasted until the New Year and then turned violent.

Euromaidan

The Euromaidan² demonstrations turned violent in early 2014 when talks between the government and opposition, mediated by the foreign ministers of Germany, Poland and France, resulted in an agreement. The principles

-
1. Ben Smith and Daniel Harari, "Ukraine, Crimea and Russia", Research Paper 14/16, House of Commons Library, March 17, 2014, p. 11.
 2. The first part, "Euro," refers to Europe. "Maidan" is a word of Persian origin, which is likely to have entered Ukraine via the Ottomans, meaning "square" or "open place", however, translating it as "Europesquare". The square was the focal point of the Orange Revolution, the 2004 mass daily protests that forced the annulment of a fraudulent presidential election. In that role, maidan became a two-syllable encapsulation of peaceful resistance and determined action. The symbolism is so powerful that the Ukrainian media have taken to referring to all the current demonstrations as Euromaidan, even if they take place on a "ploshcha," another word for square. Source: Jim Henitz, "Ukraine's Euromaidan: What's in a Name?", December 2, 2013. <http://news.yahoo.com/ukraines-euromaidan-whats-name-090717845.html>

of the agreement comprised a return to the country's 2004 Constitution³; it abandoned the Russian deal and stripped Yanukovych of his powers without an impeachment, made former parliamentary speaker Turchykov interim president and called for early presidential elections by December 2014.⁴ The illegitimate coup and ousting of President Yanukovych, appointment of an interim government and dissatisfaction with the initiatives in Kiev provided the trigger for the crisis. The new Kiev Administration and the deliberations by Britain, France and Poland were not honoured by the ethnic Russians.

The Crimean Uprising

Crimea was the bastion of support to the ousted President Yanukovych as it comprises nearly 60 percent of the Russian ethnic majority. Pro-Russia protesters rallied against the new interim government in Ukraine which was illegitimate and a takeover by the semi-fascists' forces.⁵ The dissatisfaction with Kiev's interim government got further aggravated when the interim government banned the Russian language. As a result, the ethnic Russian population feared that they would be suppressed by the semi-fascists. What started as anti-government protests soon transformed into a secessionist movement with a call for a referendum on March 16, 2014. Crimea was recognised as an independent entity on March 19, 2014, by Russia.

Russian Intervention

Russia tightened its grip in the peninsula during the clashes in Kiev. On March 21, the Russian Duma passed the 'Foreign Territory Annexation Bill' that made it easier for the territories to join the Russian Federation.⁶ Within

3. During the 'Orange Revolution' in 2004, the Ukraine Parliament passed a law amending the Constitution. These amendments weakened the power of the president of Ukraine, he lost the power to nominate the prime minister of Ukraine and the task was given to the Parliament. The president could only appoint the minister of defence and foreign minister. The president also lost the right to dismiss members of the Cabinet of Ukraine.

4. Ibid.

5. Luke Harding, "Kiev's Protesters: Ukraine Uprising was no Neo-Nazi Power-grab", March 13, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/13/ukraine-uprising-fascist-coup-grassroots-movement>. Accessed on May 20, 2014.

6. "Foreign Territory Annexation Bill on State Duma Agenda for March 21", March 12, 2014. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/foreign-territory-annexation-bill-on-state-duma-agenda-for-march-21/495946.html>

The pro-Russian sentiment which is strong in eastern Ukraine saw the referendum of Crimea and its accession to Russia as an opportunity to return to the shared legacy of Russia.

days of the Crimean Parliament declaring its intention to go for a referendum, on March 16, the ethnic Russian population backed the proposal to join Russia, following which Russia too recognised Crimea as part of the Russian Federation. The Crimean referendum was justified as a referendum under international law as the declaration mentioned the referendum of Kosovo and its outcome.

Hence, through the referendum, Crimea joined Russia and adopted the Russian ruble as its currency within a month. Crimea moved to Moscow time (GMT+4 and two hours ahead of Kiev time) since March 30. The accession enabled the Crimean Army to join the Russian military. Crimea also moved quickly to renationalise private property and two major energy companies, Chornomornaftohaz and Ukrtransgaz, and set up a new central bank, with millions of Russian rubles.⁷

Domino Effect of Crimean Referendum

The call for “Greater Novorossiya” led to a domino effect of the Crimean uprising in eastern Ukraine which includes the following provinces in addition to Crimea: Donetsk, Lughansk, Kharkiv, Zaporizhia, Kherson, Mikholaiv and Odessa.⁸ The pro-Russian sentiment which is strong in eastern Ukraine saw the referendum of Crimea and its accession to Russia as an opportunity to return to the shared legacy of Russia. On April 7, 2014, protesters occupied government buildings in the eastern cities of Donetsk, Lugansk and Kharkiv. Although the Kharkiv building was retaken the following day, the occupation spread to other cities such as Mariupol, and Odessa. Pro-Russian leaders declared referenda in Donetsk and Lugansk

