

## PAPER DETAILS

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*these vectors on security perception. Finally, after giving a brief background of the 2014 Crisis, the regional triggers of the crisis will be addressed, and the conception of these regional triggering factors which perceive Ukraine and how political expectations securitizes the region will be assessed.*

**Keywords:** *Regional Security Complex, Post-Soviet Area, European Security Area, Buffer Front, Near Abroad Doctrine*

## Introduction

Although the societies of Russian Federation and Ukraine have common history and cultural ties, there have been several disputes/challenges/conflicts/problems among them and these disputes have still remained in various dimensions, today. In the post- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) period, while Ukraine was following policies to consolidate its independence, Russian Federation was seeking to control the Soviet geography which was defined as near abroad of Russian Federation. These foreign policy goals, carried out by the two countries, have created security dilemma against each other and caused existence of some crises.

Aftermath of the 1970s, the energy security issue has gained importance in security policies. In this context, the natural gas crises between Russia and Ukraine, which started in the 2000s, have shown that regional countries should invest their energy security policies again. These conflicts have triggered the conflicts between regional countries' approach to energy supply security. (Erkan, 2015) The last crisis has been based on incidents/movements that occurred in Ukraine in November, 2013. As the movements spread to the Crimean region, which hosted the Russian minority, Russian Federation sent troops there, and this has caused the problem to escalate and transform into a crisis. In March 2014, the fact that the Crimea was annexed to Russian Federation as a result of the referendum has caused a great reaction in the international community, and many actors took sanctions against Russian Federation.

of the actors' different expectations towards Ukraine and the Ukraine's position which is being in limbo in terms of culture and politics on foreign policy actions will be revealed.

In this context, the theoretical background of this article is based on the Regional Security Complex Theory developed by the Copenhagen School and the Territorial Security Approach. In this study, with applying descriptive analysis methods, statistical data have been utilized for analyses of close social, cultural and ethnic structures of actors in the same complexes.

## 1. Conceptual Framework

A number of theses have been propounded on the new international order and security issues that have arisen aftermath of the Cold War. Samuel Huntington's The Clash of Civilizations thesis has received a lot of attention but has been subject to some criticism. Securitization approach which is known as the Copenhagen School has found this thesis as inefficient in some areas of this theory and it has pointed out a new alternative to the theory of security.

Aftermath of the Cold War, the Copenhagen School has positioned itself as a third way between those who advocate the inclusion of non-state actors by excluding the concepts such as use of force and threaten to use of force from the scope of the security studies which is a sub-discipline and the other approaches that advocate the need to preserve its traditional understanding. The school has offered a sectorial analysis on security in terms of functionality and it has considered the securitization theory with regarding the security within military, economic, environmental/peripheral, social and political sectors and it has adapted this theory to these five sectors. In terms of territorial extent, it has argued that security should be analysed at regional level. In this context, the theory of securitization has been adapted to various regions along with the Theory of Regional Security Complex. (Balta, 2016, s. 250-251) According to the scholars of this school, it has been argued that security issues will stem from the regions and intra-regional conflicts instead of the context of civilizations in the new era. The theory

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According to Buzan and Weaver, many factors of the regional dynamics in the post-Soviet area constitute the external indicators of the regional security complex. According to Buzan and Weaver, states that are in the same security complex constitute tightly connected security associations due to close security perceptions. Ukraine, which is located in the post-Soviet area and neighbour country of the European area at the same time, possesses these characteristics. In this context, Ukraine's security problems/issues affect not only the actors in the region but also the non-regional actors who are trying to take part in the region. Although states have common identifiable factors in the same complex, we can see that these factors together with security problems/issues are less effective. (LAZĂR, 2014) In this context, when the current policies of Ukraine and Russia create a security dilemma between each other, it is seen that the common historical identities they carry are left aside. In addition, while explaining the formation of a regional security complex, historical patterns of friendship and hostility are examined as independent variables. We see that these patterns exist in the historical relations of Ukraine and Russia.

In addition to being in the post-Soviet area, Ukraine, as the Eurasian view claims, it is on the "near-periphery" of the geopolitical line where RF's vital interests began as a continuation of the former Soviet Republic. At the same time, Ukraine is on the very crucial social fault lines in the region where Dugin conceptualized as a buffer cord. Especially in Ukraine, the fact that some elite rulers have claimed to be competing against Russia since the medieval ages and the people in the west of the country have acted in contradiction with Ukrainian national consciousness has revealed this fault line. As a result, nationalism has been a source of concern for the Russians since the time of the USSR. In the 1980s, these strong national movements were seen in the Baltic republics, especially in Ukraine, and in the Caucasus republics. However, Ukraine also has anti-nationalist and anti-Orthodox groups moving through Slavism. Another characteristic of these countries is that it is conceptualized as buffer cord by Dugin.

