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Marthen Napang

*Faculty of Law, Hasanuddin University, Indonesia, marthennapang57@gmail.com*

Syaiful Rohmann

*National Resilience Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia, syaifulrohman71@gmail.com*

Siti Nurhasanah

*American Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia, snurha.2893@gmail.com*

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## NATO AND RUSSIAN POLITICAL POLICY ON EASTERN EUROPE

Cover Page Footnote

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# NATO AND RUSSIAN POLITICAL POLICY ON EASTERN EUROPE

**Marthen Napang<sup>1</sup>, Syaiful Rohman<sup>2\*</sup>, Siti Nurhasanah<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Law, Hasanuddin University, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>National Resilience Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia,  
Indonesia\*

<sup>3</sup>American Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

## ABSTRACT

The growing centers of global power such as NATO, the European Union, China and India have different civilizational and cultural characteristics. Post-Soviet Russia is indeed in a relatively weak position in economic terms. Although Russia's relations with the European Union and the United States had improved after the Cold War, it did not have a significant impact on Russia's economic growth. In recent years Russia and other major powers have not only strengthened the economy and security related to the military, but have gone far beyond that to strengthen the country's influence. This is what makes the superpower countries compete in making policies that ultimately affect the world political and economic situation. This study examines Russian political policy towards NATO, Europe and Ukraine from the perspective of security and economic interests. The method used is qualitative by conducting an in-depth study of data obtained from the results of previous studies. The results of this study show that Russia, America and Europe through NATO occupy a strong position that has the ability to influence agreements and include the national interests of their country. Each country is trying to achieve their respective interests by making efforts to increase national power. National Power includes various elements, namely military power, economic and political power.

**Keywords: Russian Foreign Policy, NATO's position in Eastern Europe, Economic Interest**

\* Corresponding author:

E-mail: [marthennapang57@gmail.com](mailto:marthennapang57@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [syaifulrohman71@gmail.com](mailto:syaifulrohman71@gmail.com)<sup>2\*</sup>, [snurha.2893@gmail.com](mailto:snurha.2893@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup>

Affiliation: National Resilience Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas  
Indonesia, Indonesia\*

## **1. Introduction**

Security is the most critical aspect in a country's sovereignty so that the state must keep its security from any threat and any country (Yakovlev, 2016). The state has to be able to show its strength and power if the country wants to become a superpower or a resilient nation that leads the world power. In line with opinions (Sulastri, 2013) that territorial ownership is an essential aspect that must be owned by the state to increase power. Besides, an increase in term of the military as a strong defence and security for the country is needed to show its power to other countries (Nuttalla, Samaras, & Bazilian, 2019). A country can ally with another country when it feels threatened through cooperation with major countries or world security organizations (Kouldunova, 2016), even forming their defences with economic and military power they have.

The growing centers of global power such as NATO, the European Union, China and India have different civilizational and cultural characteristics with their individual uniqueness (Kuus, 2010). Despite the effects of globalization, these centers continue to develop their uniqueness and influence on other centers (Kouldunova, 2016). In this context, Russia also has its own uniqueness. Russia is also faced with a choice whether to become a center of civilization and ideological power according to its uniqueness or to integrate with one of the existing power centers and lose its identity (Helen, 2009). If Russia chooses to be independent based on its history and culture, Russia will develop and implement a number of policies in accordance with its resources in Europe, America and Asia-Africa (Friedman, 2012).

The superpower (superpower) occupies a strong position that can influence agreements and enter the national interests of the country. Each country is trying to achieve their respective interests by making efforts to increase national power. National power includes various elements, one of which is military power. The popular perception of Russia as a "centre of gravity" is not only the extent of the territory and the size of Russia's natural resources. Russian characters also make ethnographic entities unique to the concepts of ideology, politics, history and culture (Dragneva, Rilka, & Wolczuk , 2013). The concept of the character referred to the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century when the Russians began to identify themselves as defenders of Orthodoxy and heirs of Byzantine Culture which later developed into philosophical and historical thinking which contributed to the formation of Eurasianist geopolitical views (Dimitri, 1999).