7. “After Secession Vote, Crimea Moves in on Energy Companies, Banking, Land”, March 17, 2014. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/03/17/crimea-official-says-66-percent-voters-support-joining-russia/>

8. Adrain A Basora and Aleksandr Fisher, “Putin’s “Greater Novorossiya: The Dismemberment of Ukraine”, Foreign Policy Research Institute, April 2014, p. 1.

on granting greater autonomy to the eastern region.⁹ The interim Ukrainian government, however, refused to recognise the outcome of any vote in the eastern part of Ukraine. But the Donetsk People's Republic was focussed on creating a larger entity, carved out of southern and eastern Ukraine to be called *Novorossiia*, or "New Russia," using Czarist Russia's name for the region.¹⁰

UNDERLYING FACTORS

What is happening in Ukraine is complicated and driven by many factors apart from those mentioned above. For understanding the underlying factors, this section is divided based on internal determinants and external factors in determining the Ukraine crisis.

Since its independence in 1991 from the Soviet Union, Ukraine has been torn between east and west, and politically divided along ethnic-linguistic lines. While Ukrainian is the main language in the western regions, Russian is predominant in parts of the east and south.

Demographic Split of Ukraine

In the domestic inferences, the demographic divide of Ukraine is a case in point. Since its independence in 1991 from the Soviet Union, Ukraine has been torn between east and west, and politically divided along ethnic-linguistic lines. While Ukrainian is the main language in the western regions, Russian is predominant in parts of the east and south.¹¹

Roughly speaking, about four out of every six people in Ukraine are ethnic Ukrainians and speak the Ukrainian language. Another one in six is an ethnic Russian and speaks Russian. The last one-in-six is ethnic Ukrainian but speaks Russian. Nearly 80 percent of the Ukrainian population prefers to speak in the Russian language. The attitude and division of the Ukrainian population is further reflected in the voting patterns during national

9. Ukraine in Maps: How the Crisis Spread", May 9, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27308526>

10. "Donetsk Rebels' 'Novorossiia' Fits Russian Vision of Reshaped Europe in 2035". Source: <http://springtimeofnations.blogspot.in/2014/04/donetsk-rebels-novorossiia-fits-russian.html>

11. Ibid.

elections. People from districts dominated by the majority group (Ukrainian-speakers who are ethnically Ukrainian) tend to vote for one candidate. And people from districts with ethnic Russians or Russian-speakers as a majority tend to vote for the other candidate. The results of Ukraine's 2004 and 2010 presidential elections can be cited as evidence to bolster this argument. In both cases, it was a clear case of a regional divide.¹²

It is important to carry out a brief historical survey about Ukraine as a state, especially the plight of ethnic Russians in the region, in order to gain a better perspective on the current Ukraine imbroglio. This will also help in evaluating the claim by both Russia and Ukraine that they have a historical precedent to support their positions on the issue.

A Brief Historical Survey

Around the 9th century, the Russian state was constructed around Kiev which also happened to be the first capital. The population comprised eastern Slavs who were orthodox Christians. During the 12th and 13th centuries, Kievan Russia consisted of two main principalities: the western and eastern. The western principalities were called Galystia and Wolyn and the eastern was called Vladimir (present Moscow). The western principalities were more engaged with European politics while the title of Great Princes was held in the east by the royalty who were considered to be the masters of the whole of Russia. After the fall of the Tartars, Moscow principality's rating was affirmed as a regional hegemon. As for the west, during this period, it had lost all trace of freedom as it came under the rule of Lithuania, Austria, and Hungary and then even Romania. On the other hand, the growth of the Muscovite Empire integrated all the Cossack lands (Novorossiia) which included eastern and southeastern Ukraine and southwestern Russia.

The Muscovite Empire, little by little, liberated western Russia from the Poles and Germans. They believed that they were restoring the old Russia, Kievan Russia, uniting all orthodox Slavs – east and west – in this unique kingdom. During the 8th-9th centuries, the Crimean War of 1853-

12. Max Fisher, "This One Map Helps Explain Ukraine's Protests", December 9, 2013. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/12/09/this-one-map-helps-explain-ukraines-protests/>

56 saw France, Britain and the Ottoman Empire pitted against the Russian Empire to push back against the perceived Russian influence in Europe through its warm water policy. The unification of western Russian lands was accomplished with the annexation of Crimea from the Ottoman Empire. After the 1917 October Revolution, the Bolsheviks restored the lands of the Tsarist Empire and declared it as the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union then artificially created the Ukraine Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR).

