

# **Russia-Ukraine Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Degree  
of Master of Philosophy (Arts) in International Relations**

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Certified that the thesis entitled, "RUSSIA – UKRAINE RELATIONS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY" submitted by me towards the partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Philosophy (Arts) in International Relation of Jadavpur University, is based upon my own original work and there is no plagiarism. This is also to certify that the work has not been submitted by me for the award of any other degree/diploma of the same Institution where the work is carried out, or to any other Institution. A paper out of this dissertation has also been presented by me at a seminar /conference at Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019, thereby fulfilling the criteria for submission, as per the M.Phil Regulation (2017) of Jadavpur University.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa

CIS - Common Wealth of Independent States

CSTO - Collective Security Treaty Organisation

EaP - Eastern Partnership

EEU - Eurasian Economic Union

E. U - European Union

EurAsEC - Eurasian Economic Community

MAP - Membership Action plan

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

LDPR - Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

SCO - Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

UCO (KP) - Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate

UCO (MP) - Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate

U. R - United Russia

## RUSSIA UKRAINE MAP



Source: <http://wineris.me/ukraine-and-russia-map/and-no-surprises-ukraine-russia-map/>

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Since Mikhail Gorbachev launched Perestroika in 1985, Russia has been engaged in a grand modernization process. Though this was characterised by the concept of ‘democratic transition’, but what was significant was the encompassing geo-political shift amidst a precipitate geopolitical decline after the disintegration of Soviet Union. In spite of a permanent seat in United Nations Security Council and retaining a large nuclear arsenal it had to deal with the harsh reality of a shrinking economy. With the fall in economic wellbeing, the state sought to provide most elementary public goods. Thus the fundamental objective of Russian foreign policy was to restrict the internal rupture of Russia, along with protection of its borders which had been challenged by declaration of independence of the while soviet states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan and which later culminated into the Russian ambition of maintenance of ‘spheres of influence’ through Common Wealth of Independent States in 1991.<sup>1</sup>The charter stated:

*“The purposes of the Commonwealth shall be: The realization of cooperation in political, economic, environmental, humanitarian, cultural and other spheres; universal and balanced economic and social development of member states under the framework of common economic space, interstate cooperation and integration; ensuring human rights and*

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<sup>1</sup><https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201819/volume-1819-I-31139-English.pdf> accessed on 3rd December 2018

*fundamental liberties in accordance with generally recognized principles and norms of international law and documents of the CSCE; cooperation between member states to ensure international peace and security, the realization of effective measures for the reduction of arms and military expenditures, the elimination of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction, and the achievement of universal and full disarmament.”<sup>2</sup>*

It also agreed on the need to assist citizens of member states of free interaction, contacts and movement in the Commonwealth, mutual legal assistance and cooperation in other spheres of legal relations and peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts between states of the Commonwealth. In order to achieve the purposes of the Commonwealth the member states, based on generally recognized norms of international law , the *Helsinki Final Act* shall build their relations in accordance with the following interconnected and equal principles: respect for the sovereignty of the member states, the inalienable rights of peoples to self-determination and the right to determine their fate without outside interference; the inviolability of state borders, the recognition of existing borders and the rejection of unlawful territorial annexations; the territorial integrity of states and the rejection of any actions directed towards breaking up alien territory; rejection of force or the threat of force against the political independence of a member state; resolution of disputes by peaceful means in such a way that international peace, security and fairness are not threatened; supremacy of international law in interstate relations ,non-interference in internal and external affairs of each other is maintained. It shall ensure human rights and fundamental liberties for all, with distinction based on race, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other convictions, undertake rigorous performance of

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.dipublico.org/100617/charter-establishing-the-commonwealth-of-independent-states-cis/> accessed on 5th December 2018



obligations to pursue the documents of the Commonwealth, including this Charter. On account of each other's interests and the Commonwealth as a whole, the following provisions were mentioned: Firstly, they agreed on the rendering of assistance on the basis of mutual consent in all spheres of their relations and uniting of efforts to assist each other for the purposes of establishing peaceful conditions for the life of the peoples of the member states of the Commonwealth. Secondly, to ensure their political, economic and social progress and the development of mutually beneficial economic and scientific and technical cooperation. Thirdly, broadening of integration processes along with spiritual unity of their people, which is based on respect for their originality, close cooperation in the preservation of cultural valuables and cultural exchange.

This was done to manage the collapse of the Soviet Union and induce Post-Soviet cooperation in political, economic security spheres. Thus the most important player Russia tended to favour bi-lateral relationships. Also Russia indulged in domestic conflict with Chechnya and Kosovo along with the threat of NATO expansion looming large. Henceforth, this raised the difficulty in consensus building with regard to homogenous foreign policy making explained in terms of debates below.

## **1.2 FOREIGN POLICY BUILDING IN THE INITIAL YEARS**

The Pro-Western Idealists: The apocalyptic circumstances soon after the emergence of independent, republics paved the way for Russian democrats adopting an ideology of opposition to the existence of command economy, deepening totalitarian structure. With Boris Yelstin acting as a steersman by assuming the responsibility of the presidency since 1991 Russian foreign policy was guided by liberal ideas. The basic premise of this group was the effective opposition to Soviet Communism and adherence to Western Values and integration as per the push and pulls of national interest. Advocates of this were Andrei Kozyrev, Anatoly

Chubais, Boris Nemstov, Boris Fyodorov, Grigory Yavlinsky and Victor Chernomydrin.<sup>3</sup> Under the leadership of Andrei Kozyrev, Russian diplomacy aimed first and foremost to promote Russian integration into the West, as well as to secure Western assistance for the internal transformation of Russia's economy and polity. However, they suffered huge setback after the victory of Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. Primakov as the new foreign minister who was a staunch follower of anti-western ideology, did not let the foreign policy to be dominated only by his Anti-Western ideas but adopted a balanced approach. The major focal point in this period was the challenge of NATO expansion, which was not seen in good light even by the Russian liberals and economic integrationists who benefitted from the western integration. This was furthered by 1997 economic crash, where financial oligarchs lost their influence within the government. The new power equation resulted gave a strong edge to Primakov and his anti-western outlook. Soon with the NATO bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, the dominant rhetoric remained that of anti-Americanism but Primakov did not allow it to reflect in Russia's overall foreign policy. Instead Russia expressed itself in terms of an international peace maker and defender of international law against NATO'S belligerent profile. This was done keeping in mind a greater goal of Russia becoming a pole in a multipolar world which must be dictated by its own great power interests and not by being a part of the West. This was sought to be achieved by entering into alliances with non-Western nations such as China and India, by economically modernizing Russia and by strengthening its ability to organize and control the post-soviet Space. The new coalition of military, industrialists, the army and the security services, embraced this vision. Some members of the coalition shared the vision of out of the wounded pride resulting from the significant loss of territory and world status brought about by Soviet collapse. Others were disappointed by the failure of partnership

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<sup>3</sup>Johnson. D. Emily and Cassiday A. Julie ,” Putin, Putiniana and the question of a Post-Soviet Cult of Personality “, *The Slavonic and East European Review* , Vol 88, No. 4 , October 2010, pp.681-707

with the west in the 1990's to bring about visible improvements in living standards or to pacify military conflicts on the Russian periphery .Still, others saw a largely ignored potential to generate revenue through development of new technologies and export of conventional weapons. There also existed a Neo-imperialistic vision, which supported the identity of "Russian Empire", and their notion of balancing includes elements of foreign policy expansionism. This philosophy though marginalised but bears prime importance in my course of work. But the advocates of the Great Power Normalisation as a foreign policy strategy emerged as a critique to Primakov's idea of revolving around CIS, resisting eastern expansion of NATO, building ties with Iran, and participating in Russia-India –China axis. They asserted that this conscious approach of playing Europe and China against United States and not siding firmly with the West earned few dividends and openly opposed the Post-Soviet integration and CIS'S inability to function.

### **1.3 VLADIMIR PUTIN AND RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES**

The rise of Vladimir Putin in the year 2000 as the new president was accompanied by a paradigmatic shift in Russian Foreign policy making. Coming to power with the intent on restoring the State, he was the bearer of the old legacy in which the state itself represented both the highest aspiration of the society for survival already tested in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). Thus analysing his Russia at the turn of the Millennium statement he designed a developmental agenda that was carved out to achieve a vibrant economy along with his emphasis on Russian values of Patriotism or *derzhavnost* which means Russia as a great Power, statism, social solidarity, and above all a strong state . Thus throughout his presidency he sought to focus on the principles of stability, consolidation, reassertion of the prerogatives of

the state. <sup>4</sup> Evaluating his concept on Russia at the turn of the millennium will show further light to my view, He stated that the country's very future depends on the lessons it learnt from past and present. This was a long-term job for society as a whole, but some of these lessons were already clear. For most of the 20th century, Russia lived under the communist doctrine. It would be a mistake not to recognise the unquestionable achievements of those times. But it would be an even bigger mistake not to realise the outrageous price our country and its people had to pay for that Bolshevik social experiment. What is more, it would be a mistake not to understand its historic futility. He strongly argued that, Communism and the power of Soviets did not make Russia a prosperous country with a dynamically developing society and free people. Communism vividly demonstrated its inability to foster sound self-development, dooming our country to lagging steady behind economically advanced countries. It was a blind alley, far away from the mainstream of civilisation. Russia has reached its limit for political and socio-economic upheavals, cataclysms and radical reforms. Only fanatics or political forces which were absolutely apathetic and indifferent to Russia and its people can make calls for a new revolution. Be it under communist, national-patriotic or radical-liberal slogans, the country and the people will not withstand a new radical break-up. The nation's patience and its ability to survive, as well as its capacity work constructively, has reached the limit. Society will simply collapse economically, politically, psychologically and morally anytime soon

From the above mentioned view, it is clear that, responsible socio-political forces ought to offer the nation a strategy of revival and prosperity based on all the positive elements of the period of market and democratic reforms, and need to be implemented only by gradual, prudent methods. This strategy should be carried out in a situation of political stability and should not lead to deterioration in the lives of any sections or groups of the Russian people. This

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<sup>4</sup>Sakwa Richard , “ Putin’s leadership : character and consequences”, Europe –Asia Studies, Vol. 60, No.6 , Aug 2008,pp.879-897

indisputable condition stems from the present situation of the country. The experience of the 90s demonstrates vividly that merely experimenting with abstract models and schemes taken from foreign textbooks cannot assure that the country will achieve genuine renewal without any excessive costs. The mechanical copying of other nations' experience will not guarantee success, either. Every country, including Russia, has to search for its own path to renewal. They have not been very successful in this respect thus far and their future depends on combining the universal principles of a market economy and democracy with Russian realities. The scientists, analysts, experts, public servants, and political and public organisations should work with this goal in mind. Such are the main lessons of the 20th century. They make it possible to outline the contours of a long-term strategy which will enable them, within a relatively short time, to overcome the present protracted crisis and create conditions for their country's fast and stable economic and social improvement. The paramount word is 'fast', he uttered with no time for a gradual change. He reiterated the fact as mentioned below:

*“I want to quote the calculations made by experts. It will take us approximately 15 years and an 8 percent annual growth of our GDP to reach the per capita GDP level of present-day Portugal or Spain, which are not among the world's industrialised leaders. If during the same 15 years we manage to annually increase our GDP by 10 percent, we will then catch up with Britain or France.”<sup>5</sup>*

#### **1.4. STATUS OF UKRAINE IN RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY MAKING**

My focus of study would extensively revolve around Ukraine which had consistently occupied a key place in Russia's strive towards “Great power status” and laid the foundation of Russia's desired hegemony in Eurasian landmass. Situated in the Central part of Eastern

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.sott.net/article/310072-Vladimir-Putins-first-paper-as-president-Russia-at-the-Turn-of-the-Millennium-A-Strategy-for-Russias-Revival> Accessed on 15th January 2018

Europe and bordered by the Black sea and Sea of Azov, it lies at the cross roads of major transportation routes from Europe and Asia. Undeniably, it is a gateway to the Eastward expansion of NATO and assumes prime strategic importance for Russia as a Geopolitical Buffer between Russia and NATO. This finds a mention even in Brzezinski's famous book 'The Grand Chess Board' in 1998, where U.S considered Ukraine as a pivot to spearhead the European Ball game.

Thus, in the formative years of Russian Foreign policy one of the noteworthy move was CIS Economic Union of 1993, which aimed to progress from a free trade area to 'deep' economic integration along with a dedicated regulatory body called Inter State Economic Commission . This however, could not be materialized as it was left unratified and open ended with a risk over Ukrainian sovereignty. This was furthered by, Yelstin's economic pressure to persuade Ukraine to join CIS Customs Union in 1995. Lacking a compact coordinated political strategy, Ukrainian participation was minimalist and narrowly carved. The rise of Vladimir Putin by in the new millennium saw a complete transformation in Russian domestic, foreign policy making ethos. Evident from, *The National Security Concept of Russia in 2000* and his *State of The Nations Speech on 3rd April 2001*, he clearly drifted from integrationist agendas (make best of the West) to aggressive postures to preserve Russia's greatness and extend its capacity from within. Thus, he gave up revival of CIS and embraced issue based coalitions in the region, often informally rallying for Ukrainian political support for his institutions. For e.g. in the case of Eurasian Economic Union when he offered the embattled Ukrainian president the chairmanship of CIS council of heads in 2003, and attached economic conditionality resolving anti-dumping and taxation disputes with it. But, it still fell short of expectations, and as a result a new economic organisation with Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Ukraine, was announced in February 2003 to intensify economic integration including a common currency. The Ukrainian elites were wary of committing such measures amidst Russia building a dam by

Ukrainian islands in the Kerch Straits. However, a watershed to their relationship occurred in 2004, with the outbreak of Orange Revolution in Kiev, and election of Yushchenko as President replacing Yanukovich in 2005 elections. Thereby, the Eurasian drama took a new turn with Ukraine turning westward. Thus, it was unprepared to deal with the aftermath of the revolution and political squabbles among its elites. Ukraine had to pay huge economic costs for the drama when Russia invoked a 'Gas War' by surging gas prices fivefold and unsettling the economy of Ukraine whose GDP shrunk by 15%. This clicked fortunes for Yanukovich in presidential race in 2010 based on economic recovery. He, was the perfect man for Putin's ambitions who solidified the bonhomie by signing the 'Kharkiv Accords' accordingly which extended the Lease of Sevastopol Naval Base in Russian Black Sea Fleet in exchange of attractive discounts on gas. Thus Putin's hopes were renewed with Ukraine's political participation in least a customs union, in place of a Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreement. By February, 2014 the overthrow of Putin's confidant Yanukovich, messed up Russia's expansionist plot and raged Russian elites as the 2012 law that made Russian the official language of Ukraine was scrapped. Huge protests were conducted in the zone by middle and upper middle classes along with ultranationalists who resisted the oligarchic rule of Yanukovich. It soon escalated with E.U and U.S joining the theatre and Kremlin backed forces seizing the Crimean peninsula sending troops marching militarily. This was the worst East-West crisis since the cold war and dubbed by many western scholars as the 'New Cold war', a danger that loomed large even in 2008 Russia's aggression in Georgia.

Analysis of Russian behaviour can be looked at through various prisms, most commonly rooted in dynamics of security. The argument put forward by various scholars was the security dilemmas between Russia and western states, which created a geo-political fault line and stirred hopes for both Russia and the West. Russia's denial of Ukrainian territory to western led security organizations was quite obvious from the pattern of Russian diplomacy

that castigated EU programmes and reform processes in E.U's Eastern security neighbourhood as a deterrent of Eurasian integration. It wanted Ukraine to maintain its non- bloc status, else it would open the gates for western expansion into Russia, specifically NATO. Geopolitics was not the sole factor for Russian occupation of Crimean peninsula as it appeared. There was several other layers to it, dynamics that were constantly heading towards such an imperialistic posture. Moreover, it was a culmination of many factors the roots of which lied not only in foreign, security dimensions but on Russia's domestic political conditions and personality of Putin as a president. It also had a normative aspect whereby, Putin characterized Russia as a front rank player in global value propaganda, vowing to establish Eurasia on essentially Russian mind set of social conservatism, tradition, religion, in face of championing values of west.

## **1.5 UKRAINE AS A STRATEGIC ASSET: IMPLICATIONS FOR RUSSIAN GEOPOLITICS**

The Kremlin has been very stringent on its border policies, and the leadership have always felt compelled to maintain a "buffer zone" owing to its security dilemmas regarding Western incursion through involvement of NATO. This is not at all a modern agenda but a response of a larger history of Mongol invasion of Kievan Rus 1223, Polish invasion of 1609, Great Patriotic war in 1812. But the contemporary threat perception is an outcome of the distrust and encirclement of Russia by NATO. Especially with regard to Russia's near abroad. Whatever may be the integration efforts by the Foreign Policy elites through bilateral or multilateral diplomacy , the persistent fear of West as 'Anti-Russian' has shaped up Russia's geopolitical agenda's in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Ukraine . The key concern here is that since 1991 Ukraine has been the pivotal state to restore at least partial control over the security policy of the CIS region. Ukraine has never given up its consent to join Russia led international security structures. Thus,



Putin's ambition was to maintain Ukraine as a 'no-go-zone' for NATO, which already surfaced since Yelstin's era. In fact, it reached the zenith with Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008, revealing the Russian threat perception from NATO. Similarly Moscow considered another approach to Ukraine with the coming of power of Victor Yushchenko and Putin's belief that Ukraine was very close to join NATO via Membership Action Plan (MAP) in the Bucharest Summit 2008. This was followed by claims from Ukrainian officials that Russia was trying to foment conflict in Crimea since then out of the recent upheaval in Georgia. But the table turned to Russia's favour with election of Victor Yanukovich in the Ukrainian presidency. He then rejected NATO membership as a Ukrainian strategic goal in favour of the 'non-bloc' status and signing of the barter agreement with Russia with buying Russian gas at a lower price at the cost of extension of the lease for Sevastopol Naval Base to Russia for 25 years. This elevated the hopes of Russian policy makers to consider Russia as a geopolitical 'buffer' zone between Russia and NATO and stirred expectations of Russia about Ukraine joining the Russia led CSTO. But the threat of Ukraine responding to Eastern Partnership plans (EPP) still appeared to Russia as a geopolitical challenge to Russian hopes for reintegration of Western CIS states, in which Ukraine was non-negotiable. This was accentuated by Putin's growing ambition regarding the creation of an ambitious Eurasian Economic Union based on the Customs Union complimenting its larger integration project. The events that sparked thereafter in 2014 February was triggered by the determination of Petro Poroshenko to consolidate Ukraine's orientation towards EU which Yanukovich refused to sign. Thus after signing the association agreement with EU despite Russian warning, paved the way for harsh consequences with military intervention in Crimea discussed at length in the Chapters later. Owing to the success of Russia was the geography of Crimea, it was easy to seal from the mainland. Pertaining to the space, a counter attack for defence was easily permeable. Thus, communications systems could be easily disrupted from the mainland. Also, Crimea with its

political and administrative structures was different from Ukraine as a result had a certain degree of autonomy. The most important factor was its close proximity with the Southern Military District of Russia which had large number of steady combat. Russia apart from Crimea wouldn't have been able to launch an attack in its central districts. Also, staff readiness was possible because of the upcoming Sochi Olympics 2014, thus enabling Russia the opportunity of rapid military build-up, which partially diminished prospects of Counter attack from Ukrainian forces.

## 1.6 RUSSIAN SOFTPOWER IN UKRAINE

Apart from the harsh geopolitics at play in Ukraine there were other methods employed at Ukraine by Putin which included all aspects of Russia's attractiveness to foreigners, Russian mass media, a large and efficient economy, and binaries of language, religion, shared past. This all falls under the orbit of the concept of 'soft power' as developed by Sir Joseph S. Nye Jr in his book *'Soft power: The Means to Success in World Politics'* 2004

Putin in his programmatic article 2012 'Russia in a changing World' defined Soft power as *"a complex of tools and methods for achieving foreign policy goals without deploying weapons, using information tools and other forms of intervention"*<sup>6</sup>

The narratives by which Russia projected its position was inextricably linked with to the project of grand nation building that has existed since Yelstin's era. Thus it is of no surprise that the Anti-westernism that characterised Post-Ukraine international stance was a crucial factor for domestic nation building. The pretext for Russia's actions in Crimea and its tacit support for the separatist rebels in Eastern Ukraine focussed on the protection of its 'Compatriots' which referred to Russian people living abroad and building a Russian World.

