US -RUSSIA RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF NATO ENLARGEMENT

Sibel Kavuncu

ОТНОШЕНИЯТА МЕЖДУ САЩ И РУСИЯ В КОНТЕКСТА НА РАЗШИРЕНИЕТО НА НАТО

Сибел Кавунджу

ABSTRACT: Today, one of the problematic issue between the United States and Russia is the eastward enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which was founded in 1949 to provide a system of collective security for its members and to guarantee stability in the North Atlantic region by deterring the perceived menace of Soviet military power. Nearly 20 years passed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The possible Soviet threat disappeared and depending on this disappearance NATO developed new policies/strategies accordingly to the new strategic context. This paper aims to discuss the multi-faceted process of NATO enlargement and the inconvenience of Russia during the eastward enlargement process of NATO. In this context, in view of the facts we will try to examine the manner of the relation between Russia and the US. The paper also emphasizes NATO’s future enlargement objections and inconvenience of Russia whom perceives the eastward enlargement of NATO as the appearance of a powerfull military bloc on its borders as a direct threat to its security.

Key Words: U.S., Russia, NATO, Enlargement

Introduction

With the end of the Second World War, the world became bipolar, as divided; The West Block and the East Block. On the West the leader of the Block was the US whom advocates strongly for democracy. On the East there was the communist Soviet Union as the Bloc leader. Anxiety was dominated to the atmosphere of the post war world by this division. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was founded in 1949 in this atmosphere to provide a system of collective security for its members and to guarantee stability in the North Atlantic region by deterring the perceived menace of Soviet military power [“Setting the Scene”, http://www.nato.int/eb ookshop/video/declassified/#/en/encyclopedia/from_treaty_to_organization/setting_the_scene_2/].

Formed to counter the threat of post-war communist expansion as the Soviet Union sought to extend its influence in Europe, NATO, that stated its general aim as being to “safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation” of its members by promoting “stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area” whom originally consisting of 12 countries membership has increased from 12 to 28 countries through six rounds of enlargement in 1952(Greece and Turkey),1955(West Germany), 1982 (Spain), 1999,2004 and 2009 [“NATO Enlargement”, http://www.nato.int/issues/enlargement/index.html]. The first three rounds of enlargement took place during the Cold War, when strategic considerations were at the forefront of decision making. The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, signalled the end of the Cold War and was followed by the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Break up of the Soviet Union. The new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe were eager to guarantee their freedom by becoming integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union the eastward expansion of NATO has had a notable impact on each of the post Soviet States. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined the Alliance in March 1999, following an invitation issued at the 1997 Madrid Summit Meeting. At the Madrid Summit in July 1997, at the end of a careful and comprehensive process of deliberation and of intensified, individual dialogue with interested partner countries, Allied Heads of State and Government invited the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to begin accession talks with NATO [“NATO Summit”, http://www.nato.int/docu /comm/1997/970708/home.html]. Following
this decision, negotiations took place with each of the invited countries in autumn 1997 and Accession Protocols were ratified by all 16 Allies according to their respective national procedures and by the new members. The three countries formally acceded to the Treaty in March 1999. The three countries participated in their first Summit meeting as members in Washington in April 1999. At that time NATO leaders underlined the continuing openness of the Alliance to further new members and pledged that NATO would continue to welcome new members in a position to further the principles of the Treaty and contribute to peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO leaders also launched a Membership Action Plan, specifically designed to provide advice and feedback to countries aspiring to join the Alliance [“NATO Summit”, http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/1999/9904-wsh/9904-wsh.htm]. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia were invited to begin accession talks at the Alliance’s Prague Summit in 2002 and joined NATO in 2004. At the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, Allied leaders took a number of steps related to the future enlargement of the Alliance. Albania and Croatia were invited to start accession talks to join the Alliance. Albania and Croatia, which were invited to join NATO at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, formally became members when the accession process was completed on 1 April 2009. These processes showed clearly that, the enlargement of the Alliance is an ongoing and dynamic process.