The three lines of descent in modern Ukraine post- the Soviet collapse have continued in the population. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine never existed as an independent state within its current borders. But the problematic area starts here with the chosen identity of the newly created state of Ukraine which was dominated by the western Galystia and Wolyn identity with no place for the Novorossiia and Great Russian identity. This particularity was expressed in two opposite geo-political options: western with European integration and eastern with Russia integration. This has continued to haunt the present Ukraine as evident in the recent ethnic mobilisation, the demand for secession and the referenda in Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk.¹³

Economic Crisis of Ukraine

Following the 2008 recession, Ukraine's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined by 15 percent and what was once an emerging economy was majorly hit by the economic crisis. This brought a sudden end to the rapid economic growth of Ukraine. By November 2013, a desperate Yanukovych was in search of between \$20 to \$35 billion in loans and aid from all possible sources: the EU, Russia, the US, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as China. Moreover, integration with the European Union or Russia for the revival of Ukraine from the brink of bankruptcy and a crippled economy was dependent on the Rada (the Parliament of Ukraine).¹⁴ While Russia was

13. The brief explanation on the historical survey of Ukraine as a state is taken from the article by Alexander Dugin, "Letter to the American People on Ukraine", March 8, 2014. <http://openrevolt.info/2014/03/08/alexander-dugin-letter-to-the-american-people-on-ukraine/> Accessed on May 16, 2014.

14. Alan Mayhew, "The Economic and Financial Crisis: Impacts on an Emerging Economy – Ukraine", Sussex European Institute, SEI Working Paper No 115, 2010, p. 5.

willing to offer \$15 billion and cheap natural gas¹⁵, it was resolutely and quite rapidly putting together the Eurasian Customs Union. The European Union, on the other hand, had painstakingly negotiated the details of the association agreement with Ukraine over several years as the agreement was the central pillar of its much-vaunted Eastern Partnership¹⁶.

The hardest hit areas of the recession in Ukraine were undoubtedly the industrialised areas of eastern Ukraine, where the sudden decline in demand for the products of heavy industry had particularly severe effects on employment, and, therefore, on poverty.¹⁷ Ukraine's industrial heartland soon witnessed the demand for secession from Kiev to join Russia, as these regions faced a severe impact during the recession in 2009; moreover, Ukraine lost popular support when it failed to address the worsening economic situation in these pro- Russian regions.

Ukraine's Dilemma

Ukraine's foreign policy since independence in 1991 has been characterised by a single central feature: a reluctance to commit to one side or the other. Association with the EU or integration with Russia with which it shares historical and cultural linkages has resulted in Ukraine struggling to create its own identity. In the east and south of Ukraine, Soviet values were still solid and the Great Russian identity was, in turn, the overwhelming feeling.¹⁸

In western Ukraine, anti-Sovietism was deeply rooted and prevented any attempt of the south and east to express their own vision. Turning to Russia meant the exclusion of the European option, hence, the fury in Kiev. Furthermore, Ukraine also has been a key factor in Putin's vision for the Eurasian Union with its steel mills, coal plants, bountiful agricultural resources, and a massive population of 46 million people. Hence, Ukraine

15. Andrew Higgin, "With President's Departure, Ukraine Looks Toward a Murky Future", February 22, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/23/world/europe/with-presidents-departure-ukraine-looks-toward-a-murky-future.html>

16. Katranya Wolzuck and Roman Wolzhuk, "What You Need to Know About the Causes of the Ukrainian Protests", December 9, 2013. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2013/12/09/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-causes-of-the-ukrainian-protests/>

17. Mayhew, n. 14, p. 11.

18. Dugin, n. 13.

would provide the necessary anchor of any successful version of the Eurasian Union.¹⁹ For a while now, Kiev has been struggling to link itself with Europe or Russia, even though the aim of a sovereign country like Ukraine should have been to create a 'united Ukrainian identity'.

Crimea: The Contested Zone

Crimea has always been of great importance to Russia as it shares a historical and cultural umbilical cord with Russia.²⁰ Historically, Russia never reconciled with the peninsula being separated from the authority of Moscow which it regarded as a historical injustice, especially after the controversial move by the then Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev of transferring Crimea from Russia to the Ukraine SSR as a 'symbolic gesture' marking the 300th anniversary of Ukraine becoming a part of the Tsardom of Russia²¹. There was much debate about the fate of Crimea then as this was done without a referendum, although the population never really questioned the transfer as Simferopol was a federal city under the Moscow authority then. As for the strategic relevance, the Great Crimean War took place because of the enormous opportunity to project power into the Black Sea region, and also because warm water naval bases could be built.²² Russia's Black Sea naval fleet is based at Sevastopol and has been there for nearly 230 years—it is the only important warm water port for Russia.²³ The Kiev Administration's interest to join NATO threatened the Russian position in Crimea: a NATO takeover would make Russia vulnerable as it could lead to the possible eviction of Russia's naval fleet and denial of access to its only warm water port.

