

Russia Protest Against U.S. Plans to Place Military Equipment in Eastern Europe Countries in 2015

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ABSTRACT

After the fall of the Soviet Union thereafter the Cold War, the rivalry between the United States and Russia remains prevalent. This paper seeks to find why Russia is protesting the U.S. plan to place military equipment in Eastern Europe. The Eastern European Region is located in the eastern part of the European continent, consisting of post-Soviet Union countries. These countries are often associated with the term "Eastern Bloc" during the Cold War. Using power transition theory, the author will be explaining the nature of war concerning power in international relations. Additionally, power transition theory shows that hegemony's increasing power and rivalry tends to be difficult to resolve by peaceful means. In compiling this research, the author used the descriptive qualitative method. The form of the method used is Literature Review or library research. After collecting the data, the writer will analyze using explanatory research and take a conclusion. The study found that in the wake of the Ukraine conflict and Russian hostility towards NATO, the United States has proven to be the most committed and capable ally of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) states as the controlling power in the region.

Keywords: Europe, US, Military, Rivalry, Russia

INTRODUCTION

The Eastern European Region is located in the eastern part of the European continent, consisting of post-Soviet Union countries. These countries are often associated with the term "Eastern Bloc" during the Cold War. Looking back at the history of the power struggle between the two blocs, namely the Western Bloc (the United States) and the Eastern bloc (the Soviet Union) during the Cold War, this section of the paper would briefly describe the history of the dissolution of the Soviet Union which eventually formed the post-Soviet Union states, such as Russia and countries in Eastern Europe. The Communist Party in the era of President Leonid Brezhnev in the Soviet Union was the party that led a political activity where the Communist Party severely restricted freedom of expression. The

media could not provide actual news, considering that the government would censor the news that was acceptable to the people of the Soviet Union at that time (Can Kasapoglu, 2017).

However, Brezhnev died in 1982, leaving a vacancy in the seat of a state leader. The people of the Soviet Union then decided to support Mikhail Gorbachev as Brezhnev's replacement by seeing that Gorbachev had political abilities, energy, and had a high youth spirit. Therefore, Gorbachev was officially sworn in as leader of the Soviet Union at the age of 54. Then during Gorbachev's time, several new ideas underlie the political activities of the Soviet Union, such as the establishment of a policy of glasnost or openness, which allowed the church to carry out religious activities, released some dissidents from prison, and allowed writers who were previously prohibited from writing their ideas (Anderson, 2012). to republish his book.¹ In addition, in 1986, Gorbachev also restructured the economy to give farmers, industrial owners, and even ordinary people more authority to open their businesses (Baylis, 2009).

These changes then led to Gorbachev's democratization policy, which impacted reducing pressure from the Communist Party to develop the country's economy. As a result of the new policies proclaimed by Gorbachev, the people then formed movements that supported the efforts to democratize the Soviet Union. Gorbachev himself did not object to the development of the movement (Schröder, 2008). Nevertheless, unfortunately, this movement actually led to the destruction of the Soviet Union itself. They were coupled with ethnic groups who fought for independence from the Soviet Union due to the differences in values and culture adopted by these people. As a result, Lithuania became the first republic to declare its independence from the Soviet Union in 1990. As a result of this Lithuanian independence, Gorbachev attacked in 1991, resulting in thousands of injured soldiers. The attack on Lithuania caused the people of the Soviet Union to withdraw their support for Gorbachev and asked Gorbachev to step down from his post as President of the Soviet Union. The people of the Soviet Union then turned to support Boris Yeltsin as President of the Soviet Union. Then in the same year, there was a commotion in the Soviet Union where the Communist Party no longer had power in its people,

exacerbated by several republics in the Soviet Union such as Estonia and Latvia following Lithuania to declare its independence, followed by other republics. With this, the Soviet Union officially disintegrated, and Boris Yeltsin became President of the Russian Federation. The split of the Soviet Union then produced several new countries, namely the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), countries in the Central Asian region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), countries in the South Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) and the two core regions of this paper: Eastern Europe (Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine) and Russia (Sokolsky, 2017).

In 1991, Russia and Ukraine and Belarus formed the Commonwealth of the Independent States or CIS, followed by the post-Soviet Union countries except for the Baltic countries. President Yeltsin, who was in office, sought to build the Russian state with a new power by taking over the Soviet Union's position on the United Nations Security Council and maintaining Russia's nuclear power (Ying, 2014). In leading Russia, President Yeltsin strongly opposed parliament, which was in opposition to his government. However, in 1999, President Yeltsin resigned from his post as President of Russia and was replaced by Vladimir Putin.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the background explained above, the research question proposed by the author is, "Why does Russia is protesting the U.S. plan to pace military equipment in Eastern Europe?"

