

**THE US-RUSSIA RELATIONS UNDER TRUMP ADMINISTRATION**



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of the degree of Master of Philosophy**

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*Dedicated to*

*My Brother, Abdul Aziz Hashim*

## DECLARATION

In submitting this thesis titled, **The US-Russia Relations Under Trump Administration**, I declare that I have read the rules and regulations of Area Study Centre and Quaid-i-Azam University regarding the procedures and formally declare that all research work in this thesis is my individual research work carried out in consultation with research supervisor. I further confirm that this work has not been accepted in substance for any other degree, nor is it currently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

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**Approval of the Thesis**

This is to certify that we have read the dissertation submitted by Amal Hashim under the title, The US-Russia Relations Under Trump Administration. In my opinion it is up to the standard of acceptance of Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad for granting the master's degree Master of Philosophy in American Studies.

Supervisor

Sadia Suleiman

## **ABSTRACT**

The current study analyses the bilateral relationship between the US and Russia under the Trump administration. It is hypothesized that the US-Russia relations under the Trump administration deteriorated further because this relationship has always been the victim of narratives generated by domestic political discourse, media hysteria, historical inter-subjective interactions and actors' perceptions about themselves and others. Soviet foreign policy has been defined as driven by; its interaction with other states, a factor of externalization- in which fear of the external enemy was used to justify internal policy centralization, the USSR perception of self as the vanguard of Socialism and New Soviet Man identity (NSM). The US foreign policy on the other hand was driven by; a negative perception of communist ideology, the USSR's intentions, and the US perception of self and grand strategy as enacted in Truman doctrine- to support free people around the globe. Foreign policies of both states are defined as a function of social reality shaped by intersubjective interactions. The constructivist framework is used to find if the roles of ideas are crucial to understanding political behaviour, the construction of reality and its impact on thinking, belief and interdependence of states with other nations. The theory also purports the real world as a never-ending phenomenon of social construct. The analysis of foreign policies of the US and Moscow has been carried out to trace how historical events, inter-subjective interactions, and perception of self as "who I am" and "what other is to me" shaped reality, identity and interest of both states. Both actors are defined not as rational actors who are compelled by security needs but by ideas that triggered Cold War. The researcher adopted a qualitative method to carry out this study. This study aims to understand why the

change of mind under Trump did not improve relations between Moscow and the US. It tries to answer the questions by gauging interactions, foreign policy priorities, and deep distrust engrained by media hysteria and Soviet reality entrenched in the domestic political discourse of the US that shaped Moscow as an anti-capitalist state. All these factors underline perception-of-self guided by historic norms create identity behaviour. The process thus institutionalizes norms, assumptions and habits of behaviour. Thus how this identity and interest defined relative to others hindered Trump's efforts to set thaw in relation.

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**HASHIM**

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

DHS	Department of Home Security
FBI	Federal Board of Investigation
INF	Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRA	Internet Research Agency
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
NBC	National Broad Company
NSM	New Soviet Man
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OPCW	Organization on Prevention of Chemical Weapon
START2	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
UN	United Nations
UK	United Kingdom
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	World Trade Organization
WW	World War 2

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The declaration of the end of the Cold War at the 1989 summit by Soviet leaders Mikhail Gorbachev and George W. Bush raised hopes to start relations between two superpowers, US and Russia. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, American aid flew in to help Russia with market-related reforms, Russia was admitted to the World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and it joined G8; both countries signed many arm control agreements and worked together on international space station. In addition, negotiations took place on terms of the reunification of Germany and its inclusion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took place, and a charter for European security and stability was also agreed upon. Not only this, cooperation was extended to the Middle East as both countries sponsored the Madrid conference and successively dealt with the issue of Saddam Hussein on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Far from threatening rhetoric, both countries entered in post-Cold War period with a new spirit of cooperation. However, this cooperation proved to be short-lived as frictions were already apparent in Russia-US relations under Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999).

The grand vision of strategic partnership articulated at the Petersburg summit in May 2002 by George Bush and Vladimir Putin landed in trouble because of fundamental differences over several issues including differences over Iraq, the US lead campaign in Kosovo-launched without mandate from United Nations Security Council (UNSC), led Russia to believe that the US is bent to act unilaterally without restraints. Furthermore, US support of the Colour Revolution in 2003 in Georgia,

Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005)<sup>1</sup> were viewed by Russian officials as part of US plan to encircle Moscow and minimize its influence in neighbouring countries. Moreover, the issue of NATO eastward extension has been more toxic in the relationship. Although the first two waves of NATO's extension in 1999 and 2004 were not welcomed by Russia that included former members of the Warsaw Pact and the Baltic States, no action was taken by Moscow. Moscow attacked Georgia after four months of the Bucharest summit when membership was offered to Georgia to deter the US from further NATO expansion. However, the war did not permanently derail relations as some reset was offered under Obama's administration and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev as president in 2008. The thaw did not last long, friction arose when the Arab Spring began in the Middle East in 2011. The US-sponsored overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya and supported opposition against Syrian president Bashar al Assad was a major irritant on the part of Russia.

Currently, the US and Russia relationship is among the most critical bilateral relationship in the world. Both countries are locked in deep mutual distrust over intensifying geopolitical competition in Europe and beyond. Relationships under the Trump administration followed the same boom-bust cycles as under its predecessors. Donald Trump (2017-2021) initially took a break from the bipartisan consensus that viewed Russia's resurgence as a threat to the US in his election campaign and promised to get along with Moscow by negotiating with Russia in an effective way than his predecessors. However, the relationship eroded further since

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<sup>1</sup>"What are the 10 Key Areas of Tension between the US and Russia," *Al-Jazeera*, December 06, 2021 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/6/what-are-the-10-key-areas-of-tension-between-the-us-and-russia> Accessed on: January 01, 2023.

he took office. Several factors attributed to this including; Russia alleged interference in the 2016 elections, questionable contact between Trump's campaign and Moscow entities, the US involvement in Ukraine, Media hysteria and deadlock over the arms control agreements. In short, relations took a downward trajectory with some analysts calling it a new "Cold War" or even a Warm War. The research will argue that the US and Russia are locked in Cold War which further deteriorated under the Trump administration. A constructivist lens would be used to analyse developments, policies, events and attitudes.

### **Statement of Problem**

Since the end Cold War American presidents pondered and acted but failed to deal with Russia effectively which culminated in a new or second cold war. Today globalization driven by technological advancements has faded the lines and made regional and international relations more difficult than ever, with states competing for political influence. Globalization coupled with technological advancement and embittered by a deteriorating geopolitical environment made the new cold worst than the former. Since Trump took the helm of power in the 2016 presidential election has given new impetus to a new cold war as accusations of Moscow interference and increased politicization by media led to heightened tensions. Although relations remained unstable for years evidence suggested that the Trump administration further deteriorated the relations. The focus of this thesis will be on how bilateral relations under the Trump administration deteriorated further.

### **Research Questions**

- What went wrong after the Cold War that relations deteriorated between the US and Russia?

- During Trump's campaign 2016 elections as early as his presidency, Trump promised to enhance ties with Russia and to manage relations with President Vladimir Putin more effectively. Despite his willingness why the relationship could not improve under Trump as it occurred under Gorbachev?

### **Research Hypothesis**

The US and Russia relations under Trump deteriorated further because the bilateral relationship has always been the victim of narratives generated by domestic political discourse, media hysteria and historical inter-subjective interactions.

### **Significance of the Research**

The US-Russia have shared interest in space exploration, nuclear security and nuclear proliferation issue. Two states have long been competing for economic and political influence. The bilateral relationship which sat at a low point in the aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Ukraine crisis improved after the reset was launched by the Obama administration, to base the relationship on a more positive footing to attain cooperation on the key issues. It yielded successes including the conclusion of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), increasing cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan. Bilateral relation has remained mixture of cooperation and competition. However, since assumption of power by Trump administration relations become largely adversarial. The paper will focus on why Trump failed to live up to his electoral pledges of the campaign to cosy up with Russia and to ally Russia against China, and how the threat narrative created by the hysteria of media and geopolitical circumstances translated into a new Cold War. Trump administration

levied more sanctions against Moscow over issues including meddling in the 2016 elections and fomenting going proxy war in Ukraine.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

This research presents its finding by using the lens of constructivism. Thus according to constructivism previous approaches to IR failed to give complete structural descriptions of how nation-states conduct in world politics. This theory rejects the exaggerated focus on objective facts to explain events in international relations. They are more bothered about social construction behind the facts pointing towards identities and beliefs that are more crucial in understanding the actions of states than the concept of rationality propounded by realism. Their main point is that individuals and states act intentionally owing to their ideas, beliefs, judgements and interpretations. Constructivist asserts that the pattern of collaboration and conflict between nations depends upon the procedure of genesis of identity resulting from interaction among states that shapes their relations and interests. Drawing from this logic, when states find themselves in a positive and friendly environment because of their prior interactions like the US and France they will reinforce mutual trust and reinforce their cooperation. On the other hand, those who found themselves in rivalry like the US and Russia will keep conflicting relations, in which chances of balance of power politics and mutual distrust would prevail.

### **Literature Review:**

Nikolos Givasdev in his article Permanent Divergence-the evolution of Russia the US relationship in the Trump Era says that Trump appears to take an unusual break from the bipartisan consensus held in the US about Russia's resurgence under



the Bush and Obama administration. He viewed Russia as a strategic competitor and attempted to engage Russia based on America's Calculus and the cost and benefits of the US. Rather than confrontation he wanted to adopt a path of competition, as envisioned by his intentions to sell weapons to Ukraine and export American energy to Europe to compete with Russia's sales to increase its strength on negotiating table. However, Trump's intentions to build conducive relations met resistance because despite having the most polarized partisan environment long-held view by Congress is that Moscow should be punished for its domestic and international offences. A senior congressional adviser said relations between the US and Moscow can never be improved until "Crimea is returned and Putin is gone."<sup>2</sup> Despite his arrival in the White House Russian suspicion and distrust have increased further. Overarching assumptions about Russia are that it is viewed as an existential threat to the vital interest of the US and that disrupting Russia represents an important national security priority of the US.

Martin Russels in his article<sup>3</sup> asserts that despite Donald Trump's victory and hopes that relations would move from confrontation to transactional, a rift opened up in relations. The rift emerges primarily because of basic foreign policy differences. The US envisioned itself as a global leader and proponent of liberal standards. On the other hand, Russia's grievances are over the US hegemony and its interference in the internal affairs of another country. Initial hopes that under the Trump administration relationship might improve further were ground to dash. Relations become more

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<sup>2</sup> Nikolas Gvosdev, "Permanent Divergence: The Evolution of U.S.-Russia Relations in the Trump Era," *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, no. 12 (2018): 109 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48573514>.

<sup>3</sup> European Parliamentary Research Services, *The US Russia relations: Reaching point of no Return*, 03 October 2018 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)628230](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2018)628230)

confused due to the ambiguity of the Trump administration who claimed that “nobody has been tougher on Russia than him”. Despite Trump's vagueness, there was no softening of position on Russia. Trump's performance at the bilateral Helsinki summit in July was described by the late John McCain as a tragic mistake. In the state of Trump's prevarication on Crimea, when he failed to call out Moscow Secretary of State Mike Pompeo categorically ruled out recognizing Russia's annexation of Crimea and promised to take tough action against it. Indeed there was a huge difference between Trump and the rest of his establishment, overall the hard-line review of the Trump administration prevailed. As a result of interference in the 2016 elections sanctions were increased, Russian diplomats were expelled and military actions were approved against Russian Syrian allies in April 2017. Russels further assert that in the national security strategy of 2017, there was less emphasis on the US role as a global leader and more focus on American interest but despite the change of priorities, human rights remain a major irritant in bilateral relation. On the other hand, Russia grieved over Georgia and Ukraine's rapprochement with the West it was seen by Russia as part of the West's geopolitical expansion.

Jacob Kriminger in his article, “the new cold war: US-Russia relation under Trump Administration (2017-2020) has put it that Trump attempted to ‘reset’ relations with Russia as his predecessor Obama did but failed in his attempt. He further says that aim interference in the election by Russia was eroding trust in the democratic values of America and not electing Trump as the next president. Moreover, Moscow conflicting military interests as evidenced by its activity in Syria, Georgia, eastern Ukraine and Crimea in addition development of hypersonic missiles and Moscow’s superiority in the nuclear arena is an evident fact that Russia remains

a considerable threat to the future. “The Worldwide threat assessment of US intelligence community”<sup>4</sup> in 2019 argued that Moscow considers its military crucial to protect its national interest. This could increase the chances of military confrontation in Ukraine, Syria and Venezuela tense as Moscow has huge stakes in these areas.

Wendt in his book, *Social Theory of International Relations* argues that the unpredictable and sudden end of the Cold War can be defined best by constructivist theory. Difficulties in defining international relations during the end of the Cold War come from materialistic interpretations<sup>5</sup> of history from individualistic orientation. Wendt in his article *Anarchy is what state make of it: Social Construction of power politics* asserts that Gorbachev wanted to move away from the Cold War legacy and achieve cooperation with the West. Therefore he reshaped the Soviet identity with his ideas as demonstrated by his *New Thinking*. Thus identities were changed through the power of ideas which brought several changes. The ultimate goal of Gorbachev's new thinking was to change the attitude of Moscow citizens and the world.

Samuel Gras in his article used interpretations of three events Spanish Civil War, the Cold War and the Cold War to recent history provided by Evan Thomas, Derek Leebaert and Andrew Bacevich trace the US foreign policy as a product of social constructivism. Thomas describes Spanish War as an important transitional

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<sup>4</sup> Jacob Kriminger, “The New Cold War: US Russia Relation Under Trump Administration 2017-2020,” (Master Thesis East Caroline University, December 2020): 76  
<https://thescholarship.ecu.edu/bitstream/handle/10342/8808/KRIMINGER-MASTERSTHESIS-2020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (spring, 1992): 396.

phase in shaping American identity. He furthermore contends that NATO should have been dissolved after the end of the Cold War if it was particularly a security construct. Although it might be initially a security construct designed against the USSR in the initial years of the Cold War failure to dissolve in later years show that it was a social phenomenon to preserve the national identities and political sovereignty that had been denied in initial years. Likewise, he explains Russia's sensitivities to NATO enlargement in terms of its historical experience it was a state that underwent invasions several times from Napoleon, Mongols to Hitler. It constructed its national identity as the besieged citadel that influenced it and how it analyses its security. In the end, he concluded nation's perception of what constitutes a threat to it and the intentions of others is filtered by different constructions.

Thomas interpreted the debate regarding intervention in Cuba and to acquire more territories in Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines as less concerned with the question of Strategic calculation and more with the question of US identity. Roosevelt's perception of American identity was, "faith in national spirit, which.....to be brave, adventurous and warlike"<sup>6</sup> Roosevelt was filled with extreme nationalism and the only thing that was troubling him was a decline in US martial spirit. He expressed his regret by saying that nation was on the edge of social decline.<sup>7</sup> So, the remedy lies in "warfare, sport and hunting..." In the 1980s main question that the US faced was how to define a proper role for the US in world affairs according to its self-

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<sup>6</sup> Evan Thomas, *The War Lovers: Roosevelt, Lodge, Hearst, and the Rush to Empire*, 1898. (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2010), 22.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 145

image. According to US Census Bureau Pamphlet, the main concern of the time was what would happen to the best qualities of America if there would be no more land to acquire. Thomas asserts two groups emerged one, President Roosevelt and Senator Henry Lodge and the other, William Hearst- newspaper owner and Thomas Reed. Their perception of America and their personal experience Shaped American national identity and its role in the world and the debate surrounding American interventionist strategy. First, considered America as a warrior and adventurous state later thought of it as different from the European style of democracy based on military interventions abroad and the acquisition of foreign territories. As per Thomas former group prevailed in shaping America's interest as a world power ready to embark on foreign interventions. This is an important historical event in guiding the US's active role in international relations which later on translated into cold war consensus in the Cold War period.

Stefano Guzzini in his review of the book, *Reconstructing the Cold War: The Early Years 1945- 1958* Ted Hopf argues that to study international relations constructivism provides a more promising path than personality-oriented diplomatic theory or realist theory defining international constraints as a major factor. He gave his approach of societal constructivism in which society identity discourse of self-guide relation with other states. He argues that once the USSR identity discourse was shaped it defined relations with others. He gave a theoretical framework for understanding the USSR's foreign policy i.e. identity discourse that acts as determining factor and guides its decisions. Based on previous work, the new approach to determining a group of recognition is domestic society not international. He highlights institutions of civil society as a source of the identity

discourse of Moscow.<sup>8</sup> In this work, he recognizes several formal informal institutions -as guiding factors of identity- can be carriers of ideas or transitional silent repositories.

Chan Jun Hao in his article Social Constructivism Vs Neo-Realism in Analyzing Cold War criticizes neorealist bi-polar characterization of the international system based on the distribution of power capabilities soon after the end second world war. According to him, the international system was not bipolar because the UK was almost similar in capabilities to Russia, thus neo realists failed to characterize the system from 1945 to 1955 and failed to explain NATO formation, Berlin Blockade Korean War. As per the constructivist theory, it was a system of two different identities that were juxtaposed to each other and whose subsequent actions reinforced these identities.<sup>9</sup> This discourse was reinforced by domestic institutions and inters subjective interactions between political leaders who reinforced these beliefs and mould national interest accordingly. The main element of Soviet identity shared by politics and society was the New Soviet Man- a vanguard of Socialism to guide underdeveloped neighbouring states towards modernity. The US on the other hand perceived itself as a linchpin of liberal democracy which perceived eastern European states as necessary for it. Thus dichotomous views of identities emerged that shaped later years' relations.

