

Russia's View about NATO Enlargement to the East

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ABSTRACT

Russia has always had the same stance on NATO enlargement to the East. It seems that behaviors of the Russian Federation on the type of relationship with NATO can be divided into two periods including before the September 11 and after the September 11. In addition to NATO enlargement to the East, Kremlin officials didn't cooperate much with this organization before the September 11. After this event, the issue of "Fight against terrorism" provided the conditions for more cooperation of Russia with this largest military organization of the world within NATO-Russia Council. In view of those who are Eurasia-oriented, Russia as a "great power" should participate in NATO, prevent NATO enlargement to the East by adopting an active policy, and set the membership of Central Asia and the Caucasus countries in NATO as the red line of Kremlin.

KEYWORDS: North Atlantic Organization Treaty (NATO); NATO-Russia Council (NRC); Eurasia; Regional Security Complex (RSC)

1. INTRODUCTION

North Atlantic Organization Treaty (NATO), which was formed in 1949, initially had 12 members including England, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Iceland, Denmark, Italy, Norway, Portugal, the United States, and Canada. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, 4 more countries including Greece, Turkey, Germany, and Spain joined this military organization and the number of members increased to 16 (Hallams, Ellen. 2010). Although NATO was established to counter the military threats of the Soviet Union and the danger of Communism (against Warsaw Pact), philosophy of NATO existence was questioned after the collapse of the East Bloc. Redefining international threats and security, NATO emphasized on its survival after the collapse of the East Bloc and NATO enlargement was interpreted in this context. At the beginning in 1999, three Eastern Europe countries including Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined NATO. After accepting the association of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004 and Albania and Croatia in 2009, number of the world's largest military organization members reached 28 countries (Duffield John s. 1995).

Although Russia has had plans to cooperate with NATO (including NATO-Russia Council), this country has opposed NATO enlargement to the East and considers it a security threat. New Russian military doctrine in 2010 has enumerated NATO enlargement to the East as a threat to the national security of this country. This new doctrine also allows Russia, as a nuclear power in the world, use its deterrent nuclear power to deal with its potential enemies and prevent their aggressive actions. This paper aims to review the reasons of Russia to oppose NATO enlargement to the East. At first, theoretical framework of research about Regional Security Complex (RSC) and Russia's views in this matter will be explored.

1.1. Theoretical framework: Regional Security Complex (RSC)

The term *Regional Security Complex* was firstly used by Barry Buzan in the literature of international relations as key concepts. He defines Regional Security Complex as a number of countries in a specific geographic area around each other that security of one means the security of others and security threats of one member are considered security threat of others (Barry Buzan. 2003). There are two points in this definition; a network of security relations between political units and geographical proximity between members. Regional security complexes have the following features which are used in the analysis of regional relations:

- 1- A security complex has a geographical location and space. Space and location is where that there are continuous relations and members of this complex include countries which are widely present in these relations.
- 2- Friends and foes pattern is the basic condition for the establishment of a regional security complex. Hence, fear of an issue appears more than anything else and affects the relations of two countries as a challenge.
- 3- Mutual security independence among a group of countries which form the complex, as any change in the position of a player will change the position of other members.

4- Racial and cultural solidarity is a factor which determines the form and structure security complexes. Cultural and ethnic factors can be mentioned in this matter.

5- The role of economic and political factors in relations between countries are of importance as convergent factors.

2.1. Russia's attitude about the model of "Regional Security Complex"

Russia, European Union, China, and Japan are among the great powers after the Cold War and each of them can be considered a potential challenge to the US as the current superpower of the world. According to the theory of *Regional Security Complex*, "great powers" (including Russia) are players that have high potentials in regional security complex and others (political, economic, and military). Other players expect them to play a systemic (trans-regional) role (Weitz, Richard.2003). Hence, it is assumed that such player can potentially become a superpower in terms of politics, economy, and military in short term or long term.