Russia's perception of Eurasian integration is apparent when Ukraine participates in the formation of the Common Economic Space (CES) with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, when the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) has also been operating (Kazantsev, 2015). Meanwhile, Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia prefer to be observer status in the Eurasian Economic Community. However, the drive for integration in the early 2000s was set back by the ultra-liberal influence in the Russian government, which held that post-Soviet forms of integration were economically inefficient (Aunders, 2008). The idea of reuniting the CES economy as a common market and integration initiatives of President Vladimir Putin did not get support in Russia. At the same time, it is not possible to simultaneously form Customs Union and Common Economic Space when seeking membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO) which is considered a priority in that period (Hutabarat, 2017). At least it caused the integration process to stall for several years.

Post-Soviet Russia is indeed in a relatively weak position in economic terms (Kanet, 2010). Although Russia's relations with the European Union and the United States had improved after the Cold War, it did not have a significant impact on Russia's economic growth (Dragneva, Rilka, & Wolczuk, 2013). In recent years Russia and other major powers have not only strengthened the economy and security related to the military. However, they have gone far beyond that to strengthen the country's influence (Kanet, 2010). It is what makes the superpower countries compete in making policies that ultimately affect the world political and economic situation.

## **2. Literature Review**

The theory used in this paper is the theory of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). Hudson explained that the purpose of this foreign policy was an attempt to safeguard and maintain the strength and security of the country itself by building economic trade cooperation among countries (Hudson, 2014). In addition to security forces, the current economic power has taken a role in completing it. The policy should fulfil rationality and good and bad policy decisions (Dragneva, Rilka, & Wolczuk, 2013). Rationality and wise decision are the main concepts that are considered necessary for ordinary people. Rationality reflects from the selection of policies as logical with the goals of the leader.

According to Hudson in the Foreign Policy Analysis: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow (1995) stated that the FPA does not thoroughly review the policies of the state but rather the

actors and units that shape the country and make decisions (Hudson, 2014). The FPA, through its actors, will look for explanations regarding choices, decisions and behavior. Choices take the form of several levels of choice of existing policies. Decisions refer to the choices that are ultimately used by the government as a policy, to analyze the decision making, the background, perspective and personality of the leader must be known (Hudson, 2014). Eventually, foreign policy behavior is an action to influence the behavior of external actors. It also to protect state profits. Therefore the country protects its private interests rather than spreading global influence. The reaction of international actors is a measure to assess the policies.

This paper will look at how the relationship between Russia and countries in the Eastern European region as a whole, the relationship formed between the two parties is caused by the international system. Western powers, the United States and the European Union, have been the triggering factors for Russian activity in the region. After the Soviet Union, it was as if Western countries cut ties with post-Soviet countries. Therefore, Russia is often cornered by the presence of NATO and the European Union which are trying to expand their influence to the former Soviet Union, which became a Russian tribe.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The author uses a qualitative approach in this research with data from reliable sources, including international and national journals, proceedings, and information from websites. Qualitative research methods that emphasize understanding of problems in state life based on realistic, complex, and holistic realities or natural settings. Descriptive-analytical type with a qualitative approach is expected to be able to provide descriptive notes from previous research and other data sources observed by researchers to be able to describe and explain comprehensively the interests of Russia in Eastern Europe.

Researchers will analyze systemically so that they can see international relations as a whole. The research object focuses on Russian foreign policy in Eastern Europe, as stated (Dragneva, Rilka , & Wolczuk , 2013) that Russian policy in Eastern Europe emphasizes three things, namely Politics, Security and Economy.

In short, Russian foreign policy in Eastern European regions such as Belarus, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova and Ukraine is based on the interest to maintain the dominance of Russian influence. With the provision of arms assistance and economic improvement, coupled

with the dependence of countries on Russian natural gas for its energy needs, Russia is trying to maintain the existence of its power in the region. This paper will explain the extent to which Russia's policy towards Eastern Europe maintains its influence, especially in the security and economy.

#### **4. Result and Discussion**

##### **Russia and NATO**

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) NATO is a regional security organization for countries in the northern Atlantic Ocean region formed on April 4, 1949. NATO is an intra-governmental organization, where allied countries agreed to create a joint defence and security body during the Cold War (Rahyuni, 2012). NATO members include the United States, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Canada, Italy, Portugal, Iceland, Denmark and Norway. They first signed the agreement and became the first member of the NATO security organization (Richterova, 2014). Based on the official website of NATO, it states that NATO membership increased to the present number of 30 member countries located in the European and North American regions.

