

CHAPTER II

BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND AND BELARUS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1 Brief History of Poland

History of Poland divided into several periods: Commonwealth period; Soviet occupation; and modern Poland. The Commonwealth period began from the personal union between Kingdom of Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Union of Krewo (1385) marked the first attempt to unite the two parties. The Commonwealth era see Poland experienced many rises and falls as great power in Central Europe. Although the brief Polish Golden Age occurred in this era, the rest of Polish history during their time as a commonwealth is characterized with numerous wars and rebellions which slowly weaken the government. Two of the devastating wars are the Cossack Rebellion and series of Polish-Swedish war known as the Deluge. Ultimately, the commonwealth was severely weakened, culminating in its occupation by the Russians.

Under Russian government, Polish was suppressed by the Tsarist Russia. The will of independence reemerged in later period of Russian occupation, nearing the World War I. The World War I saw gave Poland a chance to regain its independence and thus the Second Republic of Poland was born. The Second Reuplic experienced a struggle to expand its border by reclaiming its old territories and the expansion was met with resistance from the Bolshevik. Throughout its existence, Poland was characterized with struggles from both east and west (Institute of National

Rememberance, 2020). From the west, Germany threatened the security during their clash with Soviet Union. The eventual German and Soviet occupation began a new chapter in history of Poland.

Under the foreign power, the situation in Poland became more chaotic than before with both Germany and Soviet Union divided Polish territory—forcing the official government to exile and suppressing Polish people. In 1944, Warsaw Uprising took place with goal to oust the German out, but the attack was unsuccessful, leading to Soviet occupation of Warsaw. Later Polish Committee of National Liberation was created, turning Poland into “Polish People’s Republic.” The centralized industrial project characterized the economy of Communist Poland. The idea of democraticization emerged in 1956 and several protests regarding freedom of speech emerged, which were brutally repressed by the authorities. It was not until 1980 that the authorities started to back down and relent the repression against the populace and finally, in 1990, the Communist Party was dissolved and a year later, a free parliamentary election was held.

2.2 Brief History of Belarusia

As another party involved in the crisis, the history of Belarus is fundamental to understand the relation between Poland and Belarus how it affects the decision-making during this crisis. The Belarusian came under Polish influence during its time as a commonwealth. While Belarusian nationality began to take shape, it never grow beyond its scope due to foreign influence.

With the collapse of the Commonwealth, the territories in the east came under influence of Russia. The Russian domination began a series of industrialization in the Belarusian territories. At the same time, Russia began to subject the Belarusians to Russification. This phenomenon would have a lasting impact on Belarusian and Russian relations, and subsequently the relations between Belarusia and Poland. Since Russia occupied Belarusia for such long time, relations between Russia and Belarusia became close.

Aleksandr Lukashenko's presidency also mark another period of Belarussia-Russia close relations. In 1999, Agreement of Union State was signed by both Belarussia and Russia to ensure the development of both country in economic sector and policy-making. Russia became its major trading partner.

2.3 Polish-Belarusian Hybrid War

The 2021 Polish-Belarusian Border Crisis is one of major crisis in the history of Europe. There were three main events that mark the beginning of the migrant crisis: the interception of Ryanair Flight FR4978 by Belarusian government; the attempt of forced withdrawal of Krystsina Tsimanouskaya; and the forced migration of Middle Eastern refugees towards Polish-Belarusian border. The Ryanair interception is a forced landing of Ryanair plane with goal to arrest Roman Protastevich, who was a journalist in opposition to Belarusian government. The original flight route – which was from Athens to Vilnius – had been redirected towards Belarus and Roman Protastevich was arrested by the Belarusian government (Barigazzi & von der Burchard, 2021; Sharma, 2022). The next event

was an attempt of forced withdrawal of Belarusian sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya from Tokyo Olympic 2020 (McMahon, 2021). The Krystsina's criticism regarding Belarusian athletic federation was considered as the main reason for the attempt, which was seen as repression of opinion against the federation and to an extent, against the government. The last and direct event was the mass migration of Middle Eastern refugees. The refugees mostly come from Iraqi ethnicity and many other people including Afghans. These Iraqi refugees were persecuted by the Islamic State (Collard, 2021) and lured into Belarussia by the Belarusian government through easily-obtained visa and inexpensive airlines.

