

NATO and Russia's Security Dilemma Within the European Union's Far Neighbors

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This paper presents a viewpoint for NATO and Russia's security dilemma by analyzing what happened in Georgia, Ukraine, Libya and Syria. At the end of the Cold War re-building of NATO, inheriting Missile defense System by the US government and Russia's growing concern regarding NATO's eastward expansion made clear that Russia will not abandon her sphere of influence. Thus, the main objective of this study is to analyze the questions of what is the motivation behind NATO's new strategy. This will be followed by another question NATO and EU enlargement will push Russia in what direction. The hypothesis of the study is that NATO's strategy of taking position in the areas where identified as Russia's backyard and sphere of influence is considered as "casus belli" by Russia. Therefore, Russia, despite NATO's involvement in the specified area, will not abandon these areas and will continue to use her energy resources and geopolitical advantages as a coercion, especially against NATO members among EU countries.

Keywords: NATO, Russia, Middle-East, Eurasia, security dilemma, sphere of influence

Introduction

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, many Western leaders failed to comprehend that Russian goals are not the same as those of the EU and the US. The US and the EU have taken practical steps against Russia's behavior that opposes Western interests by imposing sanctions on Moscow (Cornell, 2016, p. 97). At the end of the Cold War, the challenge of re-building a new North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and securing the alliance's unstable eastern and southern borders appeared in the agenda of the West. On the one hand, as if this was not enough, the US government initiated eastward NATO expansion in the 1990s as especially Germany was pleased to accept Polish and Czech Republic into the alliance. On the other hand, there was a high tension towards the end of George Bush's presidency when NATO was looking to Georgia and Ukraine. However, according to Lohschelder (2016), "Russia grew increasingly concerned with NATO's eastward expansion and made it very clear that the inclusion of Georgia and Ukraine in the alliance would be considered an intolerable disturbance to the region's strategic stability". In order to balance the security threats among these borders in particular and NATO as whole, Missile Defense System (MDS), a project inherited from Bush to Obama administration, is one of the latest developments of the organization for the Eastern borders.

Members of NATO hold the Strasbourg-Cologne summit in 2009 with the agenda of new transformation

projects, during which NATO marked its 60th Foundation Anniversary. This summit underlined the latest challenges to renew or reform transatlantic security and defense architecture. The map of Europe was restructured by consolidating democracy and ensuring stability from the Baltics to the Black Sea. Under the flag of NATO and European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), the dual enlargement aimed to build a post-Cold War Europe "whole, free and at peace". Furthermore, after two decades of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, NATO offered to expand political and military cooperation and plan for future joint military operations with Russia and peacekeeping operations from Bosnia and Kosovo to Afghanistan as out-of-area actions.

Russia, on the other hand, seems ready to counter these proposals with its own understanding of security, thus offers its projects, which brings about the question "whether this new era will display a cooperation or rivalry between the two powers". This study depends on the idea that NATO's post-Cold War dilemma has not been resolved yet, instead it is experiencing new structural and strategic conflicts due to the rise of Russian Federation. The main objective of this study is to analyze the questions of what is the motivation behind NATO's new strategy. This will be followed by another question NATO and EU enlargement will push Russia in what direction. These inquiries will be elucidated through summits and multilateral relations, including developments such as Russia-Georgia war, Ukraine's relationship with NATO, Russia's responses to NATO actions in terms of its foreign and security policies and the MDS (which fulfills both NATO's and Russia's international agenda from different perspectives). The term "EU's Far Neighbors" has been coined by the authors for this study to point out the security dilemma of the EU and Russia within some countries of the EU's Mediterranean Black Sea and European Neighborhood Policy. The hypothesis of the study is that NATO's strategy of taking position in the areas where identified as Russia's backyard and sphere of influence is considered as "casus belli" by Russia. Therefore, Russia, despite NATO's involvement in the specified area, will not abandon these areas and will continue to use her energy resources and geopolitical advantages as a coercion, especially against NATO members among EU countries.

In April 2009, representatives of the 28 countries met in NATO Strasbourg-Kehl Summit for the celebration of the 69th anniversary of the alliance. The main agenda of the world's biggest security organization was on the Afghanistan War, NATO's relations with Russia, France's return to NATO's military structure and the new strategic concept. During the summit, defense ministers of the ally countries gathered to figure out how an institution tied so intimately to the Cold War could still function 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall (Feffer, 2009). After the 9/11 attacks, main problems emerged in international security scene whether there will be new rivalry between super powers or not. However, Kremlin chose to cooperate with US troops against the Al-Qaida threat in Afghanistan. At the 70th years of this historic cooperation, Washington announced its projects to deploy Missile Shield Launchers to Poland and Czech Republic targeting Iran and North Korea (Lindborg, 2009; AFP, 2006). In addition to that, Russia was alarmed due to triggered Colored revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, whose governments' were supporting the pro-Western approach at that time. Therefore, Russian President Vladimir Putin has extremely criticized the Bush administration's hegemonic supremacy and unilateral acts, which could launch the new arms race and containment, and destroy the balance of power dimensions in Eurasia politics (Belton, 2008).