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<sup>6</sup>Meister Stefan, "Putin's version of Soft Power", German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2016, pp.9.

The dissolution of Soviet Union complicated Russian Post-Identity formulation due to existence of new borders, and new found identity as a nation–state. In spite of having a solid ethnic-Russian majority, the newly independent countries with their unique ethnic composition had a spiralling effect in creating new identity algorithms.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it had now ethnic-Russian people, Russian speaking minorities from the periphery and national minorities inside. Thus, defining Russianness was not a linear process, at a time when many Russians believed Ukrainians and Belarusians as part of the Supra nation State of Russia, and could not forget its imperial past. These were understandable from the irregular use of ‘ruskiy’ which had ethnic and cultural connotation and ‘rossiyskiy’ which had a civic approach and not imperial though both of them meant ‘Russian’. The central plank behind Putin’s Motivation was the historical narrative he attached. His disposition of History was a mix of Russian imperial, Soviet legacies revolving around Kievan Rus as the hub of Eastern Slavic Civilization which fought Fascism in Second World War. His argument was that of the unity between Eastern Slavs, Orthodox Georgia and Armenia with Russia was enough for him to deter aby narrative of the independent existence of these units. Putin’s Speech at 2013 Valdai club asserted that Russians and Ukrainians were one people and that Ukraine was a part of ‘our great Russian, or Russian-Ukrainian. The digital revolution has also been used by Russia as a potent soft power tool since 2000’s. In fact, the ‘Colour Revolutions’ in the post-soviet space have bewildered the Foreign policy elites of the government. They realised the strategic value of prevailing control over the information space .is one of the significant asset to maintain dominance in the near abroad. Thus with the beginning of the new era in 2000 Moscow had tightened its grips on Russian mass media , which was also broadcasted in former Space.

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<sup>7</sup>Teper Yuri , “Official Russian Identity Discourse in light of the annexation of Crimea: national or imperial?”, Post- Soviet Affairs , Vol.32, No.4, 2016 , pp.378-396

. The news channels devoted at least one slots about reports about Ukraine engaging on atrocities on innocent Russian citizens. They also glued their focus to insecurity of the civilians due to presence of the “Pro-Fascist regime”. As per the Russian media perspective it was always the Ukrainian Army who abrogated peace agreements. Significant wielding of power was done through the instrument of UCO (MP) the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow patriarch where Patriarch Kirill of Moscow Patriarch church was significantly wielding support for Russia among Ukrainians, through Pastoral visits, religious bonhomie and other forms. In fact, this UCO (MP) was a larger player which was popular in Russian mass media and fabricated the narratives in its favour.

### **1.7 UKRAINE AND PUTIN’S AMBITION OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSOLIDATION**

The decisive political break in Ukraine that occurred with the flight of Yanukovych was not only a watershed in Russian geopolitical fortunes but also a backward step in aggravating Putin’s domestic agenda at home. Ukraine Crisis was a part of the larger strategy of Diversionary Politics of Putin. Though there was a concern relating degeneration in the political or humanitarian environment for Ethnic Russians the most decisive being the spill over effects of ‘anti-constitutional coup’ (Orange Revolution) in Kiev a model of populist alternative but the actual outcome was his plunging popularity at home .<sup>8</sup> This was followed by gross economic crisis in 2008 and adoption of the neo-patrimonial structure of Medvedev as a president and Putin as a prime minister with personal ambitions high. The years followed by were characterized by slowing down of economic growth, a marked authoritarian posture, and stringent measures on civil society activities and so on. With the re-election of Putin in

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<sup>8</sup>Tsygankov Andrei P.,” Russia and the CIS IN 2011: Uncertain Economic Recovery “, Asian Survey , Vol 52.No 1, January , February 2012, pp.42-51

2012 presidential elections using fraudulent measures and massive corruptive practices, the Russian mass was enraged. This resulted in the famous Anti –Putin protest in Russia initiated by a gathering at Bolotnaya Square, responded by state violence. The worsening of situation at the domestic level led Putin to devise a strategy that would offset the losses he suffered at home. This was only possible through injecting the dose of ‘nationalist’ consciousness. His reliance on popularity and charismatic leadership over legal-rational authority were designed to contain the expanding distrust of people over state institutions. Since the onset of Ukraine Crisis, the dynamic of falling support switched in spring 2014 when Russia began to pursue aggressive stances in foreign policy. Russia’s decision to annex Crimea to the Russian Federation in March 2014, was followed by a request from the breakaway government which was backed by a referendum not legally transparent. Thus, it sparked off the de-facto intervention into the Ukrainian territory and was the biggest crisis of Russia and West since Cold War. The portrayal of the intervention as a Western instigation was the official line of Policy adopted by Kremlin, which spoke of the dangers of discontent and politics of fragmentation played by West during Yugoslavia in 1990s. This certainly deviated the Russian commoners from the gross misrule at home and created a war like situation compelling them to back nationalist Russia and separatists in Eastern Ukraine, which bolstered his public image of a national hero .

## **1.8 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Russia considering Ukraine a part of its legitimate sphere of influence have always tried to tilt the internal political balance of Ukraine in its favour. Moreover, with the circumstance of NATO expanding eastward along with future of base in Sevastopol at stake, Ukraine was accorded high priority in Russian Foreign Policy agenda .Since 2010, with pro-Russian minded Victor Yanukovich in power, there has been gross misrule in Ukraine regarding his procrastination to sign the EU- Association Agreement, drafted since 2012.On his refusal protesters gathered in Maidan, the central Square in Kiev. However, in spite of an agreement between Yanukovich and his protesters to broker peace, he fled due to his inability to confront the popular uprising. Putin decided to send his troops to intervene in Crimea followed by a referendum in March 2014, where majority population supported Crimea's succession from Ukraine and it's joining with Russia. With a constituent proportion of Ukrainians speaking Russian in the Eastern belt , Russia fomented sectarian split by backing, arming, the separatist leaders using technique of Hybrid Warfare , advanced weapons, technical and Financial assistance to the rebels. Since then, it claimed rights in Crimean Peninsula. The ceasefire agreements of Minsk 1 in September 2014, and Minsk 2 in 2015 have failed to settle the conflict thereby surprising the international audience with constant violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and blatant violation of international law in 21<sup>st</sup> century with no intent to resolve it.

## **1.9 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The review of the literature sets out to explore the scholarship which might prove useful in development of the rationale of the present study.

Marcel H. Van Herpen, is a security expert specializing in Russia, Eastern Europe and Post-Soviet States. He addresses the geopolitics of the region, the ideology of 'Putinism', Russia and the West, the information War. Never afraid of stating Provocative findings he ardently satisfies his readers. Asserting the deliberate launch of 2 wars first in Chechnya in 1999 followed by Georgia in 2008. Herpen opens up avenues of Putin's behaviour in connection with the findings of Russia's FSB intelligence Agency, exploiting the civilian targets. However, his analysis of Ukraine is based on the exclusive dias of imperialism. Geopolitics had been dealt in relation to West. Most of the accounts written before the Crimean annexation, his focus centres around Putin's authoritarianism in Russia as compared to dissolution of Empires in West Europe .While he provides an extensive study on origins and foundations of Russian imperialism and coercion in Ukraine he overlooks the scope of Research in other fundamental avenues such as Ukraine was not just a part of imperialistic project but of Wider agenda of Russian World which encompassed binaries of identity , culture , propaganda ,mythmaking .shared historical past.

Richard Sakwa, a Professor of Russian and European Politics viewed the Russia Ukraine relation as a part of larger dilemma. Stating about the failure of the Minsk agreements he believed in both regional and global solution to the problem. He poses a question frequently as to why is Russia which in the 1990s had a social political consensus with west change its line of movement after 20 years. The exacerbation of conflicts in Ukraine destructed Russia's international image internationally. This mode of Russia as an aggressive power is symbolic. On one hand he believes that it will be a part of the new order, but on the other hand it will tailor it according to its needs. Sakwa, underlines the fallacy that Russia speak of Pluralism in the international level whereas it undermines it in the domestic sphere. It is a political system that lags competitiveness, and is challenged by divergent developmental scenario with Ukrainian oligarchs negatively impacting Russia's tax revenues. Sakwa universalises the U.S

hegemony and stands for its successes in delivering public goods and therefore Russia should keep away its confrontational politics with the West. But he could have left more room for discussion regarding its regional arithmetic, power clusters, developmental asymmetry which has been addressed by Kataryna Wolczuk and Rilka Dragneva which systematically points out Ukraine's responses to Russia's initiatives by throwing light on the strategy of Ukrainian elites to extract benefits economically.

Taraz kuzio, an expert in Ukrainian, political and security affairs has assessed the effects of Orange Revolution which propelled Victor Yushchenko to power, this he believes paved the way for undertaking conflictual positions by both the countries. He then talks about the inability of Yanukovych to comprehend what is happening and labelled opponents as 'fascists' agents of CIA, and also elucidates about the American conspiracy to push Yuschenko to power and undermine the integrity of the nation. Presenting a discourse on Putin's war against Ukraine which according to him was an unprovoked one killing civilians Ukrainian soldiers, Russian soldiers destroying economy and infrastructure. Kuzio expands his work to locate national identity as the root of the crisis, exemplified by Russia's vision of refusal to accept Ukrainians to accept as a distinct entity and unmasking the meticulous clash of identity, propagated myths in revealing the war between ethnic Russians and Ukrainian nationalists. His extensive empirical evidence have contributed to my understanding of the entire scenario.

Having expertise in Russian and Eurasian International Relations through his works have provided a picture of Russian intervention in Ukraine and its effects on the international community. Roy Allison weighs the strategic and political consequences of Russian actions against political consequences of Russian actions against potential gains. His scheme of arriving at various justificatory rhetoric used by Russia in intervention have been very insightful as my work essentially delves into perspectives other than hard security issues. The



way Roy argues with the insufficiency of geopolitical binaries in handling of the incursion issue is very helpful for scholarly pursuits in areas where i intend to focus in my dissertation that is Soft power, acquiring Domestic legitimacy through foreign policy aggression,

However, there is a gap between the theories the scholars have pertained with the empirical evidence they produced. Also the literature has a paucity of analysis regarding units of decision making process which is excessively biased on one factor of threat perception of Putin from West via NATO.

### **1.10 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

At the very first outset my work would dissect the numerous flash points between Russia-Ukraine since the beginning of 21st century. Following a chronological pathway, I would analyse first the accomplishments of Russian Foreign Policy with regard to Ukraine, then try to present an understanding on the root causes of Russian behaviour towards Ukraine. Geopolitics being the dominant paradigm in decoding Russia's annexation of Crimea I would like to place emphasis on the role of geo-economics in the Russia Ukraine fiasco. However I shall also reveal various sources of Putin's conduct in Ukraine which shall include binaries of Identity, language, religion, history.

Moving on the end I shall elucidate on the politics of domestic consolidation of Putin with regard to Ukrainian intervention using the theory of 'Diversionary theory of war, followed by a concluding note on the findings and contemporary developments and future trends.

## **1.11 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the significance of Ukraine in Russian foreign policy discourse?
2. Does the threat perception of NATO'S Eastward expansion has been the larger geopolitical context of Russia's annexation of Crimea?
3. How did Geo -economics play an instrumental role in accomplishing Russia's aggressive ambitions in Ukraine?
4. How did Putin apply Joseph Nye's concept of 'Soft power' in the Ukrainian theatre?
5. Did President Putin's personal ambition of domestic consolidation play a role in fomenting diversionary tensions in Ukraine?

## **1.12 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The dissertation builds on a qualitative, multi-layered approach to assess Russia's foreign policy behaviour in Ukraine. The required understanding of the dynamics of Russia's foreign policy norms has been carried out through meticulous analysis of the concepts of Geopolitics, New Order Energy Economics, and the concept of Soft Power, diversionary tactics that demanded an extensive review of the literature which includes both primary and secondary sources.

The primary sources are Official Russian Government Reports, Fact sheets, Documents of Treaties, trade data of the Russian oil company of Gazprom, agreements between Russia and Ukraine available at the official website of Russian Ministry.

Secondary sources are the numerous books, journals, Russian news articles, Russian web Channels, speeches and perspectives of Russian and Ukrainian people understood through documentaries available on You Tube.

## **CHAPTERISATION**

*Chapter 1* discusses the fundamental questions with regard to Russia's relation with Ukraine. The first phase of the introductory chapter unfolds the post- disintegration trauma in Russian foreign policy making, and the resultant factors in policy making by throwing emphasis on the key debates of evolution of foreign policy in Russia. This has been followed by a short groundwork for establishment of my focus of study Ukraine along with briefings on dimensions on various interpretations of the resultant conflict of Russia with Ukraine in 2014.

*Chapter 2* opens an enthralling discourse on the geopolitical as well as geo-economical forces behind Russia's motives in Ukraine. Dealing with the theoretical aspects of geo-politics and geo-economics in international relations in the introductory segments. It moves on to a categorical study on the geo-political threat perceptions of Russia, the security dilemma with regard to the concept of Ukraine as a 'Buffer Zone' between Russia and NATO. The chapter also delves into 'Energy Economics' as a factor in Russia Ukraine worsening of relations resulting into 'gas crisis' in Ukraine, with specific emphasis on the 'South stream Pipeline project'.

*Chapter 3* incorporates the binaries of language, identity, culture, shared history, myth making in assessing Putin's behaviour towards Ukraine. This chapter embraces the theory of Joseph S, Nye's Soft power and states the narratives used by the President to justify his intervention in Ukraine. It also attempts to analyse the role of Mass Media in the 'information warfare' against

Ukrainian forces along with the role of Religion, various Ngo's which was used as tools of employment of Soft Power .

*Chapter 4* analyses Putin's personal ambition with regard to the Ukrainian fiasco. This has been done by using the theory of 'Diversionary Theory of War' that interprets events in terms of activities that is performed to keep the domestic audience distracted from the gross misrule at home. Foreign policy towards Ukraine has been directed with a vision of domestic consolidation of Russian President, and as a reaction to the ever growing protests against Putin's failure to rule and his electorally fraudulent victory in 2012.

*Chapter 5* summarizes the entire work and attempts to give a direction to the contemporary trends in Russia- Ukraine relations. It presents an answer to my queries and also elucidates about the existing gap between the theory building exercises and the normative findings attached to the area. It characterises the arguments presented in the earlier chapters and categorically concludes it to a point from where future research can be undertaken.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RUSSIA – UKRAINE RELATIONS IN EMERGING GEOPOLITICS**

There are various sources of Russia's conduct in Ukraine, by assessing the geopolitical and geo-economical forces at play since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This section further emphasizes the security dilemmas inherent in Putin's new international posture and his strive to attain the 'Great Power Status' for Russia, which resulted in annexation of Crimea and intervention in Eastern Ukraine in 2014.

#### **2.1 GEOPOLITICS AND ITS VARIANTS: BASIC UNDERSTANDING IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Geopolitics is a type of power projection in Foreign Policy behaviour of a nation which bases its analysis on the effects of geography on politics, encompassing geographic premises with international studies to indicate territorial land and resource factors that affect power and wealth distribution at global and international as well as regional and local levels.<sup>9</sup>

The 21<sup>st</sup> century discussion on Geopolitics should begin with a note on the changing nature of geopolitics from classical to modern to spatial to critical aspects of geopolitics encompassing the digital revolution and energy scrambles amongst nations. This, does not render traditional geopolitics and the questions of space, territoriality, and power irrelevant in international affairs. States have pursued several grand strategies based on their geopolitical circumstances

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<sup>9</sup> Aribogan D.Ulke and Bilgin Mert , "New Energy Order Politics 'Neopolitics': From Geopolitics to 'Energypolitics'", International Relations, Vol 5, No – 20, Winter 2009, pp.109-131

of their time. Classical geopolitics that dominated the 19<sup>th</sup> century, like, Alfred Thayer Mahan in his, “The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783” observed the naval race that America, England, Germany and Japan went through to establish their supremacy as sea powers. Harold J. Mackinder in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century gave the ‘theory of Heartland or the Pivot area’ (landlocked region of Central Asia) as the key to world domination in an era of declining importance for traditionally invincible sea power. He put his thrust on the significance of the Eurasian and African landmass (The World Island) as he called which could be controlled from the Pivot Area which was inaccessible by the seas, but vulnerable to land attack only from the Plains of Eastern Europe. Thus, Mackinder stated that the control of Eastern Europe would ensure world domination, which did become significant between the two Wars. Parallely, Karl Haushofer, remained Hitler’s godfather who strongly practised the ideas of lebensraum or living space, and responsible for the aggressive, expansionist tendencies of Nazi Germany. Thereafter, the Cold war, between Capitalist United States and Communist Soviet Union erupted where ideas of Containment, domino theories was categorically implied in behaviour of the two superpowers. The ideas also reflected prominence of Nicolas Spykman and his Theory of Rim land, where U.S tried to encircle Soviet Union by making alliances with countries situated in Rim land through NATO in Europe, CENTO in West Asia, SEATO in South Asia, and ANZUS in Pacific Front. The fall of Berlin wall and collapse of Soviet Union created reverberations across that end of history should coincide with the end of geopolitics. However, as the Chapter unfolds, we will see the new geopolitical forces along analyse Russia’s relationship with Ukraine in that light. Also, apart from traditional geopolitical tools, the use of geo economy as a prism has been used in the following chapter. This pertains to a simple question as to what is geo-economics.

In bold and simple terms, geo-economics is a variant of geopolitics which is applied covertly, conducted by economic means which paves the way for selective accommodation.

Contrastingly, as in the case of geopolitics that is a foreign policy operation, including security dilemma and capitalizing on threat perceptions, geo-economics creates low or medium threat perception and modest operations. In popular terms, this concept has been used widely to refer to economic geography of a nation or its commercial paradigms and strategies in foreign policy behaviour. But it's more than balancing or analysing the windfall gains or losses in trade reports of a country, but conceptualising the geostrategic objectives of certain investments, using 'Carrot and Stick' approaches, creating win-win situations for some, and zero-sum situations for some others, or understanding the 'aid politics'. As, Daniel Bell supported by Samuel Huntington have stated 'economics is the continuation of war by other means'. Contemporary Russian behaviour towards Ukraine in particular and Europe can well be mapped through Geo economic means, where patterns of geopolitics and geo-economics get enmeshed and difficult to classify differently.

For over two decades, after the launch of Perestroika in 1985, by Gorbachev, Russia has been engaged in a magnificent modernisation process. From, being one of the world's two superpowers and the alternative pole in a bipolar system, Russia suffered a precipitate geopolitical decline while at the same time engaging in economic and political transformation. As, I have mentioned earlier in the introductory chapter, my area of interest would revolve around Ukrainian geopolitics which occupies a pivotal place in Russia's strive towards 'Great Power Status' and lays the foundation of Russia's desired hegemony in the Eurasian landmass. Situated in the central part of Eastern Europe, and bordered by Black Sea and Sea of Azov, it lies at the cross roads of the major transportation routes from Europe and Asia. Undeniably, it is a gateway to the eastward expansion of NATO and assumes prime importance for Russia as a geopolitical buffer between Russia and NATO. For Ukraine it is of primary interest to develop partnership with Russia as Russian transit through the territory of Ukraine is a mammoth source of revenue for Kyiv, while the business mutually benefits both though Russia has an obvious

objective of retaining its monopoly of natural gas supplies for Ukraine. This does make room for discussion on the new variant of geopolitics called New Energy Order Politics or Neo Politics that is the reason behind strategic conflicts, cooperation, regional bonhomie, sanctions and is one of the reason behind the low point between Russia and Ukraine in the 21<sup>st</sup> century culminating in the worst crisis since 2014.