This defence organization aims to maintain security in Western Europe; it is also to maintain the freedom and security of its members, maintain security stability in the Euro-Atlantic area to prevent international crises (Rahyuni, 2012). To uphold the values of the United Nations (UN) and promote democracy, human rights and international law in 1955, to balance NATO's power a Defense Pact was formed by the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, the Warsaw Pact which established on May 14, 1955 (Clarasanti, 2019). During the Cold War, the two Defense Blocks continued to try to gain support from other countries and increase their military power (Richterova, 2014).

The competition between two military pacts ended at the end of the Cold War. It marked by the collapse of the Soviet Union on December 26, 1991. After that, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact signed the collapse of the superpower state. As a result, NATO became the only Military Pact in Europe and the North Atlantic (Wolff, 2015). This defence organization then gradually began to expand its membership and wanted to achieve its interests, namely to stem the spread of Soviet communism in the European region. To achieve this goal, NATO then expanded its membership to the Eastern European region, which was once an area of influence and power of the Soviet Union (Hatzivassiliou, 2012).

The participation of former Soviet Union countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic to NATO shows as a form of betrayal in Russia's view. It will pose a threat to security stability in the Eastern European Region. This NATO expansion received a negative response and sharp criticism from Russia (Wolff, 2015). Russia considers that this expansion is one of the threats and efforts of NATO to narrow Russian hegemony, especially in the Eastern European Region. Therefore, Russia feels this is a threat to its existence and seeks to issue policies and strong statements on NATO's expansion and policies, which considered to be able to disrupt Russia's security stability.

### **NATO's influence in Eastern Europe interfering Russian dominance**

The expansion of NATO and the entry of several Soviet Union states provoked a strong reaction from Russia. Because the impact of the expansion made Russia begin to lose its influence and power in Eastern Europe, especially since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (Richterova, 2014). The emergence of NATO in Eastern Europe made Russia feel that it had other competitors in spreading its influence and that meant the increasingly limited space for Russia in the Eastern European region, especially in the Soviet Union.

In 1999, the Czech Republic and Poland officially entered NATO. As is known, the Czech Republic and Poland are former member states of the Warsaw Pact. NATO's expansion of the countries of the former Warsaw Pact left Russia seriously threatened to lose the full influence of its power (Rahyuni, 2012). The expansion of NATO members moving towards Eastern Europe is quite threatening for Russia because Eastern Europe is Russia's lane with Western countries. If NATO continues to expand its power, that means it will make Russia more isolated from the outside world. Because, if NATO holds full geopolitical power in Eastern Europe, Russia will be even weaker. It is a strategy of the West (especially the United States) to stem Russian rule. By using NATO's name and appeal, the United States is trying to stem Russian power entirely so that no second, third and so-called superpower will be like the Soviet Union (Wolff, 2015).

The United States expressed the desire to relocate several military bases from Western Europe to several Eastern European countries, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Poland (Rahyuni, 2012). In addition to expanding its territory, NATO has even built military bases in Western and Eastern Europe, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Poland. Relocating the base means moving the



front lines of the NATO defence system to near Russian territory (Richterova, 2014). When viewed in terms of historical and cultural, it seems clear that relations between Russia and the Soviet Union were very close, so that Russia wants to maintain security and influence of its power over the region around Russia.

The expansion that happened has changed NATO's boundaries so that its territory is getting bigger. The existence of military bases shows the continuity to expand into Eastern Europe and Central Europe. The security of NATO member states guaranteed by the military base (Pringgondani, 2016). Because, the principle of this defence pact is if there is a threat to one member, then it is a threat to all other members as well. Tensions between Russia and NATO resurfaced when the issue of nuclear weapons reappeared, making the relations between the two tense again. The tension was triggered by the development of the missile defence system, or NATO missile defence system spearheaded by the United States as the NATO leader in several countries in Eastern Europe, which was once an area of Russian influence and interests.

Russia views this as a threat to its territory (Sidiki, 2016). However, the United States continues to plan, even has negotiated and reached agreements with several Eastern European countries, to build a missile defence system, including with Poland and the Czech Republic. Responding to NATO's policy, Russia then enacted a policy by strengthening military security at each of its country's borders and carrying out various counter actions including directing its missiles to Ukraine which is a NATO ally (Clarasanti, 2019). Russia did it because of a sense of concern for Ukraine that was allegedly threatening Russian security.