According to the Eurasian theorist A. Dugin, the most effective tool of the maritime forces in the world is the 'buffer cord'. This cord is a

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Ukraine joined the Nazi armies and the Orthodox people in the eastern part joined the Red Army. (Sönmez, Bıçakçı, & Yıldırım, 2015, s. 658) Following World War II, Crimea was a peninsula annexed to USSR until 1954, but the peninsula was given as a gift to Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic by Khrushchev for the commemoration of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ukraine's annexation to USSR in 1954. After the independence of Ukraine in 1991, Russia has lost its supremacy in the Black Sea as well as its military base in the Crimean Peninsula and Sevastopol. In 1993, the Russian Parliament unanimously decided that Sevastopol is a part of RF, and did not approve the Crimea's annexation to Ukraine as legitimate in 1954.

Because the region where the fleet is located is indispensable for Russia for being strategically opened to Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The military base in Sevastopol initially caused problems with the use of the Naval Base, sharing the Navy, while Russia continued to use the base with long-term use agreements and took full control of the Crimea with the annexation. (Saraçlı, Bahar 2015, s. 54-55)

## 2.2. The Social Structure of Ukraine

Although Ukraine is a unitary nation state in terms of politics, it has different several ethnic minorities. When ethnic minorities in Ukraine are listed, it is seen that two different classification approaches have been applied. According to the first classification method, there have been groups like that Ukrainians, Ukrainians who behave as Russians, Russians who behave as Ukrainians, and Russians who preserves the Russian identity. According to another classification, many ethnic minorities have been considered while listing these groups. These ethnic minorities can be listed as Crimean Tatars, Gagauz people, Rumanians, Hungarians, Polish, Armenians, Germans and Jews. The Russians, whose name we do not mention, form a large group in numerical terms that would lead to political change (Özdağ, 2015, s. 74) The ethnic distribution of the population in Ukraine can be seen in Table 1 (State Statistic Committee of Ukraine ) according to the figures of 2001. The current population of Ukraine is around 45 million. (World Bank Datas, 2018)

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The geographical distribution of ethnic minorities in Ukraine, which is shown in its simplest form in the map of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Catholic Ukrainians see themselves as a nation of ethnic minorities who also live in

On the contrary, the eastern part remained under Tsarist rule for a long time. People in these regions, where Orthodox Ukrainians and Russian minorities live mostly, have close ties with Russia as Orthodox individuals, as well as defining themselves as an equal Slavic nation with Russians. This geographical and cultural distinction has also influenced economic activities. In the western regions where the Catholic population intensely lives, economic activities are concentrated on agriculture while in the eastern regions there are heavy industrial manufacturing supported by the mining.

Together with the Russian minority, the peoples who define themselves as Slavic Orthodox and considerably become Russian in time live in these regions and the population has intensively lived in the urban areas. As a consequence of economic activities, the oligarchy that exists in Ukraine also emerges as another factor affecting the social structure. The concept of oligarch, which is applied to define businessmen who have factories and state real estate privatized in Ukraine when the planned market economy was transformed to free market economy aftermath of the disintegration of the USSR, has effected not only economic life in Ukraine but also its political and social structure. For instance; it has been known that Leonid Kuchma, who was president of Ukraine for two terms between 1994 and 2005 and known for pro-Russian politics, presided over an industrial plant in Dnipropetrovsk. (Saraçlı, Bahar 2015) In fact, oligarchs in Ukraine generally have close ties with both western countries and RF. It has been seemed that their main concern is to preserve the existing political and economic status quo instead of developing their relations with these countries. In internal political turmoil in Ukraine, it has been claimed that this political turmoil stems from the competition between these oligarchs. Indeed, the announcement about planned privatization of 35% of Ukrainian economy in the presidency term of ousted leader Yanukovych escalated the tension between both economic and political forces (İmanbeyli, 2014, s. 4-5) and this tension continued until the 2014 crisis.

The social and cultural disunity of Ukraine also has reflected itself in the election results. In the eastern part of Ukraine and in Crimea, the people who supported left-leaning political parties and candidates and parties which promised close relations with Russia while voters in the

western part supported nationalist parties. This trend has also shown in the countries in the post-Soviet space dominated by Russia in the west.

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own internal social formation, their contents resemble each other. (Al & Özdil, 2017, s. 154)

### 2.3. Strategic Significance of Ukraine

Ukraine is the largest country on European continent. The more important thing is the geopolitical location of Ukraine. Ukraine is in Eurasia region which is called Kalpgah (Heartland) in H. Mackinder's "Heartland Theory". Since Ukraine is in a strategic region between Russia and Europe, Russians have regarded "*Ukraine as transition region, strategic barrier and a buffer zone which separates them and the Western countries*".