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Power Transition Theory

The theory of power transition is a theory about the nature of war concerning power in international relations. This theory was first published in 1958 by its creator, A.F.K. Organski, in his textbook, *World Politics* (Organski, 1958). Power Transition is concerned with the pattern of shifting power relationships in global politics. It offers a probabilistic tool for measuring these changes and forecasting likely events in future rounds of change. While the theory is based on empirically tested propositions supported by extensive data sets, it has an intuitive feel that maximizes its utility for interpreting current circumstances, including the rise of India and China and the other related effects on world politics (Tammen, 2000).

Power transition theory shows that the increasing power and rivalry of hegemony tends to be difficult to resolve by peaceful means. These conditions will create a political tragedy (war or conflict). The U.S. is experiencing declining power

over the increasing influence of Russia in security competition in Eastern Europe. However, different opinions also state that given its economic openness, the current global order will accommodate the rise of Russia by peaceful means. Nevertheless, tragedy above the transition of power is inevitable if the U.S. and Russia do not manage their complicated bilateral relationship. Given the conditions, it will be interesting to compare approaches and strategies carried out by the two countries to achieve geopolitical interests during the complex conditions of the rivalry (Kegley & Wittkopf, 1997).

Organski (1958) argued that power transition is an equitable distribution of political, economic, and military capabilities between competing groups of nations is likely to increase the likelihood of war; peace is best maintained when there is an imbalance of national capacity between disadvantaged and benefited countries; the attacker will come from a small group of disgruntled powerful nations; and it is weaker than the more potent force that is most likely to be the aggressor (Organski, 1958).

In addition, historically speaking, the power transition theory leads to the extended cycle theory of war and attempts to explain trends between warring states in the last 500 years. The general trend is that a country achieves hegemonic power and is then challenged by a great power. This led to a war that had created a transition between the two powers in the past. Eugene R. Wittkopf explores past wars and their relationship to Power Transition theory in his book *World Politics: Trends and Transformations*. He explained this using the George Modelski Marine Power Concentration Index.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In compiling this research, the author used the descriptive qualitative method. The form of the method used is Literature Review or library research. Literature review or library research method is a data collection technique or information from various sources, both print media such as books, papers, newspapers, journals, and electronic media such as the internet or websites relevant to the research title, which used secondary data. After collecting the data, the writer will analyze using explanatory research and take a conclusion.

DISCUSSION AND FINDING

During the Cold War occurrence, the Soviet Union realized its interests in the European region by forming the Warsaw Pact, which promised security to member states and emphasized the Soviet Union's leadership in the military sector. In addition, Warsaw Pact was established in 1955 as an attempt by the Soviet Union to prevent NATO's decision to

develop tactical nuclear weapons. The Warsaw Pact was a multilateral military organization that was the only regional defense alliance within the Eastern Bloc. Furthermore, Moscow emphasized the Warsaw Pact as the "center" of the foreign policy coordination of communist countries in Europe. Membership to the Warsaw Pact was open to all European countries, provided that those countries agreed to the purposes for which the Pact was formed (Yani, 2017). Then, the countries that ratify the Warsaw Pact must agree not to join any alliance or coalition and make any agreement contrary to the principles of the Warsaw Pact (Kumar, 2016).

Regarding the foreign policy of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, the existence of the Warsaw Pact was not intended to be a medium for strengthening the military integration of the Soviet Union in the region. However, the Warsaw Pact was able to bridge the Soviet Union to further strengthen control of the armed forces of Eastern Europe during the first years of implementation of this agreement. In addition, the pact gave the Soviet Union access to propaganda against NATO's influence and a bargaining card to look for weaknesses in the Western alliance's influence (D.W., 2018).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was followed by the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, countries in Eastern Europe, especially those not part of the Soviet Union, tended to lag politically from Russia's foreign policy. Russia's relations with the post-Soviet Union countries have changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union and established the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The CIS was formed in December 1991 with the membership of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Azerbaijan and Georgia followed to join the association in 1993. Membership of these countries in the CIS resulted in countries cooperating on issues as diverse as the economy, defense, and foreign policy. The Alma-Ata Declaration is a declaration that underlies the agreement of member countries to cooperate in various fields of internal and external policy (Buhbe, 2007).