At the end of the Cold War, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the necessity of a defense pact that was originally designed to combat a conventional war was questioned by many political analysts. As Tom Disney stated, the end of the Cold War brought the West to a difficult crossroads; “what was the security threat now? Was NATO still relevant?” Disney determines with referring to Gheciu, A.; that the general consensus among the Western countries was that NATO was still relevant because while conventional dangers were declining, there was a corresponding increase in the probability of a different, multifaceted, and a hard to contain type of risk [Disney, “How has NATO…”, www.groundings.co.uk/, 2010]. In the first instants of the Post Cold War World NATO found itself faced with an identity crisis. But soon, with the time that passes away, NATO transformed itself, expanding its collective defense mission to include conflict prevention and conflict management throughout Europe, including areas beyond the boundaries described by the NATO treaty. To stabilize Central Europe, the Alliance practiced a strategy of inclusion and collaboration towards the Middle and Eastern European Countries and decided to include new members under Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty [“NATO Enlargement”, www.bits.de/NRANEU/enlargement.htm]. Article 10 of the Washington Treaty allows the possibility of enlarging NATO membership. It asserts that “The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty…” [“The North Atlantic Treaty”, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm].

At the 1991 Rome Summit, NATO created the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) to serve as a forum for the newly independent countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to develop a formal dialogue with the Alliance [“NATO Enlargement”, www.bits.de/NRANEU/enlargement.htm].

In January 1994, at a summit in Brussels, the 16 Allied leaders said they expected and would welcome NATO enlargement that would reach to democratic states to the East. They reaffirmed that the Alliance, as provided for in Article 10 of the Washington Treaty was open to membership of other European states in a position to further the principles of the Washington Treaty and to contribute to security in the North Atlantic area. The Partnership for Peace (PIP) program was established to develop cooperative military relations between NATO and the newly democratized countries of Eastern Europe. PIP was also intended as a precursor for the preparation of perspective states interested in eventual NATO membership [“The 1995 Study on…”, www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/]. In September 1995, NATO published a study on NATO enlargement. The principles outlined in the study why and how new members could join in. With establishing a set of political and military criteria for aspiring states the study also consid-

The Madrid Summit of
NATO held in July 1997. At the summit meeting, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were officially invited to begin accession talks with NATO for full membership. In the meeting they also reaffirmed that NATO would remain open to new members. Following this, negotiations took place with each of the invited countries in autumn 1997 and in December 1997 Accession Protocols for each of the three were signed. Allied countries ratified the Protocols of Accession according to their national procedures during 1998 and Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (former PIP members) became the members of NATO on 12 March 1999. Thus these three countries became the first former Warsaw Pact countries that gained NATO membership in 1999. And they participated in their first summit meeting as members in Washington in April 1999. At that time, NATO leaders underlined the continuing openness of the Alliance to further new members and pledged that NATO would continue to welcome new members in a position to further the principles of the Treaty and contribute to peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO leaders also launched a Membership Action Plan, specifically designed to provide advice and feedback to countries aspiring to joint the Alliance. (“The Process of NATO Enlargement”, www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001). Thus the three countries entered the NATO membership, and in 1997, Madríd Summit, Yeltsin said he would “lay out his objections to a plan to bring former Soviet bloc nations in Eastern Europe into NATO” to Clinton in Helsinki meeting. He said: “What the Americans are proposing—moving conventional weapons to the territory of eastern Europe—would amount to a “cordon sanitaire” around the Russia”, and added: “we won’t go along with that” (“Yeltsin says NATO will top…”, the Associated Press, The Southeast Missourian, Mar. 15, 1997, p. 3). Not only Yeltsin, all Russian political and military leaders were opposed to the enlargement of NATO. The planned expansion (enlargement) of NATO, widely interpreted in Moscow as a Western attempt to isolate and exclude Russia from Europe. Yeltsin’s spokesman said the West would be making its “biggest strategic mistake” since the end of the Cold War by inviting, as expected, three former East Bloc countries—Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic—to join NATO (“Talk of NATO Expansion Tops…”, World and Nation, March 21, 1997, p. 2). And at Helsinki, Yeltsin said that he still thought expanding NATO “is a mistake and a serious one at that” (“Clinton and Yeltsin Agree to Disagree”, http://edition-cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1997/). In May 1997, before Madrid Summit, Yeltsin warned that plans for NATO’s expansion are the most serious dispute between Russia and the United States since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: “Since the Cuban crisis, there hasn’t been such a sharp issue in relations between Russia and the United States, which concern Russia’s interests to the degree that everyone should think about it, including Americans and Europeans”, Yeltsin said in remarks broadcast on Russian television (“Yeltsin Says NATO issue is threat to good relations”, The Deseret News, May 8, 1997, p. 3). In 1998 at a press briefing Vladimir Lukin, chairman of the Russian Duma’s Committee on International Affairs said that they are offended by NATO enlargement and expanding the alliance is “dangerous”, that it is isolating Russia. He said that: “In the early 90’s there was talk of a common European home, with no dividing lines. There are now dividing lines between countries that are in NATO and new potential partners. Next, there are dividing lines between NATO and the rejected countries, such as Ukraine. Then there are dividing lines between countries like Ukraine and Russia…” he said that he is against such a strategy in a belief that NATO expansion is creating new dividing lines......