The strategic importance of Ukraine has also been shown itself in the Russian Near-Abroad Policy. Ukraine has hosted many tribes, principalities, and it is a geography where the several states were founded from the medieval age to our age. The Principality of Kiev was one of the principalities and it was founded in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and this date has been regarded as a milestone by the Russians and in terms of this perspective, Ukraine has been granted privilege in history of Russia. (Saraçlı, Bahar 2015, s. 75). In addition to this, Ukraine has always been a region of power struggle between various power centres in its historical process. Regional forces in Europe and Russia have always regarded the Ukrainian lands as a transit point, and this area has always been seen as a strategic area and buffer zone. It is not incidental in this sense that the word "Ukraine", which has been used since the 12th century in Russian language, and it means "border country" and "edge country". (Al & Özdil, 2017, s. 157)

Today, this issue comes to the fore in many Russians' perceptions towards Ukraine. The vast majority of Russian intellectuals and people refrain from describing Ukraine as a separate state and put it in a special position in the eternal and original story of Russia. According to the Russians who see Ukraine as part of the Russian hinterland, independent Ukraine means only a temporary situation. (Erol, Bahar 2014, s. 75) Indeed, this is not a coincidence at this point, as there is a boundary between the two major regional security complexes of Europe and Post-Soviet region in Eurasia. We can also state that the strategic significance of Ukraine is at the same time the presence of Russia with its energy resources and its position in the transition route. Although Ukraine is 29<sup>th</sup> country with 29

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Central Asian states in the south. The second reason is that Eastern Europe is Russia's most crucial interregional link.

This region is a sub-region of the Post-Soviet Region which includes both Ukraine which has anti-Russian tendencies on occasion and the most pro-Russian states such as Belarus. (Buzan & Waver, 2003, s. 416)

### 3. 2014 Crisis and Regional Triggers

Many political crises in Ukraine have directly begun as the reaction of escalating opposition, depending on the foreign policy choices of the Ukrainian administrations. As seen in recent incidents, the Yanukovich administration was expected to take the necessary steps to deepen the relations with the EU, but the end of popular movements in favour of the Ukrainian administration, which is one of the most significant instruments of Russia's intervention and "near abroad" policy the crisis has been triggered. The triggering regional actors in this process of survival are mainly the EU and Russia. In accordance with the EU's Neighbourhood Policy and Russia's Near Abroad Policy, efforts have been made to incorporate Ukraine into its regional integration. These factors have caused Ukraine to become stuck in foreign policy making, and decision-makers have experienced inconsistencies by experiencing undecidedness about foreign policy

The crisis in 2014 has developed in connection with the presidential elections in Ukraine in 2010. Yanukovich's victory in election, a name close to Russia, has brought about the prosperity of Russia in the country. As a matter of fact, Yanukovich extended the period of the Black Sea Fleet in Russia and Sevastopol which will be end in 2017 for 24 years and accepted Russia's presence in Crimea until 2042. In exchange for this initiative, Yanukovich has unilaterally annulled the Commission, which was making preparations for the Association/Partnership Agreement with the EU in November 2013, while expecting a reduction in energy prices from Russia. Then the movements/protests initiated by the EU opponents spread throughout the country and in February 2014 Yanukovich had to resign. (Özdağ, 2015, s. 90) However, with this resignation the crisis has evolved into a different direction. Russia, which has seen the developments in Ukraine as an action for organizing a legitimate sentence from the out-

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thought by Eurasians to be integrated with the Russian national interest field in this region, and therefore to be integrated with the CIS countries, has become a nationwide accepted policy in the future. According to the doctrine of proximity to the periphery, which was first applied by Yeltsin in 1993 during the period of Foreign Minister Y. Primakov, in 1993, Russia declared that the former Soviet Union was responsible for ensuring the security and stability of its territory and giving priority to its immediate vicinity in military planning. In the post-2001 period, Moscow increased its activity on the “Near Abroad” countries and determined to increase its activity on the economic and security level. In the case of any objection in the CIS countries, this practice had first escalated ethnic problems/issues, as in Georgia and Ukraine, and then appeared as a saviour. (Keskin, s. 49-50)

Aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, Russia has defined itself as the most important and primary region of Eurasia’s foreign policy, which is the Rimland’s territory, with the geopolitical phrase of the countries surrounding the western and southern regions. It has declared that it would act in this geography against any initiatives that may be against it. Russian minorities that are called as “Russians Abroad” who have been living in foreign countries in Post-Soviet area and Ukraine have been utilized as a tool for this policy of RF. Thus, with creating security problems/issues through the cultural and political rights of the Russian minorities living in these countries, they are trying to secure the “near abroad”. It also makes it dependent on Moscow by the integration activities that it establishes in its economic, military and political aspect.