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<sup>8</sup> Stefano Guzzini, review of *Reconstructing the Cold War: The Early Years, 1945- 1958* by Ted Hopf, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, (January 2013) :131-134  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265986068\\_Reconstructing\\_the\\_Cold\\_War\\_The\\_Early\\_Years\\_1945-1958\\_by\\_Ted\\_Hopf\\_review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265986068_Reconstructing_the_Cold_War_The_Early_Years_1945-1958_by_Ted_Hopf_review)

<sup>9</sup> Chan Jun Hao, "Social Constructivism Vs Neo realism in Analysing the Cold War," *E-International Relation*, August 06, 2019 <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/08/06/social-constructivism-vs-neorealism-in-analysing-the-cold-war/>

Richard N. Lebow in his book *National Identities and International Relations* observed that identities play a central role in constructivism as power is to realism and wealth is to idealism. He deals with several factors that generate identity and shape collective identifications of the state these include political leaders, the general populace, media and external forces. The relation between state identity and its behaviour is not always direct. There can be multiple identities that compete at times for dominance. Different actors as per their political interests try to impose these identities through different agencies. He treats the state as a more hierarchical unit that functions within a cultural framework which ultimately assigns these states a role. To achieve that state must be able to convince and influence others of the common benefits of the role. He argues that Great powers try to shape the behaviour of others and leader of these power proclaim their right to rule on the ability to maintain order which works in the interest of all. The US has tried to assert this claim and associated privileges to achieve hegemony and contention of its useful consequences. Furthermore, the author has discussed identity not as a single source of behaviour there can be additional including fear, status and reason that can shape state behaviour. But material resources played little role unless they are utilized properly in ways that are recognized as legitimate by others.

### **Research Methodology**

The methodology of this research is essentially interpretive. This research will be primarily based on qualitative data collection techniques sometimes on quantitative data techniques. Data triangulation, therefore, will be used to collect data and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under consideration. Data would be collected from secondary sources such as books, and research papers.

Moreover, the technique to conduct research will be 'desk research' based on my observations obtained from data collected from all the resources.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into an introduction followed by four chapters and a conclusion. The introduction would give an overview of the topic. While discussing the theme of this research the chapter will also include the significance of the study as well as the scope of the research. The introduction would be concluded by giving a brief outline of these chapters.

The first chapter will be an elaboration of the theoretical/conceptual framework employed to understand the impact of narratives and perceptions generated by domestic political discourse, and historical interactions on foreign policies of both states the US and Moscow. Here, limitations of neo-realist theory would be pointed out which asserts that the identity and interest of the state as extrinsic and given. The constructivist theory would be employed to trace the course of inter-subjective interactions in the post-World War 2 period and the impact of these interactions on the belief, identity and definition of interest relative to others would be pointed out. Moreover, analyses of the end of the Cold War period and the deterioration of relations under the Trump administration will be conducted through the lens of Constructivists theory.

The second chapter would deal with the original Cold War and the new Cold War. The original Cold erupted after the end of World War 2 and ended with the disintegration of the USSR in 1991. The new Cold War, as most analysts



assert emerged after 2015. Here, different interpretations regarding the emergence of the original Cold War are discussed. Several analysts attribute different factors to its emergence these are; the global distribution of powers, the configuration of social forces, the state of the international economy, and deeply embedded ideological predisposition that influenced American and Soviet perceptions of their security. I will argue how the rise of anti-Soviet perception in the West and failure to negotiate over post-WW2 issues shifted Stalin's view from establishing a tripartite alliance to achieving limited cooperation with the West. Similarly, the rise of anti-western perception in the USSR because the West failed to accept the USSR's sphere of influence in Eastern Europe strengthened the perception that communism and capitalism are two different systems. Additionally, aspects of nuclear bombs in shaping the Cold War will be explored.

Chapter three will deal with factors that contributed towards the downturn in 2017. It is because of several reasons that would be detailed in this chapter. First, it was a propaganda machine that was working in the US through social media campaigns which portrayed the alleged interference in the 2016 US presidential election aimed to undermine the democratic system. Coupled with this military provocations and manoeuvres, especially of the US will be discussed as to how the latter intervention especially in Central and Eastern Europe heightened the perception of Russia as besiege citadel- a state that repeatedly underwent attacks from foreigners. Moreover, similar military interventions of both the US and Russia across the globe would be discussed. In addition, the spectre of the nuclear arms race that haunted both states during the Cold War and again re-emerged in the new Cold War will be analysed. These include; withdrawal from a number of the Cold War

agreements and failure to negotiate over agreements which were about to expire further embittered relations between the two states. Due to these reasons, under the Trump administration, both states find it difficult to move along with each other. These will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

The fourth chapter will deal with several factors from the theoretical standpoint of Constructivism where reasons would be discussed as to why the relationship between both states under the Trump administration deteriorated further. The theory of Constructivism holds that identities are crucial in shaping state behaviour and multiple factors generate identity and shape collective identifications of the state these include political leaders, the general populace, media and external forces. All factors that contribute toward a downturn in relation, institutionalize norms, generate narrative and define interest in foreign policies of both states will be analyzed. In addition to belief, ideas and narratives objective reality also plays such power and economy of the state in shaping its foreign policy. From this, one concludes that theory cannot be applied universally or fully to understand a phenomenon because every theory has its limited applicability.

A conclusion will follow in which the main arguments and findings of the study will be summarized and related.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The current study deals with the US-Russia relationship through the lens of Constructivism. Significant development of the theory of Constructivism took place in 1990 with its major proponents; Nicolas Onuf author of *World of Our Making-Rules and Rule in International Relations* and Alexander Wendt author of, *Anarchy is what the state makes of it*. Failure of major theories to explain the end of the Cold War and the process of globalization that ensued resulted in the emergence of Constructivist thought<sup>10</sup>. Berger and Luckmann<sup>11</sup> assert that social reality is constructed and then aided through interactions. Individuals subjectively sense social reality through inter-subjective interaction, in brief, “a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, what may appear real to us is in effect a social construct. There are several assumptions regarding the emergence of reality: one major assumption is that it emerges from the mutual agreement of society regarding an issue. Therefore for conversion of reality into social construct, it should be shared in terms of raw realities and there must be shared perception regarding particular reality. Thus, to sum up, social consensus is required for a phenomenon to become a social reality. In addition, social phenomenon is a human product and it is not given. As Peter and Thomas put it, “Social order erupts only as a result of human activity.”<sup>13</sup> Thus we can put it as

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992):396.

<sup>11</sup> Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, Garden City, N,Y, Double Day, 1966)

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 33

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 70

human construct realities to fulfil their needs, for their benefit otherwise. They further assert that “man externalizes himself; therefore he constructed the world in which he internalizes himself. In the process of externalization, he projects his meaning into reality.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore it is crucial to understand the social construction of reality and its reconstruction to accommodate changing objective reality.

### **Social Construction of Reality**

The social construction of reality or constructivism is crucial for understanding international relations. Both approaches from sociology and international relations are interconnected as, “constructivism believes that international relations primarily consist of facts, which work only by agreements of men.” Constructivists in the field of international relations thus largely believed that what is known about the outside world results from society's perception and knowledge about it. As Adler asserts, “The outside world out there is not controlled by physical reality but it is determined socially.”<sup>15</sup> He put more focus on, “identities, interest, and behaviour of political agents which are socially manufactured by collective meaning, interpretations and assumptions about the world.”<sup>16</sup> This explanation thus accommodates identity-building and communication politics in giving meaning to reality.

### **Application of Theory of Constructivism on Research**

Hopf argued that society's perception of self at home explains its foreign policy thus the main driver of identity discourse is not only international agency or

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 69

<sup>15</sup> Emmanuel Adler, “Seizing Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics,” *European Journal of International Relation* 3, no.3 (2015): 324.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 324

individual factors. Self-identity affects elite perception and thus influences external foreign policy. This analytical approach is similar to Stephen Walt's terminology adjustment from "from a balance of power of power to balance of threat"<sup>17</sup> with less emphasis on actual power to more focus on how power and intentions are perceived.

### **An evaluation of the US and USSR relation during the Cold War:**

The Soviet foreign policy in the initial several years was guided by two principles first is externalization,<sup>18</sup> in which fear external enemy was encouraged to justify internal centralization, and repression, and to ingrain parties in domestic politics. Second, is the Russian perception of self as besieged citadel- a state that repeatedly underwent attacks and was denied security. Following from this view thus it was not an objective material capability that brought a change in the US foreign policy towards a worldwide military presence but it was the perception of communist ideology(from Mao and Stalin's Behaviour) and the USSR's intentions. This coupled with the US perception of self as Bill Clinton put it "indispensable nation" that interferes globally with the promotion of democratic and liberal principles which Benjamin Franklin at the time of the American Revolution called "the cause of America is the cause of all mankind."<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the US grand strategy

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<sup>17</sup> Samuel Grass, "Constructivist interpretation of Evolution of United States Foreign Policy and National Identity: Spanish-American War to Cold War," LinkedIn, March 22, 2022  
[https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/constructivist-interpretations-evolution-united-states-samuel-gras?trk=articles\\_directory](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/constructivist-interpretations-evolution-united-states-samuel-gras?trk=articles_directory)

<sup>18</sup> Robert S. Snyder, "Bridging the Realist/Constructivist Divide: The Case of the Counterrevolution in Soviet Foreign Policy at the End of the Cold War," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1, no. 1 (2005): 59-62  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24907280>.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Kagan, "How the US distort it Self Image," *The Financial Time*, December 6 2006  
<https://carnegieendowment.org/2006/12/06/how-u.s.-distorts-its-self-image-pub-18903>

demonstrated by the Truman Doctrine of “supporting free people”<sup>20</sup> also shaped its foreign policy.

Likewise, the main drivers of Moscow's foreign policy were; the perception of itself as a “besieged citadel,” vanguard of socialism and the principle of externalization. The USSR also defined capitalism as antithetical to communist values which also gave a sharp ideological edge to the Cold War and stated its goal to replace capitalism by triggering political unrest to increase the process. The point here is not to determine which system is morally good or more ethical but to show the USSR and US identities as opposite of other.

Derek Leebaert in his book defined the Cold War as a state of mind created by fears, policies and views that dominated the world. To adapt to the new strategic situation the United States adopted certain behaviour, paradigms and understandings and ingrained worldview that became institutionalised and which Andrew Bacevich<sup>21</sup> asserts became difficult to change. The interactions of both superpowers in a competitive environment to point mutually assured destruction thus constructing identities in which through inter-subjective interaction in which states understand each other. Leebaert in his book, *Fifty Year Wound: How America’s Cold War Victory Shaped Our World* traces the evolution in American self-understanding through the following series of events:

- The request sent to Roosevelt by Lewis Douglas which he forwarded to the president of Harvard asserting that ‘the US must become dominant power’

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<sup>20</sup> Dennis Merrill, “The Truman Doctrine: Containing Communism and Modernity,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2006):27 27–37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27552744>.

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Gras, “Constructivist interpretation of evolution of US foreign policy and national identity,”

- The pronouncement by Henry Luce of “American Century”<sup>22</sup>
- John McCloy’s plan for ‘Pax Americana’ during which the world became more receptive to bills of rights

The statements such as these demonstrate how the US after the end of WW2 changed from being important world power to dominant power. After its victory Japan and Germany Leebaert cited the US as a country ‘alive with strength and purpose’. Soon after the war deconstruction of perception about the USSR as wartime ally took place. In this whole process, several interactions, statements and occurrences played a role and moulded the perception of the USSR’s identity. As a result, reconstruction of reality occurred that heightened threats posed by communism. So, changes in Soviet intentions and interest in America began to take shape which later moulded the structure of the international system. Some crucial events that took place are as follows;

- Rejection to hold an election in Poland
- Stalin’s speech in February 1945 asserting that Clash between Communism and Capitalism was inevitable
- Kennan in a similar fashion outlined the image of Soviet self-perception in telegram
- Iron Curtain speech of Churchill in March 1946
- March 1947: proclamation of Truman Doctrine
- Communist Insurgency in Greece
- The event of Berlin Blockade 1948-1949

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<sup>22</sup> Derek Leebaert, *The Fifty-Year Wound: How America’s Cold War Victory Shaped Our World* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 5.

- August 1949: Soviet Atomic bomb explosion
- Mao Tse-Tung's Communist Victory in China in October 1949
- February 1950 NSC-68 was outlined
- Korean war

After the end of the Korean War Cold War consensus emerged in the domestic political discourse of the US which recognized the role of the latter as and world-leading state. In addition, the emergence of the negative perception of Soviet identity in America changed its domestic environment, especially through Red Scare and McCarthyism<sup>23</sup>. These were series of events and actions by individuals and American leaders that heightened the fear of communism.

Constructivism asserts that several actors according to political goals propagate and try to impose their identities on the state. They do so impacting collective memories and officials. So, identities are imposed not only by leaders but media as well. In this regard, the US media played a role in the social construction of identity when it stated that the espionage activities of the USSR had increased tremendously and that the US needed robust counterintelligence efforts. Thus, despite moral and legal principles, the US was trying to internalize anti-USSR hysteria generated by several sources:

- Censorship of media
- Character assault of McCarthy and his public hearings
- Blacklisting of entertainment industries and media persons for their alleged involvement in suspected communist activities

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<sup>23</sup> Don e Carleton, "McCarthyism was more than McCarthy: Documenting the Red Scare at the State and Local Level," *The Midwestern Archivist* 12, no.1 (1987):13.



- Deceiving of the state department
- Mechanisms of ideological enforcement and groupthink such as discouraging the scheduled commencement speech of Nobel Laureate Pearl Buck after the HUAC "found her Americanism wanting."<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, Moscow's identity in the course of history was also shaped by historical events and patterns of events. These experiences shaped the identity and guided states about themselves and about other-who they are and suggest a set of interests regarding possible actions against specific actors determined by the structure. The USSR based on historical experiences considered itself as a 'besieged citadel' which repeatedly underwent attacks and was denied security by foreign states. Therefore, after an offensive against Nazi Germany Red Army positioned its forces in Eastern Europe to create a security zone for itself. Additionally, other prominent elements that shape Moscow's identity are;

- The predominant element of Soviet identity shared by Soviet public leaders and its society was the New Soviet Man- the leader of Socialism and carrier of working-class consciousness with the purpose to lead developed neighbouring states towards modernity<sup>25</sup>
- Based on historic experiences Soviet perception of Self as besieged citadel- thus during the cold war security perception was constant in the USSR foreign policy- thus Soviet offences against Nazi Germany's Red Army stationed itself to secure its western border this affected the US perception that "achieve maximum security is the goal of USSR foreign policy with Russia moving its

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<sup>24</sup> Derek, "The Fifty-Year Wound," 209.

<sup>25</sup> Chan Jun Hao, "social constructivism vs. Neo liberalism in analysing cold war,"

border closer to West as much as possible.”<sup>26</sup> Kennan further asserts that USSR viewed confrontation with the capitalist world as inevitable and says “for ideology [...] tell them that the external world is hostile and that it is their responsibility gradually to overthrow the political forces beyond their borders”<sup>27</sup> not to talk if it is truth or not a pure fact because reality is created by society, human agents and their actions instead of objective reality.<sup>28</sup>

- Jack Snyder in his book “Myth of Empire” gives sources of Soviet foreign policy that were a revolutionary state, to justify actions at home Revolutionaries portray the outside world as hostile thus revolution becomes necessary to prepare for war and to defeat the external enemy.<sup>29</sup> Soviets projected the outside capitalist world as hostile and embarked on an international goal to become the epitome of a military state. Thus to justify external threats revolutionary state becomes highly centralized.
- Russian foreign policy is based on an identity-based perspective of “who I am” and “who is other for me.” The answer to the first lies in the perception of self as “Orthodoxy, Slavism being great and imperial power” while the West and the US are characterized as “others.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> KISSINGER, Henry. *Ordem Mundial*. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2014

<sup>27</sup> George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 1, 1947 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/george-kennan-sources-soviet-conduct>

<sup>28</sup> Sarina Onlar, “Introducing Constructivism in International Relations Theory”, *E-International relations*, 23 February 2018, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/23/introducing-constructivism-in-internationalrelations-theory/>

<sup>29</sup> Clifford G. Gaddy, *The Price of the Past: Russia Struggle with Legacy of militarized Economy* (Washington, DC: Brookings 1997)

<sup>30</sup> Ayesgul Ketenci, Cigdem NAS, “A Constructivist Perspective: Russian Politics on Ukraine and Annexation of Crimea,” *Bilge Strateji*, 12, no. 22, (2021): 57

Intersubjective interactions and patterns of relations that took place between the USSR and the US also shaped the identity and defined interest relative to each other over the years and these include;

- Brussels Pact by Eastern European states against the USSR
- Marshall Plan
- Kennan's aggressive program of Covert warfare against the Soviet bloc
- Democratic capitalist West German state which USSR responded with the Berlin blockade
- Korean War and China's involvement Stalin understood Beijing as a 'revolutionary comrade in arms,' 'substitute vanguard' of communism and protector of the NSM model in Asia.<sup>31</sup>

### **Explanation of the End of Cold War by Theory of Constructivism:**

Constructivism gained sufficient momentum with the event of the end of the Cold War when the influence of Mikhail Gorbachev's ideas on foreign policy better explained the end of the Cold War. The Soviet Union was a former revolutionary state whose foreign policy was based on externalization- justification of external enemies for internal policy, centralization and repression.<sup>32</sup> Gorbachev thus acted as a counterrevolutionary and changed the process of foreign policy. He made radical shifts and revolutions in foreign policy; class struggle as a basis of foreign policy was renounced, advocated for the abdication of nuclear weapons, and the promotion of universal human rights and common security. Moving beyond rhetoric he removed

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 79

<sup>32</sup> Robert S. Snyder, "Bridging the Realist/Constructivist Divide: The Case of the Counterrevolution in Soviet Foreign Policy at the End of the Cold War," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1, no. 1 (2005): 56

medium-range missiles, arms cuts were made, focused on regional cooperation and ended support to communist states.<sup>33</sup> Détente occurred because many mid-level Moscow leaders learned that there is more to gain from cooperation with the West. Wendt asserts that the renunciation of the idea of class struggle as the bases of Moscow's foreign policy changed its identity and as a result, the national interest of the Soviets changed. Wendt here emphasized ideational factors and agency rather than giving priority to material forces. To sum up, Gorbachev's abandonment of the idea of class struggle started an interactive process between the US and the USSR that altered the interest of both the nation and the international system.