19. Leon Neyfakh, "Putin's Long Game? Meet the Eurasian Union", March 9, 2014. <http://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2014/03/09/putin-long-game-meet-eurasian-union/>

20. Yasmeen Aftab Ali, "Crimea: The New Candy Floss", March 10, 2014. <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/03/10/comment/crimea-the-new-candy-floss/>

21. "USSR's Nikita Khrushchev Gave Russia's Crimea Away to Ukraine in only 15 Minutes", February 19, 2009, Pravda. http://english.pravda.ru/history/19-02-2009/107129-ussr_crimea_ukraine-0/

22. Askold Krushelnysky, "Democracy Lab: Crimea's War of Nerves", March 4, 2014. www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/03/04

23. Richard Allen Greene, "Ukraine's Crimea Lives in Russia's Shadow: 5 Things to Know". February 28, 2014. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/02/27/world/europe/ukraine-crimea-5-things/> Accessed on May 23, 2014

Ukraine occupies a sensitive position between Russia and the NATO member states of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania, and that adds to its geo-strategic significance.

In May 1997, Russia and Ukraine resolved years of disagreement to broker a twenty-year leasing arrangement for the Black Sea Fleet to remain in Crimea. In September 2008, in response to the Russian Defence Ministry expressing a desire to extend the lease beyond 2017, the then Prime Minister, Yulia Tymoshenko hinted at denying the request. However, under the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich, in April 2010, the two countries extended the lease by 25 years, to 2042, in exchange for Russian supply of natural gas to Ukraine at discounted rates.²⁴ Moscow has a lease on the Sevastopol port till 2042, for which Ukraine received a handsome \$98 million per year.²⁵ The interest of the Kiev Administration to join NATO, therefore, was a threat to the Russian position in Crimea.

UKRAINE: THE POLITICAL THEATRE

Ukraine occupies a sensitive position between Russia and the NATO member states of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania, and that adds to its geo-strategic significance. Ukraine's future membership in NATO would be a major blow to the Russian Eurasian Customs Union. On the other hand, integration with Russia would strengthen Moscow manifold with its resources and population and, more importantly, would fortify its energy transit route to the European states. The following section of the paper will take a look at the three major players in the region.

NATO's Expansion

The relations between Russia and the US have been far from good or normal. The US led NATO's policy in the former Soviet space has always been an irritant for the Russian mindset. The existence of NATO and redefining of its agenda in the former Soviet space even after the annulment of the

24. Smith and Harari, n. 1, p.20.

25. Ali, n.20.

Warsaw Pact, resulted in Russia's displeasure. Hence, Russia's repeated interventions in its former zones of influence are seen as a means to weaken or subordinate its neighbouring governments like Ukraine and keep them out of the orbit of the US led NATO alliance. NATO's influential role in the former Soviet space, coupled with the deployment of US missile defence systems or radar systems in Poland, the Czech Republic and Turkey, were regarded as threats. In addition, the 'Orange Revolution' sponsored by the West, and NATO's offer of membership to Ukraine and Georgia in 2008 during the Bucharest Summit did not go down well with Russia. It was in the same summit that Putin had rhetorically threatened the territorial integrity of Ukraine.²⁶

One of the major factors for the recent Ukraine crisis is Moscow's fear that a closer association agreement between the EU and Ukraine will prove to be trade diverting and not trade creating for Russia.

EU Enlargement

Russia has been wary of EU initiatives in the Black Sea, and believes that policies such as the Eastern Partnership are an extension of the EU's sphere of influence in the region.²⁷ One of the major factors for the recent Ukraine crisis is Moscow's fear that a closer association agreement between the EU and Ukraine will prove to be trade diverting and not trade creating for Russia. With the signing of such a treaty, EU goods will be able enter Ukraine, free of import duties and this can affect the market for Russian domestic goods. Furthermore, European and American transnational companies could also edge out Ukrainian firms linked to Russia, especially in the military industries and high-tech areas, generally located in eastern Ukraine.²⁸ The EU initiative through the EU Eastern Partnership since 2009 brought six Eastern European neighbours, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus,

26. Hall Gardener, "NATO, the EU, Ukraine, Russia and Crimea: The 'Reset' that was Never 'Reset'", NATO Watch, Briefing Paper no. 49, April 3, 2014, p. 5. www.natowatch.org

27. Mustafa Aydın-Sinem A. Açıkmeşe, "EU Engagement in the Black Sea: The Views From the Region", Centre for European Strategy, Warsaw, 2011, p. 10.

28. Gardner, n. 26, p. 6.

The total population of Greater Novorossiya would be approximately 21 million. This would be a sizeable potential addition to the Customs Union with Russia, and would give Moscow even stronger economic leverage against the European Union.

