

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT AND ITS IMPACT ON REGIONAL SECURITY APPARATUS

Situational Report



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INTRODUCTION

The collapse of erstwhile USSR in Dec 1991 and its subsequent fragmentation into newly born nation-states paved the way for the world community start paying its heed to the future course of newly formed independent states in the region comprising of eastern and central Europe. The regional stability had been at the core of European powers policy visions. Of various newly freed states, Ukraine assumed an indispensable importance as it became pivotal in changing the geopolitics of Eastern Europe. Ever since Ukraine emerged as a sovereign country on the political map of world, it obstructed the easy access of Russia to Black Sea and pushed her borders 500 miles to the East. The mounting tension over Ukraine has heightened concerns from other EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) states, including the three South Caucasus states like Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova, over what impact the Russia-Ukraine war could have on their policies and regional security apparatus in particular and what impact the war have on the global security apparatus in general. The present paper aims at underscoring the impact of Russia-Ukraine war upon the security apparatus of the immediate countries surrounding the arena. The paper will probe out how Russia-Ukraine war has affected the deep structures of security apparatus in terms of policy, economy, politics and above the survival crisis in and around Russian-Ukrainian block especially Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

SOUTH CAUCASUS AND EUROPEAN UNION SOLEMNIZATION

The south Caucasus comprising of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan has been a particularly coveted region because of its geo-strategic location between Europe and central Asia. The region happened to be the site of geo-strategic confrontation and competitions (Haas, Cillissen, & Tibold, 2006). The destiny of the people of South Caucasus has been shaped, since centuries, by the external powers and the interests of Russian, Ottoman and Persian empires. Despite having now been active in the region for two decades, the EU is still the new entry on the bloc. During the 1990s, the South Caucasus and the surrounding region hardly figured on the EU's radar. Preoccupied with the Balkan wars and the new

realities unfolding in its Eastern neighborhood following the fall of the Iron Curtain, there was little interest for a region that was broadly viewed as on the obscure and distant periphery (Paul, 2015). At the same time, the three South Caucasus states were busy trying to survive, being consumed with interstate war and economic collapse. Being part of one empire with multiple ties and interdependencies did not lead to deeper cooperation and integration but rather the opposite (Ebel & Menon, 2000). After independence, the three states not only experienced a split with Russia, but also with each other.

The EU has slowly awakened to the importance of the region. There are a number of reasons for this. First, through its enlargements the EU moved closer to the South Caucasus geographically. Second, Georgia's Rose Revolution brought to power a President who made Euro-Atlantic integration a key foreign policy priority. Furthermore, the EU became the main security actor in Georgia following the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. Lastly is EU energy security. Overly dependent on Russian gas, the Caspian region, with Azerbaijan as the "gateway," represented an opportunity to diversify energy sources and routes. Russia's tendency to use gas as a political tool – namely the Russian-Ukraine gas war of 2009, which left numerous households and businesses in Eastern Europe without gas for days – led to the EU's flagship Southern Gas Corridor project (Lupu, 2009). The EU's new energy interests in the region gave it an additional reason to feel concerned about the fragile security situation as a consequence of unresolved conflicts between South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Georgia) and Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan and Armenia), respectively (Fischer & und Politik-SWP-Deutsches, 2016).

RUSSIAN-UKRAINE WAR AND SECURITY SITUATION IN GEORGIA

Russian- Ukraine war has an adverse impact on Georgia's political and economic security platforms. The Ukraine issue has a direct impact upon the internal security and stability of Georgia. The political elite of both Georgia and Ukraine enjoyed very strong and deep relationship. There are the estimations that economy is going to be shrunk by 4.1 percent as compared with pre-war forecast of 3 percent growth (Devarajan & Mottaghi, 2016). The impact on economic security has reverberated through many channels comprising of financial and commodity markets, trade and migration links and an

immensely adverse impact on confidence. Georgia's foreign policy priority remains Euro-Atlantic integration, including full EU membership. Along with the states of Central and Eastern Europe, Georgia considers that Euro-Atlantic integration is the only way to guarantee its security, including assuring permanent independence from Russia (Kakachia, 2017). Georgia's National Security Concept identifies "occupation of Georgian territories by the Russian Federation and terrorist acts organized by the Russian Federation from the occupied territories" as the number one threat to Georgia's national security.

ARMENIAN SECURITY APPARATUS AND WAR-AFFECTS

Armenia adopted, rather, an opposite direction to that of Georgia. The extensive influence that Russia has over Yerevan led to President Serzh Sargsyan making a geostrategic U-turn on 3 September 2013. He announced that Armenia would join the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which it did on 1 January 2015 (Kansikas, 2015). With this decision, Armenia abandoned plans to sign an AA/DCFTA with the EU after some four years of negotiations (Chitaladze & Grigoryan, 2015). According to Sargsyan it was "a rational decision stemming from the national interests of Armenia [...] when you are part of one system of military security it is impossible and ineffective to isolate yourself from a corresponding economic space" (Patalakh & Sciences, 2018). The decision put an end to the Armenian narrative of a multi-vector foreign policy – having a strong relationship with Russia but also deepening relations with the Euro-Atlantic institutions. This development deepened Armenia's dependence on Russia, threatening national security and sovereignty. Armenia's security reliance on Russia is driven by a virtual state of war with neighboring Azerbaijan, which is rooted in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and is only exacerbated by the absence of "normal" diplomatic relations and the closed border with Turkey. Moreover, an immense source of fear for the Armenian economy is the crippling effect of western sanctions against Russia. As a result of heavy economic dependence on Russia – its economic downturn significantly aggravates Armenia's economic crisis. Notably, Russia is the main external trade partner of Armenia. Not only is Russia the destination for over 27 per cent of Armenian exports, but Russian multinational corporations such as Gazprom Armenia, VTB Armenia and MTS Armenia are some of the principal taxpayers in Armenia. Moreover, in October 2021 Russia pledged to invest \$1 billion into