Since superpower and great powers have a determining role in developments of international system, Russia (within 4+1 superpowers model or and 4 regional powers including Russia, European Union, China, and Japan) tries to be a determining security power in both regionally and trans-regionally. So, addressing the security arrangements of Central Asia and the Caucasus is the top priority of Russia.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can be considered in this regard. This organization was formed by initiative of Russia and China and membership of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and then Uzbekistan in order to address security needs of these countries. Struggle with terrorism, religious extremism, and ethnic separatism is part of the missions of this organization. Presence of cross-regional of military forces near Russia's borders is another issue. Presence of the West military forces (Europe and the US) is a military rallying in front of these republics which has been manifested within military exercises, military cooperation pacts, and establishment of defense-security organizations. Change in military doctrine of Russia and Moscow's efforts to maintain and strengthen its military influence verify the importance of joint defense-security system capabilities in the region. Abandoning former idealistic policies, Russia has a special emphasis on necessity of maintaining its security in Central Asia and Caucasus republics.

Geopolitical characteristics of Central Asia and Caucasus in terms of vastness and geographic enlargement and expansion of region's borders from the East Asian to the Europe and Balkans, geographical proximity, and common interests of republics make the role of geography in establishment of regional security complex more prominent. Existence of the world's two oil and gas resources in some of these republics and necessity to secure gas and oil lines and route have subjected the development of economic activities to providing regional security.

NATO efforts to enlarge this organization to the East have created more mobility in Russia to strengthen collective defense system. Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which was formed in this regard, seeks to create a structure for regional cooperation to fight terrorism in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Richard Waitts, in his analysis of this organization, states that Russia alongside China and 4 governments of Central Asia and the Caucasus have been united within Shanghai Cooperation Organization to fight against terrorism, separatism, and extremism which are the major sources of inability in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Nikolas Swanstorm also believes that SCO has been successful in creating trust between member States. He adds that change previous relations between members and forward process in their relations are the achievement of this organization (Swanstorm, Nikolas. 2004). Stuart Harris believes that both Russia and China benefit from this organization and Russia tries to control China's actions in Central Asia and Caucasus region and prevents China's dominance on this region (Harris, Stuart.2005) .

3.1. Russia's reasons to oppose NATO enlargement to the East:

1.3.1. Kaliningrad issue:

According to Article 65 of the constitution of the Russian Federation, Kaliningrad is one of the 89 sections of this country. This region has a population of nearly 900000 people and a surface of 129 Km². Unlike all regions of Russia, Kaliningrad is an exclave between Poland and Lithuania on the Baltic Sea. Poland and Lithuania are the only way to reach this region. Existence of Russian naval base and presence of more than 100000 troops have made this region very important to Russia. Vladimir Putin visited Kaliningrad naval base in day if Russian Navy in August 2000 and said, "Russia's official position has always been depended on the Navy. When the Navy is weak, the country would be in a bad condition and when the Navy stands on its own, Russia is able to call itself a great power."

Membership of Poland and Lithuania (which were in the neighborhood of Kaliningrad) in NATO was followed by deployment of Moscow's missiles with nuclear warheads in Kaliningrad.

2.3.1. Loss of buffer zone:

Most countries which were seeking NATO membership after the collapse of Soviet Union can be divided into three groups as follows:

A) Eastern Europe countries

B) Baltic republics

C) Near Abroad republics

Among these three groups, Baltic republics and Near Abroad republics countries have always been important to Russia both geopolitically and geostrategically, because these countries are considered the buffer zone of Russia against NATO enlargement to the East. On the other hand, Russia believes that NATO enlargement to the Eastern Europe countries underlies its development to Baltic countries and then Near Abroad countries. So, Russia strongly opposes NATO enlargement.