Until the recent Libyan crisis, NATO's agenda was dominated by various and complex issues such as strategic nuclear arms reduction, CFE (Conventional Armed Forces) Treaty, Missile Defense Shield, NATO-Russia relations, energy security, Iran's nuclear energy efforts and the crisis in Georgia. After the war with Georgia in August 2008, Russia has completed military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in addition

to recognizing them as sovereign states (Pravda, 2008). Russian Navy has also been returning back to the Mediterranean waters to renew the former Soviet base at Tarsus, Syria, close to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, the future terminal of Samsun-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the current terminal of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline (Smith, 2009). Moreover, President Obama declared the important points of his foreign policy to responsibly end the war in Iraq, finish the fight against Taliban and Al-Qaida in Afghanistan, secure nuclear weapons, and cooperate with Russia to reduce US and Russian ballistic missiles (CFR, 2009).



Figure 1. NATO Member States.

Source: Morelli, Ek, Belkin, Woehrel, & Nichol, 2009.

NATO's Involvement Attempts in Russia's Backyard

Following the Rose and Orange Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, it became essential for these countries to tie their destiny to the West (Asmus, 2008, p. 3). Colorful revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan are thus viewed as worrying experiences that could unleash a variety of unwelcome elements. Therefore, the worst scenario for Russia is the expansion of the colorful revolutions in its "Near Abroad". Although preventing Ukraine's membership of NATO remains a key foreign policy goal, Ukraine is a transit state for Russia's crucial energy exports to Europe, as well as being one of the customers of Russian gas. Georgia, in contrast, is not a crucial transit country for Russian gas and oil. Yet, Georgia is a strategic point for Caspian reserves; therefore, Russia does not want any other project like BTC. Moreover, in case of Georgian membership to NATO, the security balance of Black Sea will completely be changed. Although Russia's relations with Georgia were far from smooth when Eduard Shevardnadze was the president, they have deteriorated further since Mikhail Saakashvili came to power in the Rose Revolution. Saakashvili's government has consistently and actively sought membership in NATO. Russia, for its part, angered the Georgian government by supporting Abkhazia and South Ossetia, separatist regions within Georgia. For years, Georgia accused the Russian military "peacekeeping" presence in those regions of exacerbating tension and threatening Georgia through violations of Georgian airspace and other actions. The August 2008 conflict with Georgia further underlined the Russian view that Western efforts to promote reforms have been destabilizing and

threatening to Russia (Oliker et al., 2009, p. 101). According to both the Russian government and the Russian foreign policy community, Russia is by no means eager to use force in its near abroad.

Admitting Georgia to the organization could draw NATO into a direct confrontation with Russia and thus, especially Germany and France were against the expansion in 2008 that they were keen on understanding of the Russia foreign policy perspective. Nevertheless, the Bush administration proposed NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine without asking the support of her allies. Incidentally, just a month later, Russia demonstrated a clear message about her backyard by invading Georgia to support the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. According to Lohschelder (2016), "given Russia's invasion of Georgia in response to NATO expansion, its invasion of Crimea in 2014 should have been all the more predictable; this makes NATO's failure to anticipate the Ukraine crisis all the more tragic".

After Georgian intervention in South Ossetia on August 8, 2008, Russia sent her troops and jets to Georgia and at the end, the capital of South Ossetia Tskhinvali was heavily damaged and Russia unilaterally recognized the independence of South Ossetia. This unilateral recognition was strictly condemned by NATO and interpreted as an attack on Georgia's territorial integrity (Derman, 2016, p. 480). When the United States pushed for the launching of the process to include Ukraine and Georgia in NATO, they met strong opposition not only from France and Germany but from the United Kingdom, Spain, and Italy as well (Wallerstein, 2008). Only one month after the Georgian conflict, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev said that NATO provoked the conflict with Georgia that he saw his country destroy the smaller neighbor's army. Medvedev also added that Russia would not allow the West to "contain it behind the new iron curtain" (SkyNews, 2008). Moreover, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin accused Ukraine of sending weapons and military personnel to help Georgia fight with Russia (MSNBC, 2008). Russia's involvement in Georgia has since brought certain significant outcomes such as: (1) Russia has formalized its determination to defend its vital interests; (2) Russian air forces, army, and naval forces bombarded a number of towns and villages; (3) Oil prices have increased and this led to global financial crisis that negatively affected several economies; (4) Russia has regained its regional influence in Europe; and (5) Similar "frozen conflicts" risks escalated such as in Trans-Dniester, Kosovo, Crimea, and Nagorno-Karabakh regions.