Georgia, Republic of Moldova together, and Ukraine was viewed by Russia as drawing these countries away from the Russian zone of influence and tilting their political-economic allegiance towards Europe.²⁹

Russian Consolidation

At the heart of the ongoing crisis in Ukraine and the overwhelming majority vote by Crimea to accede to Russia, is a desire by Putin to increase Russia's political, military and economic influence in its 'near-abroad',

including strategic control of the Black Sea which Russia lost to Ukraine with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the fall of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych threatened Russia's position in the Crimea where its Black Sea fleet is harboured under a long-term lease with Ukraine. Russia's intentions in its sphere of influence are to maintain strategic military assets in the Crimea and undermine the new pro-Western administration in Kiev.³⁰ Since the post-Cold War era, Russia has consolidated its position on the international stage through its foreign policy that coincided with its economic policies and geo-political interests. One of the primary priorities of its foreign policy has been the protection of the interests, lives and dignity of ethnic Russians wherever they are located. Hence, time and again, Russia has justified its aggressive posture which was evident in the 2008 Georgian crisis and the recent Crimean uprising.

Moreover, Putin's call for "Greater Novorossiya" refers historically to a large part of the present Ukraine which was controlled by the Soviet Union until its break-up. The Orange Revolution was a deep shock to the Moscow Administration but the lustre of this revolution quickly wore off once its leaders failed to live up to their reformist promises, the Ukrainian

29. Ibid., p. 7.

30. Grant Webster and Sergey Bolshakov, "The Russia-Ukraine Crisis", March 4, 2014. www.investecassetmanagement.com Accessed on April 13, 2014

economy spiralled downward, and corruption remained rampant. The total population of Greater Novorossiia would be approximately 21 million. This would be a sizeable potential addition to the Customs Union with Russia, and would give Moscow even stronger economic leverage against the European Union.³¹

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO UKRAINE CRISIS

The reunification of Crimea with Russia by a way of a referendum has become the new battleground for the West and Russia. As a reaction to Russia's military intervention in Crimea, the West warned Russia by cancelling the G-8 Summit scheduled to be held in Sochi.³² The West also views Russia's role in the Kiev clashes as a violation of the Budapest Memorandum. According to the agreement, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine, along with Belarus and Kazakhstan, was left with many of the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons. This was a source of worry after the Soviet Union's collapse.

In 1994, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan undertook to eliminate all nuclear weapons from their territory and accede to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). One of the three Budapest Memoranda of December 5, 1994, the Ukraine Memorandum, was signed by the presidents of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the United States of America, and the prime minister of the United Kingdom, making assurances to Ukraine on behalf of those countries. The memorandum welcomed the fact that Ukraine was joining the NPT and said that the signatories would respect Ukrainian independence and borders and reaffirmed their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine. It also claimed that none of their weapons would ever be used against Ukraine except in self-defence or otherwise in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.³³

31. Basora and Fisher, "Putin's 'Greater Novorossiia' – The Dismemberment of Ukraine", Foreign Policy Research Institute, April 2014, p. 1.

32. Capt Vikram Puri, "Russia Needs to Defend its Security and Stability", *Business Central Asia*, April 2014, p. 27.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

UN Resolution

Strongly condemning the Crimean referendum as illegal and a blatant violation of the Ukraine Constitution, a draft resolution, drawn up by the United States, urged nations not to recognise the results³⁴ of the March referendum. On March 27, 2014, the UN General Assembly passed a non-binding resolution with 100 votes in favour, 58 abstentions and 11 against the resolution.³⁵ The vote gave the Western countries a platform to demonstrate the unity they shared as the Crimean crisis has unfolded. Every European Union member state and most of its candidates for membership voted for the resolution, as did the entire memberships of NATO, the G-7, and the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), except for Israel. Only 11 countries voted against the resolution: Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, North Korea, Nicaragua, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe. The abstentions are also worth noting. Four of the five BRICS countries—Brazil, India, China, and South Africa—chose not to take sides on the resolution, as did many African, South American, and Asian countries.³⁶

Targeted Sanctions

The US and the European Union expectedly denounced the Russian intervention and the US and the EU came up with their respective lists of sanctions on Putin's close aides and his loyalists in Crimea. The lists, however, strike at Putin by targeting some of his key allies as they hold the real power in Russia. The US sanctions were imposed on the basis of an executive order which Obama signed that expanded the sanctions' reach to Russian officials and the second order which enabled the Administration to take additional action if Russia did not deescalate the situation. Far beyond the situation in Crimea or even Ukraine, the sanctions order potentially

34. "Russia Vetoes UN Resolution on Ukraine's Crimea", March 15, 2014. <http://www.infowars.com/russia-vetoes-un-resolution-on-ukraines-crimea/>

35. "Russia Calls UN Resolution on Crimean Referendum Counterproductive", *Business Central Asia*, April 2014, p. 33.

36. Matt Fordmar, "The World's Post-Crimea Power Blocs, Mapped", March 29, 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/03/the-worlds-post-crimea-power-blocs-mapped/359835/>

includes anyone who is “a senior official” in the Russian government, who is involved in “the arms and related material sector in the Russian Federation,” or who has operated “for, or on behalf of, directly or indirectly,”³⁷ any of the above.