## **2.2 BORIS YELSTIN AND THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINIAN GEOPOLITICAL CONTEST**

After the Ukrainian independence on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1992 as a result of referendum, majority of the people extended their support to Leonid Kravchuk as the first president of the country, and diplomatic relations with Russia soon set forth. However, though Ukraine supported Russia in its struggle against the union oriented centre during final years of U.S.S.R, the seeds of contention were the differing perspective regarding the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991. Yelstin saw CIS as an instrument of Russian Foreign policy, a tool for Russian Hegemony over rest 11 states. However, some saw it as a fig-leaf behind Soviet disintegration, which made Yelstin's bid for military assertiveness more strong. Ukraine in particular wanted a commission for the Liquidation of U.S.S.R and wanted no centralised security and military structure as it could act as an agent of Moscow's imperial ambitions. Thus, Ukraine did not accede to CIS Collective Security Treaty (the Tashkent Treaty), followed by many treaties on collective defence of borders and resisted CIS from becoming a super state structure and from 1994 started sabotaging multilateral cooperation and preferring bilateral cooperation.<sup>10</sup> Also as per the agreement the members decided to create a "common military-strategic space" under a joint commander, including a unified control over nuclear

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<sup>10</sup> Olszanski Andrzej Tadeusz , "Ukraine and Russia : Mutual Relations and Conditions that determine them " , Centre for European Studies, pp.33-50



weapons.<sup>11</sup> Without the presence of a joint nuclear command Yelstin decided to take control over nuclear weapons, which had a tacit support of United States. During the forming years of CIS, four States had Nuclear Weapons – Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, while the all the states had committed to get rid of those, except Kravchuk’s Ukraine who was adamant in denuclearisation. It was later sealed with replacement of Kravchuk by Leonid Kuchma in 1994. Kuchma’s policies were radically different from his predecessor, as he vowed for closer relationship with Russia apart from his pragmatic gestures. This attitude was materialised in 1995 Russian –Ukrainian Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Partnership was signed.<sup>12</sup> Yelstin by the time faced nationalist critics demanding territorial concessions from Ukraine in Crimea and an assertive stand on the division of the Black Sea Fleet and its base at Sevastopol. But the friendship treaty did not include propositions on dual citizenship and Black Sea fleet which were to be settled in a different treaty.

Towards the end of 1996 , when NATO expansion was under way , Ukraine was wary of its effect on its geo-strategic position which paved way not only for NATO-Ukraine Charter , which pressurised Moscow to sign the treaty with Ukraine along with 3 agreements negotiated immediately before which held the decision of division of U.S.S R’s former Black Sea Fleet and spelt out the conditions on which the Russian Navy base in Sevastopol was to operate ,finally clearing the way for signing of Ukrainian – Russian treaty on Sevastopol during Yelstin’s official visit to Kyiv on May 1997.<sup>13</sup> This agreements ensured Russia to rule over the naval base and the city and place a navy base till 20 years. It was a culmination of mutual gains and accepting the costs, as Russia ultimately gave up the idea of separating Crimea or

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<sup>11</sup> Charter of Commonwealth of Independent States (with declarations and decisions), adopted at Minsk on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1993, Chapter 3: Collective Security and Military and Political Cooperation .p.62.

<sup>12</sup>[https://archive.org/stream/russianukrainian00stew/russianukrainian00stew\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/russianukrainian00stew/russianukrainian00stew_djvu.txt) Accessed on 9th March,2018

<sup>13</sup> Donaldson Robert H., “ Boris Yelstin’s Foreign Policy Legacy “, Tulsa Journal of Comparative and International Law, Volume 7, Issue-2 , January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2000, pp.285-326

Sevastopol from Ukraine but retained the military base in Crimea and prevented possible NATO accession on the Black Sea.

### **2.3 NATURAL GAS AS A DETERMINANT IN RUSSIA-UKRAINE RELATIONS (1990-1999)**

The bedrock of Russian –Ukrainian ties lies in the supply and transit of Natural gas , where Ukraine’s survival depends on the gas supplies from the territories of Russia , whereas , proceeds from the natural gas exports benefits Russia’s stock of Public finances .Moreover, Ukraine was one of the major consumers of Gazprom ( a public joint stock company founded in 1989, which carries on the business of extraction, production, transport, sale of natural gas majority of which is owned by Russian government.), a stable consumer which it couldn’t afford to lose. Given the strategic location of Ukraine, Russia exports ran exclusively through the territory of Ukraine. The domestic criminal conditions in 1990’s in Ukraine severely affected the gas sector, with Ukrainian oligarchs benefitting and causing loss to Gazprom but still remained of prime importance to Russia.

Following the fall of U.S.S.R Ukraine assumed control of system of transit pipelines running across the territory. In the 1990s a portion of gas was supplied to Ukraine from Turkmenistan. In 1996, this country provided 18.3billion cubic metres of gas, while Russia provided 52.9 billion cm.<sup>14</sup> However, this arrangement was disrupted followed by non-compliance of Ukraine of the few conditions by Turkmenistan and cut off supplies. The management of Gazprom took this circumstance and leapt forward by increasing supplies to Ukraine parallely transforming the gas debts to Ukrainian state debt accompanied with gas theft which Gazprom didn’t pay much heed to. <sup>15</sup>But this was used as an argument in bilateral

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<sup>14</sup>Olszanski Andrzej Tadeusz,, “ Ukraine and Russia : Mutual Relations and Conditions that determine them”, Centre for European Studies, pp.38.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.,p.36

negotiations and shame Ukraine internationally. Though Ukraine and Turks signed a treaty in 1998 but supplies were again discontinued. Russia again took control of the of the major portion of the natural gas consumed by Ukraine giving a natural advantage to Gazprom who could now look upon the major transit pipelines successfully.

## **2.4 EMERGENCE OF PUTIN AND THE NEW INTERNATIONAL POSTURE OF RUSSIA**

In 2000 the ascendancy of Vladimir Putin as president of Russian Federation ushered in a paradigmatic shift in foreign policy discourse of Russia. It could be visualized in his inaugural speech in 2000 the Russian President stated:

*“Dear citizens of Russia!*

*We believe in ourselves, in what we can truly transform and transform the country. We have common goals, we want our Russia to be free, prosperous, rich, strong, civilized country, a country that prides itself on its citizens and which is respected in the world. In recent months, both in Moscow and in meetings in the Russian regions, I feel your understanding and your support, and very often from people, from the simplest people in the squares and streets of our cities have heard very simple, but very important word for me. I said, "We believe you, we hope you, you just do not deceive us.*

*I can assure you that their actions will be guided solely by the public interest. May not be able to avoid mistakes, but what I can promise and promise, is that going to work openly and honestly.....”<sup>16</sup>*

The coming to power of Vladimir Putin at the beginning of the new millennium signalled the beginning of change in Russian politics that had lot in stake. He had to deal with the arduous task of knitting the norms of universal democracy with international integration, reconsidering aspects of both freedom and effective governance with an objective to engineer economic growth. From the very early stage, Putin identified itself in opposition to US hegemony, which rendered his foreign policy as confrontational .However, it turned its attention to the regional order, and attached supreme interest to the CIS region and declared post-soviet space a sphere of special interest .The key threat to Putin was not from United States but from falling in economic development. Eager to emphasize the economic nature of the contemporary world and the need for Russia to be successful in geo economic rather than military ventures. In fact Putin wisely reacted to the 9/11 attacks and apart from dealing with Chechnya and Dagestan at home, joined the global war on terrorism which enhanced his international posture. He devised 3 strategies to deal with threats: state consolidation, engagement with the west, strengthened influence in the post –soviet region. Evident from the National Security Concept Of Russia, 2000:

The situation in the world is noted for a dynamic transformation of the system of international relations. Two mutually excluding trends dominated them after the age of bipolar confrontation was over. The first trend was seen in the strengthening of economic and political positions of a considerable number of states and their integration associations, and in the improvement of the mechanisms of multilateral guidance of international processes. Economic, political,

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<sup>16</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_inauguration\\_of\\_Vladimir\\_Putin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_inauguration_of_Vladimir_Putin) accessed on 23rd February, 2018.

research-technical, and ecological and information factors were coming to play an ever greater role. Russia would facilitate the development of an ideology of the creation of a multipolar world on this basis. The second trend was seen in the attempt to create a structure of international relations based on the domination of developed Western countries, led by the USA, in the international community and providing for unilateral solution of the key problems of global politics, above all with the use of military force, in violation of the fundamental norms of international law. The development of international relations was accompanied with competition and the striving of some countries to reinforce their influence on world politics, in particular by creating mass destruction weapons. The significance of military force in international relations remained considerable. Russia being of the world's largest countries, with a long history and rich cultural traditions, along with the complicated international situation and internal problems, continued to objectively play an important role in world processes, in view of its considerable economic, research-technical and military potential and unique situation on the Eurasian continent. Putin also stated:

*“In the future, Russia will become deeper integrated into the world economy and develop its collaboration with international economic and financial institutes. Objectively, there is a community of the interests of Russia and the interests of other states on many problems of international security, including resistance to the proliferation of mass destruction weapons, prevention and settlement of regional conflicts, struggle with international terrorism and drug trafficking, the solution of acute global ecological problems, including problems of ensuring nuclear and radiation safety.”*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup><https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/gazeta012400.htm> accessed on 9th February, 2018

Putin thus skilfully employed conventional material capabilities and geopolitics, combined with exploitation of contemporary information networks with strategic re-emphasis on territory hard power with a view to achieve a ‘great power status’.

## **2.5 RUSSIA- UKRAINE: INITIAL YEARS OF CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS**

The year 2000 saw Russia being more pragmatic consistent and therefore stronger , giving up CIS as a tool of re-integration with “post-U.S.S.R Space” and adopting bilateral relationship with member countries of the CIS . The Chief of the Council For Foreign Affairs and Security of the Russian Federation Sergei Karaganov said at the beginning of 2001 that: “Russia is interested in a stable Ukraine ,Russia needs a friendly Ukraine,Russia cannot afford the luxury of supporting Ukraine financially.”<sup>18</sup>

The “Zlenko’s Doctrine” formulated at the beginning of 2001 by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Anatolli Zlenko issued priority to relations with Russian federation and the U.S.A pushing E.U backwards. However, it reassured that it no longer wants the status of sphere of influence rather than wanted to be treated as an equal partner in an environment of mutual respect from the Russian counterpart. Thereafter, began several bilateral visits, agreements were summed up including those on:

- Regional and cross-border cooperation plan for military cooperation between the two during the visit of Russian defence minister Igor Sergev bilateral trade agreements

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<sup>18</sup>Olszanski Andrzej Tadeusz , “Ukraine and Russia : Mutual Relations and Conditions that determine them”, Centre for European Studies, pp.40

which shot up by one-fifth reduction of electricity debt by 60% agreements on transit of natural gas. Followed by, restructuring of earlier gas debts along with agreement on sending Turkmen gas to Ukraine regulating stationing of two navy fleets in a base in Sevastopol, introduction of joint garrison patrols, traffic control of Sevastopol's harbour and lifeboat service.

- Vladimir Putin's visit to Kyiv to take part in the tenth independence anniversary Of Ukraine, speaking about common future as closely connected European states , announcing 2002 as Year of Ukraine in Russia.<sup>19</sup>
- The disagreements regarding delimitation of the border could not be resolved since 1998 when Moscow agreed to appoint a delimitation work for the land borders. While the sea borders on the Azov Sea and the Kerch Straits remained undiscussed along with Moscow's belief of the reservoirs as 'common' were declined by Ukraine.
- The Problems relating to Visa regime also was left unattended till early 2000's

This reflected a pragmatic approach than in the Yelstin's years. It also signified a new turn in Russian foreign policy behaviour as, Putin's Russia gave up treating the CIS as a tool of in re-integration of the "post-U.S.S.R space" and with treating Ukraine as a partner ,ally, and not as a 'transient country' which further would make it easier to achieve important political aims.

## **2.6. POST-ORANGE REVOLUTION GEO-ECONOMICS**

Before the Ukrainian Presidential election Russia expected a Moscow friendly attitude in Ukraine and continuation of the Kuchma regime, thus backing Party of Regions leader Victor Yanukovich who could carry forward the legacies of Kuchma tilting towards Russia and not restructuring Ukraine's economic and political structures. Therefore, Russia immensely

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<sup>19</sup> Moshes Arkady, "Russia- Ukrainian Reapproachment of 2001 : How Viable ?", Security Dialogue ,Vol 33, No-2 ,June 2002 , pp.157-170

intervened in 2004 presidential election and disregarded Ukrainian sovereignty, by attacking the opponent Yushchenko as anti-Russian, launching media campaigns, joint appearances with Yanukovych . The Orange Revolution brought pro-Western Yushchenko to power, reflecting a failure on Russia's part, as the President wanted Ukraine to move out westwards and assimilate itself with the geopolitics of Euro-Atlantic structures. The demonstrations in the aftermath of election, along with the growth of the pluralistic civil society which wanted European values, respect for laws, democracy to be held .By holding a free and fair election it wanted in power a Pro-western government and resist any further Post-Soviet Eurasian bloc, and welcoming a modern East-European state Yushchenko wanted the European Union to recognise Ukraine as a market economy and upgrade Ukraine from a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement to Association Agreement , before finally becoming a member of EU. Despite this EU failed to cultivate this due to its own institutional crisis. Some scholars have argued that Putin's bias towards Yanukovych amounted to an effort to build a new, anti-western empire to a situation like cold war. Although Putin suffered grave miscalculations, he was never ready to give up his relations over the West.

But the major geo economical flashpoint immediately after the Orange revolution was the 'Pipeline Politics' that Putin played in orchestrating a Gas Crisis in 2006. This was a turning point in the ongoing Russia –Ukraine Contest. Agreeing on a deal before elections implied Ukraine to pay \$53/ 1000m<sup>3</sup>, but Russia given its threat of Ukraine's new found Pro-Western Orientation demanded \$230/1000m<sup>3</sup>.<sup>20</sup> It was in accordance with the support for Yanukovych Party, as Russia knew him to be the best negotiator for Ukraine. This was followed by a few days of Gas Disruption left with a bid of \$95/1000m<sup>3</sup> for 2006. Such a move portrayed aggression towards, its near abroad policy with a vow that it would not change till 2007,

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<sup>20</sup> Hatton Daniel," Did the Orange Revolution change Ukraine's geopolitical position regarding Russia and the West? ", POLIS Journal , Vol 3, Winter 2010, pp.1 -26



provided Ukraine acts in concord with Russian interests. But, it again flared up in 2009, when Russia decided to reduce supply of Gas to Ukraine stating that it was needed to maintain supplies. Thereafter, Gazprom and Naftogaz began squabbles over transit fees, with thousands of people been affected.<sup>21</sup>The crisis had a devastating effect in other areas of European Union like Bulgaria, Slovakia, as temperatures stood at minus twenty degree centigrade. Considering the span of the crisis for 1<sup>st</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> January bought international condemnation from the EU. This resulted in escalation of pressures to work on a settlement. They were labelled as selfish as they allowed their dissension to spill over to the rest of Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe, as many countries relied heavily on imported gas from Russia. Pipeline Politics was in a way to downgrade Ukraine's reliability as trading partner, in the CIS zone, weaning away potential EU, Western Partners. Russia did not have much to loose from this episode as did Ukraine, who counted even less a viable a partner of EU, Undermining Yushchenko's Pro-western orientation giving Russia a Strategic advantage over Kyiv. Ukrainian debt kept spiralling and almost identical situations recurred in 2008, 2009, finally paving way for Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian PM Yulia Tymoshenko reaching a mutually acceptable trade agreement according to which Russia ascertained its market price for Gas, at the same time raising the gas transit by 60%.

## **2.7 THE GEORGIAN WAR AND THE CONSEQUENCES ON UKRAINE:**

In the occasion of the Russia –NATO Council Session in Bucharest in April 2008, Putin called Ukraine “a complex state formation. If the NATO issue is in added there,” he said along with other problems. <sup>22</sup>This may bring Ukraine to the verge of existence as a sovereign state. This was an indirect warning that it joining NATO wasn't really a good option for Ukraine. In

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.,p.13

<sup>22</sup> Herpen Van H. Marcel, Putin's Wars : The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism ,Second edition, Roman & Littlefield, Maryland, U.S.A ,2015, p.239

August 2008, conflict between Russia and Georgia broke out on the territory of Georgia's breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, with a military campaign until a ceasefire agreement by the French Presidency was worked out.<sup>23</sup> . The war demonstrated weakness of NATO and EU Security System, because they could not provide an apt response to Russia's forced changing of borders and occupation of a territory having membership of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The geopolitical ends to this war was very obvious by now, and had a real message to the Ukrainian counterparts, they were as follows:

Firstly, expelling Georgian Troops and effectively resisting Georgian Sovereignty in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Russia paved way for occupying the separatist regions.

Secondly, preventing Georgia from possible NATO expansion, portraying a strong message to Ukraine that its membership into NATO might lead to a war. Attacking a state with such vigour meant a direct assault on the presence of a NATO umbrella in Eastern Europe in a circumstance when there was no formal admission of the concerned state into it, but just reacting out in an apprehension.

Thirdly, Increase in control over the strategic energy pipelines through establishment of a pro-Russian regime. This would bring the strategic Baku-Erzurum (Turkey) Gas Pipeline under Moscow's occupation .This also had a broader implication with respect to control over the Energy and Transportation Corridor that connects Central Asia and Azerbaijan with Black Sea and ocean routes that transports Gas ,Oil, and other commodities.

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<sup>23</sup>Hamilton F. Robert, Cohen Ariel, "The Russian Military and the Georgian War : Lessons and Implications", Strategic Studies Institute , June 2011, pp.1-4

Fourthly, over the few years, output in the newly Independent CIS region had been growing, with a possibility to outgrow Russian Oil. Thus, with Georgian intervention, Russia would regain its hegemony over hydrocarbon export routes, diminishing claims for sovereignty and freedom of manoeuvre of the CIS regions.<sup>24</sup>

It thus, deteriorated Russia –Ukraine relations leaving many analyst wondering about Ukraine’s next possibility in the game .This security dilemma was in relation to the fact that Russia was a stronger State to pursue Crimean separatist claims. With Yushchenko’s refusal to renew Russian lease for port of Sevastopol which was to expire in 2017. It was quite obvious that the Crimean nightmare was under its way by showing NATO and EU that it sees the Post-Soviet space as its own zone of influence and implied a watershed for Ukraine’s plan for Euro-Atlantic integration. It divided the Ukrainian parliament into Pro-Georgia and Pro-Russian blocs. Yushchenko took a pro-Georgia line while Tymoshenko adopted a pragmatic stance which supported Georgian Sovereignty as well as vowed for mediation efforts. Party of Regions leader Yanukovich acted in consonance with Pro-Russian lobby.<sup>25</sup>Moreover, Yushchenko’s radical line decayed his popularity, as many people felt it failed to represent their interests. Further, he also demanded Russian Black Sea Fleet vessels to issue notice while leaving Sevastopol, thus interfering in Russian Fleet operations which flared up tensions for Crimea. The final nail in the Coffin was put with his failure in Second round of Presidential Election in 2010.The contest was won by Yanukovich defeating Tymoshenko. This was certainly an elimination of a threat which loomed large during Orange revolution as evident from this speech in 2007, on the occasion of Munich Conference on Security policy:

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<sup>24</sup>Hamilton F. Robert, Cohen Ariel, “The Russian Military and the Georgian War : Lessons and Implications”, Strategic Studies Institute , June 2011, pp.1-4

<sup>25</sup>Hatton Daniel,” Did the Orange Revolution change Ukraine’s geopolitical position regarding Russia and the West? “, POLIS Journal , Vol 3, Winter 2010, pp.1 -26

*“I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernisation of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them. But I will allow myself to remind this audience what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr. Woerner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that: “the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee”. Where are these guarantees?”*<sup>26</sup>

## **2.8 GEOECONOMICAL CALCULATIONS: PRELUDE TO THE 2014 CRISIS**

The following years after Georgian Crisis, Russian –Ukrainian relations remained high over various issues. But Russian fortunes were good enough to turn the table as the Russian oriented leader Yanukovych rejected the NATO membership as a Ukrainian strategic goal in favour of a ‘non-bloc status’. And, also, agreed to extend the lease for the Sevastopol naval base to Russia for 25years. This raised hopes of Russia to even consider Ukraine joining the Collective Security Treaty Organisation apart from the fact that Ukraine still was the geopolitical buffer between the NATO and Russia. Cultivating this predicament , Russia consistently offered integration to join the newly formed Customs Union between Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, a project aimed at developing a single regulatory scheme through Single Economic Space (SES)2012, Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) 2015. Unlike all other schemes this was obligatory too on the part of formation of a supranational Commission. Russia heavily enticed Ukraine for its entry through reduction in gas prices (\$425 to \$268), but Yanukovych was not

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<sup>26</sup><http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034> accessed on 15th june,2018

convinced, as Ukraine was already a member of WTO.<sup>27</sup> The Ukrainian leader worked out a compromised formula a '3+1' format (Russia , Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine ) that would allow Ukraine to derive benefits of increasing trade without binding obligations, but was not appealing to Russian counterpart due to lack of legal commitment, followed by gaining only an observer status in Eurasian Economic union. The events thereby was dramatic in the sense that in 2013 Yanukovich indicated his agreement to sign the Association Agreement, in favour of relaxed commitments from EU, but protests started occurring soon, which led to postponing of the Association Agreement in turn received \$15billion, reduction of gas prices to \$268 per cm but with strings attached as there were minor trust deficits between the leaders. Domestic circumstances made Yanukovich accept Russia's stringent conditions of instalment paying and review of gas price quarterly.