NATO enlargement, which was entered a new stage in 1999 with three Eastern Europe countries including Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, gradually covered other Eastern Europe and Baltic countries. Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia in 2004 and Albania and Croatia in 2009 joined this organization which indicates some points:

In acceptance of new countries, NATO tried to take the red line of Russia into account. Although Baltic republics were in the neighborhood of Russia and had a high geopolitical importance for this country, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Belarus are also of great importance to Russia. Central Asia and the Caucasus countries and Near Abroad countries, which form a buffer zone between Russia and NATO, are considered the last defense shield of Russia. Therefore, acceptance of new members of NATO after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the first phase in 1999 was based on the same logic. It means the joining of three Eastern Europe countries which had greater distance with Russia, discreetly and after years of waiting. As these countries were not among the first priorities of Russia, their membership in NATO made Moscow less angry. But Russia strongly opposed the strategy of NATO enlargement to the East (which was gradually performed in three stages after the collapse of the Soviet Union), because NATO enlargement means entering the buffer zone and entering the influence region of Russia.

Russia adopted *Look East* policy since 1996 and the management of Primakov, Russian Prime Minister. Based on this, Russia paid special attention to Central Asia and Caucasus region and call it Russia's traditional sphere of influence or Near Abroad. According to doctrine of Near Abroad, Central Asia and the Caucasus region found a special position in Russia's policy priorities. According to this doctrine, Russia owns special economic and security interests in this region that other regional and trans-regional actors have no choice to accept them. From the perspective of Kremlin, countries of this region are the territory of applying Russian doctrine and are not considered "Abroad".

Central Asia and the Caucasus region is so important that Brzezinski geopolitically believes that this region is the key point on the global chess board.

The fact is that Russians have found that their opponent (NATO) is approaching their critical space step by step. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO entered Central and Eastern Europe from west, then passed through Baltic republics, and finally deployed its military bases in Central Asia and the Caucasus behind the walls of Russia.

Buffer zones are of importance to Russia for several reasons as follows:

A) These countries are part of the former Soviet Union and Russia is still willing to continue its political influence on these countries. Russia cannot stand the presence of NATO in countries that are closely connected with Russia's national interests and security.

B) Maintaining the security and stability of aforesaid countries is considered as a prerequisite to providing Russia's stability and stability. Moscow believes that loss of buffer zone leads to instability and imbalance of forces and intensified military risk and also can cause a sudden attack.

On the other hand, transfer of any instability from neighboring countries to Moscow and the threat of radical Islamism and terrorism encourage Russia not to eliminate itself from security system of these countries. Yevgeny Primakov, Russia's former Prime Minister, says, "we are opposed to NATO enlargement, although some countries have joined it. We have set a red line to the US that is the rejection of the former Soviet Union republics in NATO.

C) Russia is not concerned about the strengthening NATO military authority and its European side but is concerned about the strengthening US influence in Europe and former East Bloc allies.

D) Russia seeks to strengthen its economic influence in the remaining countries of the former Soviet Union and tries to develop political and economic cooperation and increase its mutual interests with these countries and also reduce the influence of the US by strengthening the SCO (Germanovich, Gene. 2008). Hence, NATO enlargement to the East not only reduces the influence of Russia but also economically is disadvantageous to Moscow.

3.3.1. NATO enlargement to the East in order to reduce the authority of Russia in the international system:

Although Moscow is no longer considered as a superpower in the international system after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia is still the inheritor of the Soviet nuclear weapons. Russians want to be an effective power in the international system. At 17,075,400 square kilometers, Russia is the largest country in the world.

