What is the Role of the West in the Development of the Ukraine Crisis?

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Abstract

The crisis in Ukraine started in November 2013 with the popular uprising against a corrupt president Victor Yanukovych. The protest, which was named Euromaidan, has later developed into a broader crisis which involved territorial and human losses. Because of the involvement of different international actors, the crisis became a global issue. Moreover, due to the East-West division of global politics, Ukraine happened to be in-between two competing factions, who are, to some extent, believed to be responsible for the continuity of the crisis. Currently, both Russia and the Western world place blame onto each other, and no one can agree on a single and coherent solution to the crisis.

This research will set out an analysis of different views of the Ukraine crisis with the focus on the evidence from both sides, the West and Russia. Russian and Western media publications, public speeches and foreign policy documents will be the point of study.

The research aims to demonstrate the role of Russia and the West in the development of the crisis as well as to investigate the extent to which such geopolitical competition of two historically powerful actors created problems within Ukraine and internationally.

Figure 1: Anti-government protests in Kiev [1].

Ukraine: Background

Ukraine, like many other modern states, consists of different lands, peoples and languages. After gaining independence in 1991 Ukraine was in a process of state- and nation-building. It is situated in the very heart of Europe and has always been in the middle of two competing worlds - Western and Eastern.

The end of Cold War in 1989 has brought expectations of "Europe whole and free" [3]. However, in 2014 Europe again found itself as the arena of Great Power confrontation.

The Ukraine Crisis clearly represents the renewed East-West confrontation that was evident before 1989.

Figure 2: Map of Ukraine [2].

Methodology

Given the particular context of the crisis, the research will investigate the issue through the review of Russian and Western public discourses, media coverage, official documents and statistics. Popular newspapers and news websites, such as the Russian Pervyi Kanal (First Channel) or the American CNN (among others)are at the core of the research.

Particular theoretical frameworks have been chosen to analyze the roles of the West and Russia in the Ukraine Crisis. With the review of Mearsheimer's [4] and Smith's [5] academic works, two theories, realism and constructivism, will be of a great value in trying to explain why Russia and the West got involved in the crisis and why have they undertaken certain actions throughout the crisis.

Figure 3: G8 expels Russia March 24, 2014 [6].

Findings

- According to Russian media outlets [7] the Ukraine Crisis started with the rise of nationalist groups within Ukraine and was influenced by the EU's and NATO's expansionist policy.
- According to the Western coverage, the Ukraine Crisis has developed due to Russia's support of separatists in Crimea and the eastern region of Donbas.
- The Western view has proven to be divided – some European countries resistant to take counteractions against Russia for economic reasons.
- Realist assumptions of power politics are still prevalent.
- However, history, culture and ideology, as constructivist advocates think, also play an important role in Russian Foreign Policy.

Figure 4: Ukraine Protest, January 22, 2014 [8].

Research Benefits

This study will help us to understand the extent to which the Great Powers rivalry and their information war plays an important role in the continuation of the Ukraine Crisis. The ongoing research may be beneficial in finding appropriate solutions to end this open-ended conflict.

References:

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