The crisis is often adressed as hybrid war by the European Union. The exact meaning of hybrid war has not been decided by military and international politics scholar, however, the characteristics are including the employment of conventional and unconventional methods, as well as its inherent complex nature (Łubiński, 2022). As Piotr Łubiński had noted, the goal of this hybrid war was the geopolitical power and the hybrid war aimed to opponents vulnerablities. Though being adressed as hybrid war, some considered this crisis as yet another migrant crisis. The reason for this statement was the blurry concept of war (Overhaus, 2021) and how Belarusian government denied every accusation directed at them. A more proper definition of the nature of this migrant crisis is lawfare hybrid threat as it has minimal armed involvement and uses law as weapon of sort. Lawfare hybrid threat seek to abuse or misuse law to achieve actor's objective (Łubiński, 2022).

2.4 Polish Border Wall

As the crisis at Polish-Belarusian border gradually intensified, Polish government took an initiative and built a wall. The wall was built in 2022 as barrier to keep Belarusian migrants from entering the border (Gera & Grieshaber, 2022). The wall serve mainly two purpose: 1) the wall become a deterrence for migrants to enter illegally into Polish territory; and 2) the wall become a post for the border patrol to closely monitor the flow of migrants.

2.5 Border Crisis

The border crisis began when the Middle Eastern refugees arrived in Polish-Belarusian border. Lured by the Belarusian government, the refugees came to Europe and sought to enter Germany through Poland, yet the Polish government immediately respond to this migration wave by blocking them at the border. This resulted in thousands of refugees stranded between two countries. From the Polish side, the border guards denied them access into Polish territory, while from the Belarusian side, they were pushed into the border. Essentially the Belarusian government help the refugees to illegally enter the Polish territory. During the height of the crisis, the Belarusian government provided the migrants with necessary equipments to help them breaching the Polish barbed wire fence (Pérez-Peña, 2021). Melees would occasionally occurred between the stranded migrants and the border guards with the migrants stampeded into the barbed wire fence.

2.6 Migrants

The migrants involved in Polish-Belarusian border crisis came from Middle East. By early 2021, around 4.000 Middle Eastern migrants arrived in Polish border. Most of them were Kurdish and Yazidis originated from Iraq and Syria while there were many from Afghanistan as well. The number of migrants steadily increased and reached as high as 15.000 people. Many of the migrants directed towards Poland were persecuted in ISIS (Collard, 2021).

2.7 Current Situations

Belarusian-Polish migration crisis lasted for short time, yet it gave serious impact on two countries' relation. During the height of crisis, numerous attempts had been made by Polish humanitarian groups to help the migrants, yet to no avail. The humanitarian groups faced a continuous charges of arranging illegal crossing for the stranded migrants by the government (Gall, 2024). The crisis ultimately strain their relations and the crisis slowly died out with mixed signals from Belarusian government. Some flights were arranged to return the migrants their homeland, yet Lukashenko didn't stop their movement to the Western Europe (Kuznetsov, 2021).

Before the Russia-Ukraine War broke out, the migrants were stranded on the border between Poland and Belarusia. The migrants faced the winter and pressure from both Belarusian and Polish government. These factors results in casualties amongst the migrants.

While the wall at Polish-Belarusian border blocked the refugees from Belarus, it also gives Polish government another issue. Following the Russia-Ukraine War, many Ukrainians seek refuge to the neighboring European Union. Consequently, the Ukrainian refugees also seek refuge in Poland. Poland accept these new refugees with warm welcome, providing the Ukrainians with fast border passing, free transport, and humanitarian assistance and medical aid (Morales, 2022). This action is considered contradicting to the blockade of Middle Eastern refugees at the border.