Apart from the CIS multilateral cooperation, Russia is also actively building bilateral relations with post-Soviet countries. As with Belarus, Russia and Belarus formed a political union that was manifested in integrating regional air defense networks organized under the Belarusian or Russian commander. Russia also formed regional agreements with Abkhazian and South Ossetian entities that had separated from Georgia. Quoted from the writings of James T. Quinlivan and Olga Oliker, Russia's foreign policy is rooted in the national goal of protecting the life and dignity of the Russian people and protecting the interests of its

business community so that Russia will respond to all aggressive actions shown to its country (Blanton and Kegley, 2016). In this sentence, it can be seen that Russia will not remain silent in responding to threats posed by Western countries, especially those that have the potential to reduce Russia's influence in the Eastern European region. Russia believes that the Eastern European region is an area where historical relations are built and have been bound to become neighbors who need each other. Therefore, the Eastern European region is one of the main priorities in Russia's foreign policy in order to realize its national interests (Grigas, 2013).

As geographically close countries, Russia and countries in the Eastern European region have harmonious, cooperative relations and are often colored by problems that can lead to tensions between the two. The crisis in Ukraine, where Russia annexed Crimea, is not the only tense phenomenon in Russia's cooperative relations with Eastern Europe. However, it is undeniable that this crisis has become a momentum where Russia's cooperative relations with Ukraine, even with countries in Eastern Europe, are experiencing a setback as happened in Latvia. As a post-Soviet Union country, Eastern Europe is one of the countries where Russia has its interests that it wants to realize. The expansion of influence and power is seen as the underlying reason why Russia carries out activities that are sometimes assertive to countries in the Eastern European region. Russia's long-term interests in economic cooperation, security, regional stability, culture and history become essential to analyze the ups and downs of the relationship between the two sides. However, the description of Russia's interests will be elaborated further in the next chapter. Meanwhile, this section of the paper will describe the efforts made by Russia to maximize power in the Eastern European region (Kuimova and Wezeman, 2018).

The U.S. measures in the Eastern Europe region

The United States has been striving to provide leadership for the Alliance and invigorate other members to act while implementing reassurance measures and deterrence on a bigger scale and faster than what other countries did. In the wake of the Ukraine conflict and Russian hostility towards NATO, the United States has proven to be the most committed and capable ally of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) states. Furthermore, United States activities in CEE areas have included the persistent rotational presence of small land forces, air and naval deployments to the specific region, intense training and exercises, unprecedented prepositioning of heavy armour in the region improvements to local infrastructure. Therefore, the U.S. has acted both bilaterally and multilaterally, as well as within the framework of

NATO's joint Readiness Action Plan (RAP) (Megan Eckstein, 2015).

In this case, it is necessary to send a strong political signal to Moscow and show no lower class security guarantees measure for the NATO new members. CEE countries concerned about Russia's behavior and especially interested in the support and presence of the Alliance's leading and most powerful member have reacted positively to U.S. actions. Nonetheless, the permanent basing of Allied combat forces is a priority for Poland and the Baltic States. The intention is also to neglect Russia's hopes of achieving a quick victory resulted from their power and presenting the United States and the allies with a faithful accomplice. More significant deployments would slow down an enemy offensive at the other end of the scale and buy time for reinforcements to arrive. At least, small permanent forces would ensure that a successful attack against CEE states will automatically result in a costly conflict or power wasting with the U.S. and NATO with big money (J Smith, 2012).

However, from the standpoint of the United States, the permanent basing of troops is hampered by some factors. First, the Obama administration is tougher on Russia than most NATO countries, but it is wary of exacerbating tensions. Second, budgetary constraints and rising demand for U.S. forces in other regions, particularly in Asia and the Pacific, limit their availability (Bugajski and Doran, 2016). Third, the unwillingness of most European countries to invest in defense and their overreliance on the United States makes greater involvement in Europe challenging to justify to Congress, even if CEE states do play a role. Furthermore, Washington seeks Allied solidarity and participation in addressing all of NATO's threats, even though threat perceptions continue to diverge. Finally, the United States does not want to jeopardize NATO's cohesion, especially given Western European opposition to permanent deployments in Central and Eastern Europe, which they see as a provocative action to Russia, and it is incompatible with the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act (Durkalec, 2014).

The U.S. raised the possibility of placing heavy equipment in CEE in 2014, and NATO agreed to prepositioning equipment in general at the 2014 Wales summit. The United States, in other words, has chosen the timing of its final announcement with care. Washington intends to reassure CEE allies, who have recently renewed their calls for more robust deterrence measures than those already put in place by the United States and NATO. However, it appears that the Obama administration intended to supplement rather than replace Allied actions and proposed prepositioning only after Europe had made progress in some areas of the Readiness Action Plan, such as the VJTF. The United States demonstrated its leadership by introducing such a measure just days before a NATO defense ministers' meeting and

ability to make a significant contribution to the Alliance while also encouraging other members to step up their efforts (Altman, 2016).