Koslowski and Kratochwil further put that changes in relation occurred because of revolutionary changes in 'the norms' governing the eastern bloc, for example, renunciation of the Brezhnev Doctrine<sup>34</sup>- which asserts an increased role of the USSR in the Eastern European state. In the late 1970s, there was an attitudinal shift in Eastern European which regarded the Soviets not as the leader of Socialism but as a supervisor state. The society also rejected the NSM model which made Gorbachev realized that the floundering socialist project needed democratization to achieve the Marxist Leninist goal of the 'beacon of Socialist democracy'. This pushed him to adopt major changes in policies including, empowerment of policies through Glasnost policy- command for openness and transparency regarding major issues plaguing Soviet economy and adaptation of Perestroika- changing Soviet rule and reforming Soviet Foreign policy to relieve other nations so that they could co-exist in

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 57

<sup>34</sup> From *Pravda*, September 25, 1968; translated by Novosti, Soviet press agency. Reprinted in L. S. Stavrianos, *The Epic of Man* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: PrenticeHall, 1971): 465-466.

mutual harmony. Identity, interest and interdependency with other states were redefined. 'Norms' governing relations with Western states were redefined.

### **Constructivist Explanation of Deterioration of US-Russia relation under Trump:**

One of the main reasons for the deterioration of the relationship between the US and Russia in recent years is NATO's eastward expansion. According to the constructivist predominant element of identity shared by Moscow society and elite since 1947 perception of self as the New Soviet Man NSM- as supernatural and communicator of working-class consciousness and leader of the socialist world, that would guide neighbouring states towards modernity.<sup>35</sup> This created a strict dichotomous identity between the Soviets and deviant others- the West. This instituted difference and fear between the NSM and socialist Eastern European countries. The West, on the other hand, considered Western Europe a linchpin for its security and important for the Western liberal order. The economic weakness of the region and the rise of communism has had heightened the US insecurity over the years.<sup>36</sup> Another belief that guided Russian relations towards these states is the concept of 'near abroad'- the concept refers to emerging political consensus and growing societal recognition regarding 15 former Soviet Republics as the Russian sphere of influence.<sup>37</sup> These states had special relations with the Tsarist and former Soviet Empires. In addition, because of the significant Russian minority in these

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<sup>35</sup>T. Hopf, 'Moscow's Foreign Policy, 1945-2000: Identities, Institutions and Interests,' in *The History of Russia, Volume 3* ed. by Suny, R.G. (*The Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006): 662-70.

<sup>36</sup>T. Risse-Kappen, "Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* edited by Katzenstein, P.J (New York: Columbia University Press 1996) 357-399.

<sup>37</sup>Elias Gotz, "Near Abroad: Russia's role in Post Soviet Eurasia," *Europe Asia Study*, Vol. 74, issue: 9 (November 17 2022): 15-31

countries, Russia has enjoyed special influence there. Over the years Russian fears are heightened by a number of the US actions including its military presence in the Eastern European States, and NATO eastward expansion including former Soviet states into NATO.

These inter-subjective interactions have interaction have heightened fear over the years and resulted in the emergence of several conflicts between the US and Moscow ranging from direct conflict with Ukraine and Georgia, hybrid warfare with Estonia, brutal repression in Chechnya and security partnership with Central Asian Republics. As constructivists assert that this action allows shaping identities and responding to them properly states creating understanding, feeling and perception towards others.

Second, the constructivist explanation for the deterioration of Russia's Trump relationship is Trump's failure to redefine the Russian image and old preconceived views. Constructivist explains difficulties in the relation among states due to actors bidding to maintain a relatively stable role in identity. When Trump emerged as a shock victor in the 2016 election many analysts observed that the US would get along with Russia as the former has shown a desire to cooperate with Russia. Trump also showed a willingness to accept the Russian annexation of Crimea, opposed the US sanction against Russia, criticizes Obama's policy when he expelled 35 Moscow diplomats and closed two Russian embassies and even questioned the existence of NATO. Later, Trump gets off from the proposal made on the sideline of the Hamburg

G20 summit to establish a joint US-Russia cyber security unit.<sup>38</sup> After he took over relations followed a downward trajectory until they reached a new low since the end of the Cold War. Constructivists find an explanation for the downturn in the domestic political discourse of the US that viewed Russia as a threat. So, an adaptation of foreign policy that showed a semblance of normality or cooperation with Moscow found no ground in the White House. Congress's approach towards Russia was guided by the notion that the latter posed an “existential threat to the U.S. vital interests that containing and disrupting Moscow is one of the most important national security priorities of the US.”<sup>39</sup> Therefore, when it became apparent that Trump was bent on deal-making, Congress eroded traditional deference granted to the president in chalking out foreign policies. Latter also institutionalized sanctions against Russia prevented Trump from removing these sanctions. When Trump returned from Summit, both Houses passed the bill by a huge majority to increase sanctions against Moscow and prevented the president to exercise his executive power to remove the sanctions.

Trump reacted to growing domestic pressure by adopting a harsher stance towards Russia, to prove that he is not a puppet in Moscow's hands and adopted an anti-Kremlin stance. As evident from the remarks of James Clapper, former director of National Intelligence when he hinted at largely held views regarding Trump and

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<sup>38</sup> Dan Merica, “The life and Death of Trump’s Cyber Security Unit Plan with Putin,” *CNN* July 10, 2017 <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/07/10/politics/trump-ends-cyber-security-plan-putin/index.html>

<sup>39</sup> Nikolas, “Permanent Divergence,” 105.

said; Trump's actions appeared to make Russia great again not America.<sup>40</sup> Therefore when Presidency was engulfed in scandals Trump adopted anti-Russian rhetoric; he withdrew from the INF treaty- accusing Russia of violation and termed Russia as revisionist and a challenger state in the National Security Strategy adopted in 2017.

Another reason for the downturn in US-Russia relations can be described as conflict or clash over civilization. Twenty-six years since the idea of clash civilization was propagated by Samuel Huntington it seemed to return to world politics. His focus on civilization as the main component in world politics reflected constructivist theory. As per this idea, the main drivers of policies are habits, traditions, and attitudes as fundamental factor behind the policies. Francis Fukuyama a year later said that with the defeat of Fascism and communism and the triumph of democracy, there is no ideological rival to a free market economy and liberal democracy. So, when more countries would become democracies and adopt democratic values international conflict would diminish. This view was reinforced when Trump said in a speech in Warsaw Krasinski Square in 2017 said, "The fundamental question of our time is..... Do we have confidence in our values to defend them at any cost? ..... Do we have the desire and courage to preserve our civilization in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it?"<sup>41</sup> He further added, "I declare today for the world to hear that the West will never, ever be broken. Our people will thrive and our civilization will trump."<sup>42</sup> He did not stop here he mentioned "radical Islamic

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<sup>40</sup> Bobo Lo, 'An accident Waiting to happen: Trump Putin And the US Russia Relation', Lowy Institute, October 25 2017 <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/accident-waiting-happen-trump-putin-us-russia-relationship>

<sup>41</sup> Eugene Robinson, "Trump's dangerous thirst for a clash of Civilizations," *The Washington Post* July 06 2017 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-dangerous-thirst-for-a-clash-of-civilizations/2017/07/06/fb5398ea-6282-11e7-a4f7-af34fc1d9d39\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-dangerous-thirst-for-a-clash-of-civilizations/2017/07/06/fb5398ea-6282-11e7-a4f7-af34fc1d9d39_story.html)

<sup>42</sup> Ibid



terrorism” and Russia as posing a “threat to security and our way of life”<sup>43</sup>. Thus any action Russia pursued was defined in terms of a clash of values.

Russian officials also publically declared the conflict between the West and Russia as a civilization clash. Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov also framed the clash over Ukraine in terms of conflict of religious civilization. He announced that Moscow has always been ‘spiritually opposed’ to Western values. Russian Orthodox Church and its officials have tried to resist liberal internationalism. Similarly, a press release from the Ministry of Foreign affair of Moscow announced that “No state or group of state has right to monopolize the interpretation of human rights norms,”<sup>44</sup> similarly “Russian doctrine” chalked out its nationalist group and Orthodox Church called the US values as a reason of conflict in international world by prioritizing its American values. Even Western liberals who admired Western values denounce Huntington who considered the Western democratic system as superior, and he failed to appreciate the role of Moscow civilization as a bridge between cultures.”<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, Russian intervention in the US presidential election is termed by the US as an attempt to target Western democracies and derail trust in democratic institutions. A report released by Intelligence Community Assessment revealed that the “Russian goal was derailment public faith in the Western democratic process.....”<sup>46</sup> These views were reinforced following an allegation of Russian

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Presidential Address to Federal Assembly” (Speech, Kremlin December 22, 2013), Russian Presidents, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/presidents/news19825>.

<sup>45</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, “The Irony OF Western Ideas in a Multicultural World: Russian’s Intellectual Engagement with the ‘End of History’ and Clash of Civilizations,” *International Studies Review* 5, no.1 (2003): 61-66.

<sup>46</sup> Glenn Kessler, “The Truth about Russia Trump and the 2016 elections,” *The Washington Post*, May 17, 2023

intervention in European democracies: interference in Emmanuel Macron's campaign in 2017, Ukraine's central electoral commission was infiltrated to influence the result in favour of the right-wing political party, In 2014 and 2017, Paris right-wing national political party received a loan of \$9.8million and party leader Marine Le Pen (also a presidential leader) applied for an additional loan of \$29m. Heinz Christian Strache, head of the Austrian Far-Right Political Party in Australia received a signed contract in exchange for Russian political favour.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ORIGIN OF THE COLD WAR

Instead of returning to normality in the aftermath of the Second World War, a new crisis erupted. The European Powers that dominated international politics in the 1930s were weakened thus setting the stage for domination by new emerging powers. Two blocs emerged with the US and USSR being dominant powers and smaller nations pushed to choose sides between the two. The US emerged as the major power at the end of the war as it incurred a few losses in terms of human and economy. Although its Army was demobilised from 12 billion to 1.2bn yet it remained the leading global military power. In terms of economic power, the US also confirmed its status as the foremost economic state in terms of industrial and agricultural production and volume of trade. The USSR on the other hand emerged as the largest state in terms of territory and earned prestige for its victory against Hitler's Germany. It also offered economic, ideological and social order extending to the rest of Europe as never before.

The Cold War dominated the centre of world politics for more than forty-five years. It not only influenced the foreign policies of the US and USSR but also dominated the domestic policies and diplomacy of many smaller nations. Thus, understanding its origin is critical to understand the international history of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. There are several interpretations regarding the origin of the Cold War. The global distribution of powers, the configuration of social forces, the state of the international economy, and deeply embedded ideological predisposition influenced American and Soviet perceptions of their security.

## Major interpretations regarding the Origin of the Cold War

### Orthodox and Revisionist Interpretation

Two prominent views regarding the origin of the Cold War emerged in the US.<sup>47</sup> The first view, the orthodox interpretation blamed the USSR for the origin of the Cold War and also portrayed it as an expansionist and ideologically motivated state that made it impossible for the US to get along with it. Defenders of US policy blamed the Kremlin drive for domination of the world as the root cause of origin.

These traditionalists reiterated that the Russian totalitarian aggression of the 1930s and the failure of the appeasement policies of the US convinced the latter to respond to the Soviets as they did in the aftermath of the War. The second view, which termed the US as revisionist, emerges in the 1960s. The increasing availability of US records and the Vietnam War made it possible to critically appraise the US foreign policy. This view contrarily to the first termed the US as a revisionist state. Some revisionists who assert that the US was not an innocent bystander say that economic and ideological ambition were major drivers in American global aspiration. Others say that economic depression in the US resulted in an elite consensus to secure markets abroad to prevent unemployment and economic stagnation. Still, some others believe that the internal drive for empire building left no room to accommodate the legitimate security interest of the USSR and the reversal of the policy of American predecessors- Truman to maintain a wartime coalition with the Soviets resulted in Cold War.

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<sup>47</sup> Melvyn P Leffler, "National Security and US Foreign Policy," in *Origin of The Cold War: An International History* ed. by Melvyn Leffler, David Painter ( New York : Taylor and Francis e- Library, 2005), 15-18.

## **Expansionism**

Another reason that made the Cold War an inevitable phenomenon was the expansionist strategy of both states. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Moscow expanded from a small duchy in the city of Moscow to the Baltic States and across the region of Siberia at the time of the American Revolution.<sup>48</sup> America started its expansion from a small English Settlement in James Town in 1607 and by 1900 it reached the Pacific Ocean and announced Western Hemisphere as a Western sphere of influence. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> C Moscow continued expansion towards the Pacific Ocean and reached China. At that time America's trade and investment interests had grown in China. In response to the threat of Russian influence in China John Hay, the US secretary of State announced Open Dollar Diplomacy<sup>49</sup> and send a note to six states including Russia to respect the rights of all states to trade with China. Under these conditions, the interests of both nations were destined to collide. To check Moscow's influence in the Far East President Theodor Roosevelt 1902 welcomed Anglo American alliance and applauded the Japanese attack in 1904 On Russian forces in Manchuria. It was only after Japan's threat to the Balance of Power in the region that the US concluded the Treaty of Portsmouth between Moscow and Japan.

## **The Post-Revisionist Thesis**

By the 1980s the above debate loses its intensity. John Lewis Gaddis in his article gave a post revisionist thesis. According to him, a crisis of capitalism or fear of depression was not the main preoccupation of the US that instigated the war. The post-American regime was the result of pleas of the government that were

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<sup>48</sup> Ronald E Powaski, *The Cold War: The US and Soviet Union 1917-1991* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 129

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

threatened by the expansionist policies of the USSR. The US felt obligated to respond to their entreaties and thus found itself ensnared in WW2 sensitized American leaders about possible external threats even before the USSR had emerged as an adversary. In addition, no systematic effort was made by the US to suppress socialism in its area of influence. The US was not reluctant to use the economic power that it possesses. The post-revisionist, here, accepted the idea that the US did employ Marshall Plan, a land lease to attain certain political objectives but it was not as the Leninist model would mean to employ.

Vojtech Mastny, a post-revisionist, in *Russia's Road to Cold War*, gave an account of Russian policy regarding the origin of the Cold War. First, Stalin wanted to secure unilateral means to ensure security in the post-war scenario and was not willing to cooperate with the West. Second, he had not intended to make changes in the boundary at the cost of western neighbours but all the desired was the subservient neighbourhood. Lundstead argues that extended control of the USSR over Eastern Europe was facilitated by American passivity. Had the US acted with firm action against the Soviets the Cold War would not have been more severe.<sup>50</sup> Kuniholm, another post revisionist asserts that American influence resulted from invitation as well as imposition. Kuniholm shows that in Turkey, Greece and even Iran American influence was what the leaders in these countries desired against the Soviets.<sup>51</sup> Lundestad's studies have further shown that the alignment of Denmark and Norway could not have occurred in the absence of sufficient support in these countries.

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<sup>50</sup> Geir Lundestad, "the American Non Policy towards Eastern Europe," 42

<sup>51</sup> Bruce R. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980): 382

## **Stalin and the Origin of Cold War:**

Since the beginning of the 1990s scholars have been working to trace out the reasons for the Cold War. In this perspective John Lewis Gaddis asserted that Cold War resulted mainly due to Stalin's personality whose revolutionary spirit, insecure personality and ideological zeal caused the cold war.. Geoffrey Roberts in his article showed that Stalin's policy and thinking changed during wartime and after it. He wanted to collaborate with wartime allies the US and UK but at the same time, he also distrusted them. His insecurities were ingrained in the country's experience and ideological presumptions. The fear of Germany preoccupied his thinking but the main question that faced was whether to collaborate with a democratic faction or guard against them.

Stalin's views regarding the Grand Alliance- the alliance between the US, UK and the USSR underwent various changes thus shaping the orientation of Soviet Foreign policy and its relation with the US and the UK. Initially, it was regarded as an instrument to defeat Axis powers and eliminate the threat posed to Europe by Nazi Germany. Second, in the tripartite phase, he agreed with the maintenance of peace by leading powers. Third, with the end of the war, more ideological concepts of peace started to prop up in the thinking of Stalin in which the USSR's security and interest would be promoted by the hegemony of left-wing and communist power in Europe. The idea of the Grand Alliance was given up by the end of mid-1947. Stalin in the start viewed the grand alliance as an instrument with two purposes first, the defeat of the grand alliance and second to liberate Nazi Germany.<sup>52</sup> However,

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<sup>52</sup> David Holloway, "Stalin and The Bomb," in *Origin of Cold War: An International History* ed. David S. Painter and Melvyn P. Leffler ( New York : Taylor and Francis e- Library, 2005): 35

towards the end of the war, more ideological concepts began to emerge in Stalin's thinking, in which the USSR's security interests would be protected by the left wing and communist hegemony in Europe. The final shift in the thinking of Stalin occurred in the post-war years when he reverted to traditional thinking where the Grand Alliance was considered as an instrument of cooperation. This change occurred due to difficulties faced in negotiation with Western Powers during the post-war period and the rise of anti-Soviet sentiments in the West.