Russian Black Sea Fleet has been used in the operation and this demonstrated that Ukraine and Russia could co-operate in the region in the future. Georgian economy has been damaged including communications and infrastructure. Georgian territorial integrity has been treated along with the East-West transportation corridor (roads, railways, oil and gas pipelines).

The Russia-Georgia War already had a balancing effect. As the last war in the Caucasus showed that Russia is not willing to give up on its strategy of controlling energy resources and transfer ways of the former Soviet Union and using them as a political weapon in relations with its neighbors and the EU. At this point, Russia does not care about NATO's commitment, military force and American support when she feels her interests are at risk.

Confrontation over Ukraine

Ukraine's membership issue to NATO is quite a fragile matter in the country. The impact of the discussion might split the country as Eastern and Western Ukraine. Relations between the two parties date back to the early 1990s and Ukraine has since developed her relations with NATO's partnership programs. After joining the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 and the Partnership for Peace program in 1994, dialogue,

cooperation and relations between NATO and Ukraine were strengthened with the signing of the 1997 Charter on a Distinctive Partnership, which established NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) to further the cooperation (NATO, 2016). NATO-Ukraine Action Plan was adopted at a NUC meeting of foreign ministers in Prague in November 2002. The purpose of the plan was to identify Ukraine's strategic objectives and priorities in pursuit of its aspirations towards full integration into the Euro-Atlantic security structures and to provide a strategic framework for existing and future co-operation under the Charter on a Discussion Partnership (Hedenskog, 2006, p. 11).

The Orange Revolution in November 2004 triggered hopes of accelerating this process and in response to the country's aspirations to NATO membership, foreign ministers launched an Intensified Dialogue with Ukraine in April 2005 (NATO Handbook, 2006, p. 27). The presence of a substantial Russian population means that a shift in geopolitical orientation (away from NATO and toward Russia) is easily conceivable through democratic means. Why is it so important to Russia to maintain influence in this region? The reasons stem from Russia's quest for prestige, its history, its economic priorities, and its fundamental security concerns. The countries bordering Russia along with its fellow successor states to the Soviet Union are conclusively important for Russia. Russia's relations and involvement with the former Soviet territory has been fairly straightforward that Russia has never lowered her pressure on post-Soviet countries (Cornell, 2016, p. 102).

Since the Orange Revolution, Gazprom, with the Kremlin's backing, has repeatedly raised the gas price for Ukraine as equals to those paid by European customers. According to Ebel (2009), Russia was using its natural gas exports to bring political pressure on Ukraine, to ultimately stop Ukraine's desire to join NATO and EU, and to seek international support for the Nord Stream and the South Stream gas pipelines. Gas supplies were briefly halted in 2006 pursuant to Kremlin's decision, and again in early 2009. Gazprom is planning a South Stream pipeline that will extend from Russia to Turkey across the Black Sea. Gazprom and the Russian government appear to have decided that it is better to control a pipeline from start to finish than to be mired in disputes with potentially unfriendly or unreliable transit countries like Belarus, Georgia, Poland, and Ukraine (Oliker, 2009, p. 91).

In the recent past, Ukraine has been the most obvious example that the West is experiencing confrontation with Russia. However, the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 changed the agenda and also marked the beginning of a new era in NATO-Russia relations. Since 2014, in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, cooperation between Ukraine and NATO has been intensified in critical areas. Ukraine is considered as vital for NATO countries and Russia due to her accommodation of major Russian natural gas pipelines carrying energy to Europe and her geographical position in terms of being a bridge between Russia and Europe. Russia with her "Near Abroad" policy after the collapse of the Cold War has stated that she has vital interests in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries (Tellal, 2002, p. 542). Especially, after the result of separatist movements from Ukraine, Russia has declared that neither she is a westerner nor she will play this game according to Western rules but play by their own rules. Russia is aware of the assumption that if Ukraine becomes a NATO member, this country will be under the control of Western countries and Russia might be surrendered by NATO.

The general theme that emerges is that the West working to expand its reach to the East and Russia perceiving this as a growing strategic threat to the homeland. But the Western failure to anticipate this perceived threat to Russia has now forced NATO to defend its Eastern border by increasing its troop presence in the Baltic countries (Lohschelder, 2016). Moreover, the annexation of Crimea and the current conflictive

situation in Ukraine have both brought the Western countries to come together for the first time without ifs and buts and put the USA, NATO and the EU in a position to impose sanctions on Russia. For instance, during NATO Summit in Wales on 4 September 2014, NATO declared that Russian attitude against Ukraine was disturbing and they would impose sanctions on Russia as NATO would act together to protect the independence and the recognized borders of Ukraine (NATO Wales Summit Guide, 2014). However, it should be made clear that Ukraine's accession to NATO does not seem to be easy for several reasons. Firstly, NATO has almost no capability to defend Ukraine as Russia has 270,000 troops and 700 jet fighters positioned on Ukraine. In other words, Russia can quickly mobilize its military assets in the meantime NATO takes decision. Secondly, after the annexation, Crimea has been fortified with 25,000 Russian troops, many ships, subs and 5,400 missiles, which have the ability to knock down NATO jets up to 400 km away. Finally, Russia can claim the right to deploy nuclear weapons to Crimea to warn NATO and Ukraine about probable Ukraine membership into NATO.