### **Russian interests in Eastern Europe in terms of security**

For Russia, Eastern Europe is undoubtedly a significant and strategic region in the history of the Russian nation (Clarasanti, 2019). There are at least two significant events in European history that emphasize the importance of the Eastern European region for this white bear country. First, France in the Napoleon Bonaparte era had tried to attack Moscow in 1812. Secondly, Germany in the era of Adolf Hitler had also tried to attack Russia in World War II in 1941, even though Russia repelled the German army (Anggoro, 2008). These two significant events show that, in terms of geopolitics and security, Russia is indeed vulnerable and has been the target of attacks from aggressive neighboring countries located in the West (Karsten, 2008). That is the historical and geopolitical reason for Russia of the need for the sphere of influence

and buffer-zone in Eastern Europe to withstand the possibility of various attacks from the western region.

During the Cold War, Russia in the Soviet Union era managed to get an adequate buffer-zone for the strategic interests of the countries that joined the Soviet Union (Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova). These countries are part of the Soviet Union located in Eastern Europe (Dragneva, Rilka, & Wolczuk , 2013). Buffer-zone for Russia also from satellite communist countries in Eastern Europe (Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany). To compensate for the military power of the West, the Warsaw Pact military alliance was established and based in the city of a satellite country in Eastern Europe, namely Warsaw, Poland. However, the geopolitical and geostrategic map has entirely changed since the Cold War ended (Karpova, Karpov, & Kruchkov, 2015).

Towards the end of the cold war, the communist countries in Eastern Europe fell one after another and turned towards democracy. Likewise, because economic bankruptcy and the failure of political institutions was inevitable, the Soviet Union finally dissolved (Hudson, 2014). As the sole "heir" state of the Soviet Union, Russia seeks to retain its remaining influence in the countries of the former Soviet Republic by forming a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). However, Russia is slowly but surely increasingly abandoned by the countries of its former allies.

### **Russia's economic interests in Eastern Europe**

The global economic and financial crisis has affected Russia's geopolitical views in post-Soviet integration. The process of globalization and global competition does not allow any country, including Russia, to act alone, it forces to seek allies in the new multi-polar world (Kanet, 2010). At least, Russia is trying to realize the potential of the Customs Union and Common Economic Space of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, with the hope that Armenia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and several other countries will join later (Federation, 2010). In this stage, the main focus is the maximization of free movement of goods, services, capital and labor. President Vladimir Putin stated that regional integration around the world follows this path of the most effective efforts to maximize domestic growth resources and strengthen competitiveness in global markets (Myers, 2015). Shared strengths will be more reliable and more comfortable to face global challenges together.

Based on the considerations above, the Eurasian Economic Union was a "community of equal partners". Eurasia is not synonymous with Russia, despite Russia's dominant role as the owner of the largest economy in the region, the Eurasian project, at least from a political point of view, cannot develop surrounding Russia itself (Dragneva, Rilka, & Wolczuk , 2013). However, the political aspects of Eurasian integration did not reduce its economic interests. Russia, with its economic strength, must offer incentives for cooperative projects in this "multi-polar club" (Aunders, 2008). It means that Russia has the basis of making administrative and ideological leadership claims in building this Eurasian Economic Union.

The development of Russia's position in cooperation in the East Asian region still has many serious challenges. Russia's domestic factors will be crucial in the efforts to improve Russia's economic relations to the east (Karsten, 2008). At least the focus of economic integration in the Siberian region and other Russian regions in the direction called "Far East" Russia still needs to be developed to have the same level as other East Asian countries, especially China, Japan, South Korea (Malle, 2017). Russia must also solve other crucial problems to overcome the perception that Russia is geographically part of East Asia. However, economically and politically, it is still seen as an "external player" in the region (Helen, 2009).

For Russia, Eastern Europe is a critical region in the country's politics, economy and military. For example, Ukraine, which, to this day, is a connecting bridge that supplies gas from Russia to Europe (Kouldunova, 2016). Besides, the state of the Ukrainian economy that is dependent on exports of steel, coal, fuel and petroleum, chemicals and grains to Russia has its advantages for Russia.

### **Calculation of Interests of Russia VS Ukraine**

The new round of outbreaks of tension between the West and Russia occurred when Russia surprised the annexation of Ukrainian territory, that is, the Crimean Peninsula (Sidiki, 2016). The incident occurred after the outbreak of the political crisis in Ukraine after President Viktor Yanukovich refuses to sign a trade agreement with the European Union. The policy sparked the anger of the pro-Western Ukrainian people so that they held large-scale popular demonstrations in the city of Kyiv (Hanifah, 2017). The peak of tension occurred when a bloody incident broke out in Kyiv which killed approximately 67 demonstrators; President Viktor Yanukovich finally stepped down in February 2014, who then fled and requested protection to Russia (BBC, 2014).