The area of this country is twice of area of Canada, China, and the US. Russia is also the eighth most populous nation with 143 million people. Number of Russian active military personnel was announced 1027000 in 2008 which has the fifth rank among the armies of the world. Number of reserve forces of Russia also reached 2400000 in 2008. Approved budget of Russian military was announced 36.6 billion dollars in 2009 that has been increasing every year (The military balance. 2008). Russians Air Force had 5665 military aircrafts, 3169 of them (except helicopters) are used for aerial battle and the rest are used for transportation. Russian Navy was 300 years old in 1996. Historically, Navy of Russia has been a submarine force. Basic units of Navy have been prepared for nuclear deterrence (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/Russia/army.htm>). Russia is among the 5 countries which formally have nuclear weapons and one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council. Until June of 2009, Russia had 4834 operational nuclear warheads and 2947 conventional non-strategic missile. It is estimated that Russia also has 735 to 1365 tons of enriched Uranium with a high purity and 106 to 165 tons of prepared (<http://www.sipri.org/research/conflict/publications/eu-russia>). Plutonium for military purposes Russia's military exports ranked first in the world in the years 2008 and 2009 (<http://www.sipri.org/research/conflict/publications/eu-russia>). Membership in Group 8 (G8), which accounts for the majority of global economy, has given a special power and prestige to this country. Russia is also the second producer of oil and the first producer of gas in the world. The Russian government has retained most components of the Soviet Union power. 51% of population, 60% of industrial production, and 76% of land of the Soviet Union are in Russia (Nygren, Bertil .2008). From the perspective of Moscow, western governments (especially the US) seek a Russia restricted within its own boundaries and the power its influence on international developments is small. It seems that the dominant attitude of Kremlin about the West and especially NATO enlargement to the East (after the collapse of the Soviet Union) can be divided into three main categories:

A- Euroatlantists:

After the collapse of the Soviet Union until 1993, the thoughts of Euroatlantists was dominated on Moscow's foreign policy. Yeltsin and Andrey Kozyrev, Russia's President and Foreign Minister at that time, who represented this thought, believed that expansion of Russia's relations with Western countries is the key for development of this country.

B- Radical nationalists:

After the victory of Liberal Democratic Party, Vladimir Zhirinovsky applied the slogans of radical nationalism in parliamentary elections in 1993. West-oriented ideas in Russia's foreign policy were changed at this time. Internal problems, especially economic problems and frustration of people from adherence of Kremlin to the policies of the West encouraged people to find a tendency to radical nationalists. Radical nationalists believed that the West and especially the US are the main reasons for the weakness of Russia. So, this idea was strongly anti-American. Within this attitude, which called for the rule of nationalism on Russia's foreign policy, emphasis on independent identity of Russia and its global mission based on reduction the relations with the West and especially the US was considered the most important principle. Radical nationalists believed that any political and security cooperation with NATO underlies the influence and intervention of the West in internal affairs of Russia and thereby strongly opposed NATO enlargement.

C- Eurasianists:

Among radical nationalistic and west-oriented attitudes, there is a third view called Eurasian. According to this view, as Russia is a country that is geopolitically located both in Asia and Europe, this country should both consider *Look East* policy and seek its national interests in the West. Although this view, which was the resultant of two previous one in Russia, doesn't believe in full and final membership in NATO (as a goal), full cooperation with this organization, and acceptance of NATO enlargement to Russia, it indicates that cutting the relations with this organization doesn't lead to pursuit of national and security interests of Russia.

Eurasians idea, which has a realistic attitude towards NATO, is based on activation of this country in the international system to prevent NATO enlargement. According to this type of attitude, Russia believes that NATO enlargement towards this country has a mutual and direct effect on the reduction of Russia's authority in the international system. According to the thought of Eurasians (Putin and Medvedev presidency), Russia should use every means to increase its position in the international system. They believe that Russia has the potentials to become a great power, because this country is the second nuclear power and naval power in the world. In addition, Russia is one of the main members of the UN Security Council and has veto power. Eurasians believe that cooperation with NATO within NATO-Russia Council should also enhance the position of Russia. In their opinion, cooperation and participation in NATO should be considered as a means to prevent NATO enlargement towards Russia and active diplomacy of Moscow to achieve this goal should be seriously pursued. They think that if this country can achieve this objective by active and successful diplomacy in NATO, not only it is against national security of Russia but also change in attitude of NATO members about Russia as a