**Stalin's views about Cold War evolved through four stages:**

The first initial phase of liberation and defining sphere of influence- in this phase, Grand Alliance was seen as an instrument of cooperation that was aimed to conceive; European Liberation from Nazi Germany and determining a sphere of influence for Great powers. On 3 July 1941, Stalin said the Soviet-Germany war had its purpose of independence and democracy for the Soviet Union as well as the whole of Europe. In another speech made on the occasion of the 24<sup>th</sup> October Revolution Stalin spoke about liberation in the following words. We did not have a desire to use war for the acquisition of foreign territory and subjugation of its people nor do we desire to use war to impose our will on Slavonic and enslaved states of Europe. Russia just wanted to help people's liberation and let them decide their future accordingly.

British foreign secretary, Anthony Eden arrived in Moscow in 1941 to discuss the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of the alliance. Stalin suggested acceptance of territories that the Soviet Union gained through the Nazi-Soviet pact and acceptance of the

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Soviet special interest in Eastern Europe including the desire to install military bases in Finland and Romania. Although the idea of wide-ranging Anglo-Soviet cooperation in the post-war period was rejected twenty-year pact of the alliance for unspecified commitment and consultation in the post-war period remained intact.<sup>53</sup>

The Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers of October 1943 showed the emergence of the start of the tripartite phase. It was the first of its kind summoned to chalk out Allied policy and perspective on post-war order. It was a clear indication of Stalin's intentions to mould and shape post-war peace in close collaboration with America and the British. The public discourse of the Soviets after the conference was dominated by long and durable peace guaranteed and established by the 'Big Three.'

The third phase occurred when problems arose at the post-Potsdam conference. At a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers CFM, in September 1945 Western resistance to the USSR sphere of influence in Eastern Europe became apparent. Deadlock occurred over the issue of the West's refusal to recognise the Communist government in Bulgaria and Romania. From the autumn of 1945 a perception dominated Soviet intercourse of foreign policy that there was the rise of pro and anti-Soviet forces, an Anglo-American bloc is in emergence, and American and British forces are supporting anti-Soviet forces in British, Germany and other parts of the world.

Stalin in March 1946 made a speech in response to Churchill's iron curtain speech. He accused Churchill of advocating the theory of racial superiority of the English race just like Hitler's theory of the supremacy of Aryans. American senator

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<sup>53</sup> Introduction: International System and Origin of Cold War', in *Origin of Cold War*, ed. David S. Painter and Melvyn P. Leffler (New York: Taylor and Francis e- Library, 2005): 9

Harold Stassen in 1947 interviewed Stalin. The main theme of his interview was that although capitalist and communist systems are very different but both systems can coexist, and history will prove which system is best. This shift from a tripartite alliance to limited cooperation for peace occurred because of the perception of rising Western hatred and changing political and diplomatic realities. Deadlock in negotiation in CFM, in the UN and in occupied Germany showed the trouble of cooperation between the USSR and America.

### **Atomic Bomb and Origin of Cold War**

Two questions represent the issue in this debate; one did the Cold war was caused by nuclear weapons and resulted in its escalation? Second, did the American decision to use the bomb against Japan was affected by diplomatic considerations linked to USSR? The US decision to bomb the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is a matter of great contention. Some Historians believe it was aimed at intimidating Russia. The idea to develop weapons was originally conceived by scientists who feared the prospects of Germany developing nuclear weapons. In November 1941, in first “top policy” to organize project development was considered part of the wartime effort. Notwithstanding the agreement that the atomic bomb would have value in the post-war period, policymakers were not sure how they should use it as an instrument of foreign policy. Similar to the common German threat that resulted in the emergence of a grand alliance, the propagation of fear by British scientists that how German might acquire the bomb- resulted in the emergence of Anglo-American bombs. The director of Scientific Research and Development said, “If such a bomb would be made..... It would be thousands of

times more explosive than the original and its use might be determining.”<sup>61</sup> US agreed to have a full exchange of information regarding atomic weapons; his policies also influenced the latter. Churchill said, “It would never allow Germany or Russia to win the race for something which might be used for international blackmail,” he added further, “Russia might be in a position to accomplish this result unless we worked together.”<sup>14 62</sup> Roosevelt agreed with Churchill's idea that- the military is an essential prerequisite for the possession of post-war diplomatic value when he repudiated the idea of an “effective international organization” for international peace at the Atlantic Council in August 1947. Roosevelt also wanted to fully integrate the atomic bomb into his post-war Anglo-American diplomacy but he was less preoccupied with the fear of Russia than Churchill was.

Roosevelt was thus presented with two alternatives, one was to exclude the USSR from information about bomb development that would strengthen its military position but at the same time heightened Soviet mistrust about the US policy. Bombs could be used as an instrument of cooperation. He had to maintain the strategic balance achieved by the development of the atomic bomb over the USSR. He was also aware that the Soviet Union is attempting to develop its nuclear weapon on September 9, 1943, Stimson told him, “that at least one scientist at Berkeley was selling information to Russian agents.”<sup>54</sup> But he did nothing to stop it. Roosevelt committed in 1943 TO support Churchill's anti-Soviet, monopolistic position. In September 1948, the National Security Council stipulated a Policy on Atomic Warfare which stated that “utilize promptly and effectively all means available, including atomic weapons, in the interests of national security and all must plan

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<sup>54</sup> David, “Origin of Cold War,” 64

accordingly.”<sup>55</sup> The USSR tested its nuclear weapon in August 1949 and from the evidence available it seems that in 1950 depiction of the USSR was that atomic air offences against the latter would not succeed in defeating it. In July 1948 during Berlin Crisis, Truman made overt use of the atomic bomb in its foreign policy. He sends B-29 bombers to Europe but those could not carry nuclear weapons. It was a demonstration of his resolve to use nuclear weapons. Bomb strengthens the US resolve to make commitments and most importantly that made to Western Europe as endorsed in North Atlantic Treaty, 1949. It also made USSR less disposed to compromise because of fear of appearing intimidating. A foreign policy that Truman inherited included partial commitments to Churchill, intentions to use the bomb against Japan and Roosevelt's refusal to open negotiations with Russia regarding international control of atomic weapons. Thus, the bomb made relation more contentious than it would have otherwise been in the absence of it.

### **Truman, Stalin and the bomb**

The legacy of foreign policy that Truman inherited outlined three main components: commitments to Churchill, the bomb as a legitimate weapon to be used against Japan and the refusal to form international control of atomic energy with the US. He did not make any changes to this policy. Secretary of State in a memorandum on “political aspects of atomic weapons” to the White House outlined the likelihood of the atomic race and the danger of nuclear war but he did not mention any possibility to secure Stalin's cooperation in post-war international control of the atomic weapons. Secretary of State James Byrnes, Stimson and

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<sup>55</sup> David Holloway, “Stalin and the Bomb,” in *Origin of Cold War: An International History* ed. David S. Painter and Melvyn P. Leffler ( New York : Taylor and Francis e- Library, 2005): 79

Truman considered the bomb as a solution to the post-war problems of the US and to dictate its terms. They also believed in firm secrecy that no revelation is made to Japan or Russia until a bomb is laid on Japan. These three also asserted that the bomb will push the US into a position to dictate the policies of its policies on the world. Campbell Craig and Sergey Radchenko in the book "atomic bomb and origin of the cold war" asserts that the "atomic bomb compelled them to adopt an uncompromising position concerning the Soviet Union." Any little interest that Truman initially showed in cooperation with Stalin later on evaporated when in September 1945 it was found that the Russian government penetrated in Canadian government for breaching information about the US and British atomic bomb. P.125. After the bomb was laid on Japan Truman's negotiating style also changed. His secretary of War further said that in return for the neutralization of weapons, the Soviet Union would make important geographical, political and social compromises.

Stalin in their speech to Truman at the post-dam conference suspected that the US is working on manufacturing some destructive weapons. Stalin thus wanted to make a bomb to shape the outcome of the war, but their efforts were hindered by the lack of Uranium for the production of the Weapon. He also knew that the US would make bombs to intimidate the USSR. He was curious to know about the bomb; therefore he sent a team of scientists to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Stalin told Alexander Werth in September 1945, "meant to frighten those with weak nerves".

### **Nuclear Weapons and Korean War**

On September 1949 the USSR told the North Korean leader that it might not help the latter in case of attack against South Korea. However, in January 1950, the

Soviet Union showed its willingness to help. This change of mind occurs because of Chinese revolution factor weighed more heavily than the Soviet bomb. By December 1949, the USSR had hardly acquired enough plutonium to make a second and third bomb. However, things happened contrary to predictions made by China USSR when the US intervened under the auspices of the UN. China's entrance into the war created insecurity in the US. Truman in an interview created the impression that General Douglas Macarthur can use the atomic bomb at his will in Korean War.<sup>56</sup> Clement Atlee, British prime minister went to the US to confirm whether it was willing to use the bomb against the USSR. Truman employed B-29 bombers to London and Guam that were without nuclear weapons. The aim was to show American strategic preparedness to use atomic weapons but not actually to use them. The State Department and Pentagon studied the consequences of using atomic weapons and the associated challenges with it. Striking some targets in North Korea produces some good effects but bombing bases in Manchuria or Chinese cities could prolong the war that the US desired to avoid.

Truman defended his decision to use weapons against Japan but he was not willing to think about it again. Eisenhower showed his readiness to examine the use of weapons. To bring the Korean War to an end Eisenhower administration implied to use of weapons and deployed nuclear weapons to Guam. But later he professed that it was to intimidate the USSR that made possible a truce to be signed on 27 July 1953.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid

Peter N Kirstein in his article articulated the works of Gar Alperovitz; *The Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam the Use of Atomic Bomb and American Confrontation with Soviet Power and Decisions to Use Atomic Bomb*<sup>57</sup>. Peter made a staggering analysis of Alperovitz's works which contain five major revelations; 1. The United States had several viable policy options at hand even before resorting to nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end the war. 2. Those options were familiar at the highest level of government and were not the result of post-war revisionist New Left history 3. The atomic bomb was not a military weapon but a diplomatic tool to prevent the USSR from gaining influence in central and Eastern Europe. 4. The main objective of the war was to pre-empt increasing USSR influence in Asia that could result from the Pacific war and not to bring defeat already defeated the power of Japan. 5. President Harry Truman and his Secretary of State James Byrnes could win without having dropped the bomb but they used weapons because they wanted to prevent the situation in which USSR declare war on Japan and demanded concessions that Roosevelt promised at Yalta Conference in 1945.

## **The US Foreign Policy during Cold War**

### **Truman and Containment 1945-1953**

George Kennan in his famous article 'X' publically expressed his views that the USSR was committed to destroying the capitalist system<sup>58</sup>. At that time the USSR troops were also moving close to Turkey and Tehran which affirmed the Soviet desire to control the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. Kennan noted that it would

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<sup>57</sup> Peter N. Kirstein, "Reclaiming Realism for the Left: Gar Alperovitz and the Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," *Advances in Historical Studies* 2, no. 02 (2013): 46.

<sup>58</sup> George F. Kennan, "the Sources of the Soviet Conduct," *The Foreign Affairs*, July 4 1947 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/george-kennan-sources-soviet-conduct>

also make several other advances so the solution for the US lies in firm containment. Kennan, although expressed his disregard for confrontational and military approach of doctrine. But President Truman announced that like Greece, the US would “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities.”<sup>59</sup> Turkey and Greece were provided with military aid and the European continent becomes the first line of defence. Marshall Plan was also part of the Truman Doctrine structured to create an economic and political buffer to contain the USSR. It was obvious that the aid package would be rejected by the USSR because it required multilateral economic policies that were opposite to the economy of the latter. The USSR rejected the Marshall Plan and concluded several bilateral treaties with Eastern European states which resulted in the emergence of Comecon (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) in 1949. These led to the political and ideological division of Europe. Europe’s East and West developed into two different economic systems that were juxtaposed to each other.

### **Eisenhower and the Globalization of Cold War 1953-1961**

In the 1950s the rapid decolonization movement that started in the Middle East, Asia and Africa presented President Dwight Eisenhower with the challenge of communism in the form of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Eisenhower and his advisors adopted new responses to emerging challenges to promote a capitalist international economy and contain communism. These responses include; supporting the conservative elite, helping repressive regimes and resorting to covert

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<sup>59</sup> Stephen McGlinchey, “The Marshall Plan, Truman Doctrine, and The Division of Europe,” *E-International Relation* October 13, 2009 <https://www.e-ir.info/2009/10/13/the-marshall-plan-the-truman-doctrine-and-the-division-of-europe/>



operations.<sup>60</sup> To counter the threat of communism in Indonesia the US-led operation 'Haik' to help thinly supported military rebellion and secessionist movement. The US wanted to replicate the success made in Iran and Guatemala but it ended up starting "one of the riskiest and most audacious covert operations of the entire Cold War."<sup>61</sup> The US feared that Moscow and China would turn the NAM against it, so the Eisenhower administration at the Bandung Conference of 1955 promised the Western allies to provide them with economic assistance. This further aggravated the Cold War.

### **Kennedy and Johnson Policy of Confrontation and Cooperation (1961-1969)**

The US in the 1950s adopted an ambivalent approach while dealing with non-aligned states. President John F Kennedy adopted a policy of engagement when dealing with non-aligned states. JFK decided that Cold War would be decided on the battlefield of Third World countries: Asia, Africa and Latin America. Several programs were started including counter-insurgency programs in friendly countries to prevent communism, Peace Corps was established to send volunteers and to help to establish the image of the US as a supporter of Third World countries. Keeping in view the political consequences of poverty in Latin America and the threat posed by the Cuban Revolution Kennedy started Alliance for Progress.<sup>62</sup> JFK started engagement with countries of Africa and Asia although this was not intended to win formal support of these countries but to prevent them from being enlisted as allies of Moscow. The engagement followed three different methods firstly, pursuing

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<sup>60</sup> Michael E. Latham "Review of *the Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War*," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 1 (2008): 173-175. [muse.jhu.edu/article/231578](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/231578).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Robert B Rakove, *Kennedy Johnson and Non Aligned World* (California, Cambridge University Press, 2012):

presidential diplomacy by engaging with leaders and convincing them. Secondly, aid programs were intended for economic development and to serve the political purpose of the US. Thirdly, policy changes on the part of the US occurred with more focus being given to issues concerning Cold War.

### **Nixon and Ford Policy (1969-1977)**

Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford's administration replaced the policy of global containment with the selective containment of the USSR. President Richard Nixon was a strong anti-communist but when he assumed office he wanted to ease tension with the USSR. The nuclear arm had become worse because Robert McNamara gave a policy of Mutually Assured Destruction MAD calling the US to develop punishing second strike capabilities to punish the USSR for its first strike. Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger desired to manage Cold War not to win it. Nixon visited the Soviet Union and concluded agreements on the terms of strategic arm limitation talks and negotiations also started on other arms control and disarmament measure. These events marked the beginning of détente- a period of relatively cold peace between both states. Several specific circumstances on the side of the US increased the urge to improve relations with USSR. This included rising animosity in American society regarding Vietnam War. Similarly, the creation of an arms control regime with the USSR seemed based on the hope to overcome hatred regarding the Vietnam War by appealing to the latent tradition of bipartisan support for the effort to reduce tension.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Harry Gelman, "Rise and Fall of Détente Causes and Consequences," RAND/UCLA , (January 1985):5 [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional\\_papers-soviet/2007/OPS002.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers-soviet/2007/OPS002.pdf)

### **Carter administration and the decline of Détente**

Jimmy Carter entered the office with a more optimistic world view but this later changed and containment of the USSR's expansionism became the forefront of the US foreign policy. The more hard-line approach of Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Advisor began to dominate with the resignation of Cyrus Vance, the secretary of state who had optimistic policies. Carter's position became clearer with an address at Notre Dame University, "during this period was guided by two principles- a belief that Soviet expansionism was inevitable, but it must be contained and a corresponding belief in the importance of an almost exclusive alliance among non-communist nations on both sides of the Atlantic. That system could not last forever unchanged."<sup>64</sup> Carter's doctrine was justified by his administration when Brzezinski stated that the Persian Gulf "represented the third central strategic zone after first central Europe and then the Far East vital to the US and the West after WW2 that was under threat from the USSR expansionism."<sup>65</sup>

### **Reagan and the Cold War**

In the 1980s, the US was facing multiple threats from the Soviet Union. First, since the communist victory in Vietnam communism had absorbed ten countries by 1979.<sup>66</sup> In the same year, the USSR's military expansion stood at 12 – 14 pc of its GNP. In addition, in the 1980s, "Soviet leader stated with growing confidence that

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<sup>64</sup> Jerel A. Rosati, "Jimmy Carter, a Man before His Time? The Emergence and Collapse of the First Post-Cold War Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1993): 459–76. 63 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27551107>.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 470

<sup>66</sup> Andrew E. Busch, "Ronald Reagan and the Defeat of the Soviet Empire," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1997): 451–66. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27551762>.

correlation of forces has shifted in their favour.”<sup>67</sup> Stronger opinions against Moscow encouraged Ronald Regan to take firm policy against it. Defence spending of the US increased from \$134bn in 1980 to \$253 in 1985. Moreover, the credibility of containment that was shattered in Vietnam was restored in Central America. Reagan was the first since the end of WW2 who refused to give an inch of territory to the Communists because later control of it could tilt the strategic balance against the US. Reagan administration also provided support to its European allies, unlike Carter who succumbed to the pressure of the peace movement when allies demanded the deployment of a neutron bomb in the face of Russian SS-20. Reagan remained steady. Margaret Thatcher said, “President Reagan strengthened not only American defences but the defence of American allies.”<sup>68</sup> Regan's administration followed policy a complementary policy of offence that was also suggested by leaders like MacArthur Douglas but never deemed practical. In 1982 and 1983, three Nation Security Decision Directives and covert 5-year planning directives outlined a framework for non-nuclear policy offensives. NSDD-32 outlined a policy to neutralize the USSR's control of Eastern Europe through the support of the underground movement, while NSDD-66 established a framework of economic warfare policy against the Soviets. Thus Reagan's policies of supporting alliances, increasing military strength and commitment to containment maintained the strategic balance.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 451

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.,454

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE DOWNTURN IN THE US RUSSIA RELATION SINCE 2017

When Trump emerged as a 'shock victor' in the US presidential election he reiterated his stance that it would be good to 'get on' with Russia. Instead, he was repressed by a powerful vested interest in domestic politics that was against rapprochement to Moscow. Several charges erupted including; the alleged collusion of Trump with Moscow to defeat the Democratic candidate, Russia's hacking of the Democratic National Committee and emails of John Podesta- the Democratic election coordinator and the whole scandal become 'Russiagate.'<sup>69</sup> The whole scenario for bilateral relationships became 'containment' reminiscent of the Cold War.<sup>70</sup>

In 2016 a civic cultural study<sup>71</sup> inspecting the social gap between Conservative and Republican, Democratic and Republican Parties respondents were asked if they feel upset, very upset or not all upset while marrying their children to supporters of an opposite political party. Only 4pc of Democrats and 5pc of Republicans showed displeasure, when the same study was conducted in 2015 displeasure with the decision grew to 45pc and 50pc in both political parties respectively. Thus, there is an environment of increasing hatred, disenchantment towards institutions, and animosity toward political opponents. This provides foreign

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<sup>69</sup> Richard Sakwa, "US-Russian relations in the Trump era," *Insight Turkey* 19, no. 4 (2017): 13-28.

