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# Evaluation of The Ukrainian Crisis Within The Context of Regional Security Complex Theory

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## Abstract

*Ukraine is geographically located as a buffer zone between Russia and Europe. The peoples of Ukraine have shared common historical cultures and backgrounds with the Russians. Ukraine is a trans corridor for the European Union (EU) in terms of energy transmission lines and has a coast to the Black Sea. Due to these factors, its strategic significance has increased for Russian Federation (RF). These common values that Ukraine has shared with Russia and its own strategic position have consistently been in the centre of Russian Federation's near abroad doctrine. There have been two factors which have triggered the crisis in the region: the conflicting forms of perception of regional actors such as the EU and Russia Federation and the fact that the Ukrainian peoples have been continuously forced to choose one side. The main objective of this study is to assess the 2014 Crisis case within the framework of Russian Federation–Ukraine–Europe relations in line with the qualitative definition of the Regional Security Theory. First, the conceptual framework of the theory on which study is based will be drawn. Following this part, Ukraine will be assessed with considering historical, social and strategic vectors that it possesses and how these vectors affect its foreign policy making process and the effect of*

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*these vectors on security perception. Finally, after giving a brief background of the 2014 Crisis, the regional triggers of the crisis will be addressed, and the conception of these regional triggering factors which perceive Ukraine and how political expectations securitizes the region will be assessed.*

## Introduction

Although the societies of Russian Federation and Ukraine have common history and cultural ties, there have been several disputes/challenges/conflicts/problems among them and these disputes have still remained in various dimensions, today. In the post- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) period, while Ukraine was following policies to consolidate its independence, Russian Federation was seeking to control the Soviet geography which was defined as near abroad of Russian Federation. These foreign policy goals, carried out by the two countries, have created security dilemma against each other and caused existence of some crises.

Aftermath of the 1970s, the energy security issue has gained importance in security policies. In this context, the natural gas crises between Russia and Ukraine, which started in the 2000s, have shown that regional countries should invest their energy security policies again. These conflicts have triggered the conflicts between regional countries' approach to energy supply security. (Erkan, 2015) The last crisis has been based on incidents/movements that occurred in Ukraine in November, 2013. As the movements spread to the Crimean region, which hosted the Russian minority, Russian Federation sent troops there, and this has caused the problem to escalate and transform into a crisis. In March 2014, the fact that the Crimea was annexed to Russian Federation as a result of the referendum has caused a great reaction in the international community, and many actors took sanctions against Russian Federation.

The Ukrainian Crisis is linked to other regional security issues, and therefore developments that are taking place in this region can affect both other conflict regions and create new opportunities for regional countries. The crisis has also affected security dynamics of the region in general, revealing state typologies such as friendship and hostility on the basis of the reactions of the region's states, and at the point of analysis, we apply to the Regional Security Complex Theory. In addition, the two countries have been examined in the same security complex with the common cultural and historical structures carried by the two sides of the crisis, Ukraine and Russia. (Lazar, 2014)

In this study, with considering security issue and ethnic- cultural characteristics and including the former USSR countries, Post-Soviet region has been defined in Regional Security Theory which has been theoretically referred. In this definition, the group of Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova states have been defined as a whole in the sphere of influence of Russian Federation in terms of cultural and political aspects. The sub-regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia in the post-Soviet region have displayed a more unstable structure than the sub-regions formed by these states. However, the region in which Ukraine is also located is the most important sub-region for Russian Federation. The reason behind this is that Ukraine creates identity problem for Russian Federation. Moreover, Ukraine has always been regarded as an integral part of Russian Federation, unlike the independent Caucasian and Central Asian states in the South. A third reason is that Eastern Europe has been regarded as Russian Federation's most significant interregional link.

The objective of this study is to analyse the 2014 Crisis case within the framework of the Russian-Ukrainian-European relations in line with the qualitative definition of the Regional Security Theory. Thus, despite the fact that they are located in close geographical regions, the reflection of the geopolitical difference of the two neighbouring regional complexes, Europe and the Post-Soviet Region, to the field will be explained through the actions and expectations of the actors from the 2014 Crisis. It will also emphasize the significance that Ukraine possesses for its regional and non-regional actors in strategic post-war, with the fact that Ukraine is a buffer zone within the Post-Soviet Area and Europe. In this context, the effects

of the actors' different expectations towards Ukraine and the Ukraine's position which is being in limbo in terms of culture and politics on foreign policy actions will be revealed.

