

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Significance of the Issue

The year 2007 marked the 200th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and the former Soviet Union, although official representatives were not in place until 1809. Yet these two nations engaged in direct cooperation and confrontation one hundred years later. Despite the alliance forged in response to the First and Second World Wars, the relationship was severed once the Soviet Union refused to withdraw its troops from Berlin and formed the “Iron Curtain” around its conquered territories after the end of the Second World War. At that point, Communism became an imminent threat to the United States, and the United States became the arch nemesis of the Soviet Union.

The end of the Cold War transformed the relationship. Despite its immense endowment, Russia was plagued with economic malaise, corruption, disorganization, and, allegedly, incompetent leadership. The United States injected a large amount of funding into Russia to ensure that it would not revert back to communism. The United States and Russia enjoyed relatively peaceful relations during the Clinton administration.

The relationship was expected to deteriorate with the accession of George W. Bush to the White House since members of the Bush cabinet had negative sentiments towards Russia. Many of his cabinet members and advisors held the “anything but

Clinton” approach towards international relations and believed that the previous administration’s Russia policy was based personal relations between President Clinton and Boris Yeltsin. To some people’s surprise, however, when President Bush first met Vladimir Putin, he stated, “I looked the man in the eye. I found him to be very straightforward and trustworthy. We had a very good dialogue. I was able to get a sense of his soul; a man deeply committed to his country and the best interests of his country. And I appreciated so very much the frank dialogue. There was no kind of diplomatic chit-chat, trying to throw each other off balance. There was a straightforward dialogue. And that's the beginning of a very constructive relationship...Russia and the United States must establish a new relationship beyond that of the old Cold War mentality...Friends don't destroy each other.”¹

The September 11 incident in 2001 further paved the way for cooperation between both nations. Putin, the winner of the 2000 Russian presidential election, was the first foreign leader to send a message of condolence to the United States, and Russia provided logistical support to the United States during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in 2002.

Cooperation with the United States allowed Russia to revive some sense of national pride and respect from the international community, falling in line with Putin’s approach to international relations. Under Putin, Russian foreign policy was aimed at

¹ Office of the Press Security, “Press Conference by President Bush and Russian Federation President Putin,” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010618.html>.

bringing about the return of “normal” Russia², a Russia of great power. This viewpoint was in stark contrast to the Yeltsin administration, which was much more passive.

But Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 provided a different result. Russia expressed trenchant criticism against the war in Iraq, a war which was conducted without authorization from the United Nations and without consultation of nations, namely Russia itself. As international respect was the focal point of Russian interest, Russia no longer supported the United States and started to develop its own policy, a major divergence from the United States.

On the domestic front, the year 2004 was a major turning point. Putin was reelected as president, and his party, United Russia, dominated the Duma. Putin then started to implement “managed democracy”³, with counterterrorism as an ostensible reason for such political reform. Media freedom was limited, political participation was regulated, and nationalism was indoctrinated. The Russian approach to democracy was widely criticized among Western countries and widened the rift between the United States and Russia.

The escalation of energy prices since 2002 has been a major contributor to Russia’s assertiveness in the international arena. Since the country is extremely well endowed with energy resources, petrodollar provides greater budgetary supply for

² Mustafa Aydin, “US-Russian Relations: Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea and the Role of Institutions,” *Perception* (Autumn 2005): 32.

³ Stuart D. Goldman, “Russian Political, Economic, and Security Issues and U.S. Interests,” *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress* Code RL33407 (updated 31 May 2007): 6.

monopolization of governmental power. Moreover, energy exportation has become a major source of leverage for Russia in international relations.

On the international front, Russia and the United States were at ex-post conflict. The encroachment of Western influence into Russia's sphere of influence engendered serious concern among Russians. The omnipresence of the United States in the "color revolution" in Eastern Europe with the victories of pro-West politicians, the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan energy pipeline, the expansion of NATO, and the United States' plan to install an anti-missile defense system in Central Europe have all caused serious consternation amongst Russian politicians.

In response to these events, Russia tried to take over energy firms in Central Asia through its state-owned energy corporations. The takeover deals were part of an effort to amplify the dependence of European countries on Russia's energy supply. This dependency and other unilateral measures were Russia's leverage over many European nations. For instance, Russia cut off Ukraine's gas supply after the victory of Viktor Yushenko, the West-supported presidential candidate, in 2005. Ukraine was then forced to purchase energy from Russia at a much higher price.

While the year 2007 marked the 200 year anniversary of diplomatic relations, it was also a year of conflict. The differences between the United States and Russia were gradually becoming greater. Issues such as the response to Iran's nuclear development, the independence of Kosovo, and the installation of a US missile defense system in Central Europe were drawing the interests of both countries further and further apart.

Russia's disposition is becoming more aggressive under Putin. This trend is likely to continue since Putin's party, United Russia, was victorious in the December 2007 general election, making Putin the Prime Minister. The victory also heralded Dimitri Medvedev, the United Russia presidential candidate and a close aid to Putin, to presidency with the consent of Putin as an assurance of the continuity of Putin's policy. However, there were some signs of cooperation in particular cases, such as the role of Russia in transferring the frozen assets of the North Korean regime and Russia's active role in the Six Party Talk.

In a nutshell, the relationship between the two nations is more antagonistic than ever. But there are issues where cooperation is possible, and the evolution of the relationship should be closely scrutinized in order to avoid a second coming of the Cold War.

This paper will briefly examine the relationship between the United States and Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, both in its immediate environment and in bilateral context. Then, the struggle for energy security in Eastern Europe and Central Asia will be analyzed as a case study of indirect competition between the countries. The paper will further explore an example of direct confrontation between Washington and Moscow in the case of the US missile defense system in Europe.

