

# Neostructural Realism's Explanation on Russia-Ukraine War

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## Abstract

*This article aims to explain why NATO keeps expansion on Ukraine, and why Russia responds it through invasion now. By using qualitative method, library research, and the neostructural realism theory founded that since the dissolution of Soviet Union, NATO has been no longer appropriate abstracted as an alliance but an unipole security coalition, then the NATO expansion on Ukraine can be seen as the continuity of U.S.' containment policy to Russia, and adding its coalition partners for unilateral action legitimacy in order to maintain its hegemon position which undermine Russia's Eurasia great power vision and its crucial national security. Meanwhile the uneven distribution of power elements between U.S. and Russia as the macro international structure constraint Russia invasion but the bipolar world through Russia-China unlimited strategic partnership, and the shifting of U.S. offset strategy to Russia on hypersonic missile as the micro structure encourage Russia to take invasion now.*  
**Keywords:** Neostructural realism; Unipole security coalition; Containment Policy; Macro and micro structure; Russia-Ukraine war

## 1. Introduction

On 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2022 Vladimir Putin, Russia President, decided to attack Kiev, Ukraine's capital. Sergey Karaganov, Yeltsin and Putin former adviser, said that it is because NATO has crossed the red line by expand on Ukraine. It was also reflected on Dmitry Peskov, Putin's spoke person, said that Moscow will stop its special military operation immediately if Ukraine cease military action, assert its neutrality in constitution, accept Crimea as Russia's territory, and recognize Donetsk and Lugansk as independent states (Belton, 2022; Maçães, 2022: 2).

Theoretically, the prediction of Russia invasion has come from John Mearsheimer since 2014 after Crimea's annexation because Ukraine is a buffer state which strategic important to Russia regarding its huge flat land that historicly crossed by invader from Napoleonic France, Imperial and Hitler Germany (John J. Mearsheimer, 2014: 5). Recently Russia invasion on Ukraine also explained by Mearsheimer as the continuity from above argument that U.S.

refused to accomodate Russia's deepest security concerns and instead moved relentlessly to make Ukraine a western bulwark on Russia's border (John Mearsheimer, 2022: 4).

As a variant of offensive realism perspectives, the neostructural realism fully agreed with Mearsheimer above that great power will not tolerate his hemisphere placed by other great power's force (Hakim, 2021: 117). But there are two problems which rise from it: first, as discussed later, Russia is not a great power element like Soviet Union whom had Washington's promise that NATO would not expand on the East or Central Europe. So, Russia objection on NATO expansion is no longer compatible on U.S.' Monroe Doctrine which shown that Mearsheimer is trapped in the bipolar thinking or cold war mentality (J. J. Mearsheimer, 2014: 2&5-6); second, he reject containment notion, instead blame liberal hegemony by spreading liberal democracy (liberal international order) to eastern Europe and around the world as the cause of NATO expansion which is outside of realist material

structure methodology and utilitarianism principle, also it seems a constructivism approach (J. J. Mearsheimer, 2014: 2; 2017; 2022: 2).

Another explanation for this expansion before Mearsheimer was come from Charles Glaser which argued that expansion is driven by the greedy intentions of some states (Eichler, 2021: 19). The reason for Glaser used greedy intention concept is because he is a neoclassical realism which mean that he will combine the states' motive and international structure (material and information) as constraint, also the rational approach to explain states behavior and international outcomes (C. L. Glaser, 2010: 24-5; Hakim, 2022: 172). So like Mearsheimer, Glaser explanation for NATO expansion is outside of pure material structure deterministic.

What I mean is by this outside, it is looks like the material structure per se is not able to explain why does NATO keep expanse to Ukraine? meanwhile the purpose of theory is to simplify the explanation by pointed the essential factors (Waltz, 1979: 8-10). Beside this methodology problem, what Mearsheimer and Glaser have not yet explained why does Russia take this invasion now? as we know that the process formally has started since 2008, why in 2014 Russia only responded by Crimea annexation, why Russia did not invade Ukraine at that time.