<sup>70</sup> Bobo Lo, "An Accident Waiting To happen: Trump, Putin and the US Russia relation," The Lowy Institute, October 25, (2017)

<sup>71</sup> Almond, Gabriel A., and Sydney Verba. 1960. Civic Cultural Study, 1959-1960 (computer file) ICPSR07201-V2 Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2009-02-12. <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/ICPSR/studies/7201>

institutions to launch a campaign of intelligence warfare; Russia is exploiting the same vulnerabilities of the US. FBI special agent, Clint Watts enumerated five objectives of the Russian campaign, “Active measures” or the USSR era strategy of political warfare to win the “second Cold War”<sup>72</sup>

### **Russian interference in the US 2016 presidential elections**

Four major investigations were carried into Russian alleged involvement in the 2016 US presidential election these included; a report by Robert Mueller 3, a justice department inspector general report in 2019, a Senate Intelligence Committee report in 2020 and a most recent report by John Durham in 2023. Findings of all these confirmed Russian alleged involvement in elections.<sup>73</sup> Although no direct coordination was found yet campaign was specifically aimed to target Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, the ‘US-led liberal Democratic order’ and to erode faith in the validity of the election process and result. The interference campaign breached the computerized election system of 39 states, stole voter’s information and released it to support Donald Trump against Hillary Clinton. The Intelligence Committee reported that Russian-sponsored Cyber actors changed the vote polls though these actors did not possess the technology to alter vote on a large scale but, “the committee found that some districts in important states can have a substantial effect in a national election.”<sup>74</sup> The IC report also found that in a ‘small number of states,’ Russian-supported actors infiltrated ‘restricted element of

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<sup>72</sup> (Congressional Testimony to US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Disinformation: A Primer in Russian Active Measures and Influence Campaigns* March 30, 2017 <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/os-cwatts-033017.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> Glenn Kessler, “The Truth about Russia, Trump and the 2016 elections,” *The Washington Post* May 17, 2023 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/05/17/truth-about-russia-trump-2016-election/>

<sup>74</sup> Electronic Privacy Information Centre, *Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) review of Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA)* July 3, 2018 <https://epic.org/wp-content/uploads/foia/doj/mueller-report/SSCI-report-070318.pdf>

election infrastructure'. The report further asserts that it could not find supporting evidence that attacks change the vote result but it did possess the capability who could vote in elections.

“Russian Active Measures hope to topple democracies through the pursuit of five complementary objectives: undermine citizen confidence in democratic governance, foment and exacerbate divisive political fractures, erode trust between citizens and elected officials and democratic institutions, popularize Russian policy agendas within foreign populations, and create general distrust or confusion over information sources by blurring the lines between fact and fiction.”<sup>75</sup>

### **The Social Media Campaign and Propaganda Machine**

The Russian involvement campaign involved enormous strategies and platforms. Russians generated several ‘fake news’ and conspiracies like ‘pizza gate’ which was aimed against Hillary Clinton and John Podesta, his campaign manager. This manufactured conspiracy argued that both mentioned personalities ran child sex trafficking rings at several pizza restaurants.<sup>76</sup> As per a survey conducted by The Economist and YouGov 47pc of Trump voters and 18pc of Clinton voters believed that the ‘pizza gate’ conspiracy was true. Russian-sponsored cyber activists also used Facebook as a platform to target massive audiences. In the 2016 election, around 138 million people voted while Russia-created posts reached almost 148 million people through Facebook alone.<sup>77</sup> The Internet Research Agency IRA constituted

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> “The Saga of ‘Pizzagate’: The Fake Story that show conspiracy theory spread,” *BBC*, December 02, 2016 <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-38156985>

<sup>77</sup> Georgia Well and Deepa Seetharaman, “New Facebook Data Shows Russians Targeted Users by Race, Religion, Politics,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Tech. November 1, 2017 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-ads-targeted-facebook-users-by-profile-1509563354>

another platform for Russian cyber activists to propagate propaganda machines under Evgeny Prigozhin. In IRA sponsored documentary that was aired on a Russian media network, it was claimed that anti-Putin protests that erupted in 2011 were sponsored by the US government that paid them bribes. Russians also recruited black Americans and disguised members of the IRA to conduct meetings with preachers of black churches and ask for speakers for protest. Thus, by participating in 'Black Lives Matter' and 'ALL LIVES MATTER' campaigns American citizens promoted Russia's agenda.<sup>78</sup> The objective of the Russian operation was to create an enraged and divisive environment.

Two days after when Trump was elected as president on 8 November 2016 Russian officials claimed involvement in an election in favour of the Republican president and maintained contact with former "immediate entourage"<sup>79</sup> In response to Russian cyberattacks Obama administration put out it is imposing sanctions on Russian officials for their involvement in the US presidential campaign.

### **Sergei Skripal Affairs**

The UK government charged two Russian nationalists for attempting to murder former spy agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia by using the nerve agent, Novichok. In the following month of the incident, an investigative team detailed that the Russian government was palpable of attack and issued arrest warrants for two Russian citizens. Theresa May also informed parliament that both were members of the Russian GRU military intelligence agency and affirmed

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid

<sup>79</sup> Damien Gayle, "CIA concludes Russia interfered to help Trump win election, say reports," *The Guardian* December 10, 2016 [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/dec/10/cia-concludes-russia-interfered-to-help-trump-win-election-report](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/dec/10/cia-concludes-russia-interfered-to-help-trump-win-election-report)



empowering Organization for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to “attribute chemical weapons to other states beyond Syria”<sup>80</sup> The UK government charged Russia with unlawful use of Force on its territory.<sup>81</sup> A row ensued when Theresa May informed the parliament that 24 Russian diplomats were expelled who were implicit Russian intelligence officers. Other European states followed suit and within a week more than 150 diplomats were by North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Russia in a similar response expelled European diplomats from the country.

Ambassador Peter Wilson of the UK informed the Organization on Prevention of Chemical Weapons that in Hague, “the first offensive use of a nerve agent of any sort on European territory since World War.”<sup>82</sup> The main response from OPCW “confirm the findings of the United Kingdom relating to the identity of the toxic chemical that was used in Salisbury and severely injured three people.”<sup>83</sup> The US in a similar move expelled hundred of Russian diplomats and imposed sanctions for using Chemical weapons. It also vowed to impose more sanctions until Moscow admitted its guilt.

## **Military Provocations and Manoeuvres**

Military exercises are often seen as geopolitical tools to enhance stability and deterrence but these have contributed to the detriment of relation between NATO and Russia. In 2018 both Moscow and NATO conducted their largest military

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<sup>80</sup> Alicia Sanders-Zakre, "UK Names Two Russians in Novichok Poisonings," *Arms Control Today* 48, no. 8 (2018): 35-35.

<sup>81</sup> M. David, “UK-Russia relations: poisoned chalice or silver linings?” *Palgrave Commun* 4, (2018): 113 <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0168-7>

<sup>82</sup> 18 OPCW, Executive Council, *Statement by HE Ambassador Peter Wilson, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the OPCW at the Eighty-Seventh col.* 167. 18 OPCW, Executive Council, EC 87I NAT.5 13 march 2018, p. 1-2.

<sup>83</sup> 44 OPCW, Technical Secretariat, *Summary of the report on activities carried out in support of request for technical assistance by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (technical assistance visit TAV/02/18)*, Note by the Technical Secretariat, S/1612/2018, 12 Apr. 2018, para. 5. 45 OPCW (note 44), para. 10

exercises. These exercises are intended to demonstrate countries' foreign policy goals and to prevent aggression. For example, NATO in an attempt to extend eastward and northward is shifting its exercises platform forward by including non-NATO members in the military operation of alliance and exercise agenda. Russia in a similar attempt also conducted exercises which Mark Galeotti termed “heavy metal diplomacy.”<sup>84</sup> Moscow forces operate nearby of NATO forces, around Middle East—especially Syria and around Europe. Similarly NATO alliance borders Moscow along a long frontier. Previously, only Norway adjoin Russia now four new NATO states adjoin Moscow proper (Latvia and Estonia) and its Kaliningrad Oblast Exclave (Lithuania and Poland). These have also become heavily militarized because alliance-provided air defence covers a continuous mission that includes recurrent interruption of Moscow military aircraft passing Baltic Sea Space.<sup>85</sup> In 2016 Warsaw Summit alliance agreed to rotate a “battalion-sized battle group” into Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland to provide improved forward presence.<sup>86</sup> Moscow has also upgraded its Black Sea Fleet and Crimean Bases.

Russia has undertaken large-scale military manoeuvres to show its ability to defend itself and convey the message of firmness. For example, Russia conducted Zapad 2017 manoeuvres, which received unprecedented coverage by the US analyst and media. These provided vital examples of events that moulded national security discourse. Even before this exercise think tanks raised the spectre of an “exercise gap” with Moscow while asserting that the latter enjoyed a considerable advantage

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<sup>84</sup> Mark Galeotti, “Heavy Metal Diplomacy: Russia’s Political Use of Its Military in Europe Since 2014,” European Council on Foreign Relations Policy Brief, Dec. 19, 2016, [https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/Heavy\\_Metal\\_Diplomacy\\_Final\\_2.pdf](https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/Heavy_Metal_Diplomacy_Final_2.pdf).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Mark, “Heavy Metal Diplomacy,”

over the West. In addition, Russia conducted Vostok 2018 larger than 2017 manoeuvres which also involved an “interstate conflict” scenario with coalition adversaries.<sup>87</sup> The West similarly followed with the same response for instance in NATO’s 2018 Brussels Summit it was asserted “We continue to ensure the Alliance’s political and military responsiveness, including through more regular exercises.”<sup>88</sup> In 2017 several exercises were conducted and in 2018 Sabre strikes were expanded to reinforce allies’ response. Likewise Trident Juncture, the largest military exercise since the end of the Cold War was conducted in 2018. In these military manoeuvres advanced military weapon has been used. NATO in 2017 exercises deployed Patriot anti-Craft and anti-missile systems in the Baltic region. Likewise, Moscow has moved forward with Iskander tactical missiles close to Kaliningrad provoking a reaction from NATO.

### **Military Deployment in Ukraine**

Russia protests that the West backtrack from its promise that it will not expand its forces eastward close to Russia’s border. In a 2+4 negotiation to unify two Germany, James Baker, the US Secretary of State and Hans Dieter, the German Foreign Minister gave verbal assurance to the USSR that NATO would not expand eastward. In a meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister, Mikhail Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze, Russian Foreign Minister on 9 February 1990 Baker said: “Would you prefer to see a unified Germany outside of NATO and with no US forces or would you prefer to see unified Germany to be tied to NATO, with the assurance that NATO’s

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<sup>87</sup> Dmitry Gorenburg, “Five Things to Know about Russia’s Vostok-2018 Military Exercises,” *The Washington Post*, September 13, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/09/13/5-things-to-know-about-russias-vostok-2018-military-exercises/>

<sup>88</sup> UK Parliament, the NATO Brussels Summit 2018, July 16, 2018 <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-07-16/debates/CBBC1538-1558-4432-9EC3-1C08CF599F0F/NATOBrusselsSummit2018>

jurisdiction would not shift an inch eastward from its current position.”<sup>89</sup> Hans Dieter in speech on January 1990 said, “what NATO must do is to state unequivocally that whatever happens in Warsaw Pact there will be no expansion of NATO territory eastward, that is to say closer to the border of Soviet Union.”<sup>90</sup> Russia says these statements show Western pledges not to extend NATO eastward.

Even before the debate on the policy of enlargement began Russian under Boris Yeltsin's government called NATO enlargement a threat to Russia's interests. During its fifth largest extension in 2004, NATO included seven Baltic States including Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. In 2008 it showed its intentions to bring Ukraine and Georgia into its sphere of influence. Russia decided to give strong resistance to enlargement. Putin, at the Bucharest summit in 2008 cautioned, “We view the appearance of the powerful military block on our border as a direct threat to our security.”<sup>91</sup>

For Russia it is the US that has reneged on its commitment so, it just pushing against the relentless geopolitical expansion of NATO. They also assert that the US with its allies has deployed their forces close to its border. The US maintained that Ukraine presented a region where Russia is posing a threat to Post World War International order. Therefore, it vowed to maintain security relations with Ukraine and to “help Ukraine defend itself.... and regain its territorial integrity and

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<sup>89</sup> ANDREW T. WOLFF, “The Future of NATO Enlargement after the Ukraine Crisis,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944)* 91, no. 5 (2015): 1103–21. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24539021>.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid

<sup>91</sup> Ibid

sovereignty.<sup>92</sup> Trump continued with policy and affirmed to provide financial support for defence and helping Ukraine “on the path to NATO and Europe Atlantic Integration.”<sup>93</sup>

Ukraine since independence has been the leading recipient of US aid in Europe. Since the US invaded Ukraine non-military aid amounted to 321 million a year from FY 2015 to FY2019. From FY2016 to FY2020 US military aid amounted to 1.1bn. The Ukraine Freedom Support Act enacted in December 2014 stated that “to further assist Ukraine sovereignty and territorial integrity to deter the government of Russian Federation from destabilizing and invading Ukraine...”<sup>94</sup> the US also affirmed, “the unwavering support to provide additional lethal and non-lethal security assistance to strengthen Ukraine’s defence capabilities... to provide deterrence against Russian aggression.”<sup>95</sup>

Trump's policy towards Russia over Ukraine remained consistent with the policy of Obama. Russia was criticized for instigating and continuing conflict in Eastern Ukraine. It identified Moscow's policy towards Ukraine as part of aggression that the former is pursuing with other states thus challenging liberal democratic order. Thus it vowed to punish Russia through the application of sanctions and

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<sup>92</sup> US Department of State, *On Secretary Tillerson's upcoming travel to Brussels, Belgium for the NATO foreign ministers meeting* 28 March 2017, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/on-secretary-tillersons-upcoming-travel-to-brussels-belgium-for-the-nato-foreign-ministers-meeting/index.html>.

<sup>93</sup> US Department of State, *Department press briefing*, 3 May 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-may-3-2018/index.html>.

<sup>94</sup> Sharon LaFraniere, Andrew E. Kramer and Danny Hakim, “Trump, Ukraine and impeachment: the inside story of how we got here,” *The New York Times*, 29 July 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/11/us/ukraine-trump.html>.

<sup>95</sup> Cory welt, “Ukraine: background, conflict with Russia, and US policy,” *Congressional Research Service* R45008 (2019): 02.

diplomatic interactions- like summit meetings and interactions of G7.<sup>96</sup> The administration maintained a long-held stance of the US recognizing 'Crimea as Ukraine and holding Russia accountable for its aggression. The only area in which Trump departed was the provision of military assistance to Ukraine. Although Obama's administration allowed the export of commercial weapons he declined direct military support to Ukraine. However, towards the end of 2019 congressionally mandated \$400m aid was suspended when Trump asserted that Ukraine government attempted to undermine him in support of Hunter Biden- Joe Biden's son in criminal investigation.<sup>97</sup>

### **Military Deployment in Syria**

Twelve years after the demonstration of protestors against four decades of rule Assad family Arab Spring started in Tunisia when a fruit vendor immolated himself while condemning corruption. Anti-regime protests that erupted in Tunisia soon spread across the Middle East. Large-scale protests erupted in Syria with rebellion demanding the removal of four decades of Assad's regime soon eclipsed into civil war with different international actors backing different sides and groups to advance their geopolitical interests. The US spearheaded the Coalition carrying out a strike against Islamic State. Coming to Assad's Regime defence, Russia too has carried out strikes in Syria. The Syrian national coalition government profess itself to be a government in exile from Syria. The US, Turkey, and the Gulf Cooperation Council recognize it as a "legitimate representative of the Syrian people."<sup>98</sup> Moscow,

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<sup>96</sup> Ruth Deyermond, "The Trump presidency, Russia and Ukraine: explaining incoherence," *International Affairs*, Volume 99, Issue 4, July 2023, Pages 1595–1614, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ial/iad120>

<sup>97</sup> Ibid

<sup>98</sup> Zachary Laub, "Syria's Civil War: The Descent into Horror," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 14 February 20123 <https://www.cfr.org/article/syrias-civil-war>

on the other side, has provided Assad's regime with important diplomatic support. In September 2015, Russia directly entered the conflict by deployment of its air force. For several years the US provided covert training and arms to rebels and opposition forces. The United Kingdom and France have provided logistics and military support to rebels. Similarly, attempt to mediate the conflict under the auspices of the UN have been hindered by the differences between the US and Russia. Both sides have vetoed resolutions in the United Nations Security Council which they as hampering their interest.