Russia certainly has an interest in strictly following the development of the political crisis in Ukraine. For Russia, the tragic fall of President Yanukovich, who is pro against Russia, will undoubtedly cause Russia to lose soon another close friend, Ukraine (Svarin, 2016). Indeed, Ukraine, led by a new president who tends the West, will soon follow in the footsteps of other former communist countries that reoriented their foreign policy to the West and left Russia (Karsten, 2008). As popular domino theory during the Cold War, the theory also applies when one Russian ally fell into Western hands. The other Russian ally followed the measures and fell into the West align or the European Union (Kropatcheva, 2012). Russia lost in gaining influence and economically harmed. Several factors have become Russia's critical strategic toward Ukraine.

First, it is a factor in Russia's strategic importance. Russia has long had a naval military base in Sevastopol in Crimea. The strategic naval base was leased by Russia from Ukraine and extended until 2042 (Ortung & Overland, 2011). The extension of the naval base lease contract with Kyiv could occur only because of a quite tough diplomacy. This base is very strategic for Russia because it is at this Black Sea base that Russian warships remain free to operate in winter. After all, the sea is not frozen (Richterova, 2014). The Russian base lease contract in Ukraine might not be a problem as long as the government in Kyiv is on Moscow's side. However, with the fall of pro-Moscow President Yanukovich, the future of Russia's strategic naval base could become uncertain (Svarin, 2016). As a strategic point of military power in the Black Sea, Russia certainly will not give up the possibility of closing this naval base in the future. For Russia, annexation is a rational choice of action.

Second, psychological factors. After the Cold War broke out, Russia under Boris Yeltsin re-orientated its foreign policy slowly to approach the West (Andrei, 2010). However, Moscow was disappointed that the West still had a distrust of Russia. For years Russia tried but failed to achieve what it wanted most: regular membership to the West and economic prosperity (Friedman, 2012). Russia has indeed become an exclusive member of the G8 group. However, Russia has never enjoyed the same status as the other seven member states, Russia still considered as "the other." Economically, the shock therapy proposed by the West and implemented sincerely by Boris Yeltsin did not bring the expected economic progress (Karsten, 2008). However, Russia's economy deteriorated, causing the average life of Russian society to

decline from before. By carrying out the annexation of Crimea, Russia wants to prove to the West that Russia is a big country that does not receive underestimation and mock.

Third, President Vladimir Putin has ambitions to reawaken the glory of Soviet Russia (Dimitri, 1999). When the Russian economy is getting better, the West faces various problems. In 2008 the economic crisis shook the American economy and then followed the debt crisis in several EU member states. Oppositely, Russia began to rise as an economic force that could support the recovery of the crisis in the European Union (Mau, 2016). At this time, Britain, France, or even Germany are busy asking Russian oil entrepreneurs to buy and make more investments (Myers, 2015). President Putin, and his desire to restore the imperial domination of the Soviet Union's fraction states under the name New Russia, will pose geopolitical challenges. Not only for neighboring Russia but the US over Europe.

### **Russia's role in the Ukraine crisis**

The existence of a domestic conflict in Ukraine that led to Russian and European Union intervention on the conflict is a fact that the conflict in Ukraine is a conflict between the EU and Russia (Karsten, 2008). In this case, Ukraine is a terrain of real conflict. This conflict preceded by Ukraine's desire to integrate more closely with the EU (Svarin, 2016). It triggered Russian anger so that at Russia's insistence Ukraine finally declared itself out of the European Association Agreement which was the entrance of Ukraine's integration with the European Union.

Russia's involvement requires the EU to participate in the conflict by giving an economic embargo to Russia (Aunders, 2008). It is because the EU considers Russia a barrier to its enlargement mission. The economic embargo decision was a confrontation strategy adopted by the EU for Russia (Svarin, 2016). It is proven by two considerations that underlie the decision, namely the assumption that Russia is a threat to the EU and EU's capabilities are higher than Russia.

Ukraine's cooperation with the EU offers the opportunity for all parties to work together for a safer future, and firmly ensures Ukraine's membership in the EU (Dragneva, Rilka, & Wolczuk, 2013). Although the signing of the cooperation is the sovereign right of each country, Russia, disappointed with Ukraine's policy, has warned that there will be severe consequences

after the signing of the cooperation. The Russians considered the economic bloc that formed to be detrimental to the economy (Mau, 2016).