The Role of NATO on the Russian Foreign and Defense Policy

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian policy makers tried to reform the ideology of Russian foreign policy, which was focused on two fundamental goals: Russia's desire to increase its global influence and to maintain its economic growth. There is an important argument that "What's good for Gazprom is good for Russia" (Trenin, 2007). On the New Year's Day in 2009, Russian energy giant Gazprom cut off Ukraine's gas supply, which also decreased the transportation of gas more than 40% to European customers. Moreover, many analysts believe Putin views Ukraine—where Russia has a large naval base—as belonging to Moscow's sphere of influence. On November 1, 2005, General Yuri Baluevsky, former head of Russia's General Staff, said that conflict with NATO is now impossible and the two sides should cooperate to solve their common problems (Blank, 2006, p. 1). Meanwhile, Putin said in a press conference that "it is obvious that today there is no Soviet Union, no Eastern Bloc and no Warsaw Pact. So NATO exists to confront whom?" (Press Statement and Answers to Journalist's Questions Following a Meeting of the Russian-NATO Council, 2008).

The document was published by Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in March 2007 and was endorsed by President Putin (Oliker et al., 2009, p. 85). The survey discusses transnational threats and emphasizes the need to cooperate with the United States and Europe on these and other issues. It explicitly articulates the importance of good relations with the United States as Russia's views the West and particularly the EU and NATO as institutions as well as a threat to its interests (Cornell, 2016, p. 100). Russian foreign policy also parallels in many ways with its domestic policy, regarding both in the evident desire for control and stability and in the focus on sovereignty. In the foreign policy context, these goals lead to an emphasis on restoring Russia's international prestige and eliminating levers of influence that Western countries have had in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Yasmann, 2006).

According to NATO Handbook (2006), "The development of a result-oriented NATO-Russia partnership geared toward finding common approaches to common security challenges is also considered an essential element of NATO's transformation agenda" (NATO Handbook, 2006, p. 27). The document also states that the creation of the NATO-Russia Council in May 2002 marked the beginning of a more pragmatic relationship. However, recently Russia's relations with the West are a constant. It is not possible to understand the relations between Russia and NATO without the pressure of methodological problems that arose after the end of "the Cold War" that turning crossroad from hostility to partnership (Davydov, 2000, p. 5). NATO has enlarged since

1999, admitting three ex-Soviet Baltic republics and four Communist-bloc states in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, as members of historical Eastern Bloc, Albania and Croatia also joined the alliance.

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said that Russia should join NATO, adding that "this would require not only the democratization of (Russia's) system but also the introduction of civilian control over the army and the need to calm border disputes" (Soyer, 2009). Nevertheless the question of "Should Russia join NATO?" was discussed from time to time in Russian and Western Allies (Yost, 1998, p. 21). There is a feeling in Moscow that NATO's door, opened at times for others, is closed to Russia forever (Davydov, 2000, p. 21). Russia's NATO membership has never been seen as a serious option, while Moscow maintains that it sees the alliance as a threat (Pop, 2009). In September 1994, German Defense Minister Volker Rühle said that "Russia cannot be integrated, neither into the European Union nor into NATO. If Russia were to become a member of NATO it would blow NATO apart. It would be like the United Nations of Europe—It wouldn't work" (Yost, 1998). Gardner (2004) claims that NATO does not want to involve Russia in Euro-Atlantic space of cooperation as a full-fledged partner; on the other hand, it will not survive in its traditional shape (p. 120). Moreover, some scholars claim that Moscow's membership should result as protecting responsibility against China and other powers.

According to Russian point of view, two factors are essential in the relations with NATO. First, the alliance is still a challenge to Russia's security interests. Secondly, Moscow feeling that NATO's expansion to Russian borders was provoked by the discussions on East Central Europe and Caucasus geopolitics that has negative impacts on the manifestation of Russia's "Big Brother" role (Baranovsky, 2001). Indeed, Mikhail Gorbachev reminded the world that the United States, together with Western Germany and other Western nations, had promised after Germany's reunification in 1990 that "NATO would not move a centimeter to the East" (RIA Novosti, 2009). The West's failure to honor this promise led to deteriorating relations with Russia. Meanwhile, Russia is officially against the NATO expansion toward its borders in principle as then Prime Minister Putin said in May 2008. He also added that "NATO was formally created to counter the alleged Soviet threat but the Soviet Union collapsed long ago and there was no need to erect new [invisible] Berlin Wall in Europe (RIA Novosti, 2008).

