



Ukrainian crisis - Need to reinterpret Transatlantic relationship - future of NATO

Dr. Sumeet Thakur
Assistant Professor
Political Science

Abstract -

Present conflict has to be seen from the prism of the sphere of influence of a state rather than from abstract ideological conceptions. Russian nation has a proud historical legacy and as a powerful nation it visualises like any powerful nation its sphere of influence exists in its neighbourhoods. Best example can be found in the assertion of the **Monroe Doctrine** expounded by the American statesmen to assert that the American continent is for Americans only and other Colonial powers of the Western Europe's should stay out of it.¹ Policy of Big stick and Gun Boat diplomacy has been eulogised in the American foreign policy literature for defending the American sphere of interests.

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The Ukrainian crisis is the testimony of failure of Western European approach towards Trans-Atlantic relations and their excessive reliance on America as their last Security provider. The Cold War has been the historical basis of Western European approach towards the Eastern Europe. Russia has been historically seen as an outsider in the Western European political discourse. But the entire history of Europe clearly points to the fact that Russia has been the most potent force in the Eastern Europe. Russia in the last three hundred years of history never invaded or conquered territory of Western Europe. If cold war was based on the ideological difference between Liberal values and Communist totalitarian ideology then why after the end of cold war still Russia could not be included within the European Union. After the balkanization of the USSR, Russia has never been ruled by Communist party but NATO has kept its expansion towards western borders of Russia or rather into the sphere of influence of the Russian state. Present conflict has to be seen from the prism of the sphere of influence of a state rather than from abstract ideological conceptions. Russian nation has a proud historical legacy and as a powerful nation it visualises like any powerful nation its sphere of influence exists in its neighbourhoods. Best example can be found in the assertion of the **Monroe Doctrine** expounded by the American statesmen to assert that the American continent is for Americans only and other Colonial

¹ *New Encyclopædia Britannica*. Vol. 8 (15th ed.). Encyclopædia Britannica. p. 269. ISBN 1-59339-292-3.

powers of the Western Europe should stay out of it.² Policy of Big stick and Gun Boat diplomacy has been eulogised in the American foreign policy literature for defending the American sphere of interests.

American Approach towards China- Separation between politics and economics-

America's approach towards China, Saudi Arabia and other dictatorial regimes is very different from that Western Europeans' approach towards Russia. America has historically never imposed its liberal values as preconditions for friendship with regimes as long as American economic interests are taken into consideration. While Europe in the post-cold war era has kept its integration and cooperation with the Eastern European countries on preconditions of confirming to Liberal European values. Although it cannot be denied that European politics has been successful in formulating a new discourse which gave birth to the European Union based on the friendship of Germany and France, two sworn enemies. Time has come for Europeans, especially Western European leadership to think about genuine European Union with the inclusion of Russia within this community. Values of democracy and liberal conceptions of human rights presently kept engendered by the European leadership are coming in the way of establishing trust based relations with Russia. If European leadership keeps playing into the hands of the American conception of national interests they will have to keep paying a very heavy price. Eastern Europe has been historically a backyard of the Russian state and any effort to undermine its fundamental interests in this region will be seen by the Russian state as an existential threat. Ukrainian leadership of the present time is an example of jeopardising the security of the nation on the name of promise given by the Western European countries and America. These countries are providing logistics and monetary support during the present Ukrainian conflict but the battle has to be faced by the Ukraine people. Americans and British policy elites can feel that Ukraine can prove Afghanistan of Europe for the Russian state which is already economically weak. But the author strongly believes that the Ukrainian war gives the Russian state a different kind of challenge as compared to the Afghanistan conflict of the 1980s. This conflict touches the very existence of the self-respect of the Russian nation rather than seeing this conflict from the perspective of supporting a friendly regime. From Afghanistan Russian could withdraw without fearing the further expansion of Afghanistan Taliban into Russian territory. But NATO has been step by step expanding towards Russian borders after the end of the Cold War.

Need for Revisiting Cold war with new lens-

Dominant narratives of scholars of cold war and academia have been that it was an ideological conflict between Liberal -Capitalist ideology and Totalitarian Communist ideology. There is the need to revisit from the lens of nationalism and hurt feelings of an old imperial state. Traditionalist historiography of the cold war blamed the cold war on the USSR but the post- Second World War analysis of US foreign policy especially the case of Japan, Korean Peninsula and Vietnam led to the growth of Revisionist school of Cold War historians. Which points toward the imperialist-expansionist nature of American foreign policy. Use of Atomic bomb on the Japan to create an awe towards American foreign policy and adoption of containment policy. Use of *Open Door policy* to protect the market and investment interests of the US interest in the new countries. Subsequently emerged the school of post- revisionism to understand the real reasons and causes of the Cold War. The Post- Revisionism has tried to search a middle ground between Traditionalist and Revisionist historiography of the Cold War. Now Cold War analysis should not be limited to the clash of two ideological blocks and rather it should be seen as the dominance and hegemony of the two power centres on their respective peripheries. Lack of communication and dialogue process among the two actors also culminated in the creation of the cold war. Presently unilateral expansion of NATO to the backyard of Russia and intentional exclusion of Russia from its clear violation of the Russia sphere of influence. This hard fact of international politics cannot be ignored by giving the example of legal equality of states and freedom of