Moscow and Syria's relationship draws from the cold war legacy when Russia first began to support after the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956. But it did not become a client state until 1971. Russia gained control of Tartus, a naval base on the Mediterranean coast of Syria to facilitate its fifth Eskadara, an operational naval squadron. Changing context of Russian-US relations since 2011 was a major factor for former intervention in Syria, although Russia had a lingering interest in Syria. The cornerstone of Russian policy in Syria was to prevent US advance and Libya like "regime change" as Sergei Lavrov, Russian Foreign minister put it, "some leaders of the coalition forces and later the NATO secretary general, called the Libyan operation for the future. As for Russia, we will not allow anything like this in future."<sup>99</sup> Russia also asserts that the US in its unilateral attempt is trying to overthrow legitimate Syria's government and meddling in the internal affair of the state.<sup>100</sup> In addition to this objective Russia's Syrian intervention also resulted from

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<sup>99</sup> Kofman Michael and Matthew Rojansky, "What kind of victory for Russia in Syria?" *Military Review* 24, no. 2 (2018): 16

<sup>100</sup> Rumer, Eugene, Richard Sokolsky, and Andrew S. Weiss, "Trump and Russia: The right way to manage relations," *Foreign Affairs*. 96 (2017): 12.

the collapse of Russia the West relation in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine, and annexation of Crimea in 2014. In this regard, sanctions and diplomatic pressure employed by the US and European countries catalyzed the decision to intervene. Rather than surrendering and conceding to Western pressure on Ukraine Moscow wanted to broaden the confrontation through Syria. Moscow envisioned that intervention would compel the West and its allies to abandon sanctions and diplomatic isolation to achieve a negotiated settlement over Syria.

### **Military Deployment in Crimea**

#### **Crimea in Russian National Imagination and Euro-maiden**

Crimea carries strategic, military, and cultural importance for Russia. It officially becomes part of Moscow when in 1783, when Russia defeated the forces of the Crimean Khanate, a state under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Since then, the peninsula become strategically important and its seaport become home to the Russian Black Sea fleet. In the second half of the twentieth century, Crimea becomes part of Ukraine and jurisdiction was transferred to Ukraine Soviet Socialist Republic in 1954 by Nikita Khrushchev.<sup>101</sup> A huge majority of Crimeans voted in favour of secession from Ukraine in a referendum held on March 16, 2014. However, the results were declared illegal as a huge majority of voters were absent.<sup>102</sup> In addition to this Mr Yushchenko, the country's former pro-western president to expel the Russian Black Fleet from Sevastopol heightened the tension. His resolve to integrate the country into NATO further derailed relation between Crimea and Ukraine.

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<sup>101</sup> Sergey Salushev, "Annexation of Crimea: Causes, analysis and global implications," *Global Societies Journal* 2 (2014).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid



### **Euromaidan Protest and West to Rescue:**

A huge majority of Ukrainian were frustrated by the state's inept governance, other issues protested in independence square (Maidan Nezalezhonsti). Although he did not sign an agreement with the Russian Customs Union it was considered a veiled sign for integration with Russia. The US played an instrumental role in protests against the Yanukovich government. For example, the head of state, foreign ministers, and Russian antagonists from Poland, Hungary and Baltic States repeatedly made appearances and spoke to rallies. Senator John McCain made an appearance and spoke to rallies he urged Obama's administration to provide Ukraine with lethal and non-lethal aid. On 21 February Yanukovich signed an agreement in the presence of Russian special envoy Vladimir Lukin and EU representatives. However, the day after the agreement was signed opposition forces backtracked from the commitment and moved to oust the Yanukovich government.<sup>103</sup> The political coup d'état was recognized by the EU and the US while Russia condemned the decision. Relations reached Cold War lowest when Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula two weeks after the national referendum was held. The US and EU responded by lowering political relations, imposing visa and financial sanctions against Russian individuals, and ensuing by broader sanctions on defence, energy, and financial sectors. The US-NATO allies answered growing concerns of NATO's eastern allies more specifically the Baltic States of Latvia, and Lithuania by the deployment of US army companies. On March 6, 2014, in executive order 13660 signed by Obama

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid

certain entities and individuals were placed under sanctions for violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.<sup>104</sup>

### **Modernization and Nuclear Arms Race:**

The nuclear arms race was the most startling feature of the Cold War struggle between the US and Russia. Over the years various arms control agreements were signed by both sides to control to manage the risk of nuclear war. However, the spectre of a nuclear arms race has emerged once again as the fate of several arm control agreements of the Cold War was put at risk in Trump Period.

### **Withdrawal from INF treaty:**

The first major casualty was the INF treaty from which the US withdrew in 2018. Signed in 1987, the agreement resulted in the elimination of 2692 US and the USSR nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with a range between 500 and 5,500km. Both powers predicted possessions of certain weapons as menacing and decided to put restrictions on the manufacturing of these weapons. The US blamed Russia for its violation of the treaty citing that Russia is covertly developing and deploying prohibited missiles, which pose threats to allies and troops abroad. The US administration said further, “We have raised Russian noncompliance with its officials more than 30 times, including its highest officials, yet it continues to deny that its missiles are non-compliant and continue to violate the treaty.”<sup>105</sup> However, Russia denied the allegation claiming that the US is violating the treaty by building certain missile interceptors that have offensive capabilities.

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<sup>104</sup> The US Department of State <https://2009-2017.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/ukrainerussia/index.htm>

<sup>105</sup> W.J Hennigan, “Trump is Withdrawing from Landmark arm agreement with Russia. What Happens Now?” *Time*, February 01, 2019 <https://time.com/5518849/trump-is-withdrawing-from-a-landmark-arms-agreement-with-russia-what-happens-now/>

Over the years Obama's administration and its NATO allies expressed concerns over the alleged violation of the treaty but there was uncertainty regarding the violation of the treaty.

The potential fallout from treaty withdrawal carries consequences not only for Europe but beyond. It carries the potential for larger deployment in Asia as well. The reason for the negotiation was destabilizing nature of the weapon, the possession of ballistic missile-American Pershing 2 and Russian SS-20. These had a short time for launch and strike that gave the adversary little to no time for cover and strategising for a response. Treaty negotiation eliminated mutual fear of annihilation and striking the target within six minutes. It could open an era when ballistic and cruise missiles would be deployed across the iron curtain. Prospects of a nuclear arms race became more apparent when David Norquist, Deputy Defence Secretary said at Defense News Conference, "Now we are out of INF treaty, the department is making progress to field ground-launched missiles."<sup>106</sup> Billingsley told the Japanese news outlet, Nikkei Asian Review that the US is preparing to talk to allies about where to field these missiles in Asia. He further said, "engage in talks with friends and allies with our friends and allies in Asia over immediate threat.....and kind of capabilities that we need to defend our alliance in future."<sup>107</sup> Billingsley pointed toward a ground-launched variant of Tomahawk Sea-launched cruise missile. General Joseph Martin, vice chief of staff of the Army further said in addition Tomahawk Army aims to prepare a ground-launched version of Standard Missile 6.

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<sup>106</sup> US Arm Control Association <https://www.armscontrol.org/blog/2020-09/us-russian-nuclear-arms-control-watch>

<sup>107</sup> Ibid

On February 01, 2019, US state officials said the country did not plan to deploy missile falling within the INF range as it had not developed by far. But the US can do this in future as a country plan to develop a new Precision Strike missile with a range of 499 km- consistent with the INF treaty. The US could also adopt existing sea-based Tomahawk cruise missiles for land-based delivery by making new or adopting already existing like MK-41 launchers (that are part of its defence system in Romania). Russia has already shown concerns about these launchers expressing that it could be used to launch tomahawk cruise missiles. It could also acquire and develop new intermediate cruise missiles with re-entering capabilities like those of Pershing 2 destroyed under the INF treaty. After withdrawal, Putin also announced its decision to withdraw from the treaty. He also hinted at the development of a land-based version of the sea-based Kalibr cruise missile in addition to hypersonic and short-range cruise missile-consistent with the INF range, to counter US threat.

**Withdrawal from Open Skies Treaty:**

In November 2020 Trump administration withdrew from another agreement signed in 1992 that granted member countries the right to fly unarmed aeroplanes over another country's territory for reconnaissance purposes. Initially, the idea was floated by Eisenhower in 1955 at a conference in Geneva but rejected by Moscow. He wanted reconnaissance abilities for US and NATO allies that warn it about military attack. The idea was reiterated by George W Bush in 1989. Bush wrote about it, "Our country is so open already that I believed the Soviets would gain little additional

knowledge about us.”<sup>108</sup> He said further, “We had much to learn about the Soviet Union.” It was one of three international treaties- the other two being the Vienna Document and Conventional Armed Forces in Europe that were designed to increase transparency among the military and decrease the risk of war.

Trump blamed the Russian administration for violating the terms of the treaty. He claimed Russia is using the treaty for the identification of potential targets in the US and advancing false arguments related to the annexation of Crimea and Georgia separatist regions- Abkhazia and South Ossetia. State Departments also blamed Russia for limiting flight operations over Chechnya and Kaliningrad. The US in response to the alleged violation of the treaty enacted its restriction and put limitations on flight operations over Hawaii. Other participants’ states like Syria and Turkey following suit put restrictions of their own on respective territories.

Smaller countries- including NATO allies were not happy with the decision of larger power and expressed “regret” over withdrawal. In the presence of more sophisticated technology such as satellite OST though carry little value as it is less important for gathering information but was crucial for trust building and encouraging transparency. In addition, reconnaissance provided by aircraft is more significant than satellites.

Withdrawal carries numerous consequences in terms of relation to the US. It will trigger an era of great power competition. As the US has already torn apart several Cold War security arrangements-including the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. It

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<sup>108</sup> Jonathan Master, “Open Skies Another Dying Arm Control Agreement,” *Council on Foreign Relation*, May 28, 2020 <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/open-skies-another-dying-arms-control-agreement>

will also repeal global efforts on arms control. Russia and the US also got in trouble over the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action signed by the US with Iran. Moscow Foreign Ministry Statement, “We are extremely concerned that the US is once again acting contrary to the opinion of the majority of states and exclusively in its own narrow-minded and opportunistic interest in flagrant violation of international law.

## **Conclusion**

The US-Russia relations have been deteriorating for long for a long. This bilateral has worsened since Trump took over the presidential office in 2017. The shift of leadership in the US was welcomed by Russia but both sides find it difficult to move along as many issues erupted which divided both sides. Although Moscow is not a co-equal competitor as China it poses challenges to the supremacy of America. The charges of Russian collusion with Trump to influence the presidential election of 2016 to defeat the Democratic Party candidate and ensuing investigations strengthen the belief that Russia is using its propaganda warfare to target American institutions and derail trust in the Western Democratic system. Moreover, military exercises and manoeuvres of both Russia and the US further deteriorated relations. For example, NATO's eastward extension close to the Russian border, through non-NATO members, shifting exercises platforms and Russian exercises in the vicinity of NATO forces around Europe, the Middle East and Syria heightened the tension. Similarly, the nuclear race one of the most startling features of the arms race erupted once again with the unravelling of nuclear-armed agreements such as the INF treaty. The whole scenario for bilateral relationships became ‘containment’ reminiscent of the Cold War.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Causes of Downturn in Relation since 2017

Before his inauguration on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017, the Trump administration sought to redress issues with Russia but events that ensued afterwards render that a difficult task to achieve with little to no indication of improvement. After he emerged as a shock victor in the 2016 elections many anticipated a thaw in relations. During his electoral campaign, he showed his desire to get along with Moscow. He suggested recognizing Russia's annexation by Crimea, opposed US sanctions against the former and even questioned NATO's existence. Following the election he repudiated charges of Russian interference democratic process of the US and criticizes Obama's decision to expel 35 Russian diplomats and close two Russian embassies. Towards the end relationship became more acrimonious with no sign of improvement; instead of recognition of Crimea, Ukraine was supplied with defensive weaponry (a policy course not undertaken by Obama), NATO eastward expansion continued at its pace, and Russian involvement in elections become a more toxic issue in the US. In addition, meeting at the margin of the Hamburg G20 summit proved counterproductive. After returning to Washington, his anti-Kremlin stance stiffened, and he get off from the proposal to establish a joint US-Russia cyber security unit, both houses passed a bill by majority expanding sanctions against Russia. Many factors can be attributed to the downturn to these including: the administration was plagued by media hysteria that inevitably over-emphasized the Russian threat. The US policy misfired in dealing with Russia, it did not internalize the lessons learned from the original Cold War Crisis and failed to analyze the possibility of a Russian military comeback in more realistic terms. The pinnacle of the threat

narrative of both countries and lack of predictability only made threat narratives miscalculation and escalation highly probable as a result bilateral relations reached a new low since the end of the Cold War.

### **The US policy misread in dealing with Russia:**

The US policy mislead over the years and past several decades in assessing Russia's capabilities and intentions. It mainly overestimated and sometimes underestimated the powers and potential of Russia and the length to which the adversary is willing to go to protect its interest. Three important factors largely account for the issue. First is the persistent euphoria of the post-cold War period. In the eyes of many Western observers, the Soviet Union implosion strengthen the perception that US superiority is unchallengeable and permanent decline means it would never be able to push back against US policies. Second, the US policymakers failed to learn lessons from two major crises of the Cold War period- the Cuban missile Crises of 1962 and the Euro missile crisis of the early 1980s.<sup>109</sup> The US failed to misread security concerns and apprehensions of the Soviet Union. Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet leader who decided to deploy missiles in Cuba said in his memoir:

“We have already been surrounded by bombers and missiles of the US. We knew that these American missiles were directed against us in Turkey and Italy, not to say anything of West Germany. Our important industrial centres were directly threatened by planes armed with atomic bombs and guided missiles tipped with

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<sup>109</sup> Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky, “Grand Illusion: the Impact of Misperception about Russia on US Policy,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 30, 2021. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptions-about-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845>



nuclear warheads. As Chairman of the Council of Ministers, I am in the difficult position of having to decide on a future course of action which would answer the US threat but which would also prevent war.”<sup>110</sup>

In 1962 the USSR's “strategic rear” was endangered by the deployment of medium-range missiles in Turkey and Italy. Those weapon systems eroded the security provided to the USSR in the aftermath of World War by territorial gain and strategic depth. To put the US “strategic rear” in danger the USSR would have to depend upon the deployment of weapons in Cuba, thus raising the prospect of an all-out nuclear war. Two decades later another crisis of the same kind resulted due to the failure of the US to read the capabilities of the USSR. It was initiated by the Soviets in the mid-1970s with the deployment of SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles. From the perspective of the USSR, the NATO decision in 1979 to deploy cruise and Pershing 2 missiles in Europe presented Russia with a new threat. For the Russian military planner, it created a new class of weapons that would put the Russian “strategic rear” at threat once again after the crisis of 1962. After the withdrawal of the Thor and Jupiter missiles in mid-1960 the US had not deployed land-based missiles in the territory of Europe. All these events heightened the cold war. There was the same issue with several rounds of enlargement plans pursued by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) under the US, especially in the 1990s and 2000s. By extending NATO close to the border of Russia and by extending the invitation to former Soviet states security interest and strategic rear was once again

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<sup>110</sup> Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1971): 546.

put under threat. Russian reservations were ignored the US underrated the length to which the latter could go to protect its interest.

Russian foreign policy thus, become more assertive with the Russian military asserting its muscles and deploying a toolkit in grey zone power instrument to assert its power. The Western powers used vague indicators of determining the power of the USSR back in the Cold War. The period surrounding the end of the Cold War was a major setback for the military power of the USSR. Military deployment abroad drained its resources and military engagement including in Afghanistan ended. It was followed by a major withdrawal from Eastern Europe and former USSR republics. In contrast, the US reached the apex of its military power. The following decades proved successful in philosophy of the neo-liberalism and the US economy. In these circumstances, US security analysts were predicting a collapse of the country or having a subservient partner in form and not for major power competition. When the NATO enlargement study of 1995 made the groundwork for the extension of NATO the question of how to deal with Russia was not given importance. In a 1993 foreign affair article Ronald Asmus, Richard Kugler, and Stephen Larrabee enumerated six preconditions for expansion with Russia lying at number five- which shows Russian threat was not given due importance. In a similar vein US Foreign Relations committee in bearing witness before the US Senate, the then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said NATO expansion would ensure the security of by expanding the area in Europe where wars simply do not occur.”<sup>111</sup> Thus, the US

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<sup>111</sup> Senate Appropriations Committee, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Enlargement Costs*, One Hundred Fifth Congress, First Session, October 21, 1997, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-105shrg46492/html/CHRG-105shrg46492.htm>

threat assessment ignored Russian danger and not considered it worthy enough to pose any threat.