The US published lists of individuals and companies hit by travel bans and asset freezes on March 19, March 20, and April 28. The EU’s lists were issued on March 17, March 23 and April 29. The following are details of some of the targeted personalities and close allies of Putin on whom the sanctions are imposed:

Gennady Timchenko: Founder of Gunvor, one of the world’s largest independent commodity trading companies involved in the oil and energy markets, he is also president of the SKA hockey club in St Petersburg.

Igor Sechin: The head of Russia’s leading petroleum company Rosneft.

Arkady Rotenberg and Boris Rotenberg: The Rotenberg brothers have provided “support to Putin’s pet projects” by receiving and executing approximately \$7 billion worth of contracts for the Sochi Olympic Games and the state-controlled energy giant Gazprom, as a result of which their personal wealth has increased by \$2.5 billion.

Yuri Kovalchuk: The largest single shareholder of Bank Rossiya, Mr Kovalchuk is one of Russia’s 100 richest men.

Sergei Ivanov: He has been chief of staff of the Presidential Executive Office since 2011. Mr Ivanov was defence minister from 2001 to 2007, and then became first deputy prime minister and secretary of the Security Council.

Vladimir Yakunin: He was appointed chairman of Russian Railways in 2005. Mr Yakunin regularly consults with President Putin on issues regarding the state-owned company and accompanies him on many domestic and international visits, according to the US Treasury. He was

37. Karen DeYoung and Griff Witte, “Russia Recognizes Crimea’s Independence, Defying New U.S. and E.U. Sanctions”, March 22, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-eu-announce-sanctions-following-vote-in-ukraine/2014/03/17/3223799c-add9-11e3-a49e-76adc9210f19_story.html. Accessed on May 23, 2014.

The response of the West and the European Union, especially with targeted sanctions, will have little impact on Russia and cause minimal disruption to the Russian economy.

also in charge of major construction projects for the Sochi Winter Olympics.³⁸

SUMMATION OF THE UKRAINE IMBROGLIO

Failure of 'Reset' Between Russia and West

Despite both the West and Russia acting as key partners on global issues such as combating terrorism, it is ironical that as influential players in the global community, the relations between these countries are disappointing. The Crimean crisis further reveals the complete failure of the West and Russia to find a path toward defence and security cooperation in the post- Cold War era.³⁹ While NATO and the EU see Russia's claim in Ukraine as illegal and a continuation of its Cold War policy of hegemonic control of the former Soviet space, Russia, on the other hand, views the collaboration of NATO and EU in its "Near Abroad" as "containment" of Russia in its zone of influence.

Opposition to NATO enlargement is seen as the primary means to achieve a new post- Cold War system of Euro-Atlantic security. For instance, the US' and NATO's refusal to incorporate Russian concerns during NATO's intervention against Russia's ally, Serbia, in the war over Kosovo in 1999, led to a backlash against NATO and the US. Moscow subsequently denounced Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia. In a tit-for-tat response to US recognition of Kosovo, Moscow then backed the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia after the 2008 Georgia-Russia War.⁴⁰

The Dependency

The response of the West and the European Union, especially with targeted sanctions, will have little impact on Russia and cause minimal disruption

38. "Ukraine Crisis: Russian Officials Targeted by Sanctions", April 29, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26672800>

39. Gardner, n. 26, p.1.

40. Ibid., p. 4.

to the Russian economy. While Washington has been keen to tighten the pressure on Russia, the European nations are resistant, given their dependence on Russian energy stocks and in the light of commercial ties between European and Russian firms.⁴¹

Russia is Europe's main energy supplier, as it supplies about 30 percent, of Europe's natural gas and 35 percent of its oil imports. Given the substantial trade and economic cooperation between Russia and the members of the EU, any form of sanctions with regard to the energy markets of Russia will lead to major repercussions on both the region's and the market's security. For instance, German-Russia trade alone is worth Euros 73 billion and Russia supplies natural gas to Germany through the northern stream gas pipeline. The EU as a whole depends to the extent of 20 per cent of its energy needs on Russia. Over 6,000 German companies do business in Russia.⁴²

Moreover, the US and EU are divided over the use and extent of sanctions. The EU is reluctant to press harder with sanctions because Russia is its biggest oil and gas supplier, and, in fact, is not expected to impose sanctions on officials in Putin's inner circle. The division between the US and the EU could limit the impact of the sanctions. There are four energy companies that could be affected by the new sanctions. The companies include the London-based BP PLC (LON:BP); Exxon Mobil (NYSE:XOM); the Norwegian Statoil (NYSE:STO); and Eni (BIT:ENI), Italy's national oil company. All have large research deals with Rosneft (MCX:ROSN), one of the Russian companies targeted by the sanctions. The shares of BP, which has a stake of about 20 percent in Rosneft, fell 0.98 percent in London. Rosneft shares also fell, by 1.7 percent.⁴³

The EU as a whole depends to the extent of 20 per cent of its energy needs on Russia.