² *New Encyclopædia Britannica*. Vol. 8 (15th ed.). Encyclopædia Britannica. p. 269. ISBN 1-59339-292-3.

every state to autonomously determine its own foreign policy. If the USA and other western European powers believe in the legal equality in the real sense then the USA should also open up their military bases in its immediate neighbourhood.

Western European leadership in present forgot the Functionalism and Neo-Functionalism-

Present transformation of the European Union has been based on the approach of *Functionalism* and *Neo-Functionalist* approaches propounded by the scholars like David Mitrany and Ernest Haas. This approach has shunned the realistic conception of international politics and tried to build a consensus oriented politics for building regional integration. They have neglected the ideological and relative conception of national interests for collective and wider conception of collective action. Functionalist approach believed in the political nature of international relations where different states contribute towards collective action is far better than building relations on the economic basis only. Functionalism has paved the way for the onset of globalisation as a process and ideology. These approaches have pointed out the limitations of State territoriality in sustaining and promoting the welfare of its people. Traditionally it was assumed that authority of the state should be in sync with its territoriality.³ Functionalism proposed to build a form of authority based on functions and needs, which linked authority with needs, scientific knowledge, expertise and technology. Functionalism has been successful in providing a supra-territorial concept of authority. The functionalist approach does not accept the idea of state power and realist conception of international politics. Realistic conception of international politics has given authenticity of the cold war politics of conflict and military conception of national power.⁴ Neo-functionalists on the other hand focused on the immediate process of integration among states to formulate supranational identities. This process according to neo-functionalists begins from the economic sphere and subsequently trust generated from this integration will have an impact on political, legal and cultural dimensions. Neo-functionalists give the process of integration more importance than being stuck in ideological discourse.⁵ Role of regional organisations, bureaucracy and supranational pressure groups is very important in the materialisation of regional integration.⁶

These above-mentioned conditions are presently being fulfilled within the European Union but as the question of Russia comes, the EU itself reverts back towards the Realist conception of international politics and starts to identify its interests with the American Geo-political strategy in the Eastern Europe. Now with increasing conflict with Russia and on the Eastern frontiers EU will have to redefine its approach towards Russia. If the EU sticks with its realist approach towards Russia and keeps tip-toeing American policy in this region there is real danger of emerging fault lines within EU members and this tension will jeopardise the very project of regional integration of Europe. Present Russian energy boycott of Europe in retaliation of Economic sanctions imposed on Russia in the present Ukrainian crisis Many countries within Europe are dependent on the Russian supply of natural gas and oil will face inflation and other economic challenges.

The American Conception its relationship with the EU and Russia-

American strategic thinking stresses on the need to rebalance the United States and European relationship from the present European dependence and American dominance. They believe that transformation of this relationship into a more egalitarian form can happen when Europe will start sharing more financial and

³ David Held, *Models of Democracy*. Cambridge ; Polity Press, 1996.

⁴ Wolf, Peter (Summer 1973). "*International organisation and attitude change: a re-examination of the functionalist approach*". *International Organisation*. Cambridge Journals. 27 (3): 347–371.

⁵ Wolf, Peter (Summer 1973). "*International organization and attitude change: a re-examination of the functionalist approach*". *International Organization*. Cambridge Journals. 27 (3): 347–371.

⁶ Ruggie, John Gerard; Katzenstein, Peter J.; Keohane, Robert O.; Schmitter, Philippe C. (2005). "*Transformations in World Politics: The Intellectual Contributions of Ernst B. Haas*". *Annual Review of Political Science*. 8: 271–296.

military responsibility for securing its Eastern borders. Beside this they envisage burdening of the strategic vision of Europe which in other words meant joining USA initiatives in other regions of the world. On the other side they stressed the importance of making the decision making process more inclusive and sharing power with Europe. Former US diplomat Ivo.H.Daalder stresses that without this adjustment Trans-Atlantic relations will fall apart.⁷