In this context, the theoretical background of this article is based on the Regional Security Complex Theory developed by the Copenhagen School and the Territorial Security Approach. In this study, with applying descriptive analysis methods, statistical data have been utilized for analyses of close social, cultural and ethnic structures of actors in the same complexes.

## 1. Conceptual Framework

A number of theses have been propounded on the new international order and security issues that have arisen aftermath of the Cold War. Samuel Huntington's The Clash of Civilizations thesis has received a lot of attention but has been subject to some criticism. Securitization approach which is known as the Copenhagen School has found this thesis as inefficient in some areas of this theory and it has pointed out a new alternative to the theory of security.

Aftermath of the Cold War, the Copenhagen School has positioned itself as a third way between those who advocate the inclusion of non-state actors by excluding the concepts such as use of force and threaten to use of force from the scope of the security studies which is a sub-discipline and the other approaches that advocate the need to preserve its traditional understanding. The school has offered a sectorial analysis on security in terms of functionality and it has considered the securitization theory with regarding the security within military, economic, environmental/peripheral, social and political sectors and it has adapted this theory to these five sectors. In terms of territorial extent, it has argued that security should be analysed at regional level. In this context, the theory of securitization has been adapted to various regions along with the Theory of Regional Security Complex. (Balta, 2016, s. 250-251) According to the scholars of this school, it has been argued that security issues will stem from the regions and intra-regional conflicts instead of the context of civilizations in the new era. The theory

developed in this context is called the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT). According to this theory, geographical areas that have similar problems in terms of security or have common potential in these issues form a complex. (Birdişli & Gören, 2018, s. 3) The analytical framework of the theory has been conceptualized as a Regional Security Complex in "Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security" by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever and published in 2003. In political science, many geopolitical, geo-cultural and geo-economic lines intersect and the areas with internal strategic integrity are defined as basins. In terms of security, this definition reflects as region. The security complex, on the other hand, emphasizes the group of states that are so close to each other that their primary security concerns and national security are indistinguishable.

The RSCT is based on a combination of constructivist and materialist approaches. In the context of the materialist approach, it provides a similar view on the distribution of the limited territorial idea and the power in different quantities in terms of neo-realism. At the regional level, the analysis emphasis is in line with the neorealist approach, which is consistent with neo-realism's structural relevance, but which emphasizes structural analysis at the global level. In terms of constructivist approach, on the other hand, is similarly based on the theory of security, focusing on the political and cultural processes that enable new security problems to arise. (Buzan & Waver, 2003, s. 4)

In this study of the Copenhagen School in 2003, the world is divided into nine regional security complexes: North America, South America, Europe, Post-Soviet Area, Middle East, South Africa, Central Africa, South Asia and East Asia. (Balta, 2016, s. 251) The Post-Soviet Area within this theory consists of four sub-regions. These include: Central Asia, Caucasus, Baltic States and Eastern European States (Ukraine and Belarus). The security perceptions and concerns of most of the states in these regions are related to the states in the lower complexes in addition to RF. What defines a broader security complex and brings them all together is RF's attempt to reposition itself in the region. Russia's coalition over the CIS for this purpose has been interrupted by the West as an important possibility. The role of Europe on this great territory and the role of RF in the identity struggle is a significant factor that will affect this possibility. (Buzan & Waver, 2003, s. 397)

According to Buzan and Weaver, many factors of the regional dynamics in the post-Soviet area constitute the external indicators of the regional security complex. According to Buzan and Weaver, states that are in the same security complex constitute tightly connected security associations due to close security perceptions. Ukraine, which is located in the post-Soviet area and neighbour country of the European area at the same time, possesses these characteristics. In this context, Ukraine's security problems/issues affect not only the actors in the region but also the non-regional actors who are trying to take part in the region. Although states have common identifiable factors in the same complex, we can see that these factors together with security problems/issues are less effective. (LAZĂR, 2014) In this context, when the current policies of Ukraine and Russia create a security dilemma between each other, it is seen that the common historical identities they carry are left aside. In addition, while explaining the formation of a regional security complex, historical patterns of friendship and hostility are examined as independent variables. We see that these patterns exist in the historical relations of Ukraine and Russia.

In addition to being in the post-Soviet area, Ukraine, as the Eurasian view claims, it is on the "near-periphery" of the geopolitical line where RF's vital interests began as a continuation of the former Soviet Republic. At the same time, Ukraine is on the very crucial social fault lines in the region where Dugin conceptualized as a buffer cord. Especially in Ukraine, the fact that some elite rulers have claimed to be competing against Russia since the medieval ages and the people in the west of the country have acted in contradiction with Ukrainian national consciousness has revealed this fault line. As a result, nationalism has been a source of concern for the Russians since the time of the USSR. In the 1980s, these strong national movements were seen in the Baltic republics, especially in Ukraine, and in the Caucasus republics. However, Ukraine also has anti-nationalist and anti-Orthodox groups moving through Slavism. Another characteristic of these countries is that it is conceptualized as buffer cord by Dugin.