Over 6,000 German companies do business in Russia.

41. Brin Branco, "New Russia Sanctions Will Have Little Impact, Experts Say", International Business Times, April 28, 2014. <http://www.ibtimes.com/new-russia-sanctions-will-have-little-impact-experts-say-1577384>.

42. Arvind Gupta, "Crimean Crisis: A New Phase of Cold War?", Institute for Defence and Strategic Analysis, March 21, 2014, p.3, http://idsa.in/idsacomments/CrimeancrisisANewPhaseofColdWar_agupta_210314

43. Branco, n. 41.

Is Russia Prepared

The showdown in Crimea will reassert Russia's emerging global status. It is perceived in Russia as a restoration of lost glory after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It has, however, given rise to several questions about whether Russia is capable of investing in Crimea's economic aspirations, especially as Russia is still grappling with its own economy. Crimea is not just home to ethnic Russians but also to ethnic Ukrainians and Muslim Tartars who are still fearful of a revival of the persecution they suffered during the Soviet rule. This can act as a catalyst to ethnic clashes within the Russian territory.

In addition, the Eurasian Union is Putin's ambitious dream which is designed not only as an economic alternative to the European Union, but also as a philosophical mission to make Russia and its neighbours the centre of their own geo-political landscape. So far, Belarus and Kazakhstan are members of the Customs Union, an economic bloc formed in 2010 as a precursor to the Eurasian Economic Union, which will itself be formed in 2015. Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are also expected to become members and Russia had hopes that Ukraine and even Georgia might join. Russia's intervention in the Ukraine imbroglio may hamper its idea of 'reconsolidation' of the former Soviet Republics.⁴⁴

Failure of Ukraine to Create 'Pan-Ukraine Identity'

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Newly Independent States (NIS) got the opportunity to reorient their identities, in practice developing national consciousness, including a Ukraine identity. There are two nations, two societies. They always vote in opposite ways: the former for a Western (pro-American, pro-European) candidate and the latter for a pro-Russian candidate.⁴⁵ Eastern Ukraine distrusts Kiev's intentions, especially after the interim government sought to ban the Russian language, while a significant

44. Dave, "Why Kazakhstan and Belarus are Watching Crimea Very, Very Carefully", March, 25, 2014. <http://beapatriot.wordpress.com/2014/03/25/why-kazakhstan-and-belarus-are-watching-crimea-very-very-carefully/> Accessed on May 17, 2014

45. Alexander Dugin, "The Crimean Way", April 9, 2014, <http://openrevolt.info/2014/04/09/alexander-dugin-the-crimean-way/>

percentage speaks the language fluently. Western Ukraine, on the other hand, feared the option of Russian integration when the pro-Russian leader, Yanukovich preferred signing the Russian trade deal over the association agreement proposed by the European Union.

In this scenario, it is ironical that such circumstances have led to the '*geography of fear*' in both the divided regions: they live in constant fear of being subjugated or, in a worst case scenario, having their identity eliminated. This fear has led to a *ghettoisation of the minds* where both the parties concerned have developed the mindset of 'us' and 'them', 'we' and 'the other' and, hence, fail to identify as a community as a whole. Under such circumstances, the split demography of Ukraine has only become '*tolerant*' of the 'other' instead of '*acceptance*' of their respective identity. All these factors have finally resulted in *ethno-political mobilisation* and a violent uprising in Ukraine.

UKRAINE IMBROGLIO: DOES IT AFFECT INDIA?

Bilateral Indian-Russian ties are very extensive. At the present moment, India is the largest importer of arms, 75 percent of which are provided by Russia. In the economic sphere, Russian-Indian trade is also growing at a vigorous pace: they have signed a bilateral nuclear agreement worth billions of dollars. The annexation of Crimea to Russia on March 18, 2014, put India on the horns of a dilemma.⁴⁶ Taking an active position against Russia could harm New Delhi's relations with its old ally, for decades a source of diplomatic support for India in the international arena, the largest supplier of arms to the Indian Army, and a source of technology. On the other hand, India's growing proximity to the US could antagonise Washington which may also result in hampering relations between the two countries.⁴⁷

India's Response to Ukraine Crisis

- At a press conference, India's National Security Adviser Shivshankar

46. Alexander Rogozhin, "India and the Crimean Crisis – Old Friends are Better than New", April 10, 2014. <http://journal-neo.org/2014/04/10/rus-indiya-i-problema-kry-ma-stary-j-drug-luchshe-novy-h/>

47. Ibid.

Menon publicly stated that Russia has “legitimate interests” in Crimea.⁴⁸

- India abstained from voting in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution on Crimea on March 27, 2014.⁴⁹
- India as part of the BRICS countries declared in a joint statement that it does not consider sanctions and counter-sanctions to be the appropriate response to the Crimean issue and that a political dialogue is the best answer.⁵⁰
- India, along with Brazil, China and South Africa, opposed any restrictions on the participation of Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G-20 Summit in Australia in the wake of the Crimean issue.⁵¹