South streamline pipeline project: The principal enterprise to wield Russia's Geo economic power has been the South Stream pipeline Project, with a target to ship 63billion cubic metres of Gazprom's gas annually across the Black Sea to the Balkans and to western neighbours. Started in 2007 and in November that year, Putin suddenly cancelled the project in 2014 rising Gazprom's stock. This was done to deprive Ukraine of its gas transit revenues and its key player in European Markets, leaving it more exposed to hike in prices, fluctuations. Gazprom could switch off supplies, by raising its share of regional market and in consequently those countries dependent on its pipeline gas. It could also get a potential leverage in Italy and Austrian markets which benefited from lower prices. The project since 2008-11 had a potential rival in the form of a new gas contract that Bulgaria received, with a discount of 20% price cut for 20 years.<sup>28</sup> The bilateral South Stream Projects could not comply with the EU rule of that

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<sup>27</sup> Wolczuk Katarzyna & Dragneva Rilka, " Between Dependence and Integration : Ukraine's Relations with Russia", *Europe-Asia Studies* , Vol 68, No-4 , June 2016 ,pp.678-698

<sup>28</sup> Vihma Antto and Wigell Mikael , "Geopolitics versus Geo-economics : the case of Russia's Geostrategic and its effects on EU", *International Affairs*, Vol 92, No-3 , 2016 , pp.605-627

of using it as a tool of political influence, and as the crisis stemmed EU began providing more hurdles to it. Therefore, set forth on motion the Russian leadership wisely calculating risks, advanced the work on sites of Bulgaria and by political campaigns on the projected route. The Investment grew larger, with more diversifications in the site. It remained a strategic, geo economic project of Russia that affected the European Chess board.

## **2.9 ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA: RETURN TO HARD GEOPOLITICS?**

The roots of the above crisis originated from the events in February 2014 when a group of high ranking official mostly connected with the Russian Security Services abruptly fled Ukraine out of their fear for their lives. The upcoming power vacuum and the cacophony provided Russia with the plan of annexing Crimea. Clashes erupted soon near the parliament building in Simferopol, the masses divided between Pro-Russian and Pro-Ukrainian protesters, demanding secession from Ukraine asking assistance from Russia. Thus, armed individual seized and locked up Government Buildings including the Premises of Supreme Council. Covert meetings, sessions appointed Sergey Aksynov of the marginal Party of the Russian Unity was the new Prime Minister of Crimea, followed by the drafting of an amendment to the constitutional law on admitting new subjects to the Russian Federation to the Speaker of the Russian State Duma. It validated parts of Ukraine into Russian Federation on the grounds of alleged Ukrainian discrimination against national minorities.

The events that rolled on further included action by ‘self-defence ‘ militias who nimbly captured strategically important Perekop Isthmus ,blocking all passages to land , sea and air connections of Crimea with rest parts of the Ukraine. Communications and tele-networks were blocked, along with illegal expropriations of arms, assisting unlawful actions by Russian

Separatists. It resembled a situation of that of Soviet occupation of Austria (1938), Czechoslovakia (1968). It was a well-executed plan by 2000 infantrymen stationed in and around Sevastopol, about 7000 special troops brought in by March through air, 15000 troops transported through ferries to Kerch across the Straits.<sup>29</sup> The Russian units had little firepower but contained high degree of mobility. The docked ships were blockaded by Russian ships, while its commander changed his side to join Russia, havoc psychological pressure, by cutting off electricity propaganda was mounted among the rest in order to facilitate more defection to its sides. Russia had effective command and control within one week of its operation. The organised movement of its self defence units by Cossacks (cultural group of East Slavic people) and Berkut (special police) put in uniforms to manage the mob.<sup>30</sup> The level of propaganda by Putin made the situation more complex for the anti-Russian lobby to act strategically as evident in his speech regarding annexation on 18<sup>th</sup> march 2014, Kremlin:

*“To understand the reason behind such a choice it is enough to know the history of Crimea and what Russia and Crimea have always meant for each other. Everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride. This is the location of ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptised. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilisation and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The graves of Russian soldiers whose bravery brought Crimea into the Russian empire are also in Crimea. This is also Sevastopol – a legendary city with an outstanding history, a fortress that serves as the birthplace of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet. Crimea is Balaklava*

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<sup>29</sup> Bebler Anton , “ The Russian-Ukraine Conflict Over Crimea “,Teorija in Praska, let .52, 1-2-2015, pp.196-217

<sup>30</sup>[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1400/RR1498/RAND\\_RR1498.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1400/RR1498/RAND_RR1498.pdf) accessed on 22nd may,2018

*and Kerch, Malakhov Kurgan and Sapun Ridge. Each one of these places is dear to our hearts, symbolising Russian military glory and outstanding valour.*"<sup>31</sup>

At the time of the operation, more than 30,000 Troops were available, much better trained and structured, than ones in Georgia. This time the operation bore resemblance to the form of Hybrid Warfare where Military power is amalgamated with Non-Military means resulting in optimal results, with controlled costs and effectiveness. The presence of 'masked green men' were of a regular infantry along with anti-terrorist police units with a secret chain of command to hide the state identity of the force.

Owing to the success of Russia was the geography of Crimea, it was easy to seal from the mainland. Pertaining to the space, a counter attack for defence was easily permeable. Thus, communications systems could be easily disrupted from the mainland. Also, Crimea with its political and administrative structures was different from Ukraine as a result had a certain degree of autonomy. The most important factor was its close proximity with the Southern Military District of Russia which had large number of steady combat. Russia apart from Crimea wouldn't have been able to launch an attack in its central districts. Also, staff readiness was possible because of the upcoming Sochi Olympics 2014, thus enabling Russia the opportunity of rapid military build-up, which partially diminished prospects of Counter attack from Ukrainian forces.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile a Referendum was announced on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014, with insufficient notice, without the authorities disinterest in updating voters register in fear of multiple voting. However, the referendum held on 16<sup>th</sup> march 2014, reportedly proceeded peacefully and orderly, but not democratically pure. According to the authority 81.36% of registered voters

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<sup>31</sup> <https://speakola.com/ideas/vladimir-putin-annexation-of-crimea-2014> accessed on 5th September, 2018

<sup>32</sup> Bebler Anton , " The Russian-Ukraine Conflict Over Crimea " , Teorija in Praska, let .52, 1-2-2015, pp.196-217



took part in Crimea's referendum, and 96.77 % voted for the separation in Eastern Ukraine and reunification with Russia ,being very controversial specially among western spectators evident when *The Guardian* reported it as an ' *illegal poll*' stating :

*"As the results rolled in, they were met with neither surprise nor welcome by the west. Russian president Vladimir Putin told Barack Obama in a phone call on Sunday night that the referendum endorsing Crimea becoming part of Russia was legal and should be accepted, according to the Kremlin. However, Obama said that the US rejected the results and warned that Washington was ready to impose sanctions on Moscow over the crisis. The White House said, that Obama emphasised that Russia's actions were in violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and that, in co-ordination with our European partners, we are prepared to impose additional costs on Russia for its actions".*<sup>33</sup>

But that was not much of an effect , as Russian speaking Minorities supported Crimea's Secession from Ukraine and its incorporation into Russia, which mainly stemmed out of their relative deprivation ,state of corruption , economic downturns. They started protesting against the bill that abolished Russian as the official language there and didn't want to live in Ukraine as Second class citizen as the other side i.e. (the separatists) promised them with better standard of living in case of annexation. This resulted in 17<sup>th</sup> march declaration of Crimean independence, the city council of Sevastopol wanted the admission of its ports as a separate federal city, followed by a treaty on 18<sup>th</sup> march 2014, incorporating Crimea and Sevastopol in Moscow. The federal Assembly of Moscow soon passed Constitutional Law on admitting to the Russian federation the Republic of Crimea and establishing within the Russian Federation the New Constituent Entities the Republic of Crimea and the city of Federal importance

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<sup>33</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/16/ukraine-russia-truce-crimea-referendum> accessed on 2nd July, 2018

Sevastopol.<sup>34</sup> On 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2014, Moscow unilaterally renounced the agreements concerning the deployment of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine's Territory according to which Russian federation had paid US\$530 million per year and written off US\$100 million of Ukrainian debt.<sup>35</sup> But Putin justified it in clear terms evident from his speech on March 2014:

*"I understand why Ukrainian people wanted change. They have had enough of the authorities in power during the years of Ukraine's independence. Presidents, prime ministers and parliamentarians changed, but their attitude to the country and its people remained the same. They milked the country, fought among themselves for power, assets and cash flows and did not care much about the ordinary people. They did not wonder why it was that millions of Ukrainian citizens saw no prospects at home and went to other countries to work as day labourers. I would like to stress this: it was not some Silicon Valley they fled to, but to become day labourers. Last year alone almost 3 million people found such jobs in Russia. According to some sources, in 2013 their earnings in Russia totalled over \$20 billion, which is about 12% of Ukraine's GDP."*<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, Professor John J. Mearsheimer, in his seminal essay 'Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault; the liberal delusions that provoked Putin' stated the calculations of naked geopolitics behind it. He stated that Washington may not like Moscow's position, but it should understand the logic behind it. This was Geopolitics '101: great powers are always sensitive to potential threats near their home territory'. After all, the United States does not tolerate distant great powers deploying military forces anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, much less on its borders. He particularly assumed the outrage in Washington if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico in it. Putting

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.,p.207

<sup>35</sup> [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1400/RR1498/RAND\\_RR1498.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1400/RR1498/RAND_RR1498.pdf) accessed on 8th may, 2018

<sup>36</sup> <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603> accessed on 5th may, 2018

logic aside, Russian leaders have told their Western counterparts on many occasions that they consider NATO expansion into Georgia and Ukraine unacceptable, along with any effort to turn those countries against Russia -- a message that the 2008 Russian-Georgian war also made crystal clear.<sup>37</sup>

The gains in case of both Russian Military and Navy were substantial in terms of strategic leverage because:

Firstly, the Russian annexation of Crimea and accumulation of assets resolved the uncertainty of Russian Stationing Rights there.

Secondly, the control of the Ukrainian Navy confirmed the potential surpassing of strength of the Turkish fleet.

Thirdly, Russian army could now sketch plans for military development on the strategic path through Crimean peninsula.

The Russian Navy's lease was extended long before in April 2010 by the Ukrainian and Russian parliament for the extension of rights over Sevastopol. Despite of Yanukovich's approval, opponent politicians had in mind a plan of revisiting it later, which Moscow was not comfortable at since it did not grant it the right to expand further in Black Sea replacing the old naval craft with similar ones and could not modernise it or create new type of ships. But these hurdles were overcome in 2014. Russia not only establish control over Sevastopol (freeing it from debts payment), but also of former Ukrainian naval bases of Novoozerne, Myrnyi (Donuzlav Lake), Saky, Balaklava and marine base at Feodosiya. Along with it, it also captured Navy's 25 Warships, Service Ships, Seven Ship yards in Crimea that would help it

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault> accessed on 6th may, 2018

expansionist plans in Black Sea.<sup>38</sup> There has been apprehensions regarding upgradation of an early warning radar station in Sevastopol that would cover the Black Sea and Middle East. This according to Prof. Roy Allison is not just an effort on military planning for Crimea but an effort to regain the peninsula for future power projections to let the international spectators know about Russia's growing capacity and recover from the Post –cold war geopolitical declines, losing states soon after, the *Su-24* aircrafts of the Black sea fleet started practicing strikes. Another flagship blueprint that Russia had in mind was the effect Of Russia seizure of Crimea was turning the Sea of Azov exclusively a Russian lake through full control of the Kerch Straits. Along with it, the entire episode brought into question the demarcation lines of the Black Sea continental shelf and exclusive Economic Zone, with potential Hydrocarbon resource with other Black Sea countries that does not comply with Russia's jurisdiction. His significance for Black sea rights was evident in speech on 2014 concert in Sevastopol, Crimea ahead of vote where he said:

*“With your decision you restored historical justice,” he told the crowd of supporters in Sevastopol, home to the Black Sea Fleet's base. With your decision, you showed the whole world what is real, rather than sham, democracy. You came to the referendum and made a decision. You voted for your future and future of your children. In a rallying call, he said there were still things to improve in Crimea, but we will definitely do everything, because when we are together, we are a huge force that can resolve the most difficult problems.”<sup>39</sup>*

Russia's geopolitical campaign alarmed the European and their leaders, affecting public opinions, which hardened the External Security threat for Europe. Russia's actions were widely interpreted as going further than preventing Ukraine from NATO, they were seen as a

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<sup>38</sup> Allison Roy ,” Russia's Deniable Intervention in Ukraine : How and Why Russia broke the Rules”, International Affairs ,Volume 90 , No -6 , 2014, pp.1256-1328

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.voanews.com/a/putin-hails-crimea-annexation-speech-ahead-vote/4299055.html> accessed on 7th may, 2018

revisionist challenge to the existing security order and raised suspicions of broader expansionist order. This was true to some extent as the commander of Russian airborne troops now wanted to 'further increase the combat potential outside their arena', and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has himself talked about Russian plans to expand in number of key regions of the world like Seychelles, Singapore, Nicaragua, and Venezuela and Naval plans in Vietnam.

As far as West response is concerned Prof Stephen Blank, Senior Fellow For American Foreign Policy in Washington and Peter Huessy in an article in Gatestone Institute International Policy Council on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2014 elaborated that, It now appeared that the plan was for these terrorists to shoot down a Russian passenger flight over the Ukraine in order to create a *casus belli* [cause for war]. Putin repeatedly claimed that Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons as a "de-escalatory measure" even against non-nuclear states. The evidence that this war was pre planned was overwhelming. The planning for this Ukrainian operation started in 2006, when Putin offered to "guarantee Crimea's territory." The forces fighting in Kiev consist not mainly of "separatists" or rebels, but of trained Russian army, intelligence and paramilitary officers, as well as Russian and some Ukrainian "volunteers" recruited by Moscow. Putin would incite disturbances in Crimea, then, graciously offer to take over Crimea to solve the problems.

For the Russians, and particularly for Putin, Ukraine can have no future other than as a Russian colony. This is indeed a phased invasion of Ukraine. The U.S. did not accept Russian aggression before; it should not accept it now. If "truth is the first casualty of war," Russia's war against Ukraine, illegally launched by Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, is no exception. One of the saddest developments of this war is that on all political sides, in both Europe and the U.S., an entire army of Putin defenders has emerged, for whom the United States can do little right and Russia can do little wrong.

Interestingly, Patrick Buchanan has discovered that Russia's President Vladimir Putin is supporting both Christian values and U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. Consequently he asserts we should not be worried about his illegal annexation of Crimea and aggression in Eastern Ukraine in violation of the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, in which Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal in exchange for Russian and American assurances that the use of force or threats of military action would not be taken against it.<sup>40</sup>

The events that occurred between 2013-15 have seriously damaged relations between Russia and Ukraine. Moscow's harsh reply in the Euromaidan Protests and the overthrow of the Yanukovich Presidency has demonstrated that how far Russia can go to serve its interests without respect for territorial Sovereignty and integrity of a nation in a world where the member states respect for International law is commanded. In spite of international condemnation of Russia's actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, owing to the gross Human Rights violations Putin refused to bow down and continues his aggressive postures in the later period. This had severe implications in the academic and Foreign policy ethos where scholars spoke of the return of an imperial Russia pursuing harsh geopolitical ambitions, even to the extent of describing the crisis as something like a New cold War, where Russia enjoys a comparative advantage over Ukraine, and capitalises on the Trade asymmetry.

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<sup>40</sup><https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4647/ukraine-russia-war> accessed on 11th July, 2018

## CHAPTER 3

### DYNAMICS OF SOFTPOWER IN RUSSIA – UKRAINE RELATIONS

Russia's Soft Power in Ukraine is considered as it is built by a discursive strategy on the foundations of unquestionable historical, cultural and linguistic bonds between Ukrainians and Russian's. It further throws light on the role of Russian media in characterising the conflict and shaping of public opinion to its favour along with an ardent focus on the activities of Russian Orthodox Church in fomenting the crisis.

#### 3.1 CONCEPTUALISING SOFT POWER:

Power in its most general sense can be defined as '*the ability to achieve a desired outcome*'. This may imply the capacity to take certain decisions which are obligatory to others, which might fall under a formal hierarchical structure, or which captivates the other variables in a structure. There lies 2 facets of Power as defined by Andrew Heywood in his book '*Political Theory: an Introduction*' are, '*intentionalist*' and '*structuralist*'.<sup>41</sup>The first category says that power is an aspect of any observable agent i.e political party, interest group, MNC's and the second category identifies power as a derivative of any social system in a comprehensive whole. Deliberating on the unsettled controversial attributes of 'power', Steven Lukes in his book '*Power: A Radical View (1974)*' distinguishes between three 'faces' or 'dimensions' of power broadly explained as ; *If A gets B to do something A wants but which B would not have chosen to do , power is being exercised i.e. an ability to get someone to do*

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<sup>41</sup> Andrew Heywood , *Political Theory : An Introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York ,2004,p.122

*what they would not otherwise have done.* Thus, three features can be attributed from the above mentioned statement: First, exercise of power to influence decision making, second use of Power for shaping up political agenda restricting unwanted decisions, and third perpetrating control over people's mind or simply thought control.

This brings us to the core of the concept of Soft power, which is often being called as '*second face of power*'. Joseph S. Nye Jr, a former dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University has coined the term in 1990's and subsequently in 2004 and since then had created reverberations among international relations scholarship. Soft power according to Nye is an *intangible way to mould preferences of others, using the art of Seduction and attraction.*<sup>42</sup> Unlike Hard Power which rests on the inducements or threats often termed as 'carrot and sticks' used by authoritarian leaders to issue commands and establish control over it. Also, democratic leaders use this as an instrument to manufacture agenda's. Soft Power according to Nye co-opts rather than coercing them. The ability to sway people's minds, resist opinion that is not in favour, and shaping agendas that will give an edge is something that is every owner of Soft power holds in them as an objective. Locating power as the fundamental element of politics soft power is a strategic asset that none can do away with. As a matter of fact, leaders, policy makers, administrators are very well acquainted with the resources of wielding this specific kind of power i.e. Culture, personality, strength of character, political values, institutions, policies, myth-making, shared history, community fellow feeling, propaganda that has a mammoth influence over the entire political organisational and social structure. These tools of manipulating outcomes, indirectly, commanding loyalty and obedience is what the objective of adherents of Soft power. Owing to the realist view where security and survival matters the existence of Soft power may sound irrelevant as states are keen on using

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<sup>42</sup> Joseph S. Nye , Jr, Soft Power : The Means to Success in World Politics, Public Affairs ,New York ,2004,p.7



their military might and other sort of power projection or hard power. The, contemporary state cannot survive just by using the means of coercion, as the era of globalisation has dawned and supposedly the entire world has shrunk in a global village, the network of dependencies has narrowed the scope of using only blatant hard power, and with strengthening of international legal institutions and concept of Human rights, responsibility to protect states ought to become more cautious while using Hard power. Thus, Soft power gathers a strong place in the foreign policy itinerary. The types of option may range between command and co-option where other inducements like business diplomacy, aid diplomacy, sports diplomacy, agenda setting, cultural diplomacy, thwarting on discourses of identity language and most importantly political and social values.