For the record, Kenneth Waltz as the founding of structural realism also tried to explain NATO's expansion under materialistic approach, he argued that NATO expansion was tool for U.S. to dominate European states's foreign and military policy which is a fool policy (K. N. Waltz, 2000: 29&34). But it was understandable, because Waltz is defensive realism who revere the bipolar balance of power element, neglated geopolitics and saw unipolar will weakening themselves regarding too many tasks beyond its borders, also prompt rebalancing from the

weaker (K. N. Waltz, 2000: 23) which absolutely different with neostuctural realism's argument that hegemon still aggressively and constantly struggle for power elements because the hegemon is a temporary position which will be lost automatically as soon as lost its power gap through all of the major power (Hakim, 2021: 146). Since Mearsheimer, and Glaser did not explain NATO expansion under materialistic approach, meanwhile Waltz did it under bias of the bipolar balance of power, then this article trying to explain NATO expansion based on neostuctural realism theory which prising the unipolar system, pure materialistic methodology, and putting geography as other indicator of international structure.

## 2. Theoretical Perspective

The neostuctural realism is built based on two assumptions, which are:

- a. Material structure shapes human perceptions which rationally produce human interactions and outcomes. This assumption is operationalization of positivist methodology which focus on the observable object, and measurable. And as the consequence is this theory neglects politics as art or strategy which become an anomaly when hegemon or great power failed to turn mini-states behavior. Regarding this assumption, it is important to distinguish between power as the combination of power element and strategy with power element which perceived as power by the old structural realism (Hakim, 2021: 145).
- b. States response structural constrains rationally and innovatively. Innovative is the ability to find new technology and strategy against structural constrains by calculating cost and gain.

From two assumptions above, neostuctural realism argues that anarchy, survival, distribution of power elements, nuclear deterrence, and geography as the

indicators of international structure shape states' interaction and the outcomes.

There are several propositions to support this argument, they are:

- a. Anarchy makes states insecure and forces to help them-self.
- b. Survival, insecure, and self-help force states for power struggling.  
Power is a unit's capability to turn the other unit's action to serve its survival by using its power elements which consist of economic capability and military strength. Both economic and military are equal and integral as power's element.
- c. Power element distribution is classified as hegemon, great power, major power, middle power, and less power or mini state.
- d. The outcomes of international politics are determined by the hegemon and great powers' interactions because their enormous power elements.
- e. On power struggling as the best way to survive, states seeking to be global hegemony by becoming regional hegemon without peer competitor in other regions.
- f. The international system is more stable under unipolar or hegemon than under balance of power elements both bipolar and multipolar.
- g. Unipole security coalition structure under unipolar restrain arm race or imbalance of power elements between its members.
- h. Even though a state is already achieved a hegemon position, it still aggressively and constantly struggle for power elements because the hegemon is a temporary position, which will be lost automatically as soon as lost its power gap through all of the great power.
- i. Hegemon state prevents other great power from balancing its power elements by offset strategy, war, and containment.
- j. Nuclear deterrence as a part of military element with its mutually assured

destruction makes war is irrational between great powers.

- k. Both hegemon and revisionist states take a race in military technology and strategy innovation to reduce nuclear deterrence and offset each other's capabilities.
- l. The Hegemon state contains the revisionist state through establishing the regional balance of power elements, promoting the networked regions, and blocking the enemy's influence instruments.
- m. The balance of power elements temporary reduces the opportunity for use force but it will prompt states to innovate technology and strategy in diplomacy and military (arms race) to be most powerful in the system.
- n. The innovation of military technology is working on five capabilities that determine war results, which are: firepower, protection, mobility, communication, and intelligence.
- o. State's Internal geography conditions such as weather, physical setting, and especially space zone distribution related to other states compete with the distribution of power elements in constraint states behaviour on power struggling and international outcomes.
- p. If the distribution of power elements could cover the geography constraint, then the states' behavior and the international outcomes will be determined by it.
- q. But if the distribution of power elements could not cover the geography constraint then the states' behavior and the international outcomes will be determined by geography constraint (Hakim, 2021: 147).

### 3. Method

This research uses qualitative method and explanative type. Qualitative method, popularly known as grounded research, basically based on an inductive way about

relation theory and data, it is different with quantitative method which aims to examine theory into questioner as instrument of data collecting, but qualitative research also and should role in testing theory. This method stressing on understading social world through examination or interpretation of participant interpretation on their world by observations, documents, and interviews (Bryman, 2012: 379). Explanative is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012: 380).

The method of qualitative collecting data which be used in this research is library research by collecting news, film, and document. This method is choosen because limitation of researcher to conduct participation, observation, and interview on the field. There are two categories of document: primary which come from official report or release, and the secondary documents through the news, publication, magazine, webpage, and book. There are some questions that need to be answered to assess the quality of document:

- Authenticity: is evidence genuine or unquestionable?
- Credibility: is the evidence free from error and distortion?
- Representativeness: is it typical of its kind or is it the extent of typical?
- Meaning: is the evidence clear and comprehensible?