partner and major power can lead to the authority of Russia in the international system. Unlike Euroatlantists, Eurasians not only assume that the full convergence with the West is the only factor for development and authority of Russia but also they believe that it has led to some disputes between Russia and the West. In Putin's idea, implementation of the US national missile defense plan which was seeking by the neoconservatives during the presidency of George Bush could be a harmful to Russia and enters this country into a race on nuclear weapons with the US and the West. From the perspective of Eurasianists, active participation of Russia in NATO caused the US to delegate its missile defense plan to NATO to Russia be also involved in. Strategy of Eurasians against NATO enlargement to the East emphasizes on this that NATO should recognize Moscow's influence and hegemony in Near Abroad republics. *Look East* policy of Eurasians is a reaction to NATO'S *Look East* policy (adopted from Hitler's Germany policy to attract Eastern Europe countries). Realistic approach with emphasis on the developments arising from the collapse of the Soviet superpower and considering Russia's geopolitical position in the current international system is the main characteristic of Eurasians. Instead of confrontation with the West, they pursue the policy of *one step towards the West, one step towards the East* (Dut Kiewicz , Pitro & Robert J.Jackson .1998). Generally, the policy of Eurasians in Central Asia and the Caucasus has a dual nature; On the one hand, Moscow seeks stronger presence in the region through pro-Russian bloc and on the other hand, cooperates with the Atlantic world and is willing to work with it. Russia plays an effective role in the international policies in some regions of the world as a great power and a country which possesses nuclear power and this important and undeniable to NATO. With the joining of Russia to NATO-Russia Council and cooperation with the US in fight against terrorism and participation in resolving other international crises after the September 11, it seems that Putin's policy was to gain maximum political and economic points from Bush's administration. Russia obtained the right of equal participation in decision making by joining this council launched a broad cooperation with NATO according to the 19+1 charter and then NATO-Russia Council within the 28+1 model. Although the presence and participation of Russia in NATO intends to affect NATO's decisions and enhance Russia's position in the international system, Russia still considers NATO enlargement as a threat to its country. Vladimir Putin warned in NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008 that NATO enlargement toward its borders would constitute a direct threat to security of Russia. Efforts and activities of Eurasians caused Georgia and Ukraine membership application, which were raised in NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008 and then Strasbourg Summit in 2009, not to be mentioned in Lisbon in 2010 and NATO members called for more participation and cooperation of Russia due to internal problems such as failures in Afghanistan and Iraq. Not raising the Georgia and Ukraine membership application in Lisbon Summit in 2010 is considered a great success for Eurasians. Proposing START Pact to the US parliament by Obama, which was approved, is another success for this group. The US withdrawal from the national missile defense plan and Russia's participation in missile defense shield plan in Europe are also of great importance to Russia, although there are disagreements about details and the way this plan is going to be implemented. Russians believe that they should be quite sure that this plan would not be against their interests and would not change the military balance in Eurasia.

1.3.3.1.The reasons for Russia's cooperation with NATO:

It seems that Russians are willing to cooperate with NATO for some reasons. Moscow pursues the following three important goals in its relations with NATO:

- 1- Presence in global determining and decision-maker institutions and prevention of Russia's isolation on international issues and matters related to international security.
- 2- Prevention of possible orientations of NATO against Russia (including NATO enlargement to the East).
- 3- Proving opportunities for solving problems of separatism in Russia especially in the North Caucasus through blending these problems into the overall issue of global war against terrorism.

It seems that the type of Russia-NATO relation is a function of Moscow-Washington ties. In terms of membership or non-membership of Russia in NATO, it should be noted that Russia prefers the participation with NATO to the joining to this organization for three above-mentioned reasons. Rejecting the view of those who see the non-membership of Russia in inability of this country in meeting the terms of membership in this transatlantic alliance, Natalia Zivariva believes that Russia considers itself a great power and doesn't want to limit itself with the requirements of membership in NATO. The US also shows no tendency to full membership of this country in NATO and having veto power (Ghaedi MohammadReza .2012). Russia believes that policies and orientations of NATO are greatly under the influence of the US. Hence, Russia's relationship with the US directly affects the orientation of this country towards NATO. Cooperation of Russia with the US in the fight against terrorism after September 11, 2001 and allowing the US to use Russia's military bases in Central Asia led to the elimination of obstruction ruling Russia-NATO relations. A new institutional framework called NATO-Russia Council was proposed in Rome Summit in 2002 in order to attract more participation of Russia in security affairs of Eastern Europe.