In their seminal essay ‘The Two Faces of Power’ P. Bachrach and M. Baratz described non- decision making as another facet of power through ‘mobilisation of bias’, which operates basically through the ideas and policies of ‘status quo defenders’.<sup>43</sup> This has to take into consideration the dominant values, and political myths, rituals and institutions which tend to favour the vested interest of one or more groups, relative to others. Thus application of Soft Power encompasses such modes while being operated either on a domestic or international level. Nye also describes Soft Power as a different type of Currency (not force or money) to engender cooperation much like Adam Smith’s. Invisible hand while making decisions in free market. He also stated that a strong economy not only provides resources for sanctions and Payments but also lures the consumers through attractive agendas unique it its own. In International politics this activity of thought control is has an enormous effect, affecting the choice of people who are left spell bound with the seductive choice provided by the leaders. The former French Minister has observed that Americans are powerful because they can

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<sup>43</sup>Andrew Heywood , Political Theory : An Introduction, Palgrave Macmillan, New York ,2004,p.125

manufacture the dreams and desires of others through mesmerising global images, through films and television attracting foreign students to their country. This has been relevant since the advent of the Globalization and the vast amount of literature dedicated to the U.S hegemony or the so called Mcdonaldization of the world. It's not only the United States that has mastered the art of Soft Power but , Europe , India, Japan and most importantly China has cast its spell in Asia with its Chinese Characteristics and exported its ideas , food , culture elsewhere in parts of South and South East Asia . However, my topic of exploration solely deals with Russia and its usage of Soft power in its zone of influence after Cold war in Ukraine, where the conflict had taken a violent turn, with annexation of Crimea and Promotion of Separatism in Eastern Ukraine. This might confuse the readers as, nowhere does it seem that Russia embraces the Soft aspects of Power, or Co-option as described by Nye. To my surprise, Russian Soft Power in many aspects is different from the Western concepts of Soft Power in its form, composition objectives.

Nye in his book 'Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics' (2004) has articulated the Soviet Use of Soft Power in the cold war Era. The Soviets engaged in broad campaigns to convince about the rest of the world of the attractiveness of its Communist System along with its vehement condemnation of the European Imperialism which the colonies of Asia and Africa responded to. The Utopia that the Soviets projected was portrayed through Public Diplomacy, Radio broadcasting, peace movements, youth Organisations. Moreover, the Soviet launch of the first space satellite Sputnik the message that Soviets were overpowering the Americans and had a hidden agenda to promote the value that Communism was 'Scientific Socialism'. Apart from these the *Soviet Ballet Companies and Symphony Orchestras* attracted huge masses. They also heavily invested themselves on Sports through its well-built *Winter Olympic Team*. However , in the realm of the popular culture like films ,television, Pop Music it could not match up to the highs of the U.S.A as it remained a closed system. But unfortunately the

economic downturns, De-Stalinization programmes and invasion of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 was anti-thetical to the messages of peace and anti-imperialism. But surprisingly Gorbachev's policy of Glasnost had a favourable effect on its international image.

### **3.2 SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT IN RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND SOFTPOWER:**

The Westernizers are sceptical about the impact of Soft Power in Russian Sphere of influence. Since the beginning they have been wary about Russia's role in the former soviet region and its orientation in devising a strategy for them. As they believe, Russia is essentially a Western nation and saw west as an embodiment of modern progressive civilisation. Thus they proclaim that Russia should play an instrumental role in mounting the basics of liberal democracy rather than stabilising the chaotic illiberal regions. No doubt they understand the value of bilateral engagement with China and Central Asian states owing to the Security vacuum in that region. But also assert the pressing need to maintain a strong partnership with the West which will be a key to unlock its potential in the multilateral institutions and address the regional dilemma there. This explains the logic behind their condemnation of Putin's support for Victor Yanukovich during presidential elections of 2004 in Ukraine. Westernizers stated that Russia would have been in a more meaningful position if they lent their support to Victor Yushchenko, the candidate favoured by the West as this would bolster Russian international image supporting Democratic Norms and Ukrainian democracy. Further, this group asserts that language is the only probable tool for employing Russian Soft power which has a limited scope in former Soviet Space undermined by Colour Revolutions.

The Imperialists school of thought embraces those on the intellectual spectrum who has immense faith in applicability of Soft power for Russian aggrandizement in regions that have

not installed Moscow friendly governments like Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova. Taking a stance diametrically opposite to the Westernizers, this group believes in rebuilding economic and political dominance in the region. They have extreme ideas to resist Western Influence in the region by arming the secessionists, valuing their demands for independence, positively reinforcing those regions whose foreign policy is seemingly close to Moscow with a bigger dream of a greater Russia. Existing literature on the debates regarding the Foreign Policy reveals that few policy makers attached to this imperial vision have urged to transform the Russia from a Nation State to Nation-civilization. Also surprisingly they have least consideration for concepts of Human Rights in Caucasian States of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria which have been dubbed as Frozen Conflict Zones<sup>44</sup>. One important criteria for these group of leaders are the involvement of Military force in high conflict zones of North and South Caucasus.

With regard to Ukraine this school of thought recommended imposing Tough Economic Sanctions after Orange Revolution. With a rapid chain of events followed by, the invalidity of Yanukovich's Victory in the presidential election, the protests in Donetsk , Luhansk and Crimea towards independence from Kiev Imperialist believed this could be the golden opportunity to bargain for Russian expansion ,as linguistically and Culturally the mass was Pro-Russian so started backing all political movements after victory of Yushchenko vowing to grant Russian language the status of Second State language apart from supporting Ukrainian Orthodox Church which was closer to Moscow Patriarchate .<sup>45</sup>

There comes the third school of thought of the Stabilisers, who puts emphasis on economic modernisation, stability security along with the balancing role of the Soft Power

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<sup>44</sup> Tsygankov P. Andrei, "If not by Tanks, then by Banks? The role of Soft Power in Putin's Foreign Policy", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol 58, No7 ,November 2006,pp.1079-1099

<sup>45</sup>Tsygankov P. Andre , "If not by Tanks, then by Banks? The role of Soft Power in Putin's Foreign Policy", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol 58, No7 ,November 2006,pp.1079-1099

Tools. <sup>46</sup>Though they do not have disregard towards tough sanctions, military might, strategic leverage but at the same time analyses the disproportionate use of methods of coercion and violence in the periphery as that would seriously undermine Russian image in its zone of influence. Also they have a positive posture towards values of Democracy, Human Rights but have a slight difference in categorising these values from the Westernisers; as they do not imitate the Western model of democratic standards but, gradually evolve to map them in the local trajectory, i.e. state controlled form of democratisation. Thus, they had vehement criticism against the coloured Revolution in Ukraine, Georgia. However like the imperialists they did not see Yushchenko's victory as a defeat by West as they had put hope on the positive sum potential of the instruments of co-option and mutual cooperation in those areas. Also the presence of State controlled media and its role was fundamental to the vast amount of Russian presence there. The proponents of this school of thought believed that the government should adopt broad policies in the areas of Education, Export of Russian language, films, media, religion and others.

### **3.3 SOFT POWER APPROACH OF VLADIMIR PUTIN**

Putin in his programmatic *2012 article "Russia in a Changing World"*, defined Soft Power as "a complex of tools and methods for achieving foreign policy goals without deploying weapons using information tools and other forms of intervention"<sup>47</sup>. He further spoke about the current threat of outside influence from NGO's that could threaten with separatism undermining the social structure of the state. Thus, he asserted that there must be a clear division between free speech and normal political activity on the one hand, and illegal

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.,p.1084

<sup>47</sup>Rotaru Vasile," Forced Attraction ? How Russia is Instrumentalizing its Soft Power Resources in the Near Abroad", *Problems of Post-Communism* , Vol 65,No 1, 2018 , pp.37-48

instruments of "soft power" on the other. The civilized work of non-governmental humanitarian and charity organizations deserves every support. This also applied to those who actively criticize the current authorities. However, the activities of "pseudo-NGOs" and other agencies that try to destabilize other countries with outside support were unacceptable to him. He referred to those cases in which the activities of NGOs were not based on the interests (and resources) of local social groups, were instead funded and supported by outside forces. Large countries, international blocks and corporations have many agents of influence. When they acted in the open, it was simply a form of civilized lobbying. Russia also used such institutions, such as the Federal Agency for CIS Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, International Humanitarian Cooperation, the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation and their leading universities, which recruits talented students from abroad."<sup>48</sup>

The foreign Policy concept of Russian Federation of 2013 states that apart from securing the country protecting its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, there must be a vision that encompasses multi –vector foreign policy and developing a framework of non-confrontational protection of national interest, promoting universal peace and Stability focussing on collective decision making and ensuring itself as one of the influential power in the international community. This is clear from the below mentioned statement from the 2013 documents on Foreign policy which throws enough light on the significance of Soft power that Putin has attached in its foreign policy orientation. The general provisions of policy included:

*“... ensuring comprehensive protection of rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots residing abroad, and promoting, in various international formats, Russia’s approach to human rights issues; promoting the Russian language and strengthening its positions in the world, disseminating information on the achievements of the peoples of Russia*

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<sup>48</sup><http://worldmeets.us/Moskovskiye.Novosti000001.shtml#axzz5leIS5gBY>, accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> march 2019

*and consolidating the Russian diaspora abroad; facilitating the development of a constructive dialogue and partnership relations between civilizations in the interests of enhancing accord among various cultures and confessions and ensuring their mutual enrichment.”*<sup>49</sup>

This sends a clear message behind the creation of new institutions called *Rosstrudnichestvo* that is a Federal Agency for the Common Wealth Of Independent States, Compatriots living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation and *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World Foundation) established to promote Russian Culture and Language in the Post-Soviet States as a response to internationally functional U.S agency for international development.

Also, massive Russian media took a giant leap with expansion in foreign markets of the Radio station Voice of Russia later merged with Sputnik, a state funded media broadcasting news.<sup>50</sup> Freshly brewed content from social media and news agency from 34 different local languages were continuously displayed .This was done keeping in mind the outstanding influence of Western Media houses like CNBC and BBC, somewhat an attempt to provide a substitute to these Western channels. Some scholars have even argued about Moscow’s handling with Soft Power was at pace with confrontation with west. The post-Orange Revolution Moscow dubbed the event as “NGO special operation”. This conforms Putin preference for State directed approach to Soft Power, which is not comfortable with the existence of autonomous civil society. However the presence of Euro-Atlantic alliance and its spell has significantly shaped Moscow’s approach to Soft Power.

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<sup>49</sup>[http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/122186](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/122186), accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> march 2019

<sup>50</sup>Meister Stefan, “Putin’s Version Of Soft Power “, German Marshall Fund Of United States , 2016, pp.7-11.

The Foreign policy document of 2013 shows that Putin has been too cautious of its international image, and a blatant attempt to restructure its civilizational legacy abroad amongst people having Russian origin. He had several objectives in mind while framing this document which are as follows:

Firstly to contribute, explore the use of public diplomacy, the potential of civil society institutions, for the development of international cultural and humanitarian cooperation as a means to promote dialogue among civilizations, build consensus and ensure understanding among peoples placing a particular emphasis on inter-religious dialogue. Secondly, building up interaction with international and non-governmental human rights organizations in order to strengthen universal norms on human rights protection free of double standards, to balance them with the responsibility of persons for their actions. This would require first of all in terms of preventing contempt for the feelings of believers, promoting tolerance and strengthening moral foundations of the human rights dialogue, expanding participation of the Russian Federation in international human rights agreement and extending the legal framework of international cooperation in order to improve the level of protection of rights and legitimate interests of Russian children living abroad. Thirdly, to establish Russia's positive image worthy of the high status of its culture, education, science, sports achievements, the level of civil society development, as well as participation in programs of assistance to developing countries along with moulding tools to better its perception throughout the world. Fourthly, improving the application of "soft power" and identifying the best forms of activities in this area that would take into account both international experience and national peculiarities and build on



mechanisms of interaction with civil society and experts. Lastly, developing the regulatory framework in the above-mentioned area.<sup>51</sup>

But the example of Ukraine and subsequent intervention in Crimea exposes Moscow's another Strong agenda of expropriating benefits of Soft power is the Politics of Dis information, spreading half-truths, to people to capitalise on the existing identity lines between the Russians living in home and elsewhere abroad in areas of Eastern Ukraine discussed below.

### **3.4 IDENTITY AND SOFT POWER IN UKRAINE**

The dissolution of Soviet Union complicated Russian Post-Identity formulation due to existence of new borders, and new found identity as a nation-state. In spite of having a solid ethnic-Russian majority, the newly independent countries with their unique ethnic composition had a spiralling effect in creating new identity algorithms. Therefore, it had now ethnic-Russian people, Russian speaking minorities from the periphery and national minorities inside. Thus, defining Russianness was not a linear process, at a time when many Russians believed Ukrainians and Belarusians as part of the Supra nation State of Russia, and could not forget its imperial past. These were understandable from the irregular use of 'ruskiy' which had ethnic and cultural connotation and 'rossiyskiy,' which had a civic approach and not imperial though both of them meant 'Russian'.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>[http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/asset\\_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186), accessed on 22nd march 2019

<sup>52</sup>Teper Yuri, "Official Russian Identity Discourse in light of the annexation of Crimea: national or imperial?", Post- Soviet Affairs, Vol.32, No.4, 2016, pp.378-396

These identity discourses had a complementary effect in justifying its annexation of Crimea and activities in Eastern Ukraine, convincing the domestic bloc. Therefore defence for Russian language had been a controversial one since independence, became the bedrock for separatist movements in eastern Ukraine. Soon after the new government ushered into power after Victor Yanukovich there was a blatant attempt by the new authority to annul a law that has been passed by Yanukovich in 2012 which granted Russian as the official regional language. After the law was passed, Russian became an official regional language in thirteen of Ukraine's twenty-seven administrative units: *Kyiv, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and Donetsk, Luhansk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Odesa, Kherson, Mykolayiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv Oblasts*. The law generated public outrage. The opposition and the citizens and experts and intellectuals spoke against the law as it threatened to sow the seeds of disunity, and disharmony. Also, for a language to attain a status of a regional language, it must be used by 50% of the population which Russia achieved only in Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions. But this was a golden opportunity for Russia to propagate people about the resultant injustice towards the Russian people and condemn the Ukrainian Parliament for its brutal violation on Ethnic Minority Rights, supported by the European Parliament. This had a positive outcome with interim Ukrainian president Oleksandr Turchynov not signing the nullification clause of the law.

There are claims regarding Russian concerns about ethnic Russians, compatriots, Russians speaking people have been raised to consolidate the Russian domestic audience into one single whole and raise the flag against the injustice perpetrated to them by the Ukrainian authorities ushering in huge popular sympathy. Also the efforts summed up to form a concrete argument to instil support for Russian actions in Crimea, Southern and Eastern Ukraine and mobilize the sympathetic mass against the authority of the Kiev. Putin's Crimea speech in 18<sup>th</sup> march 2014 in the grand St. George Hall represented a pivotal moment in the changing

dynamics of Post-Soviet identity formulations. He also hinted upon the hanged circumstances of World order. But, his appeal to the sentiments Russian speakers was a game changing event in politics of Russia in post-soviet space. The Guardian reported:

*“At the same time, Putin directed some trademark insults at the new government in Kiev, whose leaders he said had seized power in a coup last month using "terror, violence and pogroms. These people were neo-Nazis, nationalists, anti-Semites and anti-Russians whose antecedents could be traced back to Adolf Hitler. There is no one to negotiate with [in Kiev]. I'm not kidding. Following this undemocratic push, Russia could not possibly have left Crimea "in the lurch". To do so, would have been treachery. And anyway, he said, Crimean's had a right to self-determination, just like the people of Kosovo or any other aspiring independent nation. He did not mention Scotland. Luckily for Alex Salmond, there are not many distressed ethnic Russians on the Upper Clyde.”*<sup>53</sup>

However, Russian behaviour towards ethnic Russians in Commonwealth Of Independent States and Baltic States have some resemblance to Russian behaviour in Ukraine for example, Russian conflicts in Georgia and Moldova ,Transnistria in 1990's which had appeals related to protection of the ethnic population but they were not used as pawns to justify formal interventions. The phenomena of protection and support to language rights and cultural ties were extended further through the concept of *Russkiy mir (Russian World)* which according to Putin in 2014 was defined as “*a civilisation that includes people who feel culturally close to Russia.*” The Russian World is put forward in opposition to Western values of liberalism and individualism, as described by Alexander Dugin, “*what we are against will unite us , while what we are for divides us, therefore we should emphasize what we oppose*”. The concept

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<sup>53</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/18/vladimir-putin-chilling-address-duma-world-view> accessed on 27th march 2019

includes binaries of language, culture, history, shared heritage, economic ties, conservatism, and traditionalism to embolden the path for solidifying legitimacy of Russian influence in the region. Thus, Moscow expected this to be the uniting factor for Russian diaspora in Ukraine and other states.

Putin was well aware about the fact that Crimea was the key which could open the way for huge political gains. As he viewed the diaspora communities as Russia leaning political influence within Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which meant they could muster interests of the authorities towards Russia led Customs Union and Eurasian Economic Union and could potentially abrogate Ukraine's interest towards the EU integration.

With regard to Citizenship Moscow has always shown a tough posture and used it as a tool of coercion as for example in the case of 2008 when Russian consulate in Simferopol increased the distribution of Russian passports to citizens of Ukraine in Crimea.<sup>54</sup> Also it had been used a justification for intervention in Georgia to protect ethnic Russians or 'manufactured citizen' originally from South Ossetians. But years preceding the 2014 Crisis data regarding citizens and non-citizens were blurred resulting to difficulty to use the protection rhetoric in the case of Georgia. This was the rationale behind Russian legislative efforts to amend its existing citizenship law to fasten the process of granting citizenship to Russian speaking applicants. The Russophone norm as prescribed by Mr. Medvedev was the relative of the concerned person has to live permanently in Russia or in territories belonging to Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution. Parallely, there was a creation of a separate bill that would ease the process of acquiring territories in Foreign States into the Russian Federation. This allowed including of more than 2million citizens as Russian among which 1.5millions were ethnic Russians and

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<sup>54</sup>Allison Roy, "Russian 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine : how and why Russia broke the rules", *International Affairs*, Vol.90, NO.6, 2014, pp.1255-1297.

3,50,000 Russian speakers originally Crimean Tatars.<sup>55</sup>This, according to Roy Allison, was a citizen grab strategy to penetrate into Crimea deeply which also included forced distribution of passports in population centres of separatist regions of Eastern Ukraine.

But Putin had ardently articulated a historic appeal to justify his moves. In fact the weakness of the central authority after fleeing of the Yanukovych government was a boon for Russia to intervene in more comprehensive terms in Ukraine. But what was the central plank behind Putin's Motivation was the historical narrative he attached. His disposition of History was a mix of Russian imperial, Soviet legacies revolving around Kievan Rus as the hub of Eastern Slavic Civilization which fought Fascism in Second World War. His argument was that of the unity between Eastern Slavs, Orthodox Georgia, and Armenia with Russia was enough for him to deter any narrative of the independent existence of these republics. Putin's Speech at 2013 Valdai club asserted that Russians and Ukrainians were one people and that Ukraine was a part of 'our great Russian, or Russian-Ukrainian World'. His address to the shared historical legacy can be better understood from the Valdai Speech in 2013:

*It is evident that it is impossible to move forward without spiritual, cultural and national self-determination. Without this we will not be able to withstand internal and external challenges, nor we will succeed in global competitions. And today we see a new round of such competitions. Today their main focuses are economic-technological and ideological-informational. Military-political problems and general conditions are worsening. The world is becoming more rigid, and sometimes forgoes not merely international law, but also basic decency.[Every country] has to have military, technological and economic strength, but nevertheless the main thing that will determine success is the quality of citizens, the quality of*

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.,p.1260

*society: their intellectual, spiritual and moral strength. After all, in the end economic growth, prosperity and geopolitical influence are all derived from societal conditions. They depend on whether the citizens of a given country consider themselves a nation, to what extent they identify with their own history, values and traditions, and whether they are united by common goals and responsibilities. In this sense, the question of finding and strengthening national identity really is fundamental for Russia.*"<sup>56</sup>

It is in this light that Putin time and again embarked on the fact that it was Nikita Khurshev's 'personal initiative' to in 1954 to transfer the Crimean region to the Ukrainian Union. Thus they should be loyal to lawful claims of the separatists and their right to self-determination was unquestionable. And that the Crimean annexation was a remedy for the historic injustice to the Russians.