There are three approaches of interpreting data beyond content analysis: qualititative content analysis; semiotics; and hermeneutics (Bryman, 2012: 557). This research will use the first one, begin with searching out underlying themes in material, classifcated the data and citing, triangulate it, arrange it in timeline, and then verify into theory propositions.

#### 4. Result and Discussion

##### Reconstructing NATO's appropriate concept

Since the begining of NATO establishment, this entity has been abstracted as alliance which means a coalition to balance against threat (Walt, 1987: vi). At that moment the threat was came from Soviet Union to the Western European which had power declined because of World War II. When we use alliance concept, there are some indicators that need to be noticed. First, there is at least two great powers; second, the intention is to form balance of power or balance of threat (Walt, 2009: 89); third, the final purpose is to avoiding war through deterrence (*Si vis pacem, para bellum*); fourth, decision making process based on common threat perception. Unfortunately, the end of cold war has changed most of this alliance indicators: first, international system consist of one great power; second, the hegemon intention is to prevent the rise of balancer or peer competitor; third, the war especially preventive or protracted between unipole's satellite against potential chalengger is acceptable; fourth, the threat perception dominance by unipole interest. Based on this different indicators, even though Walt, Waltz, and Mearsheimer still use alliance concept in unipolar system (J. J. Mearsheimer, 2014: 2; Walt, 2009: 100; K. N. Waltz, 2000: 35), but since the value of any particular concept will be determined by its ability to explain a maximum of the phenomena (Morgenthau, 1948: 13), and because the misjudging of NATO expansion was came from this faulty concept then for the neostructural realism this entity need to be named as Unipole Security Coalition.

Through this concept, NATO's scope is no longer bounded to Western European and North America region (inclusive) as U.S.' State Secretary, Madeleine Albright, put it that the founders of alliance were wise to allow us the flexibility to come together to

meet common threats which come from beyond our borders (Albright, 1998). Formally it has been mandated by Rome Summit 1991 that “alliance security must also take account of the global context” (NATO, 2022). A year after it in February, Michael Legge, NATO’s assistant Secretary General for Defense Planning Policy, asserted that NATO should be prepared to intervene out of area which operationalized by Commander of the U.S. European Command of NATO that 150,000 U.S. troops will remain in Europe to counter ethnic and nationalist eruption, and to be available for rapid deployment outside of Europe (Aguirre & Fischer, 1992: 28).

The important implication of this concept is under unipolar system NATO has become a U.S.’ unilateral legitimacy tool as contingency for United Nations’ liberal collective security when Washington resolution proposal been veto by other security council members. It is explicitly mentioned in U.S. Mission to North Atlantic Treaty Organization website that NATO is committed to the peaceful disputes resolution, but if diplomatic ways fail, it has military capacity to conduct crisis management operations under article 5 of Washington Treaty or under a U.N. mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organizations (U.S. Mission to NATO, 2022). As the legitimacy for this unilateralism, Clinton administration stated that if nineteen of NATO members deem the threat or use of force necessary to right a specific wrong, then that fact in and of itself provides sufficient justification and legitimacy for the contemplated action (Daalder, 1999).

This U.S.’ unilateralism is noticed by Russia in its 2000, 2009, and 2021 National Security Strategy that the Western Countries under U.S.’ leadership attempt to design international relations structure for unilateral solution or endow NATO with global

function to counter international law or unilateral imposing sanction (BITS, 2000; Security Council of Russia, 2021: 9; Walt, 2009: 95).

Unfortunately, the U.S. effort to mobilize NATO to support her unilateral policy seems did not always work well. At the Gulf War 1990-1991 as U.S. effort to maintain the balance of power or to make sure Iraq did not rise as peer competitor in Middle East has shown that NATO did not involve directly eventhough some its Western European Union members took part (Aguirre & Fischer, 1992: 29). In the Afghanistan War 2001 after terrorist attack U.S. really had the success story to mobilized NATO, but In Iraq war 2003, again U.S. could not able bring NATO, even Germany and France opposed that policy. The obstacle of U.S. attempt to mobilize this coalition actually was not a constraint for its unilateral action, because Washington still able acquired the support from NATO individual members, especially the new and candidate members. The 2003 Iraq invasion was very precise to illustrate it, in the middle of Paris and Berlin’s opposition, Poland who has experienced Soviet and Germany invasion in order to forging close ties with U.S. decided to participate in the first deployment side by side with United Kingdom, and Australia (Walt, 2009: 105). By closing it ties, Poland encourages U.S. to sustain its presence in Europe through NATO that contain Russia imperial revival (Lubecki, 2005: 70). So, under this strategy, NATO is not only U.S. coalition but also as leverage (capital) to gain supporters or legitimacy for its unilateral action.