As of May 2024, there were many illegal attempts to cross into Poland. The illegal attempts from Belarusian border were as high as 729 attempts during past weekend (Grzech, 2024). An incident occurred in late May, a Polish border guard was stabbed with makeshift spear at the border between Poland and Belarus. The border guard succumbed to his injury in June. This incident introduce a new law passed by Polish government regarding a zone inclusion which effectively ban any unauthorized people from entering the Polish border (Piekarski, 2024).

2.8 Poland-Belarusia International Relations

Poland and Belarus – as neighbouring countries - have a long history. Poland was amongst the first countries to acknowledge Belarusian government before the collapse of USSR (Shadurski, 2017). The recognition was secured in October 1991. Later, Poland opened its embassy in Minsk in May 1992, followed by Belarusian opening its embassy in Warsaw in July 1992. However, the formal relations between Poland and Belarusia was characterized by the difference of interests. During 1990's, Poland was distancing itself first from Russia then the whole post-

Soviet countries. By confronting Russia, Poland acknowledges the crimes inflicted by USSR (Tsimbal, 2020), and took course to European Atlantic Integration. As the result, Poland and Belarusia's relation was strewn. Poland tried to be the advocate of Eastern European countries for the West by participating in domestic policies of both Belarusia and Ukraine. By participating in the domestic policies of its eastern neighbor, Poland also sought to improve its relation with the West (Krasnodębska, 2021). Despite Poland efforts to become the middleman between Western Europe and Eastern Europe, Belarusia disapproved of such efforts. They prefer stronger Western European country, instead of Poland, to be its advocate instead (Shadurski, 2017).

Belarusian affinity and good relations toward Russia is also other factor in hindering Belarus-Poland relation. The Russian influence in Belarusia meaning it will be difficult for Poland to maintain a good relations with Belarusia. Russia can easily neutralize any kind of relations that may threaten Russian interest in Belarus. On the other hand, Poland considers Belarus – and also Ukraine – as border lands and barrier between Russia and Poland thus Poland worked to undermine the Russian influence and promotes Belarusian sovereignty.

Poland's anti-Russia sentiment is also influenced by the historical aspect and inheritance of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was the largest community of free people in Poland's history. As such, Poland would promote their foreign policy to build its positive image by promoting its interest regarding culture and economy (Tsimbal, 2020). In regards to the inheritance of Polish-Lithuanian

Commonwealth, Poland formerly held the territories including Ukraine and Belarusia. When the Belarusia rose as independent country, Poland tried to connect to the Belarusia and seek to influencing it, seeing Belarus as its former occupied land (Krasnodębska, 2021). It also can be seen as a continuation of Poland's traditional rivalry against Russia in post-Soviet countries, which characterized with Russian expansionist idea and unwillingness to decrease its influence in post-Soviet territory often threatening the existence of Poland as an independent country. This historical policy is carried out by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Polish Republic and diplomats, Institute of National Remembrance (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*) as well as Polish minority in Belarus.

Polish-Belarus relations thawed during 2008 when Belarus agreed to open European Commission Office in Minsk. Later in 2010, Poland and Belarus signed the Agreement on Local Border Traffic. The impact of this agreement shows increased border traffic between two countries. While it may have a positive impact to both Poland and Belarus, it certainly caused unrest in Belarus. With the influx of border crossing, Belarus will need to increase its expense on border control thus limiting their economic and agricultural sectors (Shadurski, 2017).

The relation between Belarus and Poland strains further by 2010. After the election of December 2010, European Union put an economic sanction on Belarus against officials and company for violating the election and Poland supported the sanction. This resulted in recalling of ambassadors from both sides. Later, attempts to reconcile were made in 2012 and 2013, where both European Union and Belarus

seek to improve their relationship. Poland partook in this policy by hosting the Day of Belarusian Culture in September 2012.