Moreover, General Nikolai Solovtsov, former commander of Russia's Strategic Missile Forces, stated that Russia has the capacity to target US missile defense systems if such systems are deployed in Poland and the Czech Republic (AFP, 2007). At the beginning of the 2008, President Putin threatened to target Ukraine with nuclear warheads if Ukraine joins NATO and accepts the deployment of US anti-missile defenses on its territory (Waterfield, 2008). Western commentators have viewed such statements as belligerent. Sergei Ivanov made an important speech in Munich and stated that "the existing Russian position that the US and Russia must replace the START Treaty with a new legally-binding nuclear arms reduction regime, one that would ensure the highest possible predictability (Gottomoeller, 2008). In April 2009 President Medvedev said in London that "the creation of a Pan-European pact should not lead to replacing old organizations with new ones", and "the existing organizations should remain and take part in creating a new pact" (Shchedrov, 2009).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev indicated that the new pact would attempt to build on the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, as a kind of "Helsinki Plus" agreement with new guidelines for inter-state relations (Peuch, 2009). Medvedev has suggested that the pan-European treaty used to reaffirm the "basic principles of security and cooperation" such as territorial integrity, political sovereignty, and the other principles of the UN Charter.

The pan-European summit would also need to give new impulses in conventional arms control and disarmament as a matter of urgency (Klein, 2009). Russia also hopes the Obama administration gives up deploying missile defense systems in Poland and Czech Republic. However, Medvedev stressed that,

Let me mention the top priorities. The main one is a qualitative increase in the troop's readiness, primarily of strategic nuclear forces would be equipped with modern equipment. In the past years, we have transformed a whole range of combat units and formations by providing them with modern equipment and we will begin the large scale rearmament of the army and navy. (Isachenkov, 2009)

After the last NATO summit held in Warsaw on July 8, 2016, the Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg set parameters for a new relationship and wanted to restart the NATO-Russia Council for the first time since the Crimean intervention. By the way, NATO enlargement was occupying NATO-Russia relations that Tedo Japaridze, chairman of the foreign relations committee of Georgia's parliament, said that "if Georgia is kept waiting outside NATO, Russia would exploit the situation and that would do little for the security and stability of the region" (Dempsey, 2016).

President Obama's new NATO and Russian Perspectives: The Missile Defense Dilemma

President Obama refocused the US policy towards NATO on the defense of Europe and Atlantic security, instead of Afghanistan and Iraq as the new tests and challenges of NATO's viability and success (Cordesman, 2016). The new administration in Washington has pledged to "hit the reset button" with Russia, as it needs to cooperate with Moscow in order to achieve progress in difficult dossiers such as Afghanistan and Iran. President Obama did, however, made it clear that the US would actively seek to improve relations, be more flexible in dealing with issues like missile defense and would make arms control a major goal and part of its strategy. Obama summarized his view of the dialogue with Russia about maintaining stability while protecting the autonomy of all countries in Europe: "I think that it is important for NATO allies to engage Russia and to recognize that they have legitimate interests in some cases, we've got common interests, but we also have some core disagreements" (CNN, 2009). President Obama clearly underlined the revitalization of the US role in international arms control. On April 1, 2010, President Obama and then President Medvedev signed a Joint Statement on negotiations on further reductions strategic offensive arms (Cordesman, 2009, p. 6; Slater, 2009). According to NATO 2010 Strategic Concept Article 26:

In any further reductions, our aim should be to seek Russian agreement to increase transparency on its nuclear weapons in European and relocate these weapons away from the territory of NATO members. Any further steps must take into account the disparity with the greater Russian stockpiles of short-range nuclear weapons. (NATO, 2010)

When Washington announced its plans for the Missile Defense System in Poland and Czech Republic, Russia immediately expressed its objections to the world by stating that "the real motivation of the multibillion-dollar undertaking is the desire to expand US military and strategic capacities and constrict those of other states that have nuclear missiles, Russia and China most of all" (Sieff, 2007). First of all, Kremlin reacted to Washington's plans by building new space and missile defense shields and put its armed forces on permanent combat alert. President Medvedev ordered a wholesale renovation of Russia's nuclear deterrence and told military chiefs to draw up plans to reorganize the armed forces (Halpin, 2008). These developments alarmed the international arena whether the new Cold War is beginning. Yevgeny Myasnikov (Moscow's Centre for Arms Control) said that "Cold War thinking has prevailed, especially on the eastern side" (Harding,

2007). The US Congress is poised to cut the White House's request for defense for the fiscal year 2011 by \$15-20 billion. It would be another problem for the project because Pentagon has also announced the joint US-German-Italian project to build a new generation of medium-range missile defenses. On the other hand, European countries are not so cheerful for the cost of the new missile defense project. For instance, Valasek pointed that "it is not obvious why the US Congress would fund a program to defend European mainland, which the Europeans themselves are unwilling to support" (Valasek, 2011).