According to the Eurasian theorist A. Dugin, the most effective tool of the maritime forces in the world is the 'buffer cord'. This cord is a strip which consists of several border states that are hostile to both Western and Eastern neighbours but allied with Western powers outside the region. According to him, Ukraine (especially Uniat[2] and the Catholic western side of Ukraine) are candidates which are ready to become members of the new buffer cord. For Dugin, this cord which can consist of Ukraine has been supported by the US and its allied states. If this cord is established, it will draw away from RF in terms of political extent and Eurasia in terms of territorial aspect. Since, the factors such as Orthodoxy, Slavic kinship and the Russian population inside of its territory which create bounds with this region will abolish and will cause Eurasia to be surrounded by non-regional actors. (Dugin, 2016, s. 197)

## 2. Factors Affecting Ukraine's Security Perception

### 2.1. Historical Background of Ukraine

While no agreement has been reached on when the first Ukrainian state emerged, some historians claim that it is the Russian Principality of Drevni located in Kiev between the 9th and 10th centuries, while some historians argue that it is a Russian state, not Ukrainian. (Sönmez, Bıçakçı, & Yıldırım, 2015, s. 658) In fact, this is a manifestation of the fact that the Russians and Ukrainians, two Slavs, have a common history as well as ideological distinctions and different identity perceptions. In 1240, aftermath of the collapse of the Principality of Kiev by the Tatars, Ukraine's geography was dominated by many regional states, particularly the Ottoman Empire and Russia. In the Crimean region, which is the coast of Ukraine to the Black Sea, the Ottoman sovereignty continued for a long time, but the Russian sovereignty in the region from the middle of the 18th century until 1917 was experienced. Aftermath of the October Revolution of 1917, it can be seen that there were efforts to build a nation state in the regions of Ukrainians, even for a short period of time. But after 1920, Ukraine continued to exist as a union republic under the roof of the USSR until 1991.

The cultural, religious and ethnic disunity in Ukraine has shown itself in the historical process. It has been observed during the Second World War that some of the Catholic people in the western part of

2   Uniat is an association of the Orthodox churches which are willing to remain attached to the Pope in Rome in various countries of Eastern Europe, especially Ukraine and Belarus

Ukraine joined the Nazi armies and the Orthodox people in the eastern part joined the Red Army. (Sönmez, Bıçakçı, & Yıldırım, 2015, s. 658) Following World War II, Crimea was a peninsula annexed to USSR until 1954, but the peninsula was given as a gift to Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic by Khrushchev for the commemoration of the 300th anniversary of Ukraine's annexation to USSR in 1954. After the independence of Ukraine in 1991, Russia has lost its supremacy in the Black Sea as well as its military base in the Crimean Peninsula and Sevastopol. In 1993, the Russian Parliament unanimously decided that Sevastopol is a part of RF, and did not approve the Crimea's annexation to Ukraine as legitimate in 1954.

Because the region where the fleet is located is indispensable for Russia for being strategically opened to Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The military base in Sevastopol initially caused problems with the use of the Naval Base, sharing the Navy, while Russia continued to use the base with long-term use agreements and took full control of the Crimea with the annexation. (Saraçlı, Bahar 2015, s. 54-55)

### 2.2. The Social Structure of Ukraine

Although Ukraine is a unitary nation state in terms of politics, it has different several ethnic minorities. When ethnic minorities in Ukraine are listed, it is seen that two different classification approaches have been applied. According to the first classification method, there have been groups like that Ukrainians, Ukrainians who behave as Russians, Russians who behave as Ukrainians, and Russians who preserves the Russian identity. According to another classification, many ethnic minorities have been considered while listing these groups. These ethnic minorities can be listed as Crimean Tatars, Gagauz people, Rumanians, Hungarians, Polish, Armenians, Germans and Jews. The Russians, whose name we do not mention, form a large group in numerical terms that would lead to political change (Özdal, 2015, s. 74) The ethnic distribution of the population in Ukraine can be seen in Table 1 (State Statistic Committee of Ukraine ) according to the figures of 2001. The current population of Ukraine is around 45 million. (World Bank Datas, 2018)