After the Polish election in 2015, further attempt to improve relations with Belarus was made by Institute of National Remembrance. The attempt was spearheaded by the “traditionalist” of Institute of National Remembrance. The attempt was focusing on more active and Polish-oriented policy in post-Soviet countries. During 2016, there was a series of diplomatic visits by both Polish and Belarusian ministers, culminating in Belarusian-Polish Economic Forum (Shadurski, 2017). It was in 2020 that the institute presented some of its product in book fair in Minsk and educational trips were held to Belarus (Tsimbal, 2020). Preservation and building of monuments commemorating events were also conducted by Polish Institute of National Remembrance. The Belarusian contribution, on the other hand, came in form of preservation Polish cemeteries belong to Polish soldiers and also the enrollment of Belarusian students in Polish academies. At this point, Belarusia also seeking to decrease its dependence on Russia’s market and leaning more towards European Union and Poland.

Like attempts listed so far, these were also short-lived. Poland refused to acknowledge the incident regarding R. Rajs, commander of Polish anti-communist underground, who burnt 5 villages and several Eastern Orthodox Belarusian (Tsimbal, 2020). The Polish government stated that R. Rajs actions are justified because the “state emergency” in face of communism. However, after the visit of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus,

M. Myasnikovich, Poland attempted to appease the Belarus by re-evaluate R. Rajs' actions.

The greatest crack came during 2020. The election of President Aleksander Lukashenko was deemed illegal and European Union put an economic sanction and travel ban against Belarus. The election was deemed illegal because the violent repression of opposition journalists and peaceful protesters. It become worse in 2021. The Belarusian government also intercept the opposition journalist Roman Protastevich aboard Ryanair (Barigazzi & von der Burchard, 2021; Sharma, 2022). The Ryanair was on its flight from Athen to Vilnius, however, when it passed through the Belarusian airspace, it was seized by forced landing in Minsk. Roman Protastevich was well-known for its opposition towards Lukashenko's authoritarian rule in Belarusia. This crack between European Union and Belarus affected the relations between Poland and Belarus as Poland supported the sanction imposed by European Union against Belarus.

The situation became worse when Belarusia took the advantage of Middle Eastern immigrants and asylum seekers. At the beginning of the border crisis, there were around 10.000 Middle Eastern refugees (Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2021) who wanted to cross the border but the number increased to around 15.000 (Sas, 2023). These imigrants were encouraged to cross into Western Europe via various borders including Lithuania-Belarus and Poland-Belarus borders. This movement was aimed to cripple the economy of Western Europe and forcing the European Union to relieve the sanctions imposed against Belarus (Ignatov, 2021).

During the initial standoff, the migrant This influx of refugees forcing the Polish government to declare 30 days state of emergency in Podlaskie Voivodeship and Lubelskie Voivodeship in effort to ensure the safety of citizens at border regions. The relations between Poland and Belarus strewn away as Polish government closed its borders and took a measure to prevent the immigrants from entering Poland. This decision was done by building a tall (5,5 meter) wall along the border with Belarus (Gera & Grieshaber, 2022) and continued patrol Border Guard.

During recent migrant crisis, Belarusia and Poland's relation become more strewn. There is a clear distinction between Belarusian and Polish political view. Belarusia is Pro-Russia and Anti-NATO while Poland is Pro-NATO and Anti-Russia. Belarusia's Pro-Russian stance is shown when the Belarusia supported Russian Invasion of Ukraine soon after the migrant crisis started to subside. On the other hand, Poland shows their support for NATO by both blocking their border and supporting NATO's action by sanctioning Russia for the invasion.

2.9 The 1951 Refugee Convention

The 1951 Refugees Convention is an attempt took by many states to protect the refugees. As the aftermath of World War I, its preliminaries (Balkan Wars, 1912-1913), and its aftermaths (Caucasus Campaigns, 1918-1921; and Greco-Turkish Wars, 1919-1922), many refugees left Russian territories to various European countries. As for the Greco-Turkish War, many refugees are of Armenian and Assyrian origin. Concerning this, the International Committee of the Red Cross and League of Red Cross Societies held a conference on 16 February 1921 to define the

status of refugees. The protection of the refugees was extended to Armenians in 1928 (Jaeger, 2001).