This collaborative effort between Ukraine and the EU has pursued through a complicated process. During the reign of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, this attempt thwarted, so he was dropped from his government in February 2014. The ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, who is an ally of Russia, Russia responded by supporting the Crimean secessionist movement from Ukraine (Svarin, 2016). The move of Crimea to break away from Ukraine with Russian support followed by other regions in eastern Ukraine whose population are speaking Russian (Pujayanti, 2014).

The crisis in Ukraine in 2014 led to the imposition of Western sanctions on Russia and made Russia oriented towards East Asia (Malle, 2017). China is likely to be still a vital direction of this reorientation, and aspects of the relationship in the energy sector will be its primary focus. The question is to what extent this reorientation towards East Asia will involve regional cooperation organizations. The Eurasia integration project will remain a top priority in regional cooperation (Friedman, 2012). However, the level of conformity between the Eurasian Economic Union and the East Asian regional integration process is still unclear, where the Free Trade Area (FTA) between the Eurasian Economic Union and Vietnam is still the only implementation of this field.

Russia's intervention in the Ukrainian problem is seen as incompatible with international norms (Mau, 2016). Russia which has received economic sanctions from the West rejects the allegations. Although the upper house of Russia's parliament has overturned a resolution allowing the use of military force in Ukraine at the request of President Vladimir Putin, Russia's strong stance has provoked a negative reaction on the part of the EU. Russia was asked to take effective steps to stop destabilizing Ukraine, creating safe conditions for a peace plan to be implemented and ending its support for armed separatists (Sulastri, 2013). The EU also demands that the pro-Russian separatist movement agree to return the border checkpoint to Ukraine, free the hostages, and launch serious talks on implementing a peace plan put forward by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

This intervention by Russia gave birth to new tensions between Russia and Ukraine (Pujayanti, 2014). Tensions between the two countries reached their peak when Ukraine declared itself wanting to join the EU. As for Russia, the expansion of the EU to Eastern Europe

(including expansion into Ukraine) is a form of insult to Russian power (Wolff, 2015). Thus, to maintain its influence in Eastern Europe, Russia must intervene in the Ukrainian conflict (Pujayanti, 2014). The existence of Russian intervention finally made the EU to take the policy of giving an economic embargo to Russia as a form of protection for Ukraine.

### **The response of the West; the dilemma of punishing "Great Power" countries**

Russia's actions to annex Crimea and its intervention in Eastern Ukraine violated the norms of international law and international order (Sulastri, 2013). However, the problem is once again not a legal problem but a political and national security issue of Russia. Russia is a high power or even still a military superpower in the sense that its military capabilities are still among the strongest in the world (Kanet, 2010). Aside from Russia being the most significant nuclear nation, Russia is not an arbitrary country because its political position is powerful because it is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UN) (Aunders, 2008). For the United States and the European Union, it is precisely this kind of response that is fitting to punish Russia.

Efforts that have been made by the West are to carry out diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions against Russia, although both are not without problems (Hanifah, 2017). From the beginning, the United States and the European Union carried out an intensive diplomacy drive and agreed to condemn Russia for its actions. The West warns Russia that the West is ready to increase tougher economic sanctions if President Vladimir Putin intervenes more broadly in the territory of Eastern Ukraine (Keliat, 2006). In its implementation, the leaders of the Advanced Country Group (G8) agreed to dismiss Russia as a member until President Putin wanted to change his attitude. The G7 then holds a summer meeting in Brussels, symbolically meeting at the Headquarters of the European Union and NATO, two organizations that are strengthening relations with Ukraine (Richterova, 2014).

On the other hand, Russia then supported the holding of a referendum in Crimea. It acknowledged that the referendum was legitimate in declaring Crimea an independent state incorporated in the Russian Federation (Andrei, 2010). It considered the annexation of territory and was illegal by the EU and Ukraine. On this basis, the EU provides sanctions against Russia

in the form of economic sanctions namely the freezing of assets of several Russian companies and individuals and a ban on entry to the EU against high-ranking Russian officials (Fadli Adzani, 2015). The sanctions came into force on March 17, 2014 (Hanifah, 2017).