**Table 1**: Ukraine 2001 Yearly Ethnic Population Distribution

| Ethnic Group | Population | Rate |
|---|---|---|
| Ukrainian | 37,541,700 | %77.8 |
| Russian | 8,334,100 | %17.3 |
| Belarusian | 275,800 | %0.6 |
| Moldavian | 258,600 | %0.5 |
| Crimean Tatars | 248,200 | %0.5 |
| Bulgarian | 204,600 | %0.4 |
| Hungarian | 156,600 | %0.3 |
| Rumanian | 151,000 | %0.3 |
| Polish | 144,000 | %0.3 |
| Jewish | 103,600 | %0.2 |
| Armenian | 99,900 | %0.2 |
| Greek | 91,500 | %0.2 |
| Tatar | 73,300 | %0.2 |
| Gypsy | 47,600 | %0.1 |
| Azerbaijani | 45,200 | %0.1 |
| Georgian | 34,200 | %0.1 |
| German | 33,300 | %0.1 |
| Gagauz | 31,900 | %0.1 |
| Other | 177,100 | %0.4 |

This ethnic distinction that exists in Ukraine shows itself in geographical context. This distinction can be explained for historical reasons in Ukraine, which has a dual geographical structure with the West and East in its simplest form. The west part of Ukraine remained under dominance of the Austro-Hungarian Empire for many years. In the west where the Catholic Ukrainians live in today, the people live in there identify themselves as a part of Europe and called themselves Ukrainians. The communities who are regarded as candidate for buffer cord by Russian Eurasians also live in this location.

On the contrary, the eastern part remained under Tsarist rule for a long time. People in these regions, where Orthodox Ukrainians and Russian minorities live mostly, have close ties with Russia as Orthodox individuals, as well as defining themselves as an equal Slavic nation with Russians. This geographical and cultural distinction has also influenced economic activities. In the western regions where the Catholic population intensely lives, economic activities are concentrated on agriculture while in the eastern regions there are heavy industrial manufacturing supported by the mining.

Together with the Russian minority, the peoples who define themselves as Slavic Orthodox and considerably become Russian in time live in these regions and the population has intensively lived in the urban areas. As a consequence of economic activities, the oligarchy that exists in Ukraine also emerges as another factor affecting the social structure. The concept of oligarch, which is applied to define businessmen who have factories and state real estate privatized in Ukraine when the planned market economy was transformed to free market economy aftermath of the disintegration of the USSR, has effected not only economic life in Ukraine but also its political and social structure. For instance; it has been known that Leonid Kuchma, who was president of Ukraine for two terms between 1994 and 2005 and known for pro-Russian politics, presided over an industrial plant in Dnipropetrovosk. (Saraçlı, Bahar 2015) In fact, oligarchs in Ukraine generally have close ties with both western countries and RF. It has been seemed that their main concern is to preserve the existing political and economic status quo instead of developing their relations with these countries. In internal political turmoil in Ukraine, it has been claimed that this political turmoil stems from the competition between these oligarchs. Indeed, the announcement about planned privatization of 35% of Ukrainian economy in the presidency term of ousted leader Yanukovych escalated the tension between both economic and political forces (İmanbeyli, 2014, s. 4-5) and this tension continued until the 2014 crisis.

The social and cultural disunity of Ukraine also has reflected itself in the election results. In the eastern part of Ukraine and in Crimea, the people who supported left-leaning political parties and candidates and parties which promised close relations with Russia while voters in the western part of Ukraine supported candidates and parties with more nationalist discourse and a distant approach to relations with Russia. This has also shown itself in the four parliamentary and presidential elections held in the country after the dissolution of the USSR. This trend continued in the presidential elections of 2010, in the election process Yanukovych dominated the east part of the country while Timoshenko was dominant in the west. (Özdal, 2015, s. 76)

The politics of Ukraine's social disunity also influenced decision-makers' perceptions on security. In this situation, the realities of the country are as effective as the identities of the decision-makers. Ukraine's neighbours in the post-Soviet area and its close social identities and dynamics with Russia, of course, also serve as the security perceptions of politicians and Foreign Policy Preferences.

In the context of this social structure, in the post-Soviet period, it seems that Ukrainian leaders have been trying to balance Russia and Europe in foreign policy, taking into account the geographical position, regional and social divisions/disunity/dividedness of the country. The second president, known as the pro-Russian, Kuchma tried to establish close relations with the EU, while pro-Western Yushchenko made his first abroad visit to Russia. According to Dergacev, "*Ukraine's primary foreign policy priorities are to reduce unilateral dependence on Russia and reorganize to make contacts in terms of external, economic and humanitarian activities for cooperation with Western and Eastern Central European countries. Ukraine needs normalized co-operation with both Russia and the West. The need to choose one of these two poles will harm the national interests of Ukraine.*" (Özdal, 2015, s. 80-82) As it has been shown in this analysis, it is possible to state that Ukraine has to follow a policy based on balance of power and these social and regional complexes require Ukraine to follow this policy.

