Impact of Crimean Crises on Russia and Central Asia: A Review

Nasir Nabi,

Ph.D Research Scholar History and Maulana Azad National Fellow, University of Kashmir
Email: nasirnabimir@gmail.com

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Abstract:
With Russian annexation of Crimea, the European Union (EU), United States of America (USA) and many other western countries impose Sanctions on Russia. For that reason the Russia has to Strength its Eastern policy. In East the best option for Russia is Central Asia. The Russia has invested significant resources in retaining influence over the region. The strategy which Moscow is applying is that it has emerging slowly and reluctantly with its new role in the Region. Russia seemed likely to remain for now the most prominent external power in Central Asia in terms of its high-level political relationships and its security cooperation in the Region. In this context the present study explore the possibilities of greater ties between Central Asia and Russia. The paper further examines the Russia’s interest in Central Asia that will be largely focused on trade, natural resources and other purposes.

Key Words: Economic ties, Ukraine Crisis, Export, Trade, Relations, Hegemony

Introduction:
The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought about multidimensional problems to the former republics of the USSR and their inhabitants. In 1990s Ukraine, Crimea became a centre of conflict between Ukraine and Russia over the former Soviet Black Sea Fleet and Crimea itself, perceived as historically their own by both sides of the conflict. It is very important for Russia to keep Ukraine under its influence because of Ukraine’s exceptional strategic location. In the words of Zbigniew Brzezinski, Russia, with a subordinated Ukraine, becomes an empire, and without it, ceases to be one.¹ Russia has tried to exercise pressure upon Ukraine from the very beginning of its independence. The majority of disputes between the two states have been settled. The Crimea and the issues of the Russian Black Sea Fleet (RBSF) based there still remain an important outstanding issue in diplomatic relations between the states.² The contemporary international relations is governed by the emergence of geopolitical tensions that started with the onset of Ukrainian Crisis which resulted the Crimean annexation to Russia and the imposition of mutual economic sanctions between EU and Russia. With Russian annexation of Crimea the EU, US and many other western countries impose sanctions on Russia. They have also blacklisted dozens of senior officials of Russians, Separate commanders, Russian firms and accused Russia of undermining Ukrainian Sovereignty. All these things compel the Russia to Strength its Eastern Policy.³ In East the Central Asia is of specific geopolitical importance to Russia. The strategy which Moscow is applying is that it has emerging slowly and reluctantly with its new role in the Region. Besides Russia there are other powers too as US and China.
Among all the players the role of China is significant in economic terms. Russia’s external policy conception is based on the necessity to create a favourable international environment for the country’s economic revival. This is evident from the fact that in the year 2010, Russia was overtaken by China as the number one trading partner in the Region that compels Russia to adjust its counterbalanced strategy in the region. However, despite being economically outmatched by China, Russia is still a major player in the Region. The countries in Central Asia face a number of challenges. These include a range of internal threats to stability, whether through weak and corrupt governments, divided societies, drug-trafficking and its corrosive effects on state institutions, radicalised groups and widespread poverty. Besides the two countries as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia’s weakest links: The former suffered in the 1990s Civil War, while the latter went through two revolutions in the last decade alone. Added to this, Russia’s moves on Ukraine and their repercussions are an important part of the backdrop when considering Russia’s role in Central Asia, with ramifications for stability in the region.

Historically Speaking, the relations between Russian and central Asia is older than the birth of Soviet power in 1917. The whole region along with Russia, formed part of a single state system for more than one-and-a-quarter century. The other ties as economic and Cultural ties are much older. Russia’s relation with the “Near Abroad” (a term used currently in Russia to designate the Trans-Caucasian and Central Asian region) has a history of extending over a millennium. Russia has been an important factor in Central Asian politics. The quantity of meetings at all levels is unmatched. Russia’s aid to the former Soviet Space and its priority in terms of development assistance – runs through specific bilateral mechanisms. The Russian media remains the main source of information for the societies of Central Asian Republics, which are still mostly Russian-speaking.

Russia’s changing role in Central Asia:

Some analysts were of the opinioning that there would be no role of Russia on the Central Asia after the fall of Soviet Union. However, there assumptions are premature. The status of Russia in the Region and its ability to influence these countries has changed now and Moscow has learned the strategy to deal with the situation. Moscow is a crucial player in the region, whose decisions will shape the Central Asian Region’s near future in terms of labour migration, economic integration, and strategic orientation. With the Ukrainian Crisis, Moscow is ever more present on Central Asia’s, through its support of regimes that look favourably upon Russia and by seeking to bind them to Moscow’s interest via political, economic and military integration initiatives.