It is absolutely necessary to point out the contested concept put forward by Putin, called 'Novorossiya', a large governorship in the Russian empire, used as a territorial concept to which pro-Russian separatist in Donetsk, and Luhansk provinces have laid claim.<sup>57</sup>

Putin embarked on the urgency to grant legitimate rights to ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Novorossiya of tsarist days including Kharkhov, Lugansk, Donetsk, Kherson, Nikolayev and Odessa. These areas had similar roots with those of the Russian state and therefore Russia would condemn and counter act on every encroachment on their rights. This Nationalist interpretation in Putin's Foreign Policy underlined his activities in Ukraine.

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<sup>56</sup><https://russialist.org/transcript-putin-at-meeting-of-the-valdai-international-discussion-club-partial-transcript/> accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> march 2019

<sup>57</sup>Allison Roy, "Russian 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine : how and why Russia broke the rules", International Affairs , Vol.90, NO.6, 2014 , pp.1255-1297.

### **3.5 MEDIA IN RUSSIAN SOFT POWER: A WEAPON OF WAR IN UKRAINIAN CONFLICT:**

The advent of Information Revolution has left the borders more porous with information spreading faster than winds to mobilise huge chunk of people within minutes. The governments thus use information to enhance their soft power by inciting concerned constituencies. This digital revolution has also been used by Russia as a potent soft power tool since 2000's. In fact the 'Colour Revolutions' in the post-soviet space have bewildered the Foreign policy elites of the government. They realised the strategic value of prevailing control over the information space .is one of the significant asset to maintain dominance in the near abroad. Thus with the beginning of the new era in 2000 Moscow had tightened its grips on Russian mass media, which was also broadcasted in former Space. In fact, the Russian Foreign Policy concept 2013 had reiterated the power of information in enhancing its influence in international relations, which will be clearly from the following general provision mentioned below;

*“Rapid acceleration of global processes in the first decade of the 21st century and growing new trends in global development require new approaches to key aspects of the rapidly changing situation in the world and a new vision of priorities in Russia's foreign policy, taking into account Russia's increased responsibility for setting the international agenda and shaping the system of international relations...Soft power, a comprehensive tool kit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy, is becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations. At the same time, increasing global competition and the growing crisis potential sometimes create a risk of destructive and unlawful use of "soft power" and human rights concepts to exert political pressure on sovereign*

*states, interfere in their internal affairs, destabilize their political situation, manipulate public opinion, including under the pretext of financing cultural and human rights projects abroad.”*<sup>58</sup>

In fact this tool was vehemently used in Russian policy in Ukraine’s 2004 elections. Prof. Taras Kuzio in his article “*Russian policy towards Ukraine during elections*” talked about how Russia through the Ukrainian oligarchs played a gigantic role in censoring Ukrainian media, sending covert messages to television stations and recommending what content should be covered and what to be filtered. Also there were several interferences in elections of 2004 where episodes of disinformation was recorded due to Russian portrayal of the rival candidate Yuschenko as national villain. Surprisingly Russia complained about “pressure against journalists who criticized representatives of the authorities”, revealing their double standards, though the final outcome was victory of Russian media backed Victor Yanukovich. However the most visible accomplishment of application Soft power Resources through Media was evident during 2013-2015 Ukrainian Crisis, which is described below.

### ***The politics of disinformation:***

Several information campaigns were waged over Eastern Ukraine along with sporadic cyberattacks. Though the initial attacks were not very disruptive, but since late 2014 the hackers were successfully circulating fake news, false reports about the intensity of the conflict. The news channels devoted at least one slots about reports about Ukraine engaging on atrocities on innocent Russian citizens. They also glued their focus to insecurity of the civilians due to presence of the “Pro-Fascist regime.” As per the Russian media perspective it was always the Ukrainian Army who abrogated peace agreements. The media openly disregarded professional ethics and represented biased interpretations. Since the Ukrainian presidential elections in 2014

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<sup>58</sup>[http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/122186](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/122186), accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019



,there has been a common narrative underplay which is that of the dangers of ‘fascism’ in the ultranationalist movements in the Euromaidan protest ,which was extended later to the Ukrainian soldiers and army. The most Scandalous was that of a news agency called ‘Channel one ’which used the jargons of ‘executioners’ in its report against the Ukrainian army.<sup>59</sup> Also it showed repeated coverage of a story of a young woman from Eastern Ukraine who fled as a refugee from the town of Slavyansk along with her four children due to extreme fear of Ukrainian army and its atrocities. This was added by another story by an eye witness according to whom there was a gathering by Ukrainian soldiers who on Lenin Square and crucified a 3year old boy who was left bleeding in front of his mother who was instead tied to a tank and forced to watch her son bleed. Quite obviously it had references from the haunts from the Nazi legacy as expressed below:

*“When they entered the town, there was not a single rebel there, but they shot marauded. Even fascists did not do that. They are the great grandchildren of the SS-volunteers of “Galician” division. I am saying this because I am originally from Zakarpatye, and old people say that fascists never did what those SS-volunteers from the “Galician” division did to people. They were local, they tortured other locals, raped women, killed children. Now these [Ukrainian soldiers] are their great-grandchildren .They returned rose from the ashes.”<sup>60</sup>*

This was supposedly a fake news as reported by Human Rights Protection Group in Ukraine which reported. On 12 July 2014, Pyervy Kanal broadcast an ‘interview’ with a woman presented as a refugee and mother of four. She was neither, and has been seen in several propaganda stunts, however this one aroused particular outrage and revulsion. The woman claimed to have witnessed a three-year-old boy being crucified by Ukrainian soldiers “on Lenin

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<sup>59</sup>Pantii Mervi & Khaldarova Irina, “ Fake News ; The narrative battle over the Ukrainian conflict”,Journalism Practice , Vol, 10, No.7 ,2016,pp.899.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.,

Square in Sloviansk”, and his mother killed because the father was a pro-Russian militant. Even details that could be easily checked were wrong (there is no Lenin Square in Sloviansk!), making it quite impossible to believe that the presenter Yulia Chumakova was unaware of the lie that she was helping to spread.<sup>61</sup>

Another false narrative was that of linking Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko’s Speech in Odessa with Stepan Bandera, leader of Nationalist Faction who tried to erase all ethnic Non-Ukrainians from Ukraine along with collaboration with Nazi Germany .Channel One referred Odessa city as “banderovtsy city” (followers of Stapan Bandera ).<sup>62</sup>.Apart from these there were false reports on economic downturns in Ukraine .There are other significant narratives in Russian history that accords high prominence to Crimea. This fable was built upon the narratives of Russia’s revenge for the siege of Sevastopol in World war 2, which after the annexation was pictured that Crimea became more prosperous after its entry into historical motherland with tourists joining in. This was furthered by the competition with Western Narratives where it is portrayed as aggressive, and Trouble makers from U.S and Europe who is trying to meddle in affairs of an outside state. But Russia was reflected through the prism of spirituality, morality, loyalty to traditional values vs the West who was immoral.

Kremlin was very effective in providing materials to international media outlets in the form of pamphlets, press releases, tweets, interviews by Russian strong men even reaching out their Western Audiences through English language TV Channel., *Russia today, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Daily Telegraph, Le Figaro, El Pais and others.*

Though Ukraine officially labelled its effort in Donbass as’ Anti –TERRORIST’ operation, but it had to deal with the strong Information Warfare that Russia perpetrated, the

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<sup>61</sup><http://khp.org/en/index.php?id=1544295741> accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019

<sup>62</sup>Pantii Mervi & Khaldarova Irina , “ Fake News ; The narrative battle over the Ukrainian conflict “,Journalism Practice ,Vol, 10, No.7 ,2016,pp.891-901

objectives of which was to demoralise the Ukrainian people and defame the authorities in Kiev so as to muster the public opinion in its favour . This episode thus proves *Nye* 's assertion in his book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics (2004)* that “information is power “, and success depends on not only on whose army wins but also on “whose story wins”.

### **3.6 ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RUSSIAN SOFTPOWER IN UKRAINE**

The religious landscape of Russia has seen its traditional pillar , The Russian Orthodox church weaving the ideological narrative of Moscow to lure others into its arena of civilisation , which induced various nationalities to act as a social glue to unite Russians and create a barrage to stop the flow of liberal Secularism .On the other hand , The UCO(MP) or Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate was the outcome of Russian cultural influence in Ukraine showering Spiritual Values lending support to the concept of ‘Russian World’ . This institution can thus be seen as a ‘Soft power tool’ lending rhetorical support to spiritual and moral dimensions of ‘Russian World’. The wholesome experience of Euromaidan , loss of Crimean territory ,sovereignty to Russians , its activity in Donbas have put into question UCO(MP)’S political neutrality based on Christian values.

Given the opinion manufacturing capacity of Religion in Ukraine which is very large i.e. in 2014 over three quarters of population identified themselves as believers, most of who practiced orthodoxy. However the greatest rival being the faction of Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate. But the UCO (MP) had larger audiences in mass media, gaining much more attention in leading newspapers .In fact, the influence was at its high during 2009 when Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and Al Rus, underlined special cultural bonhomie with the Ukrainian Population, opposing the Ukrainian Church mingling with people, shaping their daily lives, paying pastoral visits quite often rewarding people attached to Yanukovich Regime and raising the bar of UCO (MP) in Ukrainian soil.

However, there are competing factions in form of denominations of Orthodox Christianity that is the Kiev faction, and Autocephalus Orthodox church apart from the Moscow Faction. Between 2010 and 2013 the Moscow Patriarchate was determined to gather support from the Ukrainian Government to pressurize priests and devotees of the independent Orthodox faction to return from 'Kiev' and join the Moscow jurisdiction. However, with the Euromaidan protests going on, UCO (MP) has witnessed itself slipping into an awkward position, reflecting the spiritual aspect of a hybrid Russo-Ukrainian identity which was not necessarily attached to the Russian Federation but projecting a Russophone or 'Eastern Ukrainian Identity'.<sup>63</sup> But with the extension of support from such factions Euromaidan Protest gathered a spiritual edge, in spite of the fact that UCO(MP) gradually came under strain due to demand for a United Autocephalous Orthodox Church as the only dignified embodiment of National Independence. However with the advent of the 'revolution of dignity' the Church's (MP'S) patriotic lineages were in question and not enough for the need of the hour. This was due to the fact that in the extreme polarised atmosphere, the UCO(MP)'S proximity towards Yanukovich regime and its delayed response to the protest along with pastoral support of Russia based rebels by some clergy in occupied Donbas and Crimea.<sup>64</sup> They offered enough reasons for the media to regard it as an illegitimate imperial structure designed to spread its claws and kill the nationalist fervour of the country and betraying Ukrainian people at large. The Moscow faction kept on manipulating the rebels lending them social and psychological support along with ideological support to Kremlin's Hybrid Warfare. The paradoxical turn of events led Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate lose momentum and popularity as a Soft power tool in Ukrainian Crisis as its presence in the Ukrainian soil represented an antithetic concept of the Ukrainian sovereignty. This position instead have been taken by the UCO(KP) or the Kiev Patriarchate

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<sup>63</sup>Hudson Victoria, "The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate as a Potential 'Tool' of the Russian Soft Power in the Wake of Ukraine's 2013 Euromaidan", *Europe –Asia Studies*, Vol 70, No.9, November 2018, pp. 1355-1380

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.,

The War in Crimea further led to intensify merger of Independent Ukrainian Church and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church along with a joint commission issued in 2015 about their willingness to join the ‘local orthodox church of Ukraine. To prevent the loss of prestige and popularity of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow Patriarchate, the Russia 24 news channel broadcasted that the Patriarch of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church had called for the murder of innocent civilians in Donbas “ a holy killing”.<sup>65</sup> But it was a sheer misrepresentation of the entire episode and reflected the insecurities and the dilemma of failure to address the Ukrainian people and bring them under one orbit.

Putin’s Soft power vision is consistent with his overall foreign Policy philosophy .His quest for attaining great power status through identity, linguistic, religious and historical assertions have gained him certain political leverage, but also divided the Public Opinion. Though his instruments of coercion seemed to bolster Russia’s Soft Power credentials but the application often by force and sanctions have led scholars believe in a different approach of Putin’s Soft Power which is imperial in nature and instead not an independent category but a complementary version of a Russia’s hard geopolitical approach. This ‘soft autocracy’ by Putin is visible in his concept of ‘*Novorosiya*,’ ‘*Russian World* ‘ concepts and his portrayal of West as the potential aggressor and Russian speakers in Crimea a victim. His version of the fable have significantly resulted out of his uncertain glory at home, visible from his declining popularity ratings at home , and reducing vote share which shall be discussed at length in the next chapter.

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<sup>65</sup>Rotaru Vasile, “Forced Attraction? How Russia is Instrumentalizing its Soft Power Resources in the Near Abroad”, *Problems of Post-Communism* , Vol 65, No 1, 2018 , pp.37-48

## CHAPTER 4

### **RUSSIA – UKRAINE CRISIS: A DIVERSIONARY THEORY OF WAR APPROACH**

There are alternative approaches in understanding the Russian intervention in Ukraine. By analysing the theoretical underpinnings of the Diversionary Theory of War in the Ukrainian context, it explores the dimensions of Putin's behaviour in Ukraine which is rooted in domestic political structure over which he presides. It is followed by a detailed emphasis on the threats to stability of Putin's regime in Russia i.e. through the incidents of Orange Revolution, declining Putin's popularity, 2011 electoral frauds and the resultant anti-Putin protest in 2012 which determined Putin's diversionary tactics in Ukraine.

#### **4.1 DIVERSIONARY THEORY OF WAR: CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING**

Vyacheslav Plehve, the Russian interior Minister and chief of the Gendarme Corps at the time of severe economic crisis social crisis in Russia (1900 – 03), stated on the eve of Russo-Japanese war in 1904:

*“What this country needs is a short victorious war to stem the tide of revolution “<sup>66</sup>.*

He steered the ministry when the internal rubric of Russia was in a dilapidated condition. There was corruption, bankruptcy, which agitated social mass leading to civil unrest, formation of The Socialist –Revolutionary Party .This party associated itself with Terrorism amongst politicians and landowners. Unable to control it through autocratic means, he turned to aggressive foreign policy ventures that culminated in Russia-Japanese War of 1904-05

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<sup>66</sup><https://russiapedia.rt.com/prominent-russians/politics-and-society/vyacheslav-plehve/> accessed on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019

containing imperialistic objectives to gain Manchuria and Korea. Thus, since time immemorial foreign war has served as a remedy to control international tension, insurrection or revolution.

Political Elites have time and again resorted means that thrive on aggressive foreign policy stances to sway Public attention from ongoing social and economic misadventures by the government in power. In fact, there is no dearth of literature available that represent this theme. In International Relations realm this is called Diversionary Theory of War which would be my central pillar in this chapter.

*Jean Bodin*, in his ‘Six Books of Commonwealth ‘ in 1576 remarked that: “*The best way of preserving a state , and guaranteeing it against sedition , rebellion, and civil war is to... find an enemy against whom (the Subjects ) can make common cause*”.<sup>67</sup>

The hypothesis that international conflict acts as a unifying factor by state leaders to galvanise domestic support against external enemy is at the core of the approach to Diversionary Tactic. Lenin in his work in 1917 ‘The War and Russian Social Democracy’ emphasised on the methods of domestic political interest driving external aggression , through his statement regarding World War 1 as an attempt by imperialistic classes “to divert the attention of labouring masses from the domestic political crisis”<sup>68</sup>

Meticulous and analytical study regarding authoritarian or totalitarian leaders demonstrates the fact that leaders who are authoritarian in nature have certain constituencies they want to keep in grip and is accountable. They might be members of politburo, political elites or institutions such as the militaries. In spite of being devoid of democratic element and governed by authoritarian tactics, these leaders still take into consideration people’s reaction,

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<sup>67</sup>Manus I. Midlarsky, ed.,Handbook Of War Studies . Boston, 1989 p.259.

<sup>68</sup>Manus I. Midlarsky ,ed.,Handbook Of War Studies . Boston , 1989,p.259

with a view to contain mass uprisings . Thus, calculate ways and means to divert public focus from erosion of domestic values and norms .This of course needs to be done after assessing the strategic costs and gains of such actions.

However, the roots of the theory lies in George Simmel (German Sociologist) in 1956 in his essay ‘The Persistence of Social Groups, in American Journal Of Sociology gave a systematic account of conflict with the outgroup intensifies the cohesion and political centralization of the in-group. Applying this in the domain of International Relations he suggested that:

*“War with the outside is sometimes the last chance for a state ridden with inner antagonisms to overcome these antagonisms or else break up definitely “.*<sup>69</sup>

However, he, on the other hand, also, suggests that conflict might even cause enemies to join together against an outsider. But later has been developed by Lewis A. Coser, a German –American Sociologist in his seminal book ‘The Functions Of Social Conflict’ in 1956 criticises Simmel’s Argument of Linkage between Centralization and Cohesion. Instead he upholds the argument that, the cohesion resulting from outside conflict does not necessarily involve centralized control.<sup>70</sup>He then arrives at a point where he was not in consonance with Simmel’s handling of the theoretical loopholes and its non- pragmatic consideration of not categorizing between Violent and Non-violent Conflict. Thus, Coser runs into contradiction with Simmel saying that not all conflict end up in greater centralization.

With regard to Diversionary theory of War, in political Science Scholarship, the most profound Study can be found in the Works of Rudolph Joseph Rummel in his 1963 work:

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<sup>69</sup>Simmel G. “The persistence of Social Groups”, American Journal of Sociology, Vol 4, 1898, pp.662-698.

<sup>70</sup>Stein A. Arthur , ‘ Conflict and Cohesion: A Review of Literature “, Journal Of Conflict Resolution , Vol 2 ,No. 1, March 1976 , pp.143-172



‘Dimensions of Conflict Behaviour within and between Nations. Here he studies Cross-sectional Study of Seventy Seven States between 1955-1957 period which found that there was no relation between ‘foreign conflict behaviour and domestic conflict behaviour ‘. But Michael Stohl, a Professor and a former chair of the Department of Communication at the University of California in his famous book ‘War and Domestic Political Violence : Case of U.S’ reinvigorated the co-relation apart from other studies that war is associated with the combination of Population, diversity, and domestic turmoil.

However, there has been subsequent researches regarding the same but it is evident from critiques that, there is an overwhelming gap between theory of diversionary war and empirical findings. These still cannot falsify the main idea behind the strategy of Diversionary tactic which has numerous historical claims. One such claim is regarding the assertion that, the Crimean War interpreted in terms of Napoleon’s attempt to increase his political support at home, especially that of French Catholics. But this generalization again exports a problem, as it varies with cases, the binaries absorb different meanings when attached to different political set up, different Social Framework and varied Ethnic makeup. But my work would be rather involved not in the theoretical squabbles but on its modalities of operation in contemporary Russian Foreign policy in Ukraine and its relevance in assessing the sources of Putin’s conduct of Domestic state of Affairs and its intervention in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in an era where Sovereignty and international law prevails.