It is possible to explain the relation between Russia and Ukraine with the theoretical context of Poulantzas. According to Poulantzas, economics, politics and ideology emerge as separate levels. While these levels constitute a social unity with their specific articulation, this unity in which the economy maintains its determinism, has been defined as social formation (Iyiekici, 2011, page 63). Relations between Russia and Ukraine coincide with this theory, and although both states have their

own internal social formation, their contents resemble each other. (Al & Özdil, 2017, s. 154)

### 2.3. Strategic Significance of Ukraine

Ukraine is the largest country on European continent. The more important thing is the geopolitical location of Ukraine. Ukraine is in Eurasia region which is called Kalpgah (Heartland) in H. Mackinder's "Heartland Theory". Since Ukraine is in a strategic region between Russia and Europe, Russians have regarded "*Ukraine as transition region, strategic barrier and a buffer zone which separates them and the Western countries*".

The strategic importance of Ukraine has also been shown itself in the Russian Near-Abroad Policy. Ukraine has hosted many tribes, principalities, and it is a geography where the several states were founded from the medieval age to our age. The Principality of Kiev was one of the principalities and it was founded in the 9th century, and this date has been regarded as a milestone by the Russians and in terms of this perspective, Ukraine has been granted privilege in history of Russia. (Saraçlı, Bahar 2015, s. 75). In addition to this, Ukraine has always been a region of power struggle between various power centres in its historical process. Regional forces in Europe and Russia have always regarded the Ukrainian lands as a transit point, and this area has always been seen as a strategic area and buffer zone. It is not incidental in this sense that the word "Ukraine", which has been used since the 12th century in Russian language, and it means "border country" and "edge country". (Al & Özdil, 2017, s. 157)

Today, this issue comes to the fore in many Russians' perceptions towards Ukraine. The vast majority of Russian intellectuals and people refrain from describing Ukraine as a separate state and put it in a special position in the eternal and original story of Russia. According to the Russians who see Ukraine as part of the Russian hinterland, independent Ukraine means only a temporary situation. (Erol, Bahar 2014, s. 75) Indeed, this is not a coincidence at this point, as there is a boundary between the two major regional security complexes of Europe and Post-Soviet region in Eurasia. We can also state that the strategic significance of Ukraine is at the same time the presence of Russia with its energy resources and its position in the transition route. Although Ukraine is 29th country with 29

billion cubic meter energy in the world (The Statistics Portal, 2018) it has a significant potential to significant development with the modernization and capacity increase of the power plants which remained from the USSR period. Because of its geographical location, Russia is exporting its energy resources to the EU countries mostly by using pipelines from Ukraine. There are seven pipelines in total from Russia to Ukraine. Thanks to these lines, Ukraine is at the centre of the European distribution channel and does not hesitate to use it as a policy tool at various times. In fact, this attitude of Ukraine causes serious conflicts with Russia in some cases. (Al & Özdil, 2017, s. 162) Europe receives 80 percent of its gas through the pipelines in Ukraine. This corresponds to 50 percent of total gas that Russia has exported. Therefore, Russia tries to hinder Ukraine from becoming a member of international organizations such as NATO and the EU. (Keskin, s. 52)

The importance of the Ukrainian geopolitics for the Western alliance has been emphasized by the strategist Brzezinski. In the 1990s, Brzezinski advocated the enlargement of the EU and NATO towards to the east to include Ukraine. Brzezinski emphasized the special roles that they will play in European continent, in case France, Germany and Poland cooperate. It has been argued that this axis with the participation of Ukraine would be much more effective with a large population. Because this cooperation will be "the core of European Security regimes in the West and will increase the geostrategic depth of Europe" (Sönmez, Bıçakçı, & Yıldırım, 2015, s. 658)

According to Buzan, it has been argued that the four sub-divisions in the Post-Soviet Area including Ukraine, Moldova, Eastern Slavic Belarus and Russia, constitute both minimum and maximum security intensity. According to him, these states have a more stable structure than the Caucasus and Central Asian sub-regions in the post-Soviet area. However, the region where these states were formed is the most important sub-region for Russia. Thus, although the region in which Ukraine is located has a more stable structure, the security problems/issues are gaining importance from Russia's point of view. The reason for this is primarily that Ukraine creates an identity crisis for Russia. For Russia, Ukraine has been regarded as an integral part of Russia in contrast to the independent Caucasian and

Central Asian states in the south. The second reason is that Eastern Europe is Russia's most crucial interregional link.

