

Beyond Sanctions, the Impact of the Ukraine Crisis on Russia

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Abstract: Crimea's leaving from Ukraine seems to be a victory for Russian diplomacy, but it has also left a deep negative impact on Russia. Russia has to face both pressures internal and external. After four years, this paper tries to discuss the gain and loss of Russia in the negative impact of the Crimean.

1. Introduction

If the crisis in Ukraine is an unexpected geopolitical events, then Russia's behaviors like quickly sent troops to the Crimea which end up with Russia formally incorporated Crimea as two federal subjects of the Russian Federation with effect from 18 March 2014 is a breaking news of the century. With the help of 2014 Ukrainian revolution, Russian President Putin has seized on historic opportunities which makes Crimea back to the Russian. This diplomatic venture has brought not only benefits to Russia, but also a variety of crises. In addition to worsening relations between Russia and the Western, the incident has brought other problems. This involves not only relations between Russia and the Western, but also between Russia and CIS. There is not only Russia's diplomatic relations, but also Russia's domestic problems.

Until now, Ukraine is still an constantly bleeding wounds between Russia and the Western. The Western's resistance to Russia and sanctions over the Ukraine crisis is still continue. In September 2015, Russia's invasion of Syria made Ukraine's problems temporarily ignored by the international community. But Ukraine's problem is still the most serious disagreement between Russia and the Western.

2. Text

In domestic politics, Crimea is a cardiac stimulant of Russian politics. According to the world bank, Russia's GDP grew by 27.79% in 2008, by-26.38% in 2009. Since then, though it has been rising, but it began to grow slowly in the single digits from 2011. [1] In such cases, the situation in Ukraine gave President Putin a golden opportunity to deflect domestic discontent. The action in Ukraine is hugely popular at home. As ordinary people supported the government's actions on Crimea, Putin's popularity was up 29% in 2014, basically returned to the data when he just took office as prime minister in 2008.

The Crimean incident has not only brought high approval ratings, but also new troubles. The economic downturn and the political and economic sanctions against Russia which all come from Crimean have created some new powers in Russian politics. In 2008, Alexei Navalny walked into the spotlight with detailed reports of social corruption. Although at first he was concerned business revelations and allegations, but during the 2011 parliamentary elections, he attacked United Russia party as "crooks and thieves", which made him become one of the leaders of the opposition. Mr Navalny's success marks a growing intolerance of corruption among Russians. Mr Navalny's report, which accuses prime minister Medvedev of owning multiple mansions and large estates, is a stark contrast to Russia's slowing economy. At the end of March, 2017, there was a nationwide demonstration against corruption, targeting president Putin and prime minister Medvedev. Although there have been opposition parties in Russian politics in the past, the economic and social crisis caused by the Crimea has undoubtedly exacerbated Russia's social problems. [2] This is probably something Mr Putin did not expect.

At the same time, there are concerns about immigration and terrorism in Russia, where economic growth is slowing. Although Navalny focuses on more free and fair elections, did not have clear the direction of the blueprint for future, but he mentioned "immigrants from central Asia". That concern has been exacerbated by the St. Petersburg subway bombings. The attack broke the stereotype of a Russian terrorist attack. The killer comes from central Asian countries, which have long been considered Russia's backyard.

Although there are other negative effects, in some way, Russia's behavior in the Crimea get more support than opposition in domestic. In the international area, Russia's behavior was judged differently. Russia and Ukraine are both CIS countries, which members have close political and economic ties. According to CIS statistics, the CIS countries are Ukraine's largest trading partner. The total amount of bilateral trade is up to 40% of Ukraine's total import-export volume. [3] In the year of 2014, Ukraine should hold the rotating presidency of CIS. After the crisis, Ukrainian government has abandoned the responsibility. Ukraine's relationship with the CIS has also collapsed. In contrast to the attitude of the Ukrainian government, the CIS countries have shown a different attitude with Russia's behavior. A lengthy commentary appeared on the CIS website, arguing that the Ukrainian crisis stemmed from the complex historical links between Ukraine and Russia which the Ukrainian authorities has ignored. [4] Comparison of Russian government, this statement does not blame everything to Western's interference and the Kiev's improper policies. Ukraine crisis stems from the Ukrainian authorities' unable when it dealing with the complicated relationship between the two countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union which led to a long period of political upheaval.

Because in CIS many countries face similar problems with Ukraine. Russia's actions in the Ukraine crisis have made them aware that Russia can easily break the political borders of former Soviet states and is likely to achieve it. This has led to regional tensions in former Soviet Union. This poses new challenges to the positioning of Russia and CIS countries. Of course, the crisis in Ukraine has also allowed the CIS countries to recognize the fragility of their own countries, and they hope to actively mitigate this vulnerability by working with Russia.