Afterwards, at the end of the year 2010, during NATO Lisbon Summit, then President Medvedev proposed to unite a missile shield being built by the 28 allies with Russia's own missile defense system. However, NATO refused the proposal in a diplomatic way by saying that the proposal goes way beyond what the alliance envisages (Fidler & White, 2010). Recently, it was announced by the head of NATO Information Office in Moscow that Russia and NATO are planning to resume joint missile defense drills in early 2012. The drills were halted in August 2008 after NATO condemned Russia for its role. In addition, it was also announced that within few months, Russia and NATO were planning to hold military exercises, entitled Bold Monarchs, in the Mediterranean Sea, during which the parties would train rescue skills (RIA Novosti, 2011b). The important point of this new development is the timing. Despite certain Russian objections towards NATO's Libya operation, two former adversaries achieved to cooperate in future joint military drills.

The deployment of missiles on Turkish territory was also discussed among NATO members. However, experts think that NATO's missile defense system was aimed against Iran, but could also threaten Russia's security (RIA Novosti, 2010a). Later, then Turkish President Abdullah Gül sent a letter to NATO leaders outlining Turkey's position on the deployment of NATO missile defense shield on Turkish territory on November 13, 2010. Ankara emphasized three conditions for the deployment of the missiles. First, Turkey insists on building a NATO, but not a US missile defense system. Second, the missile defense shield should be deployed in all the alliance's member states. Finally, Ankara would not allow NATO to turn Turkey into alliance's frontline state as it was during the Cold War (RIA Novosti, 2010b).

Russian Position against NATO's Libya Operation

When the crisis has started in Libya at the beginning of the March in 2011, there were rumors about NATO's intervention into the crisis. Meanwhile, then NATO Secretary General Anders Rasmussen said that the alliance did not attend to intervene in oil-rich Libya but was planning for "all eventualities" (AFP, 2011). Despite Turkey's objections, the organization decided to reinforce its naval presence in an area near Libya, and the humanitarian aid that USA would benefit. Few days later, on March 18th, the UN Security Council passed a resolution on Libya to impose a no-fly zone and the Security-Council members voted in favor of the resolution, with Russia, China, Germany, India and Brazil abstaining. Although Russia did not vote for in favor of the resolution, Putin and Medvedev looked at the situation from the different perspectives. Putin likened the UN Security Council resolution on Libya to a medieval crusade call. He also added that "it effectively allows intervention in a sovereign state" (RIA Novosti, 2011a). On the other hand, hours later, Russian President Medvedev said Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's description of the UN resolution to Libya is "unacceptable" and could "lead to a clash of civilizations" (BBC News, 2011).



Figure 2. Military operation in Libya.

Source: RIA Novosti , 2011.

Although Russia and NATO decided to resume joint missile defense drills on March 25th, Moscow's envoy said that "It's not up to NATO to decide the future of Libya. If someone in Libya thinks otherwise, they are deeply mistaken". Furthermore, Rogozin stated that;

..During our meeting with NATO officials today, we demanded the UN Security-Council be fully informed about the actions of the alliance in Libya at all time. The coalition has taken sides. It is not only targeting Gaddafi's forces, including those that aren't direct action against the rebels. We have reports of air strikes against convoys far from the front line. This is a far cry from the UN Security Council resolution. (RT, 2011a)

On 29 March, Russian authorities urged coalition forces involved in a military operation in Libya to operate strictly within the UN mandate (RIA Novosti, 2011). Russia also has an economic motivation to protest Western military involvement in Libya. Qaddafi was one of the most significant arms customers of the Russian military-industrial complex (Cohen, 2011). While Russia had concerns about NATO's Libya operation, Russian Ambassador to NATO Rogozin met with NATO partners to discuss the development of anti-missile defense and air defense systems on March 30th in Brussels. Rogozin advised Europeans to understand what Washington wants to build and to consider all the advantages and disadvantages of the common missile defense shield with the US. Rogozin clearly warned that "if missiles are downed over Europe, the nuclear garbage will fall down on the heads of the Europeans" (RT, 2011b).