The interesting things about NATO as U.S.’ unipolar security coalition regarding Germany and France soft balancing on Iraq war is in Ukraine NATO membership issue, these countries also did soft balancing against U.S. policy to accept Ukraine NATO membership action plan (MAP) under

consideration it will alienate Russia and causing instability in Europe (Schreer, 2009: 385). Unfortunately, this objection still could not constraint U.S. determination to give Ukraine MAP at 2008 Bucharest NATO summit, as they agreed that Ukraine will become members of NATO (Gallis, 2008: 6). Even at the top of crisis moment after NATO summit on June 14, 2021 which still conclude that Ukraine and Georgia can be admitted in the future, Olaf Scholz, Germany Chancellor, in order to appease Russia, told Putin in February 15, 2022 that Ukraine will not be NATO's member for 30 years ahead (DW News, 2022b). And again, Germany effort was deminished by Kamala Harris's remark through bipartisan delegation support at Munich Security Conference, right on Germany land, in Februari 18-20, 2022 that U.S. and Europe reaffirm the principle of every nation's right to choose their own alliances or will uphold NATO open's door for Ukraine which trigger February 24th invasion (DW News, 2022a).

Based on explanation above we can conclude that since the end of Cold War, NATO has turn from an alliance concept into Unipole Security Coalition which means that NATO was a tool for U.S. legitimacy and leverage to gain supporters of its unilateral preventive war or other strategy in order to maintain its world hegemon position. By this model we can see that some NATO members' soft balancing as structural constrain does not work effectively on U.S. unilateral policy because Washington could obtain support from states who interested in forging close ties with her.

### **NATO expansion as the continuity of U.S.' containment policy**

The reason for Mearsheimer explained the NATO expansion through liberal hegemony idea was because of his bipolar balance of power worldview bias just like Waltz, he did not see that the NATO

expansion also has rooted from U.S. hegemony or unipolar perspective, that Russia as Soviet Union's descendent eventhough no longer a great power but regarding its advance military technology, largest geography, energy resources, and its nuclear capability which larger than any other European states still need to be contained by U.S. to maintain her hegemon status. More over, eight years after the dissolution, Russia presented a multipolar vision to balancing the U.S. unipolarity which written in The Medium-Term Strategy for the Development of Relations between Russia Federation and European Union 2000-2010 in October 1999 seven months after Poland accession that E.U. is part of Russia pursuit multipolar world or counter to U.S. unipolarity by offseting NATO dominance through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (BITS, 1999; Lynch, 2004: 103; Smith, 2004: 3).

Unfortunately for the most neorealism the dissolution of Soviet Union means that the threat has gone, and as the consequence NATO or containment are no longer relevance in unipolar world (Rauchhaus, 2001: 11; K. N. Waltz, 2000: 28). Since for the neostuctural realism the unipolarity is the most stable system regarding its overwhelming power elements that can not be balanced by alliance of other major powers then the explanation of NATO expansion will entry from this point. Eventhough U.S.' containment policy which architected by George Kennan was designed to work in the bipolar world, but because the essence of containment is to prevent a revisionist state to reshape international order (Gaddis, 2005: 4), then this policy also can be operationalized in unipolar world by hegemon through its potential balancer. Based on this logic, neostuctural realism argues that U.S. has been maintaining containment policy to Russia under unipolar world which confirmed by Wolfowitz or

Bush's doctrine 1992 that U.S. will prevent the re-emergence of a new rival from the former Soviet Union or other countries (Tyler, 1992). The consideration for this doctrine was the U.S.' mistake to believe that after the World War 1 and 2 the transformation of the security order which achieved under extraordinary American sacrifice could be sustained without our leadership and significant forces (National Security Council, 1992: 3). Every time U.S. has withdrawn its influence from Europe, trouble has followed. This is we cannot afford (Committee on Foreign Relations, 1998: 43).