Armenia's economy. Besides, Russia is home to more than 2.5 million Armenian migrants, and as of 2019, 45% of money transfers distributed to Armenia came from Russia. Meanwhile, the deflating nature of the Russian ruble means that the remittances sent from Russia will decrease in value. The ruble's devaluation will inevitably lead to price increases in Armenian exports to Russia, thus affecting trade volumes and giving impetus to economic instability.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR IMPACT ON THE SECURITY APPARATUS OF AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan, a transcontinental country, seems to have no appetite either to be a member of EU or to liaise with EEU (Eurasian Economic Union). But the policy of 'choosing not to choose' won't last for a longer especially when the country heavily depends on the foreign imports. The Russia-Ukraine war has risen the security tensions in Azerbaijan especially the food and political security apparatus. Azerbaijan imported goods worth roughly \$470 million from Ukraine and \$2.74 billion from Russia in 2021. Tobacco, food supplies, and medications are the most common commodities traded between Azerbaijan and Ukraine (Fuchs, Marquez, Dutta, & Gonzalez Icaza, 2019). Last year, Azerbaijan imported nearly \$300 million of wheat from Russia, as well as timber materials worth \$100 million and vegetable oils worth \$46 million, according to the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Those three items account for more than 20% of imported goods from Russia (Gulaliyev, Mustafayev, & Mehdiyeva, 2020).

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR IMPACT ON THE SECURITY APPARATUS OF MOLDOVA

Geographically just a little larger than Maryland, The Republic of Moldova, is a landlocked country in Eastern Europe sharing its borders with Romania to the West and Ukraine to the south, north and east (Faye, McArthur, Sachs, & Snow, 2004). Moldova's pro-European stance and an expressed opposition to Russia's endeavor against Ukraine has alarmed the over-all security apparatus in the country. Moldova harbored around 350k refugees from Ukraine between 24 February and 16 March, largest portion by any country compared to its population size. The political and economic situation has already been trembled due to the fragility of security in the region. When it comes to Russia, Moldova has a number of worries. In addition to the estimated 1,500 Russian troops in Trans-Dniester, there are also at least 8,000 Transnistrian troops in the breakaway region, which shares a 250-mile-long border

with Ukraine. "We get about 75% of our electrical energy coming from a Transnistria-Russia-owned energy plant," says Andrei Popov, an official with Moldova's Foreign Ministry (Niemann & De Wekker, 2010). "This gives Russia very strong leverage, and should this be interrupted, we'll be in a very difficult situation." Moldova, which is landlocked as stated earlier, also relies on Russia for 100% of its natural gas. Therefore, Moldova faces one of its worst kinds of threats to its over-all security apparatus.

CONCLUSION

Russia-Ukraine war has a deepened impact on a multitude of human arenas endangering the peace and stability particularly in the region and the world community in general. The initial global shockwaves, which emerged to be most articulated, has been the deep humanitarian security crisis triggered by the war. The unprecedented waves of refugees from Ukraine to her neighboring countries has dwarfed the previous crisis. The oil and gas supply has been brutally affected as Russia emerged to be the largest supplier of oil and gas to Europe and other Western countries. The war-pushed spike in global oil prices serves to underscore the need for energy security by boosting energy supply from renewable sources and furthering up the design and implementation of large-scale energy efficiency initiatives. The political stability of the region around the warzone in particular and around the globe in general is at stake. The surprisingly inflated prices of economic goods and consumables have deepened the gulf of global poverty scale and furthered up the potential threat to economic security of mankind. The impacts of Russia-Ukraine war on security apparatus of the immediate region and off region flow through three main channels. One, higher prices for commodities like food and energy will push up inflation further, in turn eroding the value of incomes and weighing on demand. Two, neighboring economies in particular will grapple with disrupted trade, supply chains, and remittances as well as an historic surge in refugee flows. And three, reduced business confidence and higher investor uncertainty will weigh on asset prices, tightening financial conditions and potentially spurring capital outflows from emerging markets. The Russia-Ukraine war has created a climate of uncertainty, exacerbated the already fragile security situation as well as undermined the presence of the EU in the region by further fragmenting it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need to be more engaged in regional security, including strengthening its role in security sector reform and taking a more proactive role in conflict resolution. It is high time to so-called global political and economic giants to cast aside their ulterior motives and come forward to stop further disintegration of security apparatus in and outside the warzone region. Following are some the recommendations of the study:

- a. The EU should aim to deepen cooperation with Turkey, which is increasingly involved in the region.
- b. World bank needs to accelerate its operational projects to ensure improvement of security divisions at a larger scale.
- c. The countries in the landscape of Eastern Europe should not be persuaded to be the part of any military organization by the West and NATO alliance and should stay out of Eastern Europe's political and economic affairs.
- d. The international community, led by the United States, must always ensure that sanctions are not imposed out of sentimentality, but rather to deter an offender.
- e. There must be a re-consideration of sanctions imposed on Russia so that Russia does not turn to friendly countries like China with Europe bearing the brunt of the consequences and eventually lead to a cataclysmic catastrophe.

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