B. Structure of the Paper

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Overall relationship

Chapter 3: Energy Security

Chapter 4: Missile Defense System

Chapter 5: Conclusion

C. Objective of Study

This research paper aims to provide an evaluation of the relationship between the United States and Russia. The result of this research will extract the essence of the aggravated relations and its causes. The paper will examine whether the relationship is likely to lead to a second Cold War.

D. Research Questions

1. How has the relationship between the United States and Russia evolved since post-Cold War to post-September 11 period?
2. What are the vital factors that changed and shaped the relationship between the United States and Russia?

E. Hypothesis

Despite the severance of the relations between the two nations, Russia is not likely to be in direct conflict with the United States. A common interest in some issues will demand greater self-restraint from both nations. But in the long-term, the severed relationship could possibly lead to confrontation, although to a lesser scale than the Cold War.

As for the cause of the current tension, chronic policy calculation is responsible. American policies towards Russia in the 1990s were largely demeaning and disrespectful towards the fallen power. Once recovered, Russia was able to orient its foreign policy in a more isolated manner, leading to a clash between the major powers.

F. Scope of Analysis

This research paper will focus on the evolution of the relationship between the United States and Russia from the end of the Cold War to the present. The study will mostly focus on the relationship between the United States and Russia *per se* and in the immediate surroundings (Eastern Europe and Central Asia) as they relate to various issues - the U.S. response to the Putin regime, American and Russian influence in Central Asia and Europe, including the energy security issue, and U.S. Missile Defense in Poland and the Czech Republic – in order to understand the dramatic shift in relations from faithful allies to highly antagonistic rivals.

G. Analytical Framework: Realism

Realism takes a negative view of international relations. Realists share the view that international relations are conflictive and chaotic by nature. Realists can be roughly divided into two groups: Realists and Neo-realists. The early realists, such as Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes, depicted the study of politics in comparison with human nature. They perceive that men are selfish and self-centered. Hence, men form nation-states through cooperation with each other to provide security and to relieve fear of each other. And each nation-state's ruler has the utmost obligation to pursue national interests and seek for survival regardless of ruthlessness and morality. It was this characteristic of men that formed the anarchical order of the interstate system. Hans J. Morgenthau expanded on this viewpoint of international relations. He focused on the pursuit of power with the supreme goal of state survival. Power was deemed an assurance of security. Therefore, power must be sought at any cost. Realists also believe in an unequal distribution of power, thus forcing states to form alliances to maintain the "balance of power" and secure survival. War is the international constant as states struggle for greater power.⁴

Neo-realists derive their thesis from another source: the international system. They believe that the international order is anarchical since there is no international government. This disarray compels states to seek power and security for their survival. In this sense, cooperation is possible. However, cooperation is ephemeral since it is based

⁴ Robert Jackson and George Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, 2nd ed. (UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 276-277.

on relative gain. Furthermore, the definition of national interest and power is extended beyond a military basis.

Neo-realists once explained the structure of international relations in the Cold War. To Kenneth Waltz, international relations during the Cold War was the international structure with “the long peace”. Such peace was due to the bipolar system, which he believed to be superior to the multipolar or unipolar systems. Three reasons account for the peace of bipolarity. First, bipolarity has fewer great powers, and that reduces the possibility of a great-power war. Second, it is easier to operate an effective deterrence system with fewer great powers involved. Lastly, bipolarity reduces the chances of miscalculation and misadventure.⁵

Both realists and neo-realists share the same views on three aspects of international relations: statism, survival, and self-help.⁶ To both paradigms, the state is the main important actor which possesses sovereignty at its disposal. Regarding sovereignty, the state has the utmost power to use and enforce the law to govern. According to Hobbes, people have traded their liberty to live in communities with a higher authority governing, receiving security and protection in return. Once security has been established, civil society can begin. But in the absence of security, there can be no art, no culture, and no society.⁷ Thus for realists, the solution is to organize power domestically; once power has been organized, a community can exist.

⁵ Introduction to International Relations, pp. 89-90.

⁶ Tim Sunne and Brian C. Schmidt, “Realism,” in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 3rd ed., edited by John Baylis and Steve Smith (1997; repr., UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 172-176.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

Realists and neo-realists further claim that the conditions are different in an international community. There is no higher authority to govern the relationships between states, which results in an anarchical atmosphere. Given this anarchy, states will compete with each other for security. In that case, international power accumulation is needed to pursue security.

The second principle both realists and neo-realists agree upon is that the goal of international politics is survival. Survival of state can be seen from two perspectives according to realist scholars. On one hand, defensive realists such as Kenneth Waltz and Joseph Grieco argue that the state has an obligation to acquire power to guarantee its survival, but not necessarily to be the top of the list, but rather to have just enough to maintain survival. According to this view, states are defensive actors which prefer the status quo in their existence among other actors because maximizing power may mean jeopardizing security. On the other hand, offensive realists such as Mearsheimer argue that the vital goal of all states is to achieve a hegemonic position in the international system. Then states will always desire more power and will alter the existing distribution of power even though it may destroy their security.

Lastly, the precept of both paradigms converged on the idea of self-help. According to the pessimism of human nature that realist and neo-realist scholars subscribe to, in an international arena, the system does not allow for trust, friendship, and honor as there is no higher authority to govern or control relationships among states. Security can thus only be realized through self-help. Then co-existence can be achieved through the maintenance of the balance of power.

In this research, realism will be applied. The term will refer to both realism and neo-realism in an indiscriminate manner as the maxim of both thoughts overlap.