Russian opposition against NATO expansion had been known for a long but the pivotal point came when Putin at the Munich Conference of 2007 directly warned against the policy of expansion. But the perception was deeply entrenched in the US policy circle that it would be unable to do anything. After a few months, Russia attacked Georgia set the idea of NATO expansion off the agenda and achieved a symbolic victory against NATO. This shows metrics used by the US were inadequate to gauge power, signalling West is ready to take action to guard its exclusive sphere of influence. The same logic was manifested six years later against Ukraine by the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Hence, the US policymakers failed to internalize lessons from two crises of the Cold War when Russia was provoked to take action to protect its "strategic rear". George Kennan also recognized that the most fateful error US policymakers made in the post-Cold War period was NATO extension. It influenced anti-West, militaristic and national tendencies in Russian opinion. This also negatively impacted democracy development in Russia.<sup>112</sup> Because of this intersubjective interaction, the latter adopted a foreign policy opposite to the liking of the US and it also restored the atmosphere of the original Cold War to East-West relations. The Trump administration despite the incoherency that characterized its foreign policy continued with the inherited policy of Obama: Russia was sanctioned for its policies in Ukraine and remained excluded from G-8. The US officials also endorsed the administration's position that it would continue with sanctions until

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<sup>112</sup> George F. Kennan, "A fateful error," *The New York Times* February 05, 1997  
<https://www.nytimes.com/1997/02/05/opinion/a-fateful-error.html>

'Russia implement commitments made in the Minsk agreement'.<sup>113</sup> Thus, these inter-subjective interactions shaped expectations and assumptions. Trump also acted within norms established by the previous administration and relations become a victim of historical baggage and a new Cold War characterised by the legacy of the original Cold War with East-West shaped.

### **Media Hysteria:**

Media is largely responsible for circulating panic, generating conspiracies theory and misinformation. One of the dangerous theories that it generated that later become un-defendable was Trump's alleged collusion with Putin. This frightened the public by generating the anti-Trump that the former is under the influence of Putin through false reporting and information by ignoring the constant threat that was mounting between the two nuclear powers. For example, controversy erupted over an email sent by Trump's son to a Russian who allegedly had access to compromising information on Hillary Clinton, the then-Democratic presidential candidate. Attorney General William Bar also said that Special Counsel Robert Mueller was not able to establish the Fact of "collusion" between the Trump campaign and Russia.<sup>114</sup> Jonathan Turley, a left-leaning professor of Law at George Washington University said, there was no wrongdoing based on currently known facts. "Does any of this constitute a clear crime or even a vague inkblot image of a crime? No, at least not on these facts,"<sup>115</sup> he wrote. Leading experts said that the

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<sup>113</sup> Ruth Deyermond, "The Trump Presidency, Russia and Ukraine: explaining incoherence," *International Affairs* June 12, 2023 <https://academic.oup.com/ia/advance-article/doi/10.1093/ia/iiaad120/7191374>

<sup>114</sup> Branko Marcetic, "The Media Must Face Up to its Role in Inflaming Frenzy Over Russiagate," *In These Times* March 29, 2019 <https://inthesetimes.com/article/media-russia-russiagate-trump-putin-rachel-maddow-msnbc>

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

media showed a double standard in handling the issue in which most of the media outlets hold Trump's feet to fire on the other hand they ignored many wrongdoings of democrats.<sup>116</sup>

There are many other discredited and retracted reports in this regard: there are independent news outlets which are working as Russian propaganda that disseminate fake news which is working in addition to Russian covert programs to attack important national installations of the US. A newspaper reported that a power grid in Vermont was hacked by Russia (Washington Post), and another reported Trump had a covert email server channelling him into a Russian bank (Slate).<sup>117</sup> On another occasion during the presidential campaign Clinton was asked the reporter from Bloomberg asked if a bomb attack anywhere in New Jersey or New York could be part of Moscow's plan "to drive a vote bank in favour of Trump."<sup>118</sup> These incidents and reporting set a pattern of portraying Trump as a Russian agent whenever he failed to adopt anti-Russian policy. In addition to this, Guardian reiterated weapon manufacturer-funded Atlantic Council said that Trump would adopt a policy of appeasement towards Russia on the issue of Syria and Ukraine and adopt a soft policy with Moscow that could "threaten Western Security interest."<sup>119</sup> Thus these further heightened the tensions and compelling to adopt a strict foreign policy against Russia.

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<sup>116</sup> Liangya, "Spotlight: Media Blast Trump Over Russia but Some Call it Hysteria," Xinhua Net, 18, 07, 2017 [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-07/18/c\\_136452595.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-07/18/c_136452595.htm)

<sup>117</sup> Franklin Foer, "Was a Trump Server Communicating with Russia," *Slate* October 31 2016, [https://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/cover\\_story/2016/10/was\\_a\\_server\\_registered\\_to\\_the\\_trump\\_organization\\_communicating\\_with\\_russia.html](https://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/cover_story/2016/10/was_a_server_registered_to_the_trump_organization_communicating_with_russia.html)

<sup>118</sup> Joe Concha, "Bloomberg ask Clinton Russians were behind Attack to help Russia," *The Hill* September 9, 2016 <https://thehill.com/homenews/news/296658-bloomberg-asks-clinton-if-russians-were-behind-attack-to-help-trump/>

Meanwhile, this was further aggravated by Mother Jones' to publish David Corn's report about Steele's dossier, which now stands publically disparaged. The report claimed that Moscow had been working for years to install Donald Trump as an intelligence agent; this resulted in Vanity Fair questioning Trump as a "Manchurian Candidate." Ridiculously on the same occasion, the New York Times in a report asserts that the FBI had failed to establish collusion between Trump and Russia. Thus, media hysteria that portrayed Russia as a potential aggressor working to undermine the national interest of the US by attacking American Values and institutions and its portrayal of Trump as a Russian agent compelled the former to adopt an adopted hardliner approach against Russia. His administration was staffed with hawks like Jeff Sessions, Jim Mattis and Mike Pompeo talking about upgrading nuclear capability in sharp contrast to the previous administration. As relations worsened over the years and Trump adopted more harsh rhetoric. Just a few days after assuming the presidency he called Putin and hit the New Start Treaty 2010, saying that he would not renew the treaty.

Tension in relations grew further even after Tillerson's visit in April 2017 over the question of Trump's strike in Syria earlier that month. Even further, in August 2017, Trump questioned Moscow's export dominance in Eastern Europe, gave many anti-Russia speeches, accused it of preventing US efforts to get rid of Russian nukes and withdrew from JCPOA while facing Moscow's objections. Meanwhile, the Guardian stated that Steele's dossiers "were "growing more relevant by the day,"

while David Corn reiterated the dossier's allegations of Trump blackmail."<sup>120</sup> In 2017 in National Security Strategy Trump directly attacked Russia. A few days later he finally crossed the lines by sending weapons to Ukraine which previous administrations have refrained from doing so. In February 2018, a fact checker at political fact asserted that the belief that Trump had been much tougher on Moscow was largely correct. In the following month of March Putin decided to test more nuclear tests with different nuclear capabilities NBC reported that "the Trump administration has further emboldened Moscow" and was responding to a US foreign policy of weakness about Russia."<sup>121</sup>

Media hysteria reached its apex when the US media outlet conspiracies and fear mongered the Helsinki summit in advance. Even before the meeting was held the Washington Post called the as "geopolitical win" for Russia and "kowtowing" to Putin.<sup>122</sup> Jonathan Chait, in New York magazine, called Trump "a 30-year Russian asset." When Trump used the threat to pull out from NATO to convince them to increase their spending and took Putin's words that Moscow had not hacked at DNC, the media went furious charging him with treachery and treason.<sup>123</sup> Claims increased that Putin and Trump had already discussed arms control and disarmament and Putin that there was not something new in the discussion.

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<sup>120</sup> Kyle Cheney and Rachael Bade, "Top FBI official linked to reporter who broke Trump dossier story," *Politico* 22 December 2017 <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/12/22/trump-dossier-fbi-james-baker-david-corn-mother-jones-316157>

<sup>121</sup> Erik Ortiz, "Putin's bravado over Russian nukes is emboldened by Trump, analysts say," *NEWS* <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/putin-s-bravado-over-russian-nuclear-weapons-embolned-trump--analysts-n852301>

<sup>122</sup> Andrew Osborn, "For Putin, Helsinki talks with Trump a win before he even sits down," *Reuters* <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-summit/for-putin-helsinki-talks-with-trump-a-win-before-he-even-sits-down-idUSKBN1K12EU>

<sup>123</sup> Holly Ellyat, "'Treasonous' Trump and 'Putin's poodle': Scathing headlines follow the Helsinki summit," *CNBC* <https://www.cNBC.com/2018/07/17/trump-putin-summit-news-headlines.html>

## Differences of Narratives

### Reaction from Inside: pan Slavic Identity of the Russian Regime

The main elements of the national policy narrative of Moscow include pan-Slavic identity this presents Russia as the only country capable of questioning its identity and status and narrative of exceptionalism. This can incite a revisionist posture – threatening the use of military force. This comes from evaluations of different writers who highlight the revisionist side of Russian geopolitical interest. Marlene Laruelle sums up the nationalist view of Russian foreign policy as a predominantly revisionist state. “Disappointment is thus the main nationalist feeling regarding Russian official foreign policy. If the most vocal nationalists had been able to mould its foreign policy, it would not have been the status quo power it has been for the past two decades. It would have acted more aggressively in the Near Abroad.”<sup>124</sup> Two groups assert Russian exceptionalism. First, is the ‘great power balancer’, ‘great power realist’ or ‘statist’ they want Russian acceptance as a great power and the right to decide as an equal partner in international security issues. Second, Russia is the leader of socialism and nationalism has the authority to lead the Slavic world and oppose Western values.

Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991 resulted in economic ruin and caused a new era of international embarrassment for Moscow. This heightened the already existing narrative that perceived the US exported democracy when the US stopped to give focus to Russia as it did during the initial cold war period. Putin in his address to Russian Duma in 1991 argued, “Russia for centuries, has been major power and

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<sup>124</sup> Tomas Janeliunas and Kojala Linas, “External Forces and Russian Foreign Policy: Simulation of Identity Narratives inside Putin’s Regime,” *International Journal* 74, no. 2 (2019): 258–81. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26739390>.



continues to remain so. It has had and legitimate sphere of interest...We would not surrender in this respect, neither would we allow our beliefs to be ignored.”<sup>125</sup> Fuelled by mounting tensions with the West, this narrative was used during the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. Putin, after annexation, said, “We have every reason to assume that the notorious policy of containment that started in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century continues today. They are constantly trying to push us to side because we have an independent position, because we maintain it and because we call things like they are and do not engage in hypocrisy.”<sup>126</sup> General Valerii Gerasimov's speech in 2016 again portrayed the US as an enemy trying to marginalize Russia when he said that Russia need to focus on asymmetric warfare employed by the West. Andrei Tsygankov believed that the pan-Slavic narrative of exceptionalism is affected by the behaviour of the US.<sup>127</sup> As per him, Russia has responded to security challenges posed by the West and more particularly the US and adopted thinking and behaviour in response to it. An important feature of this is Russian self-perception about their self given the West. Magda Leichtova also asserts that Kremlin's foreign policy is impacted by the Russian view of itself as it varyingly either tries to seek balance with the West or resist it. Thus the reaction of Putin's regime towards the US foreign policy can be said as the urge to redevelop Moscow's status quo, mission and position in the world. All these

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<sup>125</sup> Bullough, “Vladimir Putin: The Rebuilding of ‘Soviet’ Russia,” *the BBC News*, March 28. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26769481>.

<sup>126</sup> Jacob Kriminger, ‘the New Cold War: US Russia Relation under Trump Administration (2017-2020) East Carolina University, 2020. <https://thescholarship.ecu.edu/bitstream/handle/10342/8808/KRIMINGER-MASTERSTHESIS-2020.pdf>

<sup>127</sup> Tomas and Kojala, “External Forces and Russian Foreign Policy,”

adaptations are reflected in Russia's national identity narrative of "Who are we? And what should we do?"

### **Influence of the US Foreign Policy and Oil Prices of Moscow**

Some general perceptions regarding external factors influencing Russian foreign policy can be drawn:

1. Elite perception of Russia regarding the US's behaviour in the international sphere is a crucial factor. The more threatening the former view US policy to its security and interest, the more defensive the foreign policy approach would be adopted. However, an opposition or revisionist approach towards the West could be formulated depending on the economic performance of the country.
2. External economic shift impact its economic growth and tendency to accomplish assertive foreign policy. Time of high oil prices results in increased GDP and results in greater aspirations and revisionist objectives in foreign policy.

Applying these external conditions Tomas proposed that if the US does not pursue assertive economic policy by threatening the vital interests of Russia by intervening in its sphere of influence and global economic situations are feasible for Russia the latter would pursue a pro-Western narrative (cooperative behaviour). And if global economic conditions are favourable for Russia and it is combined with assertive US policy, Russia would follow a more assertive narrative towards the US.

Thus the above hypothesis could be applied during the Trump period from 2017 to 2020 to gauge the viability of determinants of narrative. After Trump assumed office in 2016 expectations aroused that the balancing approach would become stronger. By November 2016, 54 % of opinions showed the relationship would move towards a positive trajectory. However, once in office, Trump continued

with the assertive policies of his predecessors. The US, forced by its congress continued with sanctions and pledged to expand further until Moscow refrain from its action. At the end of 2017, Trump's National Security Strategy highlighted the threat of Russia. While mentioning Russia and China's threat it asserted "China and Russia challenge US, influence, interests and power and trying to derail US national security and prosperity," that "Moscow intervene in the internal political affairs of countries around the globe," and that "the combination of latter ambitions and increasing military capacities make an unstable frontier in Eurasia, where the danger of clash because of Russia miscalculation is increasing."<sup>128</sup> A shifting economy also changed the Russian response. GDP fell to 4% in 2015, after overcoming the recession in 2017 economy showed marginal signs of recovery with a projected growth rate of 1.4 to 1.9%. Ultimately, defence spending was lowered to 5%. However, towards the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018, a significant increase in oil prices was observed. A change in foreign policy from confrontational based on Slavic nationalist narrative to great power balancing is not a surprise. The unpredictability of the Russian economy and American foreign policy behaviour shaped a mixed narrative. Trump applauded Putin's economic performance and focused on the need for cooperation when he said:

"He said his foreign policy intended to improve the relationship with Moscow. It is clear that despite his desires he has not been able to improve relations this was due to the obvious hindrance, even if he desired to... I wish that he does and that we will eventually improve our relations to the benefit of the Washington

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<sup>128</sup> John M. Weaver, "The 2017 National Security Strategy of the United States," *Journal of Strategic Security* 11, no. 1 (2018): 62-71.

and Moscow people, and that we will continue to struggle and try to overcome the common threats including terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, environmental problems, issues around the globe, including in the Middle East, the DPRK problem, etc. ... Actually, we can effectively manage threat if we work together.”<sup>129</sup>

While on the other side, Putin showed no reluctance for his inclination to use force. For example before the elections of 2018, during a speech to the federal assembly seemingly animated video of nuclear warheads falling on Florida was shown. Putin asserted that “we have repeatedly told our US and EU partners who are NATO members: Russia will take the required endeavours to balance the threats posed by the deployment of the US global missile defence system.”<sup>130</sup>

#### **The domestic political landscape of the US further deteriorated relations:**

The deep optimism of the initial days present in the Trump administration eroded and towards the end relations reached a new low since the end of the Cold War. The accusation of Russian interference in the election strengthened. Sanctions against it become more strident and there was no cooperation against the counterterrorism agenda so, why there was little progress in the relation with Russia despite repeated pledges made and a downturn in relations achieved a new low since the end of the cold war period? The biggest impediment was unforeseen division in domestic politics. Polarizations among political elites became more pronounced during the Trump administration. Thus political system dependent on compromises was characterized by gridlock, hostility, and dysfunctional democratic

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<sup>129</sup> ‘Vladimir Putin’s annual news conference’, Kremlin, 14 December 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/56378>

<sup>130</sup> “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly,” Kremlin, 1 March 2018, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957> (accessed on 20 May 2023)

governance. Supporter of other party is viewed by partisan as morally wrong and unpatriotic. This generates a divergent understanding of facts, hate and mutual differences. It leads to political deadlock and obstructionism.<sup>131</sup> It became impossible for the White House to push the Russian agenda in a situation where any concession made to the latter, however insignificant was viewed as doubtful or worse. The emergence of scandals posed a fatal threat to Trump forcing him to take a strong anti-Russian stance to ensure his survival.

The dominant domestic political narrative or US political landscape under Trump was characterized by three main components. First, was Trump's view on global engagement, particularly concerning the US role in Eurasian matters, Trump's narrative was of "freeloading" allies who wanted to use American blood and exchequer to gain their objectives. He wanted to break away from the bipartisan consensus that emerged under Bush and Obama and made pragmatic bargaining with Kremlin. Trump's views were guided by America's first calculus he still viewed Russia as a strategic partner. These views were misread both by domestic political opponents and Kremlin. This competitive response can be witnessed by Trump's willingness to export weapons to Ukraine and increase energy exports to European countries to cut Russian oil influence. This view was exploited by domestic political opponents to make anti-Trump views, forcing the latter to adopt harsh measures thus further de railing relations. As a result, trump took more stringent measures against Russia therefore members of the national security team were drawn from "Russian sceptics."

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<sup>131</sup> Gordan M. Friedrich and Jordan Tama, "Polarization and US foreign policy: key debates and new findings," *Int Polit* **59**, 767–785 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-022-00381-0>

The second important hindrance was division and infighting within the administration. This anarchy was witnessed not only concerning Russia but on important policy issues such as the revocation of the affordable care act (Obama Care Act), tax reform and immigration.<sup>132</sup> The major important including of Rex Tillerson (Secretary of State), James Mattis (Secretary of Defence) and HR McMaster (National Security Advisor) as an adult back in charge did nothing to improve the situation. They were also faced with difficulties in office. This infighting characterized the domestic political narrative and further derailed relations. Despite his attempts, Trump never succeeded in overcoming suspicions and intentions of Moscow's foreign policy and rebuttal of liberal democratic values. Thus despite the electoral victory congressional Republicans under the leadership of John McCain joined hands with the Democrats. Who showed a rebuttal of relations with Russia until the latter showed a complete reversal of policy. Further, in this bipartisan environment, the congressional view was it must be punished for excesses committed internationally. As a senior congressional member put it, "Crimea is returned and Putin is gone."<sup>133</sup> Congressional approach to handling Russia was that it poses such an "existential threat to important the U.S. interests that containing and disrupting Moscow is one of the most crucial national security objectives of the US."<sup>134</sup> Congress eroded traditional deference granted to the president in chalking out foreign policies. These ensued from Trump's failure to question Moscow for its alleged interference in the 2016 elections and his willingness to withdraw sanctions imposed on Russia- which he decided in the run-up to his 2017 inauguration. Congress did not want to allow

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<sup>132</sup> Nikolas, "The permanent divergence,"

<sup>133</sup> Ibid

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

Trump to make changes in US foreign policies there it institutionalized sanctions against Moscow to prevent him from removing or lifting sanctions. So, Trump was interested in deal-making while Congress was bent on punishing Russia. Therefore, US policy on Moscow was locked in a confrontational position and the president was deprived of most of his leverage.

