**Annexation or Reunification**

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Last Friday (September 30, 2022), President Vladimir Putin announced Russia’s ‘reunification’ of four Ukrainian parts with Russia while both countries have been fighting since late February this year. The US and the West have shown their anger over the “annexation” of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson by Russia, a region that makes up 15 per cent of Ukraine’s territory. Annexation or Reunification, whatever you call it in terms of your interpretation or vested interest, Russia took control over the four parts after a “referendum” followed by the “rulers” of these parts singed the documents of reunification/annexation of their land with Russia, telecast live on the screens. Good enough. What next?

Several weeks back, I wrote on these pages; showing my apprehensions that Ukraine will be divided. Some Kremlin-leaning parts would be annexed by Russia. Other parts would go to the NATO Bloc. The US and West are only interested in a piece of land where their military might could sit over Russia’s neck to control its ever-strengthening economy and wide-spreading geopolitical and geo-economic bilateral and multilateral ties since after the end of the cold war.

Russia has taken control of the four Ukrainian parts. The US and NATO are shouting against the step; declaring it illegal, calling the “referendum” fake, and promising to undo the move. Russia is all out to defend its “reunification”. Russia is also claiming to liberate other parts of Ukraine or the entire country from the occupation of the West that was done in 2014 through a “revolution” and seems determined to “reunify” with Russia. The rising conflict is a serious concern for the entire world, especially for the region. Fueling the feud is a constant threat to regional and global peace and prosperity.

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Ignoring all the noise in the Western and the US media against the Russian annexation of Ukrainian parts, Russia’s lower house of parliament, the State Duma, unanimously approved President Vladimir Putin’s bills on Monday, according to Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin, formalizing the seizure of four regions of Ukraine in a vote that was never in doubt.

The upper house, Russia’s Federation Council, voted yesterday (October 4) to formalize the annexations, which the West claims have “violated international law”. The moves signal to Ukraine and its supporters that Moscow sees the seizures as irreversible. Fine, but what about the Ukrainian video showing their forces “planting” their flag in Myrolyubivka, a settlement in the Kherson region? Ukraine claimed to have gained more ground overnight in counter-offensives while Russia was preparing to vote on the seized Ukrainian parts in the State Duma.

A chaotic and strange situation is merging in Ukraine but not unexpectedly. A decade back geopolitical wisdom reflected upon the consequences of increasing US and NATO interest and influence in Ukraine. They knew well that it would disrupt the peace and prosperity of the country, region and global too. Now, we are seeing it happening.

Ultimately, we need to do something about Kyiv too. The destruction of Ukraine is now underway while the US and NATO are supporting Kyiv against Russia to grab entire Ukraine, Poland claims five regions, Romania claims one, and Hungary claims Transcarpathia. The three recent interests play no small part in fomenting the conflict. Therefore we can say that by special operation we are saving Ukrainian statehood. Because there is no hope that the current leaders of Ukraine will save it. After all, it is no coincidence that a fictitious person was put in the president’s chair. A comedian-actor with no skills rules over 40 million people in the centre of Europe.

A Russian diplomacy expert believes, “It should not be forgotten that Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are historical Slavic states, which can only live in cooperation with each other. And it is not a secret for the West. First, they tried to shake up the situation in Belarus but didn’t succeed, and then they confronted Ukraine and Russia. These are not random processes. That is why nobody but our country is concerned about the destiny of Ukrainian statehood. We understand very well that if it disappears, it will be unnatural for us. We can say that Russia is solving a serious strategic task today.

The historical and ideological effect is the return of territories. These lands were acquired by the Russian Empire during the development of the Wild Field in the second half of the 18th century. Under Catherine II, they were named Novorossiya. Zaporozhye (Aleksandrovsk) was founded in 1770, Kherson in 1778 and Lugansk in 1795. Donetsk emerged later, in 1869. In 1922 these regions were included by the Soviet authorities in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. There was a demographic effect. Together with the four regions, Russia will gain 5 to 6 million new citizens. The population of the country will grow considerably. These people will integrate into the Russian socio-cultural space, become taxpayers.”

The Russian Foreign Office believes that the referendum fixed the annexation of the regions within their old administrative borders. The Russian state border will now run along the administrative boundaries of the four former Ukrainian regions. And they will have to be defended, protected and rebuilt as Russian territory. All of the country’s resources will have to be devoted to it. The Washington Post experts estimate that Russia will get more than US$12 trillion worth of minerals just in Donbas (DNR and LNR). That’s more than 60 per cent of Ukraine’s coal deposits, 20 per cent of its gas reserves and more than 40 per cent of its metal deposits. Just a glimpse of why the US and NATO are interested in and struggling to capture Ukrainian membership for a decade.

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