After Clinton Administration the policy of the US toward NATO enlargement continued in Bush Administration. As Gordon and Steinberg mentioned that, after a speech in Warsaw, Poland on June 15,2001 where Bush has asserted that “all of Europe’s new democracies”, from the Baltics to the Black Sea, should have an equal chance to join Western Institutions.He suggested that the failure to allow them to do so would amount moral equivalent of the World War II Yalta and Munich Conferences and appealed to NATO leaders to take a forward leaning approach to enlargement at their November 2002 Summit in Prague. With America’s urging, Alliance leaders agreed to allow NATO Secretary General George Robertson to announce that NATO expected to launch the next round of enlargement at the Prague Summit in 2002[Philip Gordon, James Steinberg, “NATO Enlargement:Moving Forward”, Policy Brief, The Brookings Institution, Washington DC, no:90, December 2001, p.2].

At the Prague Summit, seven partner countries-Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia- are invited to start accession talks. NATO Secretary General George Robertson made an announcement on enlargement in 21 November 2002. With this announcement these seven countries were invited by NATO to accession talks [“The Prague Summit and NATO’s Transformation”, www.nato.int/docu/rdr-gde-prg/rdr-gde-prg-eng.pdf]. All seven countries joined NATO in 2004. This was the second round of enlargement of the Alliance after Cold War, also the fifth and the largest round of enlargement in the Alliance’s history. Membership of NATO rose from 19 to 26 states with this enlargement and again this round of the enlargement brought NATO on Russian borders. Because the Baltic States became members. Entry of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia shifted NATO’s military influence eastward to Russian border. Worry that NATO’s enlargement will significantly change the geopolitical situation in Eastern Europe and damage its national security, Russia has warned to take steps to defend itself if the Alliance’s push is perceived as a menace[“NATO Expansion Causes Serious Concern in Russia”, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200403/31/eng20040331_139052.shtml].

Russian lawmakers have voiced concern about NATO’s eastward expansion to Moscows doorstep. A resolution by the Duma, said Russia may reconsider its defence strategy if NATO continued to ignore Moscow’s interests [“Russia Condemns NATO’s Expansion”, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/358717.stm].

Konstantin Kosachyov, head of the International Affairs Committee in the State Duma said: “NATO’s steps have had an unfriendly character toward Russia”, and he warned that Russia might take corresponding actions if NATO significantly deploys military bases near Russia’s borders and change the balance of forces in the region[“NATO Expansion Causes Serious Concern in Russia”, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200403/31/eng20040331_139052.shtml].