In 1933, Convention relating to the International Status of Refugees guaranteed welfare and relief as well as dealt with administrative measures regarding the Russian and Armenian refugees. In 1936-1939, the protection of refugees was extended to refugees from Germany and Austria by signing of Provisional Arrangement concerning Status of Refugees coming from Germany (1936), Convention concerning the Status of Refugees coming from Germany (1938), as well as Additional Protocol which extend the protection to refugees from Austria (1939).

The next step of protection for refugees is the establishment of International Refugees Organization (IRO) on 15 February 1946. IRO became fully established organization by August 1948 and took resettlement as its main focus. With the influx of refugees, a study regarding the protection of stateless individuals and both national legislation and international convention was conducted. The study was used to create future convention regarding stateless individuals. The main elements of the 1951 Refugee Convention can be derived from the study.

2.10 Belarusia-EU International Relations

Belarus-EU relations has gone through ups and downs during the course of its development. In mid 1990s, EU tried to make the Belarusian government to practice a more democratic form of government however their attempts did not yield desired

result (Lorenzmeier et al., 2021). In 1995, EU-Belarus Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was signed, yet ratification of said partnership was frozen since 1997 due to lack of progress in respect for human rights and fundamental freedom. Belarus decision to suppress the rights of the opposition and freedom of expression was the main reasons for the halted ratification (Van Elsuwege, 2010). Sanction was imposed against Belarus in 2004 owing to disappearance of four individuals in 1999 and 2000 (Przetacznik & Russel, 2021). The tension thawed during Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, when Belarus maintained a neutral stance and refused to recognize the annexation. Belarus also released political prisoners and held a non-violent election in 2015 which contribute to the improvement of relations between Belarus and EU (Lorenzmeier et al., 2021; Przetacznik & Russel, 2021). However, the situation would be heated again after 2020 election, where Lukashenko won the election. During the election, members of the opposition were either exiled or arrested. This election was deemed unfair by the European Council and rounds of sanction – in form of travel ban and asset freezing– were given to Belarusian government.

Belarusian interception of Ryanair in 2021 also damaged the relations between European Union and Belarus. The interception was done by Belarusian government to arrest Roman Protastevich, who is the political dissident of the government. This arrest resulted in further application of travel ban against Belarusian Airline by not only EU but also Ukraine (Przetacznik & Russel, 2021; Sharma, 2022). For the repressive behaviour and interception Ryanair, EU also apply economic sanctions against Belarus, hitting several industries. The economic sanctions also apply ban

on exporting communication equipment and restriction on arms sales to Belarusian government (Barigazzi & von der Burchard, 2021).

2.11 Belarusia-Ukraine International Relations

Being two states priorly connected historically, Belarus and Ukraine develop close yet constrasting relations. Both Belarusian and Ukrainian lands were parts of Kievan Rus and later part of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Kotljarchuk & Zakharov, 2022). While Ukraine develops its own identity rooting from the emergence of Ukrainian Cossacks and independent cultural development, Belarusian has always been connected to Russian identity. This causes the weakened national awareness within Belarus as there was no significant independent traditions (Szeptycki, 2006).

In regards to Russian Invasion of Ukraine, Belarus sent a rather mixed signal to both Ukraine and EU. While Lukashenko allows the entrance and usage of Belarusian lands as bases of operation for Russian army, he states that Belarusian army will not participate in the offensive (Kotljarchuk & Zakharov, 2022).

2.12 Belarusia-Russia International Relations

Belarus and Russia share close international relations. Consolidation of power during early stage of Belarus government required economic and political support from Russia (Usov, 2020). Since the early Russian government was considerably more democratic, this was perceive as something non-threatening even by EU. Russia could – in a way – democratized the Belarusian government through their

influence. In 1997, Treaty on the Union of Belarus and Russia and The Charter of the Union of Belarus and Russia were adopted by both. These documents marked the beginning of union attempt and the attempt was finalized with the signing of the Treaty on the Union Creation in Moscow. This union, in the end, put Belarus under Moscow geopolitical influence. As Russia steadily became more and more authoritarian, Belarus also become increasingly authoritarian. Belarus lacks in firm national identity and what identity it has is Pro-Russia in nature. With Russia's support within the Union, Belarus can challenge the "mainstream" ideology of Europe: Democracy (Ambrosio, 2006).