The Syrian Conflict: A New Possibility of Clash Between Russia and NATO

The situation in Syria looks like worrying as the tragedy, multi-actor intervention, the risk of a direct conflict between NATO and Russia and not knowing who is on which side are possessing a direct threat to NATO member EU countries' security. The Russian intervention in Syria where Russia first launched airstrikes on Sept. 30, 2015 seems a part of a plan of Putin to distract national and especially international attention from the controversial intervention in Eastern Ukraine. According to Owen Matthews, due to Putin's ambition of restoring Russia's status as a world power and showing potential allies in Syria that Russia stands by its friends, Russia is acting as a reckless geopolitical pirate. However, should we consider Putin's ambitions or plans atrocious if peace breaks out in Syria after the Russian intervention (Matthews, 2016)? It seems in this multi-actor game that NATO and Russia ask for the same things as such; ending the war as soon as possible, eradicating the terrorist ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and even establishing a transitional Assad government. In the meantime, it can be assumed that Russian officials are concerned about the course of Russian relations with the West and are in fact trying to collect as many neighbors as possible to stand firmly against the sanctions coming from the West.

NATO's biggest concern about the situation in Syria and Russian intervention is that NATO is afraid of experiencing the spillover of Syrian crisis into a wider war as Russia is not a reliable party for it. Speaking at a security conference in Munich on February 14, 2016, the US senator McCain gave notice of how they perceive Russia's presence in Syria why Russia is not a reliable party. "Russia presses its advantage militarily, creates new facts on the ground, uses the denial and delivery of humanitarian aid as a bargaining chip, negotiates an agreement to lock in the spoils of war, and then chooses when to resume fighting", he said (McCain, 2016). Thus, according to David Owen, NATO needs to establish two clear positions. The first one is not to get embroiled as an alliance in fighting in Syria and the second one is to respond attacks that menacing Turkey's territorial integrity (Owen, 2016).

Since 24 November 2015, Turkey's shooting down of a Russian warplane after the violation of Turkish national airspace, NATO is more afraid to feel the possibility of a wider war as these Russia and Turkey come face to face. However, taking Turkey's apology over the downing of Russian jet to restore the relations with Russia into account, Russia seems to continue working in cooperation with Turkey about destroying ISIS as Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Çavuşoğlu declared that "Turkey is stronger than before in fighting against ISIS and Turkey's relations with Russia is not an alternative to NATO and the EU" (Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, 2016). In addition, just days after NATO summit in Warsaw, Poland on 08 July 2016, the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg tried to restart the NATO-Russia Council in Brussels. For Jude Dempsey, senior associate at Carnegie Europe, the reason behind this rapprochement between the two parties is to set parameters for a new relationship for the sake of the cohesion of transatlantic relationship (Dempsey, 2016).

Moreover, Russia and Turkey, two powers supporting different actors (so far) in the Syrian civil war, came together after Turkey's shooting down of a Russian warplane to hold talk in St Petersburg on August 9. After the failure of the military coup in Turkey, Andrei Kolesnikov (2016) states that Russian officials were surprised and concerned about the events and quickly expressed their sympathy for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. As William Powell argues that following Turkey's this week's (August 9) visit to Moscow, more bilateral visits would take place between Russian and Turkish government officials over the coming months as both country talked about Turkish Stream pipeline from Russia to Turkey (Powell, 2016). "We'll be

taking the necessary steps to back Russian gas supplies to Europe via this gas pipeline together with involved ministries and departments”, Erdoğan said (Roberts, 2016). Russia and Turkey had also special talks about the current situation and future solutions on Syrian crisis as well. Jonathan Stearns (2016) expresses that NATO seems distressed about this meeting as NATO called Turkey a “valued ally” a day after the visit of President Erdoğan to Russia.

Up until now, NATO has clearly steered from any involvement in Syria. The only way the NATO involves in Syria is Turkey's direct intervention in this country and thus, NATO keeps calling Turkey and Russia for political consultation in order not to resort Article 5 (collective defense) (Van Ham, 2012). On the other hand, although the NATO's new strategic concepts that define NATO as not only a defense organization but also a collective security organization, the NATO has not yet taken a significant action in Syria. Why is NATO still a passive by-stander while the conflict in Syria is turning into a civil war? The reason for that is the unwillingness of the majority of alliance members as decisions are taken by consensus in NATO. NATO's possible involvement in Syria would undermine its political and military energy and drag the Alliance into a sectarian (Sunni-Shia) conflict as the current situation in Syria is more messy and chaotic than Libya in 2011. Russia and even China are quite keen on leaving the NATO out in Syria due to both countries have their presence in the eastern Mediterranean. Consequently, it seems pretty clear that the case against the NATO involvement in Syria is not seen as rational and Turkey therefore should act together with the Alliance member (Van Ham, 2012).

Conclusions

The Russia-Georgia War has already had a balancing effect. As the last war in the Caucasus has showed that Russia is not willing to give up on its strategy of controlling energy resources and transfer routes of the former Soviet Union and using them as a political weapon in relations with its neighbors and the European Union. If NATO remains functional, it must make real concessions to Russia and revert to its original *raison d' être*, namely collective security in the Euro-Atlantic space. NATO must decide where its limits end. In other words, is NATO becoming the “police” of the world? In the short run, the problem needs consolidation of securing Russian respect for the boundaries. Thus, in long-term perspectives, NATO leaders will also need to consider the political image responsibilities that they want the alliance to project toward the rest of the world.