The policy of Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to come under pressure from Western economic sanctions (Karpova, Karpov, & Kruchkov, 2015). A series of sanctions imposed by the EU and the US, the first step of the US has announced the prohibition of visas and blocking of assets to Russian officials who are in the US and take precautions if there are US citizens who want to do business with Russians and Ukrainians (Wolff, 2015). The US will also prepare a legal basis to impose further sanctions on individuals.

This strong response from the US is not much different from the EU response. The EU Council said that they condemned all forms of violence that had befallen Ukraine (Pujayanti, 2014). Therefore, based on Decree 2014/119 / CFSP, the EU Council decided to freeze funds and assets of 18 people who have misused Ukraine's state funds and for violence and human rights violations that occurred during demonstrations against the government.

Despite the economic difficulties in Europe, the EU continued to move to put pressure on Russian natural gas imports in Europe began to be fruitful (Hanifah, 2017). Russia, which is a major supplier of European natural gas needs, with around 80 per cent of it channelled through the instability of Russian gas exports to Europe so that the Russian economy disrupted. On the other hand, Russia's efforts to find a new route in channelling its natural gas through Bulgaria have stalled. Under EU pressure, Bulgaria terminated project agreement with Russia in the southern route natural gas, by suspending the 'South Stream' pipeline project on its territory (Myers, 2015). The termination of this project, when its exports in Ukraine had not yet recovered, it significantly disrupted the Russian economy that was on the verge of recession. In short, economic sanctions and EU political pressure have damaged the Russian economy that is on the verge of recession.

The EU then extended sanctions given to Russia because it never stopped interfering in Eastern Ukraine, namely the EU banned all member states from importing weapons from Russia (Wolff, 2015). The access of Russian government banks to capital also restricted. Large Russian oil and gas companies will no longer get credit from the EU. The gas companies that received sanctions were Gazprom, Rosneft and Transneft. Whereas in military cooperation, the EU broke the cooperative relationship with the airline United Airport Corporation, as well as the arms



company Kalashnikov (BBC, 2014). With these sanctions, Russia threatens back EU. Russia bans all flights from Europe to Russia. Russia also cut gas flows to Poland and Austria. Russia implemented a policy of cutting gas flow to Poland by 50%. Whereas in Austria a reduction of 15% of the amount that should be received (DWNews, 2014)

Facing political and economic pressure on his country, Russian President Vladimir Putin began to be pragmatic by calling for improved relations between Russia and the US (Conley, Mina, & Nguyen, 2016). After that, President Putin puts Russia as an equal partner who must work together to take responsibility for maintaining global security (Sidiki, 2016). By these facts that the EU economic embargo against Russia is a strategy of EU in confronting with Russia. It shows that EU capabilities are higher from Russia. The proof is the EU cooperation with NATO in terms of the military to rival Russia and the EU cooperation with Turkmenistan and other oil-producing Central Asian countries to overcome its energy dependence on Russia (Federation, 2010). Besides, the enlargement of EU was a form of recognition power of the EU over European areas. The participation of European countries to the EU has proved that.

## **5. Conclusion**

Superpower countries occupy a stable position that can influence agreements and put the national interest of the country. Each country is trying to increase national power. National power includes a variety of elements, one of which is military force. In recent years Russia and other major powers have not only strengthened the economy and security related to the military. However, they have gone far beyond that to strengthen the country's influence. It is what makes the superpower countries compete in making policies that ultimately affect the world political and economic situation.

The expansion has changed NATO's boundaries so that its territory has become even more significant. The existence of military bases which continue to expand into Eastern Europe and Central Europe has proven it. This military base's creation aims to maintain the security of NATO member countries. Because, the principle of this Defense Pact is that if there is a threat to one of the members, then it is a threat to all other members as well. Tensions between Russia and NATO resurfaced when the issue of nuclear weapons reappeared, making the relations between the two tense again.

Russia's intervention in the Ukrainian problem is incompatible with international norms. Russia which has received economic sanctions from the West, rejects the allegations. The

intervention by Russia has given rise to new tensions between Russia and Ukraine. Tensions between the two countries reached their peak when Ukraine declared itself wanting to join the EU. Despite the economic difficulties in Europe, the EU's continued move to put pressure on Russian natural gas imports in Europe began to be fruitful. Facing political and economic pressure in its country, Russian President Vladimir Putin began to be pragmatic by calling for improving relations between Russia and the United States. President Putin puts Russia as an equal partner who must work together to take responsibility for maintaining global security.

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