Containment policy it self was based on psychological approach through producing in the minds of potential adversaries that attitudes to emergence international order will more favor U.S. interests. This psychology approach used material means which began by determining vital area, Marshall Plan economic assistance, military alliance, and the important one was reducing enemy ability to project influence beyond its border (Gaddis, 2005: 35; Hakim, 2021: 47-8). On first mean, at the cold war era, Kennan defined it as Atlantic community nations, which include Canada, Greenland and Iceland, Scandinavia, The British Isles, Western Europe, The Iberian Peninsula, Morocco, and the west coast of Africa down to the bulge, the countries of South America from the bulge north; and the countries of Mediterranean, Japan and Philippines. For natural sources, there is the Middle East as the Far East, and including Iran. And for industrial military centers are Great Britain, Germany, and the Central Europe (Gaddis, 2005: 28-9). But after the cold war, based on McKinder's Heartland Theory that whoever control Eastern Europe as the heart land than will dominate the world, also Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin's assumption that U.S. present in Eurasia will be obstacle for their global ambition, Zbigniew Brzezinski

reassert the important of this supercontinent for U.S.' world domination by argues that if Russia regains control over Ukraine with its 52 million people, major economy resources, and access to Azov also Black Sea then Moscow will become Eurasia imperial state once again like Soviet Union or The Great Alexander Russia (Brzezinski, 1997: 3&24).

The Brzezinski's new vital area was very important to understand the new America's policy to contain Russia after the cold war because he was the one who came with the plan for NATO expansion to Poland or Ukraine, created American-Ukrainian Advisory Committee, and in 1998 told Kiev to be prepared for 2010 NATO membership (Vaisse, 2018: 379). Even though formally he was Carter adviser, but nine of U.S.'s presidents consult to him for foreign policy since Kennedy to Obama with the Bush Junior as the exception. By this fact he is the U.S.' Grand Strategist who form its foreign policy (Vaisse, 2018: 11). Just like Brzezinski, Alexander Dugin as Putin adviser also prescribes Eurasia vision or land power for Russia to regain its great power status versus Atlanticists or sea power. As part of this strategy, Dugin recommendates Russia to annex Ukraine which he saw as artificial states because they are part of Russia cultural-ethnic except for Volynia, Galicia, and Trans-carpathia (Dunlop, 2004: 10).

Beside this geography view, theoretically as neostructural realism and offensive realism assume that the best way to survive in the anarchy system is to be the regional hegemon and make sure there is no others peer competitor from other regions then U.S. also assumes that Russia will annex Ukraine and Georgia to be regional hegemon which has to be contained by U.S. when Moscow still does not has power element to accomplished it (Hakim, 2021: 117; J. J. Mearsheimer, 2016: 6; J. Mearsheimer, 2001: 2).

On the military alliance as further step after determining vital area was the NATO

accession of Poland and Czech Republic in 1999; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia in 2004; Croatia and Albania in 2009; Montenegro in 2017; and North Macedonia membership in 2020 (Bilinsky, 1999: 9). What needs to be noticed about NATO expansion is because it required military capability upgrade from its new member, so it would form the regional balance of power. Through this accession Russia's revisionist strategy such invading his neighbours will face against all of NATO countries under article 5 which absolutely high-cost policy because they have standard equipment, integrated, and highly trained troops. Moreover, by surrounding Russia from Central Europe, Baltic states, Caucasus (Georgia accession plans), Balkan, Black Sea, even through Japan in Northeast Asia, U.S. and its allies will able to conduct attack to Russia from any directions.

On reducing enemy ability to project influence beyond its border, we can see U.S. policy againts Russia-E.U. Nordstream 2 project which began since Obama Administration in 2015 and escalate under Trump and Biden's presidency (Łoskot-Strachota et al., 2018: 1). The Nordstream 2 it self is a system pipelines for transport natural gas from Russia to Germany through Baltic Sea as further to Nordstream 1 which lied from Vyborg in Russia to Greifswald and completed in 2011 (Jacobsen, 2021: 1). As shown in the diagram 1, in 2017 37% of E.U. gas import was from Russia which already increase into 43% in 2020, and If Nordstream 2 project operated then it will double E.U. gas supply from Russia which create a massive energy dependency that can be converted by Moscow as leverage on bergaining or coercion tools to European Union (Morales Pedraza, 2021: 3).