4.3.1. Paying attention to Russians living in Near Abroad republics:

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the status of Russians minorities living in former Soviet republics was one of the issues which was taken into account in decision of Russian politicians in terms of Near Abroad republics. After the 1993 parliamentary elections in Russia, more attention was paid to the Russians living in the surrounding republics, because these minorities were of great importance in view of Russian Liberal Democrat nationalists. Some factors, including the followings, have made the issue of Russians living in Near Abroad republics one of the main concerns of the Russian governments:

1- Population of Russians living in the surrounding republics is about 25000000. Neglecting the welfare and social status of Russians in these republics can lead to migration of minorities to Russia Federation which is a threat to national security of this country.

The population of Russians in these republics is viewed with skepticism and as the fifth column of Russia. Some believe that Russia has retired many of soldiers to ensure the presence and future use before removing its military forces from these republics.

One of the strategies of Russia in relation with Near Abroad republics is to try to prevent the formation of anti-Russian sentiments in these countries and migration of Russians to their original homeland. Russia fears that membership of these republics in NATO paves the way for aforesaid events and threatens national security and interests of Russia. So, they have no choice to support Russians minorities.

2- Near Abroad republics found a prominent in foreign policy after the radical nationalists took office in 1993. Although west-oriented policies of Kozrov after the collapse of the Soviet Union to 1993 prevented Russia to seriously look at the surrounding republics, nationalists valorized the position of these republics in foreign policy of Russia due to millions of Russians living there. However, internal pressures made Moscow pays more attention to these republics and Russians living in these republics is an excuse to tie the national and security interests of Russia with Near Abroad republics. This continued during the Eurasian period.

Tabl1: Military spending of the world's top 10 countries

Country	Military budget (US dollar)
US	651/163/000/000
China	70/308/600/000
France	67/640/900/000
Britain	64/005/100/000
Japan	48/860/000/000
Germany	45/930/000/000
Italy	40/050/000/000
Russia Federation	39/600/000/000
India	32/700/000/000
Saudi Arabia	31/050/000/000

Table2: Military exports of the world's top 10 countries in 2008 and 2009

Country	Exports value (US dollar)
Russia Federation	6/197/000/000
US	5/453/000/000
France	2/122/000/000
Britain	985/000/000
Canada	543/000/000
Ukraine	452/000/000
Israel	283/000/000
Italy	261/000/000
Sweden	260/000/000
Netherlands	211/000/000

2. Conclusion:

Although Russia has the motivation to cooperate with NATO on issues like Afghanistan, fight against terrorism, and disarmament within NATO-Russia Council, Russia still opposes NATO enlargement to the East. Adoption of the third military doctrine of Russia in 2010 can be interpreted in this regard. In this doctrine, NATO enlargement to the East is considered a threat to Russia and the permission to use nuclear weapons to deal with this threat has been issued which is itself a response to NATO performance in accepting new members and enlargement towards Russia's borders, reveals the real stance of Russia as an official document. Russia's reasons and motives for opposing NATO enlargement to the East are numerous. The issue of Kaliningrad and geopolitical and geostrategic importance of this region to Russia, importance of buffer zones and surrounding republics of Russia, redefinition of Russia's authority position in the international system, and importance of Russians living in surrounding republics are some of these reasons. From the perspective of Moscow, NATO enlargement to the East means that Russia is an enemy to NATO members and it is intended to inhibit Russia.

Kremlin believes that NATO enlargement to the East can lead to reduction of Russia's authority in the international system, loss of buffer zones, and having common borders with this country. Russia believes that NATO, instead of enlarging towards Russia's borders, should be separated from the context of the Cold War and rebuilds itself to deal with new threats to international security, while NATO considers Moscow a potential threat to the security of Euro-Atlantic.

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