While Belarus-Russia relations seemed close, it is often unstable. Lukashenko seeks to maintain Belarus sovereignty and equal standing within the Union, while on the other hand, Russia sees Belarus as more of a junior partner rather than equals. Belarus also refuse to recognize the independence of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia and only recognize Russia's occupation of Crimea in late 2021.

Nevertheless, Belarus remain as an ally for Russia. Evidently, this can be seen by Belarus' contribution in Russia-Ukraine War. Belarus provided base for Russian military operations against Ukraine and hosted Russian nuclear weapons (Masters, 2023; Walker, 2023). Troops of Wagner Group also move to Belarus and establish base and training ground there (George & Wezeman, 2023; Masters, 2023). This movement of the Wagner Group, according to Dr. Mathew George and Pieter D. Wezeman, can increase the risk of confrontation and Belarusian involvement in Russia-Ukraine War.

2.13 Ukraine-EU International Relations

During early years of Ukraine's independence, Ukraine pursued the EU membership. This was done by maintaining its independence against Russia's attempt to persuade Ukraine to join Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Ukrainian leaders believed Ukraine's great size and significance in realm of geopolitic could be used to elevate its status in the eyes of the West (Wolczuk, 2016). Ukraine-EU relation is characterized with attempts of balancing power between Russia and EU over Ukraine. Russia sees EU as rival over the influence over Ukraine and seeks to place itself on equal standing by creating organization and begin their "region-building". One of such organization is Eurasian Economic Union, which contribute on increasingly divided Europe.

Compared to Russia's expansion into Ukraine, EU is more or less reluctant to consider Ukraine as important power amongst the European states, leading Ukraine to fend off Russia's aggression alone. Kataryna Wolczuk points out in her work "Ukraine and Europe: Reshuffling the boundaries of order": EU's policy is concerning more towards Western European's interest rather than Ukraine's urgency to remain independent from Russia's influence. This results in seemingly minimal effort to stop Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Apart from trading, EU has little interest in Ukraine and EU, during their early years of international relations, saw Ukraine as "part of Eastern bloc" and lacked in "Europeanness". It was not until Orange Revolution and Euromaidan Revolution that Ukraine began to catch the eyes of the Union and became increasingly important.

However, Russia-Ukraine War created a new opportunity for Ukraine to pursue cooperation with EU. The war gave Ukraine leverage – the importance – it needed and many state within the EU support Ukraine’s membership into the Union. Given their cultural relations and border with Russia, pressure from the Visegrad Group is most noticeable in Ukraine’s case, highlighting their support for Ukraine’s immediate membership (Nieczypor, 2023). Krzytof Nieczypor, in his policy paper, states that while support is given, it is limited to only give pressure – both political and social – towards other members. Ukraine’s fast access towards EU is near impossible as consent of all members is required for the ascension into EU membership. Fast access is also nigh impossible. Fast access requires changing of rules and the change will have required vote from all members.

Ukraine – should it is granted membership – may affect the Union. With such large territory, Ukraine may cause significant change within the Union including power imbalance. Power imbalance mention is the reduced authority and power of some countries i.e. Germany and France. This may spark member’s tendency to maintain the status quo and remain reluctant to accept into the Union.

While membership is hard to obtain for Ukraine, Union members still consider the aggression as a threat. Members send some of their military equipment as a “sign of goodwill” and innitiate training for Ukrainian soldiers and pilots. Moreover, EU attempts to increase their budget to spend on military equipment which later will be used to support Ukraine against Russia. Policy Brief regarding Ukraine-EU relations during Russian Invasion specifically aim to improve

Ukraine's overall resilience against Russian and providing the country with necessary equipment, training, and investment (European Council, 2023).