In order to tackle this Nordstream 2, U.S. under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 inflicting sanctions against involved companies such Allseas

from Swiss, and Saipem from Italy that make Gazprom, Russia state own enterprise, has to complete the pipeline alone (Jacobsen, 2021: 2). Eventhough this project has finished in September 2021 but it has not operated yet before certified by Germany and European Union because it used by U.S. as bargain for Ukraine's MAP, as Joe Biden said that he will shut down that pipeline if Russia invades Ukraine, which proven by Olaf Scholz decision to halted it after Russia Februari 24 invasion (BBC News, 2022; Marsh & Chambers, 2022).

Another reason for NATO existence under unipolar world offered by Glaser that NATO as the hedging war against Russia (C. Glaser, 1993: 6). This concept refers to insurance policy against opportunism through conducting counteracting policy – strengthening economic cooperation while preparing for diplomatic and military confrontation by increasing military capabilities – to temporarily avoid an explicit confrontation with a potentially adversarial state (Koga, 2018: 634). Unfortunaly this concept unable to represent NATO expansion because hedging prescribes increasing internal capability, but do not tend to reduce enemy capability like the containment one. On strengthening economic cooperation although there is increasing gas and oil import from E.U to Russia, but U.S.-Russia trade in this sector seem declined since 2000 as shown in table 1.4. The most important thing is that the containment could end up with confrontation immediately like Ukraine and Georgia's case meanwhile hedging aims to avoid it.

At this sub chapter we can conclude that under unipolarity U.S. still maintain its containment policy to Russia through NATO expansion in order to form regional balance of power that able to deter Russia regain its Eurasia great power vision, and Nord Stream sanction in order block Russia's ability to project influence in Europe. This U.S

containment policy has rooted in its effort to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival or a peer competitor from the former Uni Soviet.

### **International structure encourages Russia to invade Ukraine now.**

The explanation for why Russia invasion on Ukraine does take time now, did not in 2008 or 2014 will begin by the neostructural realism's argument that anarchy, survival, distribution of power elements, and geography as the indicators of international structure shape state's interaction and the outcomes (Hakim, 2021: 145). Anarchy makes states which its function is survival feel insecure and forced to help themselves that cause power struggling by become regional hegemon and make sure there is no peer competitor in other region. Unfortunately this power struggling creates security dilemma which drive arm race and spiral hostility that could end up with pre-emptive strike (Hakim, 2021: 145-6 ; Powell, 2003: 21).

Through propositions above, we can see that Russia like other states feels insecure under anarchy system, and struggle to be Eurasia hegemon. By this insecure nature, geography as the last international structure especially the distance will point out the threat. Ukraine itself since the dissolution of Soviet Union has not been a threat for Russia because Kiev's power element far behind Moscow. In 2021, Ukraine's GDP was only 200.09 billion and Russia at \$1.7 trillion which 8.5 times more, on military expenditure Ukraine only \$4.3 billion which was 9.3 percent than Russia \$45.8 billion, meanwhile in the micro structure for aircraft Kiev possess 132 and Moscow about 1,391; active personnel 196,000 versus 900,000; and armored fighting vehicles 3,309 Vs 15,857 (Glance, 2022: 1). But when Ukraine join NATO as the U.S.' coalition to maintain its unipolar or hegemon status, which mean the increasing of Kiev external power elements, then Russia perceived Ukraine as a threat

because it will represent U.S. national interest. By this power element distribution, neostructural realism argues that the international structure encourages Russia to take preventive war on Ukraine to secure it before formally join NATO.

At this point we can see how international structure such anarchy, survival, and geography encourage Russia to invade Ukraine. Unfortunately, because Ukraine is U.S.' satellite then what we need to see is how the distribution of power element between Russia and U.S. constrain and encourage the Russia invasion. First, at the macro power element in 2021 Russia GDP only 7.3% from the U.S. and the military expenditure about 8.2% with the aggregate is 7.7%. By this number we can see that Russia very uneven to U.S., so in this case, both of Washington respond such balancing or buck-passing will constraint Russia invasion, but regarding the existence of nuclear deterrence, U.S. itself also was constrained to take balancing, meanwhile for buck-passing through Ukraine by protracted war (bloodletting) will constraint Russia because if the war takes long time, then Russia will collapse by herself just like Soviet Union before. This bloodletting strategy is part of U.S. containment policy to reducing Russia power elements both economy and military. So, the macro structure constraint Russia to invade Ukraine.