Ukraine hosts a significant Russian population in the post-Soviet area and is the transit corridor in transporting Russian energy sources to Western markets is one of the factors that increase the significance of this country in the eye of Russia, in addition Russia’s Black Sea Navy is in Ukraine’s Crimean territory. In the social and historical context, the emergence of the Russians in the history in Kiev is also reflected as another factor that increases the importance of Ukraine for Russia due to their common history. (Keskin, s. 47) Ultimately, Ukraine with these characteristics has to be an outpost of Russia in the west of its lands. The Crimean Crisis has raised the “Russian ethnic entity”, which constitutes one of the most significant reasons of this policy in the context of near abroad policy, which

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Therefore, Ukraine is a key country due to its proximity to energy resources and its geopolitical position (Yıldırım, 2010: 48).

### 3.2. West-Ukraine Axis

If we move on the western axis, it is efficient to refer to the enlargement policies of NATO and the EU. Although the relations between NATO and Ukraine were cautious at first, they signed settlement agreements in the following years. The “Privileged Partnership Charter” was signed in 1997 and the Defence Reform Working Group between Ukraine and NATO was established in 1998. In 2000, Ukraine passed the “Concentrated Dialogue” phase in 2005 when it ratified the BIO Status of Forces Agreement. In 2007, the NATO-Ukrainian Commission was established and together they initiated an intensified cooperation program. On the other hand, Russia has also aimed to develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries in terms of its foreign policy concept published in 2008 and NATO has recently opposed the expansion of the Black Sea, especially Georgia and Ukraine, as a threat to national security. Russia in particular has placed Ukraine in a more vital position in politics because of its long border and historical and economic ties and their common Slavic cultures. (Keskin, s. 52-53)

The EU’s policy towards the former Soviet republics is mainly the provision of economic and political reforms of states. The Neighbourhood Policy, which was misunderstood in 2004, has gained a new dimension after the Georgian War of 2008 with the development of the East Partnership project specifically for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus countries. The Polish-Swedish proposal, the East Partnership, was a policy that aims to develop relations with Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine in Eastern Europe and Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia without full membership perspective in the Caucasus. From this aspect, the East Partnership has reapplied the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy to a specific region. (Özdağ, 2015, s. 82-83) Considering the context of the enlargement process and the security complex areas of the EU, it seems that Ukraine will be in search of membership due to the spread of the process towards Eastern Europe. But Ukraine will probably join the EU and trigger the European Regional Security Complex of the Eastern European country group. However, this process will not bring the participation of Russia. Hence, these countries will be away

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terranean and the Middle East through the Syrian crisis and threatening the “Customs Union” policy and the EU’s “Neighbourhood Policy (Baltic-Caspian line)”. Even though it is not very obviously made current issue in the agenda, there is a possibility that the whole world will be dragged into a global conflict through a crisis starting from a limited competition between Germany’s “Through the East” and Russia’s “Through the South” policies. (Erol, Bahar 2014, s. 8)

The analysis of historical, social and religious formations that have led to the foreign policy choices of the decision makers in the region and of the area in which the crisis has arisen but where the findings of the regional and global conclusions of the 2014 Crisis are made in the current literature have not found much. In this study, the main actor of the Ukrainian Crisis and Ukraine has undergone an analysis with its historical, cultural and social vectors and has been trying to contribute to the literature by subjecting the construction of two neighbouring security complexes affected by these vectors to constructive analysis. At the same time, when the way in which other actors perceived Ukraine and how they safeguarded the region was assessed, the conclusion of these perceptual battles came to the conclusion that the ending crisis deepened.

Although the Baltic states are generally seen as outside region of the post-Soviet zone, an assessment has been made that the CIS countries, where Ukraine was a former member, cannot go beyond the Post-Soviet area. The possible EU and NATO accession perspectives of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia from these countries are predicted to be a security issue for Russia. As it has been demonstrated in our study, it has been observed that the area in which Ukraine is located is a buffer zone in which the interests of both Russia and the West are in conflict, and that the region has consistently been transformed into a security issue by various actors. Nonetheless, in practice it has become obvious that Ukraine is in the Post-Soviet zone for now, even though it has become a serious conflict issue. This leads Russia to put forward the principle of “defence for the future” as a policy with regard to Ukraine. (Buzan & Waver, 2003) (Buzan & Waver, 2003, s. 415)