Western attitudes are very different. From the government to the mainstream media, government leaders to the general public, Western countries have expressed strong protests over Russia's unification of Crimea and imposed long sanctions. After the Crimean crisis, 44% and 24% of interviewees said Russia was unfriendly or hostile. That number was still 53% in June 2013 (Americans consider Russia a friendly or ally). [5] The same day Russian army into the Crimea, President Obama issued a statement, saying that "Russia will pay a high price for its own policies". May 25, President Obama in The Hague issued a statement that "Russia's actions in Crimea were not motivated by strength, but by weakness." The European Union's response to the Crimean crisis has been even more dramatic. March 17, EU foreign Ministers strongly condemned Crimea referendum, and EU will not recognize Russia's annexation of the Crimea, and will impose the strengthening of sanctions for maintenance of Ukraine's territorial integrity. [6] In the same day, United States and EU announced the imposition of sanctions, primarily against Russian government officials who are designated as the referendum concerned. In June, without Russia's participation, G7 summit was held in Brussels. The group of eight thus becomes the group of seven. The leaders of the seven countries issued a joint statement on April 4 which is urging Russia to stop "destabilizing actions in eastern Ukraine." According to the polls, in 2015, 40% interviewees from the EU Eastern European Region, think that Russia is their main threat. This proportion in non-EU Eastern European countries only of 3%. [7]

In military terms, the stand-off between NATO and Russia is increasingly tense which can be proved by the frequent military exercises, as well as the constant reinforcement of the garrison. In 2016, the U.S. deployed the land-based anti-missile system in Romania and started construction in Poland. It is expected to be completed by 2018. Since 2017, NATO has carried out various exercises involving aerial drills, anti-submarine exercises and cyber defense. In March, seven NATO countries held military exercises in Romania. In April, NATO countries held military exercises in Latvia. Facing with the military exercises of NATO in the Black Sea and Baltic, Russian conducts

large-scale surprise combat readiness check and combat drills, in addition of deployment of S-400 counter-missile system in Leningrad.

Western sanctions are not only diplomatic but also economic. Objects including the Russian officials, the President's intimate friends, energy companies, financial institutions and energy companies. So far, the sanctions and the anti-sanctions still continue. Since 2014, world oil prices have fallen, from \$100 to \$120, to \$40 to \$60. [8] The decline in Russia's economy is inevitable. The decline of the economic level directly leads to the decline of the living standard of the Russian people. The CPI has risen year by year, has risen from 420 to 540 in three years. Dealing with the severe economic situation, Mr Putin has launched an anti-corruption movement in the government in 2015. However, it did not get enough support. In March 2017, there were even anti-corruption demonstrations involving several major Russian cities.

After the declaration of independence, the Eastern regions of Ukraine has not been able to achieve international recognition, not mention support and funding. It makes the people who is still living in there must endure inconveniences and pains. According to the United Nations refugee report, Ukraine is evaluated as a part of the free region, and the Crimea is not free region. [9] By April 2017, there were 170 million residents living in the Crimea and the Eastern regions of Ukraine who were registered as internally displaced persons (IDP). Donetsk and Lugansk became "besieged castles". Given the current situation in Ukraine and the Malaysia airlines incident in 2014, Air transport capacity has also been limited. Because of persistent conflict, this area has effectively become an isolated island. [10] The eastern part, which began in the Soviet era was dominated by heavy industry, are largely dependent on external supplies. The disruption of traffic lead to the disruption of the supply chain, and residents' living were seriously affected. The disruption of personnel and material exchanges is accompanied by the lack of administrative competence and basic services. In March 2017, the Ukrainian government officially blocked rail transport lines leading to the eastern Ukraine armed region [11]. By April 2017, in the Ukrainian Eastern city of Mariupol (a populous city in Ukraine.), there have been 6 months without hot water supply, which makes the 460 million residents living in trouble. [12] All this has forced Russia to take steps to ease tensions in the region, including humanitarian aid, renewal of border management and refugee policy. From August 2014 to April 2017, Russia has delivered 68, 000 tons of daily necessities and other humanitarian supplies to eastern Ukraine. [13] when Kiev announced that it would cut power, Russia announced that it would supply electricity to the eastern part of the country to ensure residents' power levels. [14] The United Nations high commissioner of Refugees Filippo Grandi said the Russians' behavior like humanitarian aid and reception of the Ukrainian refugees played a very important role. In February 2017, Russian President Putin signed an executive order that would changed Russia's long-standing practice of denying documents issued in eastern Ukraine. Russian presidential press secretary Peskov said the policy is forced for humanitarian reasons with the willing of relieving the situation in the east. It will also help to ease Russia's border management and refugee problems.

Comparing with eastern Ukraine, Russia has put more attention and resources in Crimea. In April 2015, The first session of Yalta International Economic Forum was held to introduce the Crimean region and attract global investors to build Crimea. It has been held every year since. In April 2017, chairman Andrew Nazarov said Crimea would become Russia's Monaco in a few years. [15] In 2017, Russia has paid 8.8 billion rubles for electricity subsidies in Crimea. Agricultural subsidies is about 6.786 billion rubles. At a meeting in September 2016, Medvedev introduced the construction of highway and railway transit cross-sea bridge which is one of the important part of the transport network in southern Russia, the final investment is about 140 million rubles. [16] The bridge has strengthened transport links between Russia and Crimea. It has great economic and strategic significance for the Russian inland river shipping south in Black sea and Mediterranean Sea.

That is a big expense for Russia's finances. But government has full support of it. Facing with Western economic sanctions, 3/4 of Russians think the government should not succumb to the pressures of Western economic sanctions, 59% of Russians believe that they are ready to deal with

pressure of life which caused by economic sanctions, especially when the sanctions comes from Russia Ukraine's policy. [17]

When we look at Ukraine, we cannot just see Russia's diplomatic success. It should also see the pressure on Russia. This pressure comes not only from the Western but from Russia as well. Russia's citizens are willing to support Russia's actions in Crimea, but the decline of domestic economy and sanctions have caused a series of problems. One day, Russians will have to face the truth. That is, although they can resist western sanctions, the impact of Ukraine's problems has profoundly affected their lives. Mr Putin's government has to face this problems.

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