This region is a sub-region of the Post-Soviet Region which includes both Ukraine which has anti-Russian tendencies on occasion and the most pro-Russian states such as Belarus. (Buzan & Waver, 2003, s. 416)

### 3. 2014 Crisis and Regional Triggers

Many political crises in Ukraine have directly begun as the reaction of escalating opposition, depending on the foreign policy choices of the Ukrainian administrations. As seen in recent incidents, the Yanukovych administration was expected to take the necessary steps to deepen the relations with the EU, but the end of popular movements in favour of the Ukrainian administration, which is one of the most significant instruments of Russia's intervention and "near abroad" policy the crisis has been triggered. The triggering regional actors in this process of survival are mainly the EU and Russia. In accordance with the EU's Neighbourhood Policy and Russia's Near Abroad Policy, efforts have been made to incorporate Ukraine into its regional integration. These factors have caused Ukraine to become stuck in foreign policy making, and decision-makers have experienced inconsistencies by experiencing undecidedness about foreign policy

The crisis in 2014 has developed in connection with the presidential elections in Ukraine in 2010. Yanukovych's victory in election, a name close to Russia, has brought about the prosperity of Russia in the country. As a matter of fact, Yanukovych extended the period of the Black Sea Fleet in Russia and Sevastopol which will be end in 2017 for 24 years and accepted Russia's presence in Crimea until 2042. In exchange for this initiative, Yanukovych has unilaterally annulled the Commission, which was making preparations for the Association/Partnership Agreement with the EU in November 2013, while expecting a reduction in energy prices from Russia. Then the movements/protests initiated by the EU opponents spread throughout the country and in February 2014 Yanukovych had to resign. (Özdal, 2015, s. 90) However, with this resignation the crisis has evolved into a different direction. Russia, which has seen the developments in Ukraine as an action for organizing a legitimate sentence from the out-

set, and regards it as a process punishment, has put its "punitive method" against this actual situation and triggered the Crimean Crisis. As in this crisis, "Russian ethnic existence", one of the most important reasons for the near abroad policy, has come to the agenda. This rationale, on the other hand, put forward possible interventions aimed at countries in the Post-Soviet area (such as Kazakhstan). (Erol, Bahar 2014, s. 5)

After the resignation of Yanukovych, the presidential election in May 2014 was won by Petro Poroshenko, a business man and political historian who played a crucial role in the process called the Orange Revolution. Although he supported integration with the EU, he considered Russia as the most important neighbouring country, and his closeness to balance politics has been catch the attention. In contrast, the pro-Western parties won parliamentary elections in October 2014 with an overwhelming majority. As a result, Russia annexed Crimea. But the importance of Ukraine for Moscow is not limited to the Crimea. For Russia, importance of Ukraine is a whole in the geo-strategic and geo-economic context. (Özdal, 2015, s. 90)

In the case of the Crimea, it has been seen that the crisis has become an international crisis, while the situation for the two major powers on the EU and Russia seems appropriate for their interests. The security of Ukraine, a transit country in the context of energy security for the EU, is important for Europe. The energy needs of Eastern European countries are largely based on Ukraine, and Ukraine is an important country for the EU, which has entered into integration with Eastern Europe. In terms of Russia, Ukraine is a significant base for the Russian navy in the Crimean region, which it owns. The fleet's strategic location and presence in the peninsula has helped Russia to defeat Georgia in the South Ossetia war in 2008 and is a key point for Russian security interests, especially in the region. (Al & Aypek Ayvacı, 2017, s. 233)

### 3.1. Russia-Ukraine Axis

"Near abroad policy" is a foreign policy concept that is applied to Post-Soviet territories (Baltic States, Ukraine, Central Asia and Caucasia), most of which are outside the Russian Federation. In this sense "near abroad" defines the Post-Soviet region. This doctrine, which was originally

thought by Eurasians to be integrated with the Russian national interest field in this region, and therefore to be integrated with the CIS countries, has become a nationwide accepted policy in the future. According to the doctrine of proximity to the periphery, which was first applied by Yeltsin in 1993 during the period of Foreign Minister Y. Primakov, in 1993, Russia declared that the former Soviet Union was responsible for ensuring the security and stability of its territory and giving priority to its immediate vicinity in military planning. In the post-2001 period, Moscow increased its activity on the "Near Abroad" countries and determined to increase its activity on the economic and security level. In the case of any objection in the CIS countries, this practice had first escalated ethnic problems/issues, as in Georgia and Ukraine, and then appeared as a saviour. (Keskin, s. 49-50)

Aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, Russia has defined itself as the most important and primary region of Eurasia's foreign policy, which is the Rimland's territory, with the geopolitical phrase of the countries surrounding the western and southern regions. It has declared that it would act in this geography against any initiatives that may be against it. Russian minorities that are called as "Russians Abroad" who have been living in foreign countries in Post-Soviet area and Ukraine have been utilized as a tool for this policy of RF. Thus, with creating security problems/issues through the cultural and political rights of the Russian minorities living in these countries, they are trying to secure the "near abroad". It also makes it dependent on Moscow by the integration activities that it establishes in its economic, military and political aspect.

Ukraine hosts a significant Russian population in the post-Soviet area and is the transit corridor in transporting Russian energy sources to Western markets is one of the factors that increase the significance of this country in the eye of Russia, in addition Russia's Black Sea Navy is in Ukraine's Crimean territory. In the social and historical context, the emergence of the Russians in the history in Kiev is also reflected as another factor that increases the importance of Ukraine for Russia due to their common history. (Keskin, s. 47) Ultimately, Ukraine with these characteristics has to be an outpost of Russia in the west of its lands. The Crimean Crisis has raised the "Russian ethnic entity", which constitutes one of the most significant reasons of this policy in the context of near abroad policy, which

can bring to mind possible interventions for other former Soviet countries (e.g. Kazakhstan). This is the beginning of a new Eurasian power struggle between the West and Russia, especially the USA. In this context, Crimea has become the first serious conflict area. (Erol, Bahar 2014, s. 5)

For Moscow, Ukraine and Crimea are integral parts of Russia's "Southward Policy". Therefore, as it can be seen in Georgia case, Russia gives the message that Russia is ready to apply all methods to Ukraine. If Russia discards Crimea and Ukraine, it foresees that it will lose the Black Sea, the buffer zone from the Baltics to Caspian and consequently regional initiative, the Eurasia Customs Union which aims at the Eurasian Union and "Near Abroad Policy" and lastly its energy security will be seriously and negatively affected. This means that, in the midterm and long term, Russia will have a persistent problem which stem from political and security-related problems, starting with economic aspect. Russia does not ignore its historical background for these reasons. Therefore, Russia is trying to hold the Crimea for a long time. (Erol, Bahar 2014, s. 6)

As a nation that lived under Russian rule for many years, the unexpected independence of Ukrainians after the dissolution of the USSR created some problems. Indeed, Russia has objectives on both Ukraine society and its lands that stem from its history and it cannot be expected that Russia will easily remove them from its agenda.

Moreover, independence of Ukraine has been regarded as "the greatest geopolitical loss for Russia in the post-Cold War period". By Ukraine's independence, Russia has lost not only its influence over the Baltic States and Poland, but also lost its ability to "lead the former Soviet Union's predominantly as assertive Eurasian Empire which dominates the southern and east southern non-Slavic peoples". That is why Moscow has described "the independence of Ukraine as a temporary deviation". This viewpoint is a reflection of the relation between "old national subjects and rulers, colonial and metropolis, centre and periphery" (Sönmez, Bıçakçı, & Yıldırım, 2015, s. 663) On the other hand, existing crisis in the energy sector is another problematic area between Russia and Ukraine. Today, Europeans supply a significant portion of their oil and natural gas from reserves in Russia and Caspian basin. However, the shortest way to transfer energy resources in these regions to the European market is through Ukraine.

Therefore, Ukraine is a key country due to its proximity to energy resources and its geopolitical position (Yıldırım, 2010: 48).

### 3.2. West-Ukraine Axis

If we move on the western axis, it is efficient to refer to the enlargement policies of NATO and the EU. Although the relations between NATO and Ukraine were cautious at first, they signed settlement agreements in the following years. The "Privileged Partnership Charter" was signed in 1997 and the Defence Reform Working Group between Ukraine and NATO was established in 1998. In 2000, Ukraine passed the "Concentrated Dialogue" phase in 2005 when it ratified the BIO Status of Forces Agreement. In 2007, the NATO-Ukrainian Commission was established and together they initiated an intensified cooperation program. On the other hand, Russia has also aimed to develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries in terms of its foreign policy concept published in 2008 and NATO has recently opposed the expansion of the Black Sea, especially Georgia and Ukraine, as a threat to national security. Russia in particular has placed Ukraine in a more vital position in politics because of its long border and historical and economic ties and their common Slavic cultures. (Keskin, s. 52-53)