#### **4.2 ASSESSING SOURCES OF RUSSIA’S FOREIGN POLICY IN UKRAINE**

Russia always had a cultural pre-disposition and affinity towards personalised leadership. In fact the country’s political culture have always been characterised by weak formal political institutions and underdevelopment of societal participation amidst several political crisis. Richard Sakwa, UK’s leading scholar and the first person to provide a major

study of man and politics of in his book 'Putin: Russia's choice' in 2004 have provided a detailed account of major domestic and international impact of Putin and his associated charisma that has transcended Russia's Foreign Policy Decision making an instrument for achievement of a Great Power Status. Scholars have often referred to him as 'little Napoleon'. As, similar to Napoleon he rebuilt the State and refurnished new order through pragmatism and consolidation and surprisingly, became a votary of social and political reconciliation and consensus building. Analysing Roger Eatwell's (British Academician and expert on Fascism and Populism) theories on 'coterie Charisma' and 'mass charisma' the former being the leader who inspires a small inner cell of followers and later being the leader who galvanise popular support through sentiments, there is a third category called 'institutional Charisma' wherein there is a noticeable bond between institutions such as a political party, president and followers. But according to Eatwell, Putin's Charisma was that of a 'mass charisma' and was viewed as a 'president of hope'.<sup>71</sup>

Putin remarkably moved out from his portrayal as bearer of Yelstin's legacy. His policies and behaviour at home sprung from his new found love for innovation which reflected in his style of rule. Evident from his statement in his Millennium Manifesto of inculcating a Russian way that opened doors for a more Radical –future oriented model. This had indications for renovating the state system and promotion of political and social reform, which was known as radical centrism. His initial years in power was marked by launch of attacks on number of fronts including barons, oligarchs and media. But was constrained by the socio-political hardships, criminal gangs, structure of Property and paucity of an organised mass political base and resulted in the merger of Unity with Fatherland Party in 2002 to create United Russia, an effective Presidential Party. Thus the next step was to underline his affinity towards the

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<sup>71</sup>[https://www.academia.edu/2415376/The\\_Concept\\_and\\_Theory\\_of\\_Charismatic\\_Leadership?auto\\_download=true](https://www.academia.edu/2415376/The_Concept_and_Theory_of_Charismatic_Leadership?auto_download=true) accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> may 2019.

significance of ideology in his nation building project which proposed Traditional values as ‘patriotism’, ‘*gosudarstvennichestvo* (statehood) and ‘social solidarity’. This moulded his nation building agenda where Patriotism would accommodate its pride in diversity, its history and place in the World. Instead they need to be maintained by strong political authority that could stabilise the internal order and carry a strong aversion towards dividing regional lines and look beyond such binaries that would create a homogenous and statist base. So in order to solidify his stances he adopted symbols that were very much different from earlier periods with a new anthem, emblem, and celebration of Victory Day in 9<sup>th</sup> May to recognise their victory in the Great Patriotic War.

My focus of study would extensively revolve around Ukraine which had consistently occupied a key place in Russia’s strive towards “Great power status” and laid the foundation of Russia’s desired hegemony in Eurasian landmass. Situated in the Central part of Eastern Europe and bordered by the Black sea and Sea of Azov, it lies at the cross roads of major transportation routes from Europe and Asia. Undeniably, it is a gateway to the Eastward expansion of NATO and assumes prime strategic importance for Russia as a Geopolitical Buffer between Russia and NATO. This finds a mention even in Brzezinski’s famous book ‘The Grand Chess Board’ in 1998, where U.S considered Ukraine as a pivot to spearhead the European Ball game. Thus, in the formative years of Russian Foreign policy one of the noteworthy move was CIS Economic Union of 1993, which aimed to progress from a free trade area to ‘deep’ economic integration along with a dedicated regulatory body called Inter State Economic Commission . This however could not be materialized as it was left unratified and open ended with a risk over Ukrainian Sovereignty. This was furthered by, Yelstin’s Economic pressure to persuade Ukraine to join CIS Customs Union in 1995. Lacking a compact coordinated political strategy Ukrainian participation was minimalist and narrowly carved. But, the rise of Vladimir Putin by in the new millennium saw a complete transformation in Russian

domestic, Foreign policy making ethos. Evident from the *'The National Security Concept of Russia* in 2000 and his State of The Nations Speech on 3rd April 2001', he clearly drifted from Integrationist agendas (make best of the West) to aggressive postures to preserve Russia's greatness and extend its capacity from within. Thus, he gave up revival of CIS and embraced issue based coalitions in the region, often informally rallying for Ukrainian political support for his institutions. For e.g. in the case of Eurasian Economic Union, when he offered the embattled Ukrainian president the chairmanship of CIS council of heads in 2003 and attached economic conditionality resolving anti-dumping and taxation disputes with it. But, it still fell short of expectations, and as a result a new economic organisation with Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Ukraine, was announced in February 2003 to intensify economic integration including a common currency. But Ukrainian elites were wary of committing such measures amidst Russia building a dam by Ukrainian islands in the Kerch Straits. However, a watershed to their relationship occurred in 2004, with the outbreak of Orange Revolution in Kiev, and election of Yushchenko as President replacing Yanukovich in 2005 elections. Thereby, the Eurasian drama took a new turn with Ukraine turning westward. Unprepared to deal to deal with the aftermath of the revolution and political squabbles among its elites ,Ukraine had to pay huge economic costs for the drama when Russia invoked a 'Gas War' by surging gas prices 5fold and unsettling the economy of Ukraine whose GDP shrunk by 15%. This clicked fortunes for Yanukovich in presidential race in 2010 based on economic recovery. He, was the perfect man for Putin's ambitions who solidified the bonhomie by signing the 'Kharkiv Accords' accordingly which extended the Lease of Sevastopol Naval Base in Russian Black Sea Fleet in exchange of attractive discounts on gas .Thus Putin's hopes were renewed of Ukraine's political participation in at least a customs union, in place of a Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreement. By February 2014 overthrow of Putin's confidant Yanukovich messed up Russia's expansionist plot and raged Russian elites as the 2012 law that made Russian the official

language of Ukraine was scrapped. Huge protests were conducted in the zone by middle and upper middle classes along with ultranationalists who resisted the oligarchic rule of Yanukovich. It soon escalated with E.U, U.S joining the theatre and Kremlin backed forces seizing the Crimean peninsula sending troops marching militarily. This was the worst East-West crisis since the cold war and dubbed by many western Scholars as the ‘New Cold war’, a danger that loomed large even in 2008 Russia’s aggression in Georgia.

My assessment of the crisis would not deal with hard security issues which has already been discussed in chapter 1 but treating the causes of such an escalation through discourses of domestic management of foreign policy making by Putin. This certainly deals with application of Diversionary Theory of War discussed in the first section of my chapter. The basics of which lie in diverting public attention from the ongoing domestic economic political social crisis by resorting to aggressive foreign policy. The 2014 Ukrainian crisis was thus an instrument of reverting back to a pro-Putin atmosphere at home which was damaged due to several social economic and international factors that will be discussed below, and regaining the lost confidence among the masses. This needed Putin to be projected as ‘National Hero’ of Russia.

The roots of this diversionary tactics lie deep, the culmination of which was annexation of Crimea. Now geopolitics and Soft power are the approaches that deal with the end of Putin’s Foreign Policy Making, but the reasons of such a stance is very much rooted in its domestic misconduct, and threats emanating from the very fundamental societal level which could not have been repressed so easily, as evident from the figures of subsequent elections since 2008. The factors are categorically discussed below.

### **4.3 ORANGE REVOLUTION AND PUTIN'S THREAT PERCEPTION**

The Orange Revolution in Ukraine in November –December 2004 that put Victor Yushchenko to power was a jolt to Putin's authoritarian mind set in Russia. His response were deeply coated by aversion to 'colour revolutions' as they were orchestrated by Western elites to change the current regime for geopolitical hegemonic objectives.

The roots of Orange revolution itself stems from Putin's security dilemma in CIS especially Ukraine. However, apart for security Ukraine was a paw in the overall ideological battle that West and Russia engaged itself with. Russian policy makers generally intended to portray Victor Yuschenko as anti-Russian .This was the case of appeasement of the Russian population in Ukraine and sow seeds of ethnic split among Ukrainians. The Domestic impact of which was associated with the nurturing of the Russian dream of Supra State inclusive of Ukraine. Thus Russian political technocrats were thus very active in presidential campaigns of Ukraine. Secret associations were opened named Russian Club where Russian ambassador to Ukraine Victor Chernomydrin and Ukrainian Prime Minister Yanukovych attended its meeting. They sought to undermine Yushchenko's credibility by printing fake leaflets, raging commentaries, debatable broadcasts, false defamations and allegations on Yuschenko. Also Yushchenko was portrayed as an ultra-nationalists who would foment instability if elected .The most surprising event took place with the disastrous act of Terrorism took place in August 2004 affecting the lives of many. But Russian political Strategists blamed it on Yushchenko.

This disinformation campaign tool was vehemently use in Russian policy in Ukraine's 2004 elections. Prof. Taras Kuzio in his article "Russian policy towards Ukraine during elections" talked about how Russia through the Ukrainian oligarchs played a gigantic role in censoring Ukrainian media, sending covert messages to television stations and recommending what content should be covered and what to be filtered. Also there were several interferences

in elections of 2004 where episodes of disinformation was recorded due to Russian portrayal of the rival candidate Yushchenko as national villain .Surprisingly Russia complained about “pressure against journalists who criticized representatives of the authorities. There was also clear signs Anti-Americanism ethos being created , with election materials that suggested anti-Yushchenko messages .In fact George W. Bush was portrayed an evil apart from other anti-American Symbols. But what triggered Putin’s diversionary tactics was the realisation of the failure of its strategy in Ukraine. In spite of gross intervention in Ukrainian election it undermined Ukrainian political scenario which had changed since 1999 elections. Thus, through strategies of making Russian an “Official language”, reproducing east-west Conflict to destabilize national unity. However there has been evidence of other factors that led to nullification of Yanukovich i.e. criminal background of Yanukovich, and undermining the factor that he was popular only in central Ukraine and not Eastern Ukraine. Also, Yuschenko was backed by Socialists while the Communists swayed neutrally. Putin was mistaken with regard to voter’s motivation in this election who voted with expectations of reaping Economic benefits.

Russian elites could not accept the fact that it was Victor Yushchenko who was on the winning side after the large scale protests that was believed to be fuelled by Western states for competition around election process to shift local and foreign policy alignments in their favour by replacing incumbent leaders.<sup>72</sup> Putin with regard to Orange Revolution in February 2014 remarked that:

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<sup>72</sup> Allison Roy , “ Russia’s ‘deniable’ intervention in Ukraine : How and why Russia broke the rules “, *International Affairs* , Vol 90. No.6,2014 , pp.1255-1297

*“To push the necessary candidate through a presidential elections, they thought up some sort of third round that was not stipulated by the law...it was so absurd and mockery of the constitution.”<sup>73</sup>*

Thus, annexation of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine fiasco had a string of justificatory remarks now, with an interpretation of the annexation as “counter colour revolution”. The consequences thereafter were:

1. Putin won a second term gaining 71.4 percent of the Vote.
2. Threatened by the ideological narrative of the Colour revolution and performance of the citizens, Putin initiated a punitive campaign against the NGO’s that received foreign Funding and served interests of several interest and commercial groups that according to Putin were dubious.
3. The state dominated media was extensively used for defaming the numerous interest group for pursuing works against the interests of Russia. On the other hand, also the attacking media outlets that published or established scoops that went against Russian State propaganda. Such had been the case of independent newspaper *Kommersant* who had to be the victim of a legal suit filed by the Kremlin backed Business man. Also there was reported killing of two journalist who believed to have been killed due to report on corruption of Russian backed business elites.
4. The terrorist attacks after Chechnya led Putin to dissect the constitution pull through amendments that eliminated direct election of regional governors paving way for presidential consent.

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid.,



The domestic turmoil in Russia was followed by deteriorating conditions of Putin with Saakashvili and with launching of harsh attacks on Georgians living in Russia. The next section thus discusses the lessons learned from Putin's diversionary war with Georgia in 2008.

#### **4.4 LESSONS FROM PUTIN'S DIVERSIONARY TACTICS IN GEORGIA**

Lessons from Putin's gambit in Georgia might be analysed from gains that Moscow reaped from its diversionary war in 2008. Maintaining a modest level of 'Diversionary tensions' at home meant favourable edge in the electoral cycle. Robert Keohane and Milner in 1996 analysed that democratic politics is fully understandable by taking into account the push and pulls of world economy and links between the two and stated:

"In non-democratic regimes the trade-off is between the danger of isolating the country from international influences which would threaten to slow economic growth, thus threatening regime stability in the long run and the increased pressures for political liberalisation that international openness would generate within polity."<sup>74</sup>

Russia had already sustained its domestic support without resorting to international isolation as well as by preserving its Russian ness from excessive international influence. This was done by a well calculated strategy of openness to the West along with creating a virtual conflict with the West to unite the Domestic audience against such an enemy. Russian elites were sure that Conflict in the Post-Soviet States would not harm trade relation with the West. But the appeal to domestic audience at large would be beneficial so as to portray the Western Hypocrisy and Russia as a real saviour in the zone. Thus managing Conflict with a small Post-Soviet State was a safe choice, facilitated by the views of Russians that the small Post –Soviet

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<sup>74</sup>Filippov Mikhail,"Diversionary Role of Georgia- Russia conflict : International Constraints and domestic Appeal ", Europe-Asia Studies , Vol 61, No.10 ,December 2009,pp.1825-1847.

States were agents of Western Hypocrisy. This was proven with the coming of a western president in Georgia after Rose Revolution along with marked presence of European Human Rights group and Western Institutions.

Ever since the incursion of a Chechen Terrorist into neighbouring Dagestan, there has been assertions that Georgia was to be blamed by giving psychological and financial support to the rebels. This was due to the fact that terrorists were hiding in the Pankisi Gorge in Northern Georgia which shared borders with Chechnya. Thus there were military pressure and air raids along with economic pressure and cutting off gas supplies. But in the aftermath of 9/11, since 2002 the Russian military actions were on a high rise and Sergei Ivanov (Defence Minister of Russia) called it 'nest of Terrorist'. Owing to the narrative of the spiralling effect of Instability flowing from Georgia, Russian troops marched to control the situation along with news on bombing of Pankisi Gorge by untraced aircrafts. Sergei further remarked:

"We understand very well that the rebels in the Pankisi Gorge will never be liquidated without Russia," Mr. Ivanov said during a visit to Russian troops on the Chechen border with Georgia on Tuesday."<sup>75</sup>

The benefits were reaped in the CIS summit in August 2002 Moldova where several Russian Concessions were met along with agreement to create Joint border patrols with Russia. But Georgian Leader realised the motives of such action long before and stated:

"The goal is not a settlement of the situation in Chechnya," said Valerian Khaburdzania, Georgia's minister of state security, "but the transfer of its conflict to Georgia."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/15/world/georgia-hearing-heavy-footsteps-from-russia-s-war-in-chechnya.html> accessed on 24th April 2019

<sup>76</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/15/world/georgia-hearing-heavy-footsteps-from-russia-s-war-in-chechnya.html> accessed on 24th April 2019

However the Beslan tragedy in 2004, with Chechen terrorists capturing a school shook Russian Policy Makers and no sooner did they established that it had connections with Georgian misconduct. The special forces raided the hotel owned by Georgian Embassy and confirmed the pre-emptive strikes on Georgian territory and broadcasted that Georgian journalist were too fast in arriving at the spot suggesting that had advance knowledge of it.

The entire episode paved the way for stronger presidency and increased centralism and this was used as a justificatory rhetoric to deal with threats international forces. These were followed by huge protests everywhere in the area fomenting anti – western sentiment. These further encouraged hundreds of young people rallying at the U.S and British embassies In Moscow to expose the double standards of West in case of terrorism.<sup>77</sup>

These negative publicity of the Georgian as a military adversary of Russia along with the ideas that it was a dangerous place to travel and reside there was tremendously helpful for Putin in guaranteeing his imperialistic trajectory in the Post –Soviet States without the fear of losing public support from significant constituencies.

The subsequent years saw attempts of amendments which implied to penalize media outlets for reporting electoral campaigns that marred the image of Putin. A series of measures were taken further that restricted foreign aid to Russian Civil Society groups engaged in ‘political activities’. This meant relentless and fearless efforts of Putin to subtly support authoritarianism in Post-Soviet regimes that were caught in the cross roads of Western, European integration and reintegration efforts of Moscow. The court order of closure of Russia-

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<sup>77</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/15/world/georgia-hearing-heavy-footsteps-from-russia-s-war-in-chechnya.html> accessed on 27th April 2019

Chechen Society that monitored Human Rights conditions in Chechnya added a feather to Putin's effectiveness in manoeuvring public support for his expansionist ideas unapologetically.

Tensions resurfaced with Abkhazia and South Ossetia at logger heads added by signing of a decree in 2007 suspending Russian participation in Conventional Forces of Europe treaty which was considered a leap towards military built up in the region. Again the trend continued with aircrafts dropping missiles in Georgian Radar cities. Thereafter the conflicts spilled up in other regions resembling a full scale war, with Georgian police forces striking back. But Georgia could not win in face of Russian tanks advancing towards South Ossetia.

Now this had an obvious impact in elevating the New President Medvedev's ambitions and legitimacy to modify Russia's domestic policies and international standoff. But the relative advantage of the war was to settle Putin's balance of power with President Medvedev, Putin acted in a way to gain credits for the war than the new President. Even though Medvedev and Putin seemed to have enjoyed cordial relations with each other but Putin already realised that the president has institutional means to increase his political weight and that Russian Constitution allows unchecked powers for the President, which would facilitate Medvedev to consolidate his position at the expense of Putin. Thus, he in order to tip the balance in his favour created a special division in within the government apparatus which was responsible for implication of foreign policy. Thereafter it was Putin who lifted trade sanctions on Abkhazia and South Ossetia that CIS had imposed. Thus, these diversionary domestic goals had been in mind of Putin who repeated a similar action In Crimea and Eastern Ukraine though with different justificatory undertones which included the threat of Anti-Putinism and falling rate of economic performances of the country, discussed in the next arena.

#### 4.5 DOMESTIC CAUSES OF PUTIN'S DIVERSIONARY WAR IN UKRAINE 2014

The Global Financial Crisis in 2008 hit Russia badly. Owing to its heavy dependence of the economy in energy, including exports annual growth fell decisively. As the crisis stunted the growth of domestic enterprises Russia had to utilize a handsome proportion of reserves to bail out domestic ventures and tone down its foreign policy projects. The presidential rating showed falling popularity of Putin since 2008 as compared to 2000-2007.

There were a fundamental issue involved here that is the failure to provide essential services effectively with complaints regarding functioning of the state hospitals, schools, law firms, and other public services. The structural problems evident are:

- Political centralization – Russian administrative and political system taking a turn towards greater centralization. Until the time Putin ascended his role as a president Russia was caught in the cross roads of different styles of governance i.e. Medvedev's detached incrementalism and Putin's populism.<sup>78</sup> .
- Maintaining personal relations both the leaders pulled the political clout in different directions. These were reflected in soaring of public ratings and corruption of Putin's United Russia party .This was countered by formation of a new political movement which sought to accommodate fresh ideas from wide range of political actors including their names in the next election.

In the meantime, there was simmering tensions between Russian and Muslim nationalities of the Northern Caucasus. This was also the reason behind Russian Nationalist and Football fans

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<sup>78</sup>Tsygankov Andrei P.,” Russia and the CIS IN 2011: Uncertain Economic Recovery”, Asian Survey , Vol 52.No 1, January , February 2012, pp.42-51

rioting at Manzh Square due to release of men suspected of killing Russian Football Player Yegor Sviridov. The Guardian reported:

*“At least two people were killed after around 5,000 far-right football fans and nationalists gathered at a rally outside Red Square at the weekend, calling for the death of Russia's immigrant population. The demonstrators, who were marking the death last week of Spartak Moscow fan Yegor Sviridov, who was shot during a brawl with several men from the Caucasus, flashed the Nazi salute, chanted "Russia for Russians" and pelted riot police with flares, smoke bombs and metal fence posts. After the rally hundreds of protesters entered the Moscow metro where they continued their rampage, beating and stabbing passers by from Central Asia and the Caucasus, Russia's troubled, mainly Muslim, southern region. A Kyrgyz man was attacked by 15 people and stabbed to death. One central Asian man was reported to have died in hospital from his injuries following the riot, but officials have declined to comment. More than 20 people were taken to hospital. Video images showed several men from Central Asia and the Caucasus walking dazed with bloody faces. The square on which they gathered, Manezhnaya Ploshad, was left littered with graffiti, including one that read: "Yids, get out of Russia!"<sup>79</sup>*

Also the rule of law remained fragile and vulnerable to the power mongering political authorities with the basic administrative framework torn between constitutional and administrative regime. Thus with its entry into the new electoral cycle there were numerous demands from leading Ministries to hold it in a free and fair manner. Alas this was not in the fortunes of Moscow which erupted in Protests against the flawed parliamentary election that began in 4<sup>th</sup> march 2012. Gathered in the Bolotnaya Square with participation from along 80000

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<sup>79</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/13/two-dead-football-racist-riot-moscow> accessed on 27th april 2019

people used symbols of White ribbons to express their demands for democratic change. This was believed to have been the first protest of such a kind. The agenda of the protest remained vague and demands disorganised, thus the activity of gathering assumed not just a means but an end in itself after all this was the first mass political process since 1993. The protest displayed a range of inventively witty but scathing placards and banners condemning the practices of 'managed democracy'. The matters were made worse with the assertion of the United Russia party about Putin's nomination in the presidential election and Medvedev running for Prime Ministership. The preceding years and Medvedev's presidency was thus a farce an eye wash for the masses carrying the message that elections were mere staged plays with the actual control on leaders and compromise with strong Putin allies and his personal coterie. Al Jazeera reported about Tens of thousands of people taking to the streets across Russia against Vladimir Putin's 12-year rule amid signs of swelling anger over a poll won by his ruling United Russia party. The protesters demanded an end to Putin's rule and a rerun of the parliamentary election in the biggest popular protests since those that led to the fall of the Soviet Union. Protesters waved banners, such as "The rats should go!" and "Swindlers and thieves - give us our elections back!", in cities from the Pacific port of Vladivostok, Perm in Siberia, Arkhangelsk in the Arctic north, in Kaliningrad and St Petersburg in the west, and Karelia in the north west. Nationwide there have been protests in dozens of towns and cities, all across Russia's nine time zones, they were calling not for revolution, but for political evolution, he said. In Moscow, people gathered on Bolotnaya Square, on an island across the Kremlin after receiving permission from the authorities for the event. Police saying there were at least 25,000 at the Moscow demonstration, while protest organisers claimed more than 60,000 were present. in cities from the Pacific port of Vladivostok, Perm in Siberia, Arkhangelsk in the Arctic north, in Kaliningrad and St Petersburg in the west, and Karelia in

the northwest. Nationwide there have been protests in dozens of towns and cities, all across Russia's nine time zones.<sup>80</sup>

Opposition leaders started pouring in with the main demand being 'Russia without Putin' apart from words like 'Putin Is a thief'. They represented variety of concerns ranging from liberal issues and nationalistic concern for Russian Ethnic Majority. These stemmed from the fact that the administration could play an instrumental role to establish an effective system of labour migration from Central Asia and it would be better without North Caucasus, and the Tajiks. The society had matured, in part as a result of the long Putinite stability, and a new class had emerged.<sup>81</sup>

Threatening the factional balance, the unitary opposition against Putin deserves special mention. In spite of the fundamental differences between the two the *Siloviki* the regime composed of Hardliners and *Civiliki* the supporters of evolutionary reforms were united to demand strengthening of competitive market economy and political institutions.