But at the microstructure Russia's hypersonic missile which offset U.S. both missile and its defense system interpreted by Putin that Moscow has military advantages from U.S. which encourage Russia to invade Ukraine. Its reflected on Putin nation speech in 2018 right after he announce Russia acquire new strategic nuclear weapon that can not be intercepted regarding its speed more than Mach 5 and maneuverability which make U.S-NATO missile defense useless, he said U.S. have kept ignoring us, so listen to us now (Putin, 2018). In order to

explain why Russia invasion happened now, not in 2008 or 2014, because at those times Moscow has not had military advantages than U.S, then neostructural realism argues that Russia possessing hypersonic missile encourage it to invade Ukraine in 2022.

The other indicator of international structure that need to be looked is the pole of international power elements, because 21st century since 2018 was marked by a tremendous increasing of China's economic capability that has increased from 12 percent in 2000 to 40 percent in 2010 toward the U.S. economy, and continued to 67.3 percent in 2018, which is more than half of the U.S. economy. In military element China military expenditure also increased from 7 percent of the U.S. budget in 2000 to 16 percent in 2010, and become 34 percent in 2018 which assumed already achieves 50 percent of U.S. military expenditure because it does not include foreign weapon procurement, some research and development (Cordesman, 2021: 18; Hakim, 2021: 4). Because the requirement for bipolar system is the revisionist state acquire at least 50 percent than other great power, and regarding China power element's aggregate has been more than half behind U.S. then we can conclude that since 2018, the international system has been entering a bipolar world (Hakim, 2021: 122).

Regarding on the changing of international system, Russia just like Ukraine which has informal alliance with U.S. under NATO, also tries to balance U.S.' power element by form an informal alliance with China through signing joint statement on unlimited bilateral strategic partnership in February 4, 2022. On this join statement was mentioned that two side reaffirm their strong mutual support for protection their core interest, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and oppose external interference in the internal affairs such Taiwan independence or further NATO enlargement. This mutual support was

described by two sides as superior than political and military alliance at the cold war time (USC US-China Institute, 2022).

There are three ways this unlimited strategic partnership encourages Russia to invade Ukraine: first, on economic realm: as neostructural realism emphasizes that economic element is equal with military instrument (Hakim, 2021: 122), then U.S. with its NATO coalition's members will use economic sanction as instrument to deter Russia invasion, especially for oil and gas market as Russia biggest export commodity. As shown on table 4, that since 2017 to 2021, Beijing has replaced Netherland and Germany as Moscow biggest market about 11.7% to 13.4%. By this unlimited strategic partnership Russia sees that they can diminish U.S.-NATO sanction impact by pivoting its export to China and other emergence economy such India. Second, on political realm: The unlimited strategic partnership is expected will gain China's support in security council to veto U.N. resolution about the invasion or propaganda for international public opinion. Third, on military realm since uneven military budget between Russia and U.S., also because in that meeting they have discussed bilateral military-technical cooperation under mutual support, it is assumed that Russia is expecting to gain military equipment or technical support from China (Kremlin.ru, 2022).

At this sub chapter, even though the distribution of macro power element between Russia and U.S. constraint Russia invasion on Ukraine, but its unlimited strategic partnership with China that rebalance U.S.' advantages, plus Moscow's hypersonic missile that replace U.S. offset strategy as the microstructure encourage Russia to invade Ukraine now.

## 5. Conclusions

This article aims to show how the material structure per se work to explain why

NATO does keep expand on Ukraine and why Russia respond it by invasion now. The former's objective found that since the end of Cold War, NATO has turn from an alliance concept into Unipole Security Coalition which means that NATO was a tool for U.S. unilateral legitimacy and leverage to gain support of its preventive war or other strategy in order to maintain its world hegemon position. And under unipolarity U.S. still maintain its containment policy to Russia through NATO expansion in order to form regional balance of power that able to deter Russia regain its Eurasia great power vision, and Nord Stream sanction in order block Russia's ability to project influence in Europe. This U.S containment policy has rooted in U.S. effort to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival or a peer competitor from the former Uni Soviet. Meanwhile the reason for Russia invasion occurred now, not in 2008 or 2014, is even though the distribution of macro power element between Russia and U.S. constraint Russia to invade Ukraine, but its unlimited strategic partnership with China that rebalance U.S. advantages, plus Moscow's hypersonic missile that replace U.S. offset strategy as the micro structure encourage Russia to invade Ukraine.

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