The EU's policy towards the former Soviet republics is mainly the provision of economic and political reforms of states. The Neighbourhood Policy, which was misunderstood in 2004, has gained a new dimension after the Georgian War of 2008 with the development of the East Partnership project specifically for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus countries. The Polish-Swedish proposal, the East Partnership, was a policy that aims to develop relations with Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine in Eastern Europe and Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia without full membership perspective in the Caucasus. From this aspect, the East Partnership has reapplied the EU's Neighbourhood Policy to a specific region. (Özdal, 2015, s. 82-83) Considering the context of the enlargement process and the security complex areas of the EU, it seems that Ukraine will be in search of membership due to the spread of the process towards Eastern Europe. But Ukraine will probably join the EU and trigger the European Regional Security Complex of the Eastern European country group. However, this process will not bring the participation of Russia. Hence, these countries will be away from Russia. In the post-Soviet area, the Ukrainian-Belarusian-Moldavian and Georgian country groups will retain their own internal problems and differences when they are members of the EU compared to other member countries, but they will share the same security agenda as Western Europe. (Buzan & Waver, 2003, s. 367) The relation with the Post-Soviet Region (especially with Russia) is important from three perspectives, as the European Region of the EU is interacting with the Post-Soviet area in a regional approach:

1. It is the ultimate border of the disunity between the Baltic States and potentially Ukraine, the EU-Europe and the Post-Soviet Regional Security Complex.
2. Although the relation with Russia is not very intense, it is also crucial for both positive and negative possibilities at the same time.
3. Some European institutions include some parts of CIS (Council of Europe) or the whole (OSCE) as well as the EU-European region. Some such political processes have been experienced together. (Buzan & Waver, 2003, s. 374)

### As For The Conclusion

John J. Mearsheimer's article which claims that Ukrainian Crisis is the output of wrong policies of Western governments published in *Foreign Affairs* magazine has been a significant study for triggering this discussion. According to Mearsheimer, the West, which pursues liberal goals, is cause of the Ukrainian crisis. The US and its allies NATO and the EU with enlargement policies have taken critical steps to try to bring Ukraine out of Russia's orbit. Finally, Putin, who thinks that Yanukovych was handed over by a coup in Ukraine, has taken the Crimea and instability in countries will continue if Ukraine keeps closer to the West. According to Mearsheimer, Moscow's Ukrainian policy is "an introduction to geopolitics," and it is "an example of the vulnerability of each station to threats in the near/close regions of the great powers". (Özdal, 2015, s. 91-92)

From the Russian point of view, it is once again at the target of the West when has been starting to become effective again in the Medi-

terranean and the Middle East through the Syrian crisis and threatening the "Customs Union" policy and the EU's "Neighbourhood Policy (Baltic-Caspian line)". Even though it is not very obviously made current issue in the agenda, there is a possibility that the whole world will be dragged into a global conflict through a crisis starting from a limited competition between Germany's "Through the East" and Russia's "Through the South" policies. (Erol, Bahar 2014, s. 8)

The analysis of historical, social and religious formations that have led to the foreign policy choices of the decision makers in the region and of the area in which the crisis has arisen but where the findings of the regional and global conclusions of the 2014 Crisis are made in the current literature have not found much. In this study, the main actor of the Ukrainian Crisis and Ukraine has undergone an analysis with its historical, cultural and social vectors and has been trying to contribute to the literature by subjecting the construction of two neighbouring security complexes affected by these vectors to constructive analysis. At the same time, when the way in which other actors perceived Ukraine and how they safeguarded the region was assessed, the conclusion of these perceptual battles came to the conclusion that the ending crisis deepened.

Although the Baltic states are generally seen as outside region of the post-Soviet zone, an assessment has been made that the CIS countries, where Ukraine was a former member, cannot go beyond the Post-Soviet area. The possible EU and NATO accession perspectives of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia from these countries are predicted to be a security issue for Russia. As it has been demonstrated in our study, it has been observed that the area in which Ukraine is located is a buffer zone in which the interests of both Russia and the West are in conflict, and that the region has consistently been transformed into a security issue by various actors. Nonetheless, in practice it has become obvious that Ukraine is in the Post-Soviet zone for now, even though it has become a serious conflict issue. This leads Russia to put forward the principle of "defence for the future" as a policy with regard to Ukraine. (Buzan & Waver, 2003) (Buzan & Waver, 2003, s. 415)

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