2.14 Ukraine-Russia International Relations

Ukraine-Russia relations is characterized with many Russian attempt to influence the country. Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia are former USSR countries and Russia had been the most active player in Eastern Europe. Ukraine possessed important position within Russian Great Power ambitions. Russia engage in geopolitical attempt to put Ukraine into their sphere of influence such as persuasion to join the Commonwealth of Independent States though Ukraine mostly ignore them (Wolczuk, 2016). Ukraine, seeking to remain independent, leant more towards EU and the Western European. Early Ukrainian leaders cherished the idea of integration with West than East. This move forced Russia to create EEU as to put themselves on equal standing against EU.

Ukraine and Russia enjoyed close friendship thanks to President Viktor Yanukovich's Pro-Russia leaning. Yanukovich era saw thawing relations with Russia through Kharkiv Agreement in 2010, which made gas cheaper for Ukrainian in exchange for extended lease for Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol until 2042. A number of visits increased and renunciation of Ukraine's aspiration for NATO membership also contributing to the thawing of Ukraine-Russia relations (Shumylo-tapiola, 2011). Russia aimed to rebuild the image of Moscow as the "Third Rome," an image build on shared heritage and determined to put

Ukraine under their influence as Ukrainian consent to this image is important for their Great Power legitimacy.

Major event which create a strain in Ukraine-Russian relations is Russian Invasion of Ukraine. Russia used Donetsk People's Republic's and Luhansk People's Republic's calls for assistance as pretext of the invasion. Both People's Republics declared their independence in 2014 – which President Putin recognized – and in 2022, they called Russia for help to secure their independence. The attack began in 24th February 2023 (Walker, 2023). This invasion gave significant negative impact for the relations as it increases the chance of EU-Ukraine partnership. This possible partnership is mirrored by significant contribution lend by EU – and particularly the Nordic countries – to combat Russian army in Ukraine.

2.15 Russia-EU International Relations

Early Russia-EU relations was marked with cooperation. Russia-EU's communication is established via Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and both sides consider each other as strategic partners (Russell, 2020). However, the cooperation became gradually difficult with intensified during Putin's presidency. Putin considers Eastern Europe as important territory for Russia's Great Power ambition and sees NATO – and Western Europe as whole – as “threat”. One example of Russia's attempt to protect their interest in Eastern Europe is their attempt to influence Ukraine. Ukraine becomes the main target of Russia and Ukraine's determination to lean towards West becomes main issue for Russia. This

pushes Russia to begin their region building in their neighborhood and eventually begin a rivalry with EU (Wolczuk, 2016).

Russia's bold attempt began by their annexation of Ukraine's Crimea in 2014. The annexation of Crimea causes another problem for Ukraine too. Separatist Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics were formed during this crisis. The annexation is not recognized by EU and resulted in application of sanctions – in form of economic, individual and Crimea-related sanctions – against Russia. As retaliation, Russia bans its import from EU. The sanctions also mark the end of Russia-EU political cooperation.

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine in 2022 marked a new chapter in the deteriorated Russia-EU relations. The invasion can be considered military assistance for Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic after Putin recognize their independence from Ukraine (Walker, 2023). EU's decision to provide military assistance for Ukraine exacerbates the matters as it shows stronger tendency to accept Ukraine into EU. Like what has been explained in Ukraine-Russia's relations, Russia aspires to rebuild their desired geopolitical field revolving around the concept of Moscow as the "Third Rome", and EU's support for Ukraine can potentially weakening Russia's power within Eastern Europe.

2.16 Securitization

Securitization is a concept used in dealing with an issue which in nature, strongly tied to politics. The core point of securitization as a concept is great of a

threat the issue can be. When dealing with issue of great importance, the securitization actor has the right to exclude it from mainstream regulation of decision-making. With that being said, the Securitization is mainly about convincing the public about the severity of the threat (Taureck, 2006). The securitization is considered a success if the public is convince. There are two main views regarding securitization: narrowers and wideners. The wideners view securitization beyond its traditional scope, incorporating non-traditional threat such as human security and regional security. Therefore the subject of the wideners' view of the securitization is the people rather than states. Meanwhile the narrowers focus their concept of securitization into military and political threats (Eroukhmanoff, 2018).