The Chinese Challenge in the Great Game for Central Asia:

The withdrawal of NATO Forces from Central Asia will reduce the influence of West in the region. The other player in the Great Game is China and Russia. The Chinese policy in Central Asia is a part of global foreign policy strategy of the Peoples republic of China. Thus the greater rival for Russia in the region is China. As China is the main economic partner for the Central Asian countries. The most important investor in the region is also China. Thus to overcome the growing influence of China in Central Asia the strategy which Moscow seems to adopt is that it will seek to use violent methods in its policy towards Central Asia. There is even the very existence of the risk that the Moscow may support anti-government forces in the countries of the region will remain a factor “disciplining” the local ruling elites. Russia’s moves on Ukraine and their repercussions are an important part of the backdrop when considering Russia’s role in Central Asia, with ramifications for stability in the region. That will make Russia an important major player in the Region.
Economic impacts on Central Asia:

With Russian annexation of Crimea, the EU, USA and many other western countries impose Sanctions on Russia that put the Russian economy in a critical stage. The factors responsible for the economic challenges may be as, accumulated problems from a failure to address structural reforms; the effects of the dramatic fall in oil prices; and the impact of Western sanctions. This is estimated from a fact that during 2014, the value of the Russian rouble depreciated by over 45% against the US dollar and other leading currencies. This changing economic context affects the relations between Russia and the Central Asian states. The economic problems in Russia will affect the Central Asian Countries in a number of ways as the central Asian countries which are hydrocarbon importers or exporter due to fall in the oil prices. The region’s two poorest countries, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, are already in dire financial straits. Tajikistan’s per capita GDP is less than one-tenth of that in Kazakhstan, and it is the poorest of all the former Soviet states, its already weak economy further undermined by poor financial management. Since Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan depend on Russia as a major source of investment and remittances, the impact of Russia’s economic down-turn has been particularly hard on these two countries. Russia’s slowdown is felt through the reduced volumes of cash remittances sent home by migrant workers. Tajikistan tops global tables for the highest dependence on remittances, which account for around 50 per cent of the country’s GDP; while for Kyrgyzstan, the figure is 30 per cent of GDP. Whereas official data suggest that some 736,446 Tajik citizens, predominantly men, left the country independently in 2010 to look for work in other countries, independent experts have put this figure at more than 1 million. About 95% of the migrants went to the Russian Federation to find their work. The Tajikistan has the Highest Ratio of Remittances to Gross Domestic product in the world; this should successfully transfers responsibility for economic stability and growth into individual households. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission in Tajikistan, remittances sent by labour migrants to Tajikistan are unable to significantly reduce the level of poverty within the families of labour migrants who remain behind – only 40% of families live above the poverty line, with income of more than $2.15 a day. The migration of the householders has created problems for the wives and children’s of the labour migrants. In Tajikistan’s social system women’s are traditionally responsible for family care. In the absence of the male partners women are able to assume the role of the households and are depend on the remittances send from the husbands working abroad as migrant workers. The Conditions forced her to work outside but due to their illiteracy and overburdened with child rearing women also face problems in working outside.13

The security context:

The Russia is the most important security actor in the region. With significant military assets based in the region, Russia has the means to react to a crisis together with an assumed responsibility to manage security.14 Central Asia is generally considered to be the forgotten world of the former Soviet Union. The region emerged from seventy five years of Soviet tutelage. Since, then all the Republics embarked on the process of radical change such as, restructuring of nation economy, implementation of new constitution and systematic rationalization of indigenous society. Among the indigenous society the category of Gender would prove to be the most problematic aspect of transition. One of the major aspects that have gained silence is the Gender nature of Post-Soviet transition. Women activities in such societies have been made invisible through patriarchal system.15 The countries in Central Asia face a number of challenges. These include a range of internal threats to stability, whether through weak and corrupt governments, divided societies, drug-trafficking and its corrosive effects on state institutions, radicalised groups and widespread poverty. Besides the two countries as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia’s weakest links: The former suffered a in the 1990s Civil War, while the
latter went through two revolutions in the last decade alone. Added to this, Russia’s moves on Ukraine and their repercussions are an important part of the backdrop when considering Russia’s role in Central Asia, with ramifications for stability in the region.

Conclusion:

In the contemporary international relations which is governed by the emergence of geopolitical tensions that started with the onset of Ukrainian Crisis. With Russian annexation of Crimea the EU, US and many other western countries impose Sanctions on Russia. They have also blacklisted dozens of senior officials of Russians, Separate commanders and Russian firms accused of undermining Ukrainian Sovereignty. For that reason the Russia has to Strength its Eastern policy. In East the best option for Russia is Central Asia. As Russia’s interest in Central Asia has and will be largely focused on trade, natural resources and other purposes. Central Asia also needs an easy access to European market. The present situation in Russia will provide impetus for this relationship to go forward. However, as strains in the Kazakhstan-Russia relationship illustrate, they have the potential to undermine the current balance of power in the region. Russia’s apparent prioritisation of geopolitical aims over diplomatic and security relations with Central Asia states suggests that the latter have been given less focus. It is somewhat easier to discern a series of ad hoc actions and reactions, rather than a clear long-term Russian strategy in respect of Central Asia. What is certain from this is a complex, uncertain outlook.

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