A third round of the enlargement, which includes Croatia and Albania was opened at the NATO Summit in Bucharest in April 2008, by sending invitations to these two states. At the Bucharest Summit Allied leaders took a number of steps related to the future enlargement of the Alliance. Besides the invitation of Albania and Croatia to start accession talks to join the Alliance, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was assured that it will also be invited to join the Alliance as soon as a solution to the issue of the country’s name has been reached with Greece. Also Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro were invited to start Intensified Dialogues on their membership aspirations and related reforms. Allied leaders also agreed at Bucharest that Georgia and Ukraine, which were already engaged in Intensified Dialogues with NATO, will one day become members [NATO Enlargement”,www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49212].

Albania and Croatia joined NATO in April 1, 2009. By these entries the members of the Alliance increased to 28.

Relations with Russia took a marked turn for the worse after the brief Russia-Georgian War of August 2008. As correspondents say Georgia’s stated aim of joining NATO is a major cause for Concern for Russia and part of the current tension between Russia and Georgia. Georgia and Ukraine’s actively seeking to join the Alliance and the strong support of the US to these two to become NATO members [“Russia Objects to NATO Expansion”, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/2006/10/04] caused Russia’s reaction. Russia strongly opposes the NATO membership bids of Georgia and Ukraine. Speaking at the end of NATO’s annual summit in Bucharest, Vladi-
mir Putin reaffirmed his strong opposition to NATO’s eastward expansion and said NATO was in principle a threat to Russia. He said NATO’s expansion eastwards is a direct threat to Russia’s security [“NATO Expansion a Direct Threat to Russia-Putin”, http://rt.com/Top_News/2008-04-04/NATO_expansion_a_direct_threat_to_Russia_Putin.html].

Russia has long been concerned about an expanding NATO which has moved toward its borders. Though NATO countries maintained that the expansion was not directed at Russia, Moscow remained unconvinced.

**Conclusion**

In an interview in 31 May 2008, Putin (whom left the presidency for the office of prime minister)said Russia has every reason to worry that new NATO bases could appear close to its borders if Ukraine and Georgia join the Alliance. “We are concerned that if these countries become part of NATO today, tomorrow we will see offensive missile systems deployed on their territory which will pose a serious threat to us”[“Russia Opposes NATO Expansion in Principle-PM Putin”, http://en.rian.ru/russia/20080531/108965213.html].

After Putin’s leaving the Presidency for the Office of Prime Minister, Dimitri Medvedev starts in Office. Like his predecessor, Medvedev opposes to the enlargement (expansion) of the NATO too. In his statements as from his first days in the presidency to today he highlighted his opposition. Medvedev approved a new military doctrine in Feb 5, 2010, identifying NATO expansion as a national threat and reaffirming Russia’s right to use nuclear weapons if the country’s existence is threatened[“Russia Names NATO Expansion as National Threat”, http://www.reuters.com/assets/].

In a speech in Feb 23, 2010, US State Secretary Hillary Clinton, disagreeing with Russia’s new military doctrine that lists NATO’s eastward expansion as a threat to Russia’s security, said: “While Russia faces challenges to its security, NATO is not among them”[“NATO not a Threat to Russia-US state Secretary Clinton”, http://en.rian.ru/world/20100223/]

In the period, dating from the end of the cold war to the extant time, the eastward enlargement of NATO is naturally one of the main dispute matter between US and Russia. From some of the expressions of the US, we can make an implication that, according to the US; enlarging NATO will make it stronger; will secure the democratic gains in Eastern Europe and will foster regional stability [“NATO Enlargement in the US National Interest”, http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/natoindex.html]; But Russia, contrarily to the US, perceives the enlargement strategy of NATO as a threat for its security. Russia has strong sensitivity on this issue. Russia feels particularly depressed. Squarely Russia’s and the US’s approach to this subject is disparate from each other. Conceivable that Russia equates the policies of NATO with the US policies. And hence, it may perceive the enlargement of NATO as enlargement of the US. In this context, the opposition to the enlargement can be perceptible from Russia’s emotional appeal.

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Sibel KAVUNCU
Trakya University
International Relations
Trakya Üniversitesi, İİBF, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü, Balkan Yerleşkesi/Edirne/Türkiye sibekav@yahoo.com