The responses were two folded i.e. on one hand there were a range of repressive laws and legislation including harsh penalties and punitive measures, strong laws that intensified imposed tougher conditions over NGO's and sanctions on NGO's that had international funding. The Guardian reported that the rally ended in bloodshed after police in riot gear attempted to break it up, sparking clashes with angry protestors. Video footage from the event shows members of both sides participating in the violence, and 70 police officers were allegedly injured. But the independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta, reported that protestors suffered more serious injuries on the whole, including broken arms, ribs and noses. No criminal cases have been opened against any law enforcement officer. Of the 28 protestors, who were

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<sup>80</sup><https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2011/12/2011121053755418485.html> accessed on 28th April 2019

<sup>81</sup>Sakwa Richard, "What happened to the Russian Opposition", Research Paper, Chatham House, May 2014, p.16.



charged in the case, 12 have been given prison sentences ranging from 30 months to four-and-a-half years, including one suspended sentence. Several have been declared prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International, including Mikhail Kosenko, who was declared insane and sentenced to indefinite compulsory treatment in a psychiatric institution. Charges against 11 defendants were dropped after a wide-reaching amnesty law was passed this year.<sup>82</sup>

The regime's dual headed responses strengthened the oppositional activity. But the regime was very stern and tried possible ways to avert crisis like the Colour Revolution and Putin asserted that he is not going to accept a situation like Ukraine, as it has been proved that in most of the cases there was existence of non-governmental organizations, nationalist and neo-Nazi groups and militants who became the main agents of 'anti-constitutional coup d'etat and received foreign Funding. As the situation at home grew severe. Harsh the hardliners in Putin's regime increased their vigilance over the waves of 'democracy promotion' and feared regime change. Also strikingly there were protests on Russian soil against escalation of 'Ukraine Crisis' and deployment of forces in Crimea also referred as 'Peace March ' or Marsh Mira '.<sup>83</sup> These situations at home made Putin congregate his powers and use the Ukrainian theatre to preserve his heroic image by the decision of intervention and portray Russia as the leviathan who could ensure self-preservation of the Russian people, from the looming dangers of 'neo-fascist forces' which he referred to the Ukrainian soldiers and preserve 'Russianness' through protection of Russian language and Russian speakers from 'historic injustice'.

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<sup>82</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/24/russian-opposition-leader-jailed-bolotnaya-square-sergei-udaltsov-putin> accessed on 29th April 2019

<sup>83</sup>Sakwa Richard ,” What happened to the Russian Opposition”, Research Paper , Chatham House ,May 2014,p.15

#### **4.6 THE SOCHI OLYMPICS AND PUTIN'S POWER PROJECTION IN UKRAINE**

Well there has been very few discussions regarding sports mega –events and their effects on international relations. Useful among them was Merkel in 2008 who discussed use of Sports as a foreign policy and diplomatic agent in South Korea, and other scholars like Almeida, Marchi, Pike 2013. Gradually there has been contributions from other discipline to consolidate it into one whole of Sports Studies. Though recognising it as Putin's effort to establish it as a great power projection would be a misrepresentation, the popular view is that of a tool of perpetuation and legitimization of western standards as the International Olympic Committee since 1894 was regarded as imposition and universalisation of Western imperialist norms . Thus, use of this model by emerging countries subtly pave for recognition of liberal democratic standards of the west.

But this analysis covers Putin's use of Sochi Olympics to serve as an eye –wash to domestic audience who were titillated by Putin's misrule and gross misconduct of the entire administration. Now this would serve twin purposes of captivating the enraged and protest prone mass at home and dig foundations for Putin's aggressive ambitions of annexation of Crimea. Sochi Olympics was thus an instrument of diversion to the Russian people at home. The fundamental objective thus lied in inculcating values of Patriotism, self –worth, and carve out a national sense of being which was a dire need for united support of Putin's action in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine.

As sport undertakes the aim of 'collective identification' proving rock solid foundations for building nationalistic sentiments it has been time and again used by Incumbents to harden the National idea and use it with modifications in bigger conflicts. Thus, Putin was no exception as he was desperate to portray the Sochi event as a show of Russian strength in face of Western offences. The Pseudo war like situation would then be used by Putin as a

justificatory smokescreen to legitimize his actions in Crimea and support of Separatists in Eastern Ukraine. These were evident from the Mass Opinion Polls conducted in Russia in 2014 revealed by news agency *Novosti* that in the aftermath of games suggested a picture of high popularity at home which went up to 85.9 in 2014 and 46% of people believing that the game has been able to build Russia's image internationally in 2015 along with sharpened sense of Patriotism.<sup>84</sup> Russian News Channel, Channel One officially broadcasted news of the Games, engaged in live streaming Software applications and other Social Media Marketing, which had a gigantic impact on the potential to integrate audience in news making. The Russian International News Network RT Question More published a report on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2014 where, on being asked about the organisational costs and preparations Putin stated:

*“This was a team result; the first part was the creation of sports, engineering and transport infrastructure. And here, of course, I must state directly that the Government of the Russian Federation played the most important role, as I have already said before – both the previous Government and the current one. So ultimately, the main burden was with the key ministries: the Natural Resources Ministry, the Transport Ministry, and ministries and departments that were in one way or another involved in the construction, as well as big Russian infrastructure companies, Russian Railways, and major construction companies. This was the main work carried out at this site, with ministers, deputy ministers, the Prime Minister, as well as your humble servant in his previous role, and Mr Medvedev, as Prime Minister today and when he was still president, working here too. In other words, this was a joint, collective, large-scale effort.”*<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Kramareva Nina and Grix Jonathan ,”The Sochi Winter Olympics and Russia's unique Soft Power Strategy ‘, Sports In Society , Vol 20, No 4, pp.461- 475.

<sup>85</sup><https://www.rt.com/news/putin-olympics-interview-media-624/> accessed on 1<sup>st</sup> may 2019

The Olympic Games were much more than it seemed. They certainly were the agents of development, acting as a stimulant after the crisis in 2008. 51% of the population regarded Sochi as an Economic boon. Also significantly in order to bolster its image in the global order, it saw the potential of the Winter Olympics to have an edge in the infrastructural development at par with the Western Competitors resulting in boosting the tourism industry. This is also evident from the depreciation of Rubble to almost half value against US Dollar and Euro. This, instead, increased 20 to 50 % the number of bookings for holidays abroad at Sochi. Henceforth the twin goals of Regional Development and global engineering of image were successfully carried out through the games.<sup>86</sup>

However, the Crimean intervention acted as a justificatory smokescreen for shielding the frauds, and gross appropriation of Funds that took place and gave a geo-political turn to Russian Politics. Instead of shrinking Putin's ambitious overtures after the Sochi episode, the simultaneous coup in Ukraine brought Russia territories that were historically demanded to belong to Russians. Though it bought Western Economic, political Sanctions but by then the main agenda of Putin had been fulfilled which was to pour in national consciousness which was very necessary to elevate his image as the only saviour in the wake of annexation to gain the confidence of his citizens which had been severely eroded due to reasons discussed in the previous chapter. It is absolutely necessary to point out the contested concept put forward by Putin, called 'Novorossiya', a large governorship in the Russian empire, used as a territorial concept to which pro-Russian separatist in Donetsk, and Luhansk provinces have laid claim.

Putin embarked on the urgency to grant legitimate rights to ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Novorossiya of tsarist days including Kharkhov, Lugansk, Donetsk,

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<sup>86</sup>Mueller Martin, "After Sochi 2014 : costs and impact of Russia's Olympic Games", Eurasian Geography and Economics , 2014 , Vol 55, No 6 , pp.628-655.

Kherson, Nikolayev and Odessa. These areas had similar roots with those of the Russian state and therefore Russia would condemn and counter act on every encroachment on their rights. This Nationalist interpretation in Putin's Foreign Policy underlined his activities in Ukraine. Putin's resurrection of Russian image from the tough decade was possible only after presenting a robust ,developed , united , picture of Russia to the domestic audience and to the global competitors especially Europe. What is visible through his trajectory is that Putin always sought to act through long term plans and not acting on instincts and short term vision. His Crimea blueprint and conduct of Sochi Olympics were not coincidence but an outcome of the carefully designed strategy that could divert public attention from the ongoing chaos and turn the tables in favour of Putin whose image had been marred. Thus Putin through his intervention and hybrid warfare and disinformation campaigns upheld his strategy of defaming West as an evil aggressor and used jargons of 'executioners' , neo-fascist forces ' against resisting Ukrainian soldiers. This was engrossing enough to undermine domestic problems which characterised Russian politics in the previous years. Diversionary tactics as such thus gave huge strategic leeway to Russia in consolidating his regime at home.

Putin's vocal domestic critic Alexey Navalny claimed: "Putin's rash behaviour ...is motivated by the desire of revenge against the Ukrainian people for revolting against a Kremlin free government"<sup>87</sup> Navalny, believed the call of referendum to be risky as it was a pathway for Crimean Sovereignty, but for Putin this was a responsible strategic choice to bolster his regime's survival. This objective of diversion have tremendously benefitted Putin not only to have gained territory but harnessing populist alternative at home and reuniting the long due Ukraine with Russia. This raised the popularity rating of Putin at home, and gave an advantage in the next electoral cycle. Hinging on to the contemporary developments where Ukraine had

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<sup>87</sup> Allison Roy , " Russia's 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine : How and why Russia broke the rules " , International Affairs , Vol 90. No.6,2014 , pp.1255-1297

elected a Moscow friendly leader Zelensky have increased its international standing as he is also a Russian speaker who is capable of acting as a representative of the entire ethnic Russians. Though the costs of diversion had been much but Putin has reaped much benefits from this entire episode. The basic condition of Diversionary theory has been fulfilled by Putin. This was evident from the Media broadcasts and Social networks which flooded with news of Ukraine and not the domestic erosion. Kremlin was very effective in providing materials to international media outlets in the form of pamphlets, press releases, tweets, interviews by Russian strong men even reaching out their Western Audiences through English language TV Channel, Russia today, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Daily Telegraph, Le Figaro, El Pais and others.

Though Ukraine officially labelled its effort in Donbass as 'Anti –Terrorist' operation, but it had to deal with the strong Information Warfare that Russia perpetrated, the objectives of which was to demoralise the Ukrainian people and defame the authorities in Kiev so as to muster the public opinion in its favour. Thus my initial hypothesis of application of Diversionary tactics have been proved correct. However, the gap which existed between Theory and Practice of Diversionary Theory had been much sorted out. I do not assert the dominance of one single narrative in responding to the analysis of Putin's behaviour but interplay of many narratives have worked in Putin's favour. But the central idea behind the chapter that is its modalities of operation in contemporary Russian Foreign policy in Ukraine and its relevance in assessing the sources of Putin's conduct of Domestic state of Affairs and its intervention in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in an era where Sovereignty and international law prevails had been successfully established. The next section that is the conclusion would summarize my findings from each and every chapter so as to gain an in depth picture of the entire scenario regarding Putin's behaviour and also highlight the future trajectories expressing and engaging ideas on relevant researches by the upcoming scholarship.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The events that occurred in Ukraine between 2013–2015 have damaged the framework of Russian policy towards Ukraine. Its harsh reaction to the Maidan Square protests and to the overthrow of the Yanukovich presidency reflected a picture as to what extent was Ukraine important for Russia. Thus it presented a perception that is explained below.

. It can be concluded that the Russian perception is interwoven with the broader perspective of the 'Near Abroad'. As, Ukraine is essentially viewed as a 'Buffer state' to contain the West. It seems that Putin prepared constructed a 'geopolitical fault line' through Ukraine by means of force, this meant as per Roy Allison "a policy of strategic denial" to classify the CIS as a 'no-go zone' which continued from the presidency of Yelstin, who faced NATO'S expansion in Central Europe in 1999. In fact, Medvedev's engagement with Georgia in 2008 also struck a similar tone in keeping out NATO from the zone. This message was carried forward by Putin which enabled him to connect to his own rhetoric of Western Hegemony and Russian imperative to resist this encroachment. This assertion as per scholars is evident from Putin's conviction that "Ukraine is an artificial state with no right to exist". This conflict have often been referred to as a new Cold War between Russia and U.S. Noam Chomsky analysed and stated that "The worst case scenario would be a nuclear war which would be terrible". Ukraine therefore was placed in the agendas of major powers that is Russia, U.S and their allies which started their Diplomatic manoeuvres and sharpened their attacks. The former president Barrack Obama in his speech at the UN on September 2014 counted Russian aggression in Europe as the top three global threats apart from international terrorism and Ebola and reiterated at the NATO summit in Brussels where he viewed Russia's aggression against Ukraine as a threat to Europe. The Ukrainian Conflict has probably widened the rift

between Russia and the West. The sanctions against Russia have resulted in increasing divide between people. With Russia cultivating its relations with emerging powers like India and China through BRICS. In spite of economic implications of sanctions, the ultimate goal of stability has not been fruitful. This is also due to the fact that Russia and EU is economically interdependent and sanctions act as a hindrance to their multi-layered co-operation. Situations have been worse since then with Russia threatening to impose sanctions on planes flying above its air space. Majority of the European airlines pass through Russia to move to Asia and such imposition and diversion of routes have resulted in high costs of air travel. On the other hand Russian state had to grasp with the travel bans, caps on import of technology restrictions of borrowing from foreign banks with major banks such as Sberbank, VTB, Gazprombank, Rosselkhozbank witnessing share drop. As a response to sanctions many foreign investors have withdrawn the capital from Russia. The World Economy website has reported that:

“Between 2014 and 2018, a military conflict between Ukrainian soldiers and Russian-backed separatists has continued in eastern Ukraine. More than 10,000 people have been killed. On November 25<sup>th</sup> 2018, Russian ships attacked and boarded three Ukrainian vessels in the Crimean port of Azov near the Black Sea. It placed a freighter to block the port. It said Ukraine has violated Russian waters. The two sides signed an agreement in 2003 to guarantee free passage through the strait. In recent months, they've been harassing each other's ships. Critics at the United Nations Security Council meeting said Russia's attack was a violation under international law.”

There were other issues at stake as well that is the rupture of the defence-industrial ties that dealt a 'serious blow' to Russia's defence sector. But there have been scope for strategic gains for Moscow with regard to a transit corridor for energy as at least half of the Ukraine's shale reserves are located in Donetsk-Luhansk-Kharkiv Region, thereby acting as a reason for



Moscow still retaining the territories of Ukraine. But there have been certain pitfalls which undermined Russian objectives of Foreign policy in that area. Military interventions after the flee of Yanukovich were erroneous as underestimated Ukraine's resilience and capacity of its armed forces. In fact civil society of Ukraine have been strengthened after the War especially in Eastern Ukraine. Dnipropetrovs, Kharkiv, and Mariupol have become symbols of Patriotism, collective sacrifices and solidarity. In fact Russia did not expect a strong counteroffensive between May and July 2014. Which regained control of 23 and 36 districts by rebels, demonstrated support for the state. But the Russian offensives had following aims:

Firstly, to demonstrate Russia's military dominance and capacity to annihilate Ukraine's forces at will.

Secondly, to use military means necessary to block unilateral revision of the post-February 2014 status quo.

Thirdly, to incur financial damage on Ukraine and deny the minimum fiscal solvency for political credibility.

These offensives were tools to restrain western narratives. In fact to its surprise, the Minsk agreements were not inked on equal terms but a product of force majeure. The restoration of Border control by Ukraine was to be initiated after holding of the elections but was subject to agreement by the Separatists in articles 4,9,11 which implied withholding their consent indefinitely. The goals of stabilisation and reconciliation was far from being achieved and represented just an armed truce. Russia violated it as soon as the ink was dried with military takeovers and intimidation continuing tortures.

Surprisingly, as evident from the Russia insider reports, Ukraine continued to be a trade haven for Russia .So far, in 2017 despite contrary noise and efforts, aggressive Russia remained the third largest foreign direct investor into the Ukrainian economy at the equivalent of \$4.4 billion dollars. The largest is of all places Cyprus, with investments of \$9.9 billion (25.5 percent of total foreign investment), followed by the Netherlands with \$6.3 billion (16.2 percent). In the top ten category were also Great Britain, Gibraltar, Germany, the Virgin Islands, Switzerland, France, and Luxembourg.

Thus, it might be well argued that despite international condemnation and image of violator of International law Putin's grand design seems to have been achieved success with high degree of economic dependence of Ukraine over Russia. Throwing light on the Soft Power credentials of Putin, Russia has exhibited strong influence on Russian speaking mass in Ukraine. With increase in control over the most popular print, radio, and television outlets in Russia Kremlin successfully portrayed a unified, patriotic image of Russia abroad. But there has also been clear signals of Russia adhering to the multipolar world without western dominance. Thus, each and every step towards Public Diplomacy has been a calculated effort to show its anti-Americanness. Putin's ideational narrative have successfully harnessed the story of Russian culture, history and compelled the Russian speakers to internalize such a narrative. The aggressive use of Media , the gross disinformation campaigns have been used very wisely , especially the sentiments of the compatriots living in Ukraine has been very wisely manipulate and generate a public opinion in favour of the intervention. With the presidential elections of Ukraine in 2019 and the victory of comedian turned Politician Volodymyr Zelenskiy defeating Petro Poroshenko the real winner is undoubtedly Putin. This is due to the fact that Zelenskiy is a native Russian speaker and has been emotionally appealing the Russian speaking mass. Putin's propaganda which bombards Ukrainian broadcast internet channels are now busy raising hopes for a corrupt free transparent presidency with Zelenskiy at power. In fact this victory enabled

Putin to pursue his passportization strategy which implies distribution of Russian passports to people living in Ukraine especially in areas of Eastern Ukraine. But what is remarkable is the fact is the emergence of cyberwarfare to a new level with Russian hackers affecting Ukrainian presidential elections. Having said that, Russia and Ukraine in the 21<sup>st</sup> century still resembles a cold war like situation with never ending violation of norms and preponderant practices in international relations with non-compliance to Western international relations and encasing on values such as ethnicity, conservatism, and identity which Western model doesn't incorporate much. Well owing to the continuous occurrence of violence in Ukraine, there are ample scope of research for future scholars on the area of Ethnicity and War, hybrid wars, information warfare which would broaden the scope of international relations.

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