Transatlantic community should also rethink how it should engage and reach final borders of enlargement and globalize NATO norms and cooperation by overcoming differences on Iraq, avoiding disagreements over Iran, and stabilizing Afghanistan's possible cost effects. NATO should enhance its capabilities, maintain its credibility, and then NATO members must seek to use other instruments such as cooperation with Russia on Caucasus, Black Sea and Mediterranean policies. As in the scenario, if NATO cuts the communication links with Kremlin, including using its energy weapons cards for supplies and influence, Russia would emerge as an authoritarian capitalist alternative to the West, attracting autocratic leaders throughout Europe and Eurasia. In this geo-strategic scenario, power transition with Russia matters because of the potential power of a Russian-Chinese alliance.

Libya crisis proved that how the communication is crucial between NATO and Russia. Russia is not comfortable with NATO's growing courage to intervene into unstable areas instantly. Due to this reason, NATO once again requested the UN Security Council resolution to make operations, which means getting the favor vote of Russian Federation. However, this does not mean that NATO is capable of acting freely in

Mediterranean. Moreover, Balkans, Georgia, Ukraine, and the wider Black Sea region (Frozen Conflicts) areas are less stable and have potential risks. Nevertheless, as long as NATO continues its military actions, Russia will use the threat of using the energy card anytime it needs. Therefore, cooperation between Russia and NATO partners is the vital subject of the international arena. The situation in Ukraine also demonstrated that Ukraine's accession to NATO is not easy as both NATO has almost no capability to defend Ukraine and Russia has already positioned her troops and jet fighters on Ukraine. Moreover, Russia can claim the right to deploy nuclear weapons to Crimea to warn NATO and Ukraine about probable Ukraine membership into NATO. Thus, cooperation between the two allies seems crucial for the course of international relations.

Finally, concluding the article, to the questions asked at the beginning deserve some answers. Regarding the first question "whether the new era will display a cooperation or rivalry between NATO and Russia", it may be pointed out that although the MDS originally intended to improve Europe's security and is not directed against Russia, the system display a rivalry between the two parties as it seems to provoke Russia to respond with a similar power. In reality, since 2009, the more NATO expands closer to Russian sphere of influence, the more Russian military incitements intensifies. The prove of this statement is that Russia has already demonstrated that Georgia, Moldavia, Crimea and Eastern Ukraine are in her sphere of influence and thus has a capacity to heat the frozen conflicts if she feels that these areas are under threat. The success of NATO-based MDS depends more on common political decisions rather than the military ones. If the two allies cooperate with each other and Russia comprehends that the system is not against her the whole security system would become more effective.

Regarding the second question "the motivations behind NATO's missile defense system", NATO's MDS strategy was originated by second Bush administration that USA wanted to place a radar to Romania and Poland (SPY 1, AEGIS) and missiles to Turkey (Pac-3, THAAD) in order to both protect Europe against Iranian and Russian missiles and thus destroy missiles which are likely to target the USA. However, the Obama administration opted to reset NATO's MDS and stated that this program should be aligned with concrete threats and present capabilities. Since the Obama team believed that through strong and pragmatist diplomacy with Russia and other important partners and powers, they can reduce threats and formalize the way the USA and NATO members look at MDS. By the way, on the 8th of October, 2016, the US government changed from Obama to Donald Trump administration whose election is prone to bring new dynamics and uncertainties into the unstable Syria. In the absence of clear direction, while Trump may be much more attentive to Netanyahu about Palestinian issue, he might even shift American Syria policy towards working together with Russia, Iran and Assad regime. On the one hand, Trump may even be line up with Turkey against P.Y.D and extradite the leader of Feto (Fethullah Terrorist Organization). On the other hand, it seems that at the moment (end of 2016) Trump has got insufficient political weight to gain domestic and international support to revoke or adjust policies and thus, global arena is likely to see more uncertainties.

Regarding the last question "what direction NATO enlargement will push Russia", it may be pointed out that Russia demonstrates little prospect of returning her conventional force structure due to the change in her political system and fragile economy. However, that does not mean the Russian bear will always be into hibernation. Russia could still threaten NATO's significant interests. Kremlin's direction depends on both NATO's strategy as well as the course of the country's politics. Russia sees no need to display the US nuclear weapons in Eastern Europe and concerns about NATO enlargement in her sphere of influence namely in

Georgia and Ukraine. Moscow believes that if these countries are accepted as NATO member ballistic missiles would one day be deployed there, and that is why, Russia will not be reluctant to take adequate measures.

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