Ivo.H.Daalder (Former Brookings Experts Former U.S. Ambassador to NATO) writes that Trans-Atlantic Alliance has survived the Post-cold war period by becoming an instrument of promoting security throughout Europe. Although NATO'S collective defence mission remains a central purpose, the alliance's primary function today - codified at 50th anniversary summit in April 1999- is to extend to other parts of Europe the security and stability its members have long enjoyed. The alliance pursues the new mission in two principal ways. First, it has opened its doors to new members, and through the Partnership for Peace, it helps non-members countries to make reforms necessary to joining NATO. Second, NATO stands for willing and ready to use its military capability to strengthen security and stability in Europe wherever threatened, as exemplified by its intervention and continued presence in the Balkans.⁸

Ivo. H.Daalder further illustrates that initially there was sharp transatlantic disagreement over the Balkan policy in the early 1990s but gradually the United States and Europe have also settled on an agreed joint strategy for the region. Washington takes the lead in the initial stages of any intervention. Military actions come under the auspices of NATO rather than the United Nations. The EU takes the responsibility of stabilising such operations in the targeted counties and paves the way for the transformation in the political and economic structures of such countries. Inclusion of the East European countries and Balkan countries into the European Union would be the logical conclusion of such operations according to the former diplomat. Such American strategic thinkers and institutions also justify the presence of US troops to ensure the long term stability of the region. He also stressed the need to provide Europe with a safety shield for Ballistic Missiles for which the EU will have to pay either by developing their own shield or by purchasing shield form US. While the US will backtrack from its own commitments on the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaties (SALT) for defending its own national interests from new rogues like North Korea, Iran and other new possible threats.

Balkan- Intrusion into Russia sphere of influence and strategically sensitive zone-

Since the Collapse of the USSR and its allies in the Eastern Europe and Balkans, the US has kept pushing coloured revolutions. US policies have led to displacement of the Pro-Russian or Russian sensitive leadership form these countries gradually and on the other hand US has failed in building bridges with Russia on economic and strategic fronts. Now this policy has culminated in removing the buffer states between its allies and the Russian state, which has increased the chances of conflict. NATO 's intervention in the Yugoslavian civil war to protect the human rights of the Bosnian Muslims from the Serbs who shared ethnic ties with Russia without consultation with Russia. Subsequently this intervention culminated in the Creation of Kosovo as a protectorate under NATO forces to strengthen the position of NATO in the Balkans. These actions were carried out in the name of protecting the right of self -determination of nationalities and protection of human rights.⁹ Gradually US and EU policies have made Russian states clear their intention and it reacted by becoming more aggressive. The Russian state has started a process of challenging the capacity and resolve of

⁷ Brookings www.brookings.edu. Europe: Rebalancing the U.S.-European Relationship, Ivo.H.Daalder, Friday, Sept 1 2000.

⁸ Brookings www.brookings.edu. Europe: Rebalancing the U.S. - European Relationship, Ivo .H. Daalder, Friday , Sept 1 2000.

⁹ Una Hadari, MIT Center for International Studies lecture (NATO, the Balkans, and Ukraine: The Geopolitical Implications of the European Periphery, January16 , 2019, accessed on 6 August 2022.

the NATO member to engage militarily to protect its members. IT has gradually become successful in calling this bluff and it has also forced neighbouring regimes and countries to rethink about the costs of siding with the US and EU .In 2008 Russians attacked Georgia for undermining its sphere of influence and subsequently separated Abkhazia and South Ossetia for hobnobbing with NATO and annexation of the Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 was a direct response to US sponsored regime change in Ukraine. New government after the Revolution of Dignity became more tilted towards EU and NATO. Russia responded by sponsoring separatism among the pro-Russian population of Donbas region of Ukraine.¹⁰

Conclusion-

The latest Russian Ukrainian war is the culmination of this process and the gradual failure of the US and EU in militarily protecting its allies is becoming very much clear to other allies in this region. Weapons of economic sanctions on Russia are now hurting many European countries because Russia in return is using its natural gas as a weapon against Europe. Many countries who are reliant on Russian energy will face energy shortages which will make their industries uncompetitive in the International market and their economies are bound to face inflation. While the US is economically immune from these negative externalities of this conflict .This conflict clearly points towards divergence of interests between the EU and US. The EU is paying the price of visualising its strategic interests from the US perspective. Present plight of Ukraine in which NATO has not directly come to its aid has sent clear signals to states situated on the sphere of influence of Russia that NATO lacks the courage to challenge the Russian state in its immediate neighbourhood. Neither America nor the main EU states (France and Germany) have the courage to challenge the core interests of the Russian state. Ukrainian crisis will help in awakening the European Union from its present slumber.



¹⁰ Simon Tisdall, *Behind Nato's defensive shield lies weakness and division. Ukraine will pay the price*, The Guardian, 12 June 2022 Accessed on 6 August,2022.