Reasons for India's Response to Ukraine Crisis

- The Ukraine Resolution was drafted by Canada, Costa Rica, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine.⁵² The decision by New Delhi not to support the sanctions imposed on Russia by the USA and the European Union conforms to its policy of supporting only sanctions imposed by a UN decision.⁵³
- Abstention of votes showed solidarity on the part of the BRICS member states, with China, Brazil and South Africa also on the same page as India,⁵⁴ by not isolating Russia.
- India does not want to interfere in the internal affairs of another country as it touches a raw nerve in the Indian strategic thought. Thus, voting against the Ukraine Resolution would be a compromise by India on the “political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders”.⁵⁵

48. Ibid.

49. Rajeev Sharma, “India’s Abstention on Ukraine Resolution Does Not Mean Neutrality”, *Business Central Asia*, April 2014, p. 32.

50. Jhinuk Choudhary, “How India’s ‘Balanced’ Stance on Crimea Strengthens the Russian Case”, April 2, 2014. <http://rt.com/op-edge/india-crimea-balanced-stance-russia-885/>

51. Ibid.

52. Yogitha Singh, “UN Adopts Resolution Backing Ukraine’s Territorial Integrity”, March 27, 2014. <http://www.outlookindia.com/news/article/UN-Adopts-Resolution-Backing-Ukraines-Territorial-Integrity/834395>

53. Rogozhin, n. 46.

54. Sharma, n. 49, p. 32.

55. Ibid.

- The issue at the core of the Crimean crisis is whether the referendum held in the autonomous Republic of Crimea is valid or not. Taking sides in this referendum would put New Delhi in an uncomfortable situation and could lead to possible political and diplomatic repercussions domestically, especially on the longstanding issue of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The government tried to balance its position in the international arena by declaring that New Delhi, in principle, does not support referenda specially as the single justification for the disintegration of a country.
- While India's intention is not to leave Russia in the lurch at this moment of crisis in Ukraine, it should also be understood that there is a diplomatic facet of the whole episode which pertains to India-Ukraine bilateral relations.⁵⁶ While India-Ukraine relations may not be a priority of the Indian diplomatic establishment as the bilateral trade is minuscule (only \$3.1 billion),⁵⁷ compared to Russia, India believes in valuing all its bilateral relations equally.

BRICS can play the role of a bridge-builder between Russia and the West as there is a need to address the conflict from a non-violent and peace perspective.

APPROACH TO UKRAINE IMBROGLIO

Federalism

The foundation for politically addressing the various dimensions of the crisis in Ukraine includes the possibility of redefining the autonomy status within the constitutional parameters set by the Ukrainian and autonomous regional Constitutions. Federalisation is one condition upon which Ukraine can address the ongoing crisis in its region. If Russia and Ukraine can pull back from the brink of a large-scale violent conflict, the crisis is likely to

56. Rajeev Sharma, "Early End to Ukraine Crisis Will be in India's Interest", *Business Central Asia*, March 5, 2014, p. 36.

57. Choudhary, n. 50.

revive the discussion about the principles of regional autonomy and, perhaps, federalism. For a country the size of Ukraine, this could prove a fruitful avenue for managing its regional diversity, and the crisis could ultimately pave the way toward a more constructive engagement with the idea.⁵⁸

Greater Role by BRICS

The BRICS members, excluding Russia, not only abstained from voting in the UNGA Ukraine Resolution but also opposed the idea of banning Russia's participation in the forthcoming G-20 summit. It is important to note that the role of the BRICS, though relatively new, would nevertheless be impactful for its emphasis on dialogue and reconciliation. Emphasis on the role of the United Nations and opposition to sanctions have not only increased its visibility and role in international arena but also elevated the BRICS as global players. The BRICS can play the role of a bridge-builder between Russia and the West as there is a need to address the conflict from a non-violent and peace perspective. BRICS can be a balancer of values between the East and West, an enforcer of dialogue and deliberation, while, at the same time, playing a role to offset policies that aim to destabilise the global order.⁵⁹

While many analysts view the ongoing crisis in Ukraine as a new battleground of interests, it is in my opinion more of a 'global lab'. If Ukraine and the international community work together to resolve the crisis in a diplomatic and peaceful manner, it would be a success of conflict-prevention. The outcome in Ukraine would set an example for many countries which have struggled to find solutions to the long standing ethnic crises in their respective regions.

58. "Crimean Autonomy: A Viable Alternative to War", March 3, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/03/crimean-autonomy-a-viable-alternative-to-war/>

59. Debidatta Aurobinda Mahapatra, "BRICS Play Role as Global Balancer", Russia and India Report, March 26, 2014. http://in.rbth.com/world/2014/03/26/brics_play_role_as_global_balancer_34025.html Accessed on May 12, 2014