This belated prepositioning could also be due to U.S. concerns about how it will be received by some Western European allies, to whom such a far-reaching move as placing tanks close to the Russian border may appear too provocative (Burchill, 2005). Eventually, most NATO members' reactions were muted, but media reports suggested that some concerns remained. Nevertheless, public opposition was avoided, possibly because it would have strained relations between Washington and its Central and Eastern European allies, especially in light of Russia's continued belligerence toward NATO.

Since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, the United States has moved faster than the rest of NATO, and the scale of its military moves has been greater than that of any other single Ally. For example, the U.S. initially sent twelve UK-based F-15 fighters and a KC-135 air-tanker to supplement NATO's Baltic Air Policing (BAP) mission. On March 6, 2014, this occurred just a few days before NATO decided to deploy AWACS planes over the region as its first reassurance measure. Simultaneously, the United States began additional naval deployments in the Black Sea. Furthermore, on the 14th and 15th of March, 12 Italian F-16s began a temporary deployment to Poland to reinforce the U.S. There is an Air Force Aviation Detachment there meanwhile, the other individual Allies began taking similar steps at the end of March, and NATO collectively agreed on an increased presence in Central and Eastern Europe on April 16 (BBC News, 2014).

The United States was also the first country to deploy land units in CEE, and it is still the only NATO member with a permanent rotational presence there. Small contingents (around 150 troops) began to be deployed in Poland and each of the Baltic states at the end of April, when four companies of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, based in Italy, arrived at training and exercising local units. The deployment marked the start of Operation Atlantic Resolve, which includes the majority of air, sea, and land deployments and activities to reassure NATO Allies and deter Russia (Jervis, 1994).

After Obama announced the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) on June 3, 2014, the United States increased its military involvement in Central and Eastern Europe. 11 Congress authorized \$985 million for ERI funding through the 2015 fiscal year (F.Y.) in December 2014, and the Pentagon is requesting nearly another \$800 million for the following fiscal year. The ERI has allowed the U.S. to maintain a consistent rotational presence in Poland and the Baltic States and bring additional rotations from the U.S. to the region and increase air, land, and sea exercises and training in Central and

Eastern Europe. As part of these actions, the United States Army expanded its rotational deployments to Bulgaria and Romania in March 2015, though these are only done regularly, not continuous. In addition, air deployments in Central and Eastern Europe have included, among other things, Theatre Security Packages of 12 U.S. Air Force A-10 ground attack aircraft and ten Air National Guard F-15 fighters, as well as a few B-2 and B-52 strategic bombers operating temporarily from the U.K. on several occasions. Furthermore, the ERI funds allowed for the postponement of the previously scheduled withdrawal of F-15 fighters; these will now remain at their Lakenheath base in the United Kingdom until at least the end of 2016 (BBC News, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Regardless of the interests of other countries, the United States has neglected them. Joint efforts to establish a new order in Europe after the Cold War. The United States unilaterally expands the reach of NATO's troop presence, even the European Union, to the border region of Russia, namely the territory of the former Union of Soviet (Global Security Org, p. 12). Then the United States declared a desire to relocate several military bases from Western Europe to many Eastern European countries, such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Poland. Besides expanding its territory, NATO has even built bases militaries in Western Europe and Eastern Europe, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Poland.

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The entry of these former Soviet Union countries, considered by Russia as a form of treason, will threaten the stability of security in the Eastern European region. Therefore, this NATO expansion received a negative response and strong criticism from Russia. Russia considers this expansion to be one of the threats and efforts of NATO in narrowing Russia's hegemony, particularly in Eastern Europe (Kotz & Weir 2007, p. 160). Therefore, Russia feels this is a threat to its existence and seeks to issue strong policies and statements on the expansion and NATO policy, which is considered to disrupt Russia's security stability.

Even this military base was created under the pretext of maintaining security because a threat to one member is a threat to the whole country other members. The issue of nuclear weapons resurfaces between these two rivals (Russia-NATO) so that relations between the two are again strained. The tension was triggered by constructing a missile defense system, or the NATO missile defense system pioneered by the United States as NATO leaders in several countries in the Eastern European region, who were formerly is Russia's sphere of influence and interest (Evangelista 2002, p. 144). Russia sees this as a threat to its territory. However, the United States has continued its plans, has even negotiated and reached agreements with several Eastern European countries to build its missile defense system, among others with: Poland and Czech Republic (Hunter & Rogov 2004, p. 45).

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