Third, the US-Russia relations became detainees of the anti-Trump campaign. Any reform proposal by the White House whether in the domestic or foreign policy arena including US-Russian relations faced strong elite resistance. Vladimir Putin 2017 recognized this state of affairs when said relationship had “become victim to the domestic political situation in the U.S... Certain elements use the Russian-Washington relation to solve domestic political problems in the US... We are eagerly waiting until this process in the internal political life in Washington will end.”<sup>135</sup> An opponent of Trump was prepared to use any available means to discredit him even if that would mean threatening US’s national interest (as was a case of anti-Trump moves made by Obama in cases of Israel and Russia)<sup>136</sup> even more unusual were Clinton and Obama’s attempt of using US intelligence and other special services to strengthen the former claim that, “all seventeen U.S. intelligence service had proof of Moscow interference in American elections to favour Trump.”<sup>137</sup> In American political history, there have been examples of political pressure used against its intelligence services- for instance, the Bush administration forced intelligence services to give distorted and false reports on Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction

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<sup>135</sup> Andrei Korobkov, “Donald Trump and the Evolving US-Russia Relationship,” *PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs* 24, no. 1 (2019): 47. <http://sam.gov.tr/pdf/perceptions/Volume-XXIV/Spring-Summer-2019/03-Korobkov.pdf>

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 53

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 58

and Saddam Hussein's alleged links to al-Qaeda.<sup>138</sup> Still, using pressure on the intelligence community to disrepute one's political opponent, impact political opponent and determine policies of the coming administration has become a dangerous precedent in US political history.

Donald Trump's reform proposal presented a threat to the ingrained interest of influential political groups that were trying to prevent changes in foreign policy and were engaged in complex activities to discredit Trump. An unusual "alliance of convenience" was formed including leftist populist groups, hardcore right-wing politicians and the traditional-liberal establishment. The alliance consisted of a majority of conventional elites, government bureaucracy, globalist financial elites and IT business elite. The only group presenting Trump was real sector representatives- including agriculture, manufacturing and those who were in favour of protectionist policies and the military. The goal of opposition groups varied tremendously. The leftists resisted policies, they wanted to delegitimize him and politically weaken him while the right Republicans wanted the geopolitical orientation of Washington's foreign policy to remain intact- a shift from animosity to cooperation with Russia. Security and foreign policy bureaucracy was against reform and shift in policy goals and methods. Thus at the end of the 2018 Helsinki summit, the Russian government concluded that despite personal opinion and desire of Trump to reset relations could not change the views of Congress and the national security establishment. Trump also did not have enough political influence to provide cover to officials to initiate political dialogue with Russia.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid



## Political Warfare against the US

George Kennan, the architect of the containment policy of the original Cold War period defines Political Warfare in these words, “Political warfare is the logical application of Clausewitz’s doctrine in time of peace. In the broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation’s command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives, to further its influence and authority, and to weaken those of its adversaries. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures (such as ERP), and ‘white’ propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of ‘friendly’ foreign 46 elements, ‘black’ psychological warfare, and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.”<sup>139</sup> Galeotti further asserts that the current interconnected world has rendered direct military too expensive to resort to. Therefore, states have discovered political warfare as a new strategy to indulge in state-to-state contentions, which are different from lethal guns and missiles. Russia considers itself a victim of the US information warfare campaign and has employed this strategy.<sup>140</sup> As per the finding of the Mueller Report purposes of Russia's multi-pronged strategy were; to further aggravate the existing division within the American political System, to target democratic institutions and major democracies and start a conflict.<sup>141</sup> The campaign had three different components:

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<sup>139</sup> George F. Kennan, 1948, ‘The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare’, U.S. State Department Memorandum, April 30. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114320>.

<sup>140</sup> Mark Galeotti, *“Russian political war: moving beyond the hybrid,”* Routledge, 2019.

<sup>141</sup> American Constitution Society, *Key Findings of Mueller Report*, <https://www.acslaw.org/projects/the-presidential-investigation-education-project/other-resources/key-findings-of-the-mueller-report/>

1. Internet Research Agency's led information operations
2. Cyber Hacking Operations of Russian Military Intelligence Agency
3. Infiltration into Trump Election Campaign

Russian interference in the 2016 presidential campaign to favour the Republican presidential campaign against Hillary was the most prominent case of political warfare that remained the dominant debate to further deteriorate relations in the following years. The finding of the Mueller Reports further showed that its infiltration was a well-thought-out strategic plan that carried received instructions from Moscow, which was amazingly effective in infiltrating US media and impacting public debate around the 2016 elections. Their basic purpose was to deride trust in the democratic process. By the end of the 2016 election IRA launched an information campaign that could reach millions of U.S. citizens through social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Tumblr per the report Face book later assessed that IRA-controlled accounts reached more than 126 million people<sup>142</sup> IRA was part of the project "Project Lakhta" funded by Moscow Oligarch.

**Political warfare employed against Democracies:**

Most Western analysts are convinced that Moscow has built nonconventional warfare capacity, particularly in the Cyber and information domain. These operations do not represent isolated events but these are fundamental of strategy prepared in East Europe to employ against the West to target democratic institutions to deepen division in society and create division in the transatlantic alliances. The Russian government in addition to information operations has also provided support to Far

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<sup>142</sup> Alina Polyakova, "Lessons From the Mueller report on Russian political warfare," *Brookings*, Thursday June 20, 2019 <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/lessons-from-the-mueller-report-on-russian-political-warfare/>

Right political parties in Europe. For instance, Heinz Christian Strache, head of the Austrian Far Right Political Party was made to resign when a video surfaced in which he could be seen giving a contract to an Australian newspaper in exchange for Russian support for his party. In 2014 and 2017, Paris's right-wing national political party received a loan of \$ 9.8 million and party leader Marine Le Pen (also a presidential leader) applied for an additional loan of \$29m.<sup>143</sup> These operations fit into larger strategies to influence activities. Russia also interfered in Ukraine's Democracy in 2014; Ukraine's central election commission was infiltrated by Moscow-linked cyber hackers to influence results in favour of the Right Sector-ultra nationalist party.

Following the 2016 US elections, Emmanuel Macron's campaign in 2017 was targeted by online disinformation-Macron Leaks. Bogus fake accounts were created on Facebook to spy on presidential candidate Macron. Furthermore, the email accounts of Macron's official campaign were also hacked. During the period when French Law banned media to report on the election campaigns, in three and half hours Twitter campaign Macron Leaks reached 47,000 tweets. In addition to Russian military forces (VOSTOK 2018- a most recent example of strategic military exercises) Russian paramilitary forces have also played a role in the Moscow information confrontation. Over the last few years, Moscow has shown its willingness and ability to use paramilitary forces to further its political warfare agenda. The trend has increased with the Ukraine crisis of 2014, where paramilitary organizations were used to fight in the region of Donbas. It has employed private military companies (PMC), for example, Wagner Group, in Syria, Western Balkan and Central Africa. The

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid

assistance and sponsorship of PMCs and other groups enabled it to carry out hybrid operations whenever and wherever it felt necessary. As per Western analysts, this has proved true in states such as Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Western Balkan States of Bosnia, Serbia, and Herzegovina and recently in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.<sup>144</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Nation States similar to individuals have character driving factors which include; socio-political experiences, historical traditions and geography that remain unchanged over time while demonstrating them in different ways. To move towards cooperation, old and inadequate models of cooperation would not work. A reset is required to deal with fundamental causes rather than immediate irritants that are troubling relations. Thus, despite Trump's initial shift in policy to get along with Russia the US failed to achieve cooperation with the former. The Congress successfully securitized the relationship- framing Moscow as an imminent threat. Through several legislative checks and various non-legislative means, it influenced the US's foreign policy discourse. Several bills were passed to impose new sanctions against Russia and to limit the power of the president to make changes in policy towards Moscow. Similarly, the primacy of the US and its Universalist ideology-based on its relation with the outside world failed to take into account Russian security interests and concerns thus further aggravating its threat narrative. Media hysteria, in addition to conspiracy theories, misinformation and reporting created a narrative that Russia is a potential aggressor working to undermine the national

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<sup>144</sup> Danny Pronk, "The return of Political Warfare," *The Strategic Monitor* 2018-19 <https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2018/strategic-monitor-2018-2019/the-return-of-political-warfare/>

interest of the US, attacking American values and institutions. Thus, any semblance of normality by Trump towards Russia was portrayed as Russian works, forcing Trump to adopt a harsher stance towards the former. Hence, the US domestic threat perception against Russia, the shaping of reality by the political elite, media hysteria and geography and socio-political traditions deteriorated the bilateral relation of both countries.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The current study deals with the relationship between US and Russia under the Trump administration. Here, the analysis of relation is carried out within the context of constructivism to analyse if the logic of conflict and cooperation depends on social events, facts and inter-subjective interactions and changes in identity concerning others. Constructivism as a model theory has been applied in the Cold Warpost-Cold War period of detente and under the Trump period to analyse if this model holds. If it does why it do so and if not what are reasons behind failure? An extensive literature review has revealed that the social world is created because of a human agent which acts as an agent in shaping identities. Society is not the product of mere objective truth. It has been found that sources of Washington and Moscow foreign policy are identities shaped by past interactions, events and experiences. The perception of being self-guided by historic norms creates identity. The process thus serves to institutionalize norms, assumptions, and habits of behaviour.

### **Basic Findings:**

Some basic findings of the study include why interest guided by identities underlined by inter-subjective interactions defined Moscow as an enemy of the US and France and other European countries as the enemy. The study also highlights why détente occurred during the Gorbachev period and not under Trump which constructivists defined as order moving from conflict to cooperation requires a change of mind involved in the process of self-perception that resulted in the change of identity with relation to other. Why this détente could not occur under Trump when the latter same willingness to move from conflict to cooperation?

**Finding 01:**

Kenneth Waltz's realist assumption regarding the end of the Cold War is that the Soviets were trying to right its economy to preserve its position in the global order so the cold war was ended. Constructivists put it there was a deconstruction of perception of "who I am?" and "what the other is?" In addition, to change from conflict to cooperation requires a change of ideas on one side and this change was provided by Moscow. Gorbachev wanted to break away from the traditional cold war legacy provided by the ideas of leaders including Stalin and Lenin and wanted to engage in cooperation with the West. When Gorbachev realized that the USSR was a floundering but perfectible social project that needed Marxist Leninist goal to be bacon of social democracy. His ideas were manifested through New Thinking and Paradigm shift in foreign policy. The history of Moscow has always been guided by personalities and ideas more specifically designed to justify oppression and control at home. Fear of external threats was used to justify oppression and centralization at home. These leaders used traditional Machiavellian strategies to gain power using fear and personality politics to justify control at home. Soviet leaders from Oprichniki of Ivan the terrible to Lenin the terrible dictatorship followed this course. Ideas of these leaders deprived people of power thus ideas plays an important role in the fall of communism. From the enlightenment policies of Rousseau which led to a revolution in France to Bush's neo-conservative policies in that is Iraq war, this shows ideas play an important role. Gorbachev tried to deconstruct and reshape identity through glasnost, perestroika, political speeches, scholarly interpretations and political discourses and through redefining foreign policy with eastern European states and the West.

Thus Gorbachev's paradigm shift in domestic reforms and new thinking was instrumental in ending the cold war. Through these policies, public weariness was converted to possible acceptance of new ideas. Alexander Wendt in his article, "Anarchy is what State make of it: the social construction of power politics" asserts that the main purpose of Gorbachev's thinking was to free the USSR from the constraining relations of the Cold War and engage in cooperation with the West. Thus identities were changed by the change of ideas by his "new thinking" to achieve the ultimate goal of changing the behaviour of Soviet citizens.

"Norms" governing relations with Western states were redefined, for example, there was the renunciation of the Brezhnev doctrine- similar to the US Monroe doctrine in determining relations with the Eastern European states. There was also a rejection of the NSM model in eastern states that made him change his mind, that the floundering socialist project needed democratization to achieve the Marxist Leninist goal of a "beacon of socialist democracy."

The identity of the USSR was changed the from power of ideas. He perceived the problem that the USSR was facing not through the lens of the country's perception as besieged citadel or through fear of externalization- constant fear from the external enemy but rather as a problem of its own making due to failure to implement reforms. The situation was perceived as a result of the removal of power from people. Thirty years of hindered economic growth was believed to be result of hindered economic reforms after death of Stalin, and 60 years of impeded political reforms after 1920. These beliefs change Gorbachev's political thinking and response. Even before he undertook power he called for economic self-government,



increase self-government and socialist democracy. He responded by enacting reforms of Perestroika- and Glasnost. He constantly asserted that there is no alternative to perestroika (opposite to the status quo of the decade). According to the psychological constructivist view person,'s reality is also constituted by a person's personal experience. He had unpleasant memories of Communist Party, and his paternal grandmother was arrested on charges of being counter-revolutionary. He was shunned and chastised by other boys of his age called an 'enemy of people'. So, when he became leader he decided to change the country- which he loved to save it. His personal experience thus influenced his policies.

This change of belief in identity also reshaped interest and priorities with other states and it was replicated in political discourse for defining inter-subjective interactions with other states. Gorbachev redefined state interest he wrote in his book Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World by stating that, "fundamental principle of new outlook is very simple, nuclear war cannot be used as mean of achieving social, political, ideological, economic or any other goal." He unilaterally called off the nuclear arms race. Gorbachev made a paradigm shift by standing down identity commitment inside the USSR resulting from breaking downUSSR'sthe USSR's aggressive posture. However, Moscow could not achieve long-term enduring relations with the West this difficulty in relation is defined by Constructivists to demand and bidding for maintaining the relatively stable roles of identities gives Wendt gives credit to the end of the Cold war to the Soviets by asserting that, "when Gorbachev changed his mind- about relation with the US, Cold War ended."35

**Finding 02:**

Trump when assumed power showed indecent haste to move forward and engage in cooperation with Moscow. In his election campaign speech, he showed his willingness to move along with Russia, he even questioned the existence of NATO and in the initial period, he did not criticize Russia for allegations of involvement in elections. However, he finds these policies difficult to execute. What were the reasons that made it difficult to get along with Russia? Several findings under constructivism are attributed to this. First, the perception of Moscow shaped in the identity discourse of the US prevented the normalization of relations. Both identities are considered juxtaposed to each other. Institutions of civil society which act as sources of identity include both formal and informal institutions that have further entrenched these identities. Therefore it would be difficult for a single institution or personality to change it. Thus despite the electoral victory of Trump congressional Republicans under the leadership of John McCain joined hands with Democrats. They showed a rebuttal of relations with Russia until the president showed a complete reversal of policy. Furthermore, the congressional view based on an understanding of the past guided the view that Moscow should be punished for excesses it made against Western democracy. Congress did not want Trump to lift sanctions against Russia, therefore sanctions were institutionalized against Russia. Trump despite their willingness could not change Congress and the national security establishment's perception of Russia hence relations deteriorated further.

Furthermore, another informal institute shaped the identity discourse of the US against Russia. Media hysteria was created through misinformation and conspiracy theories that moulded Russian identity as a country bent upon derailing

the democratic system and US national interest. The controversy was generated over an email sent from Trump's son to Russian. The anti-Trump and anti-Russian narrative was generated when Trump failed to hawkish stance against Moscow. Media further generated an anti-Russian narrative through its reporting on Russian propaganda channels that allegedly attacked important US institutions. David Corn added fuel to the fire when he reported that Russians were working for years to install Trump as an agent. Because of his soft stance toward Russia, Trump was portrayed as working in collusion with Russia.

Any semblance of normalcy by Trump towards the West was perceived as a Russian non-conventional warfare strategy. This also cast Trump's image, even though he debated cooperation based on the American first strategy he portrayed the Russian project installed in US political system. Thus he ended up pursuing harsher rhetoric and foreign policy. Most Western analysts were convinced that Moscow has employed non-conventional warfare against Western liberal democracies. Several events and experiences in the Trump period reinforced this stance including Moscow's interference elections of several European democracies. It was a perceived threat of autocracy against liberal democracy to derail trust in democratic institutions. Even Moscow and China relations were called a contest of authoritarianism against democracy. All this ended up forcing Trump to attain a hawkish stance against Russia. He withdrew from several Cold War agreements to control weapons, imposed more sanctions and provided Ukraine with military aid that the previous US administration refrained from. As a result, relations reached a new low since the end of the Cold War.

Another reason for the clash of relation is the differences between both identities- that guides interest and prescribe different role to both states-US and Moscow. As constructivists put it state societies are more hierarchical units that function within a cultural framework which assign these states with definite roles. Democratic state societies proclaim their right to rule on their ability and role to maintain order that functions for the interest of all for instance through a concert of Democracies. The US has been trying to assert this claim and associated privileges to achieve hegemony. Trump continued with the legacy of their predecessors and tried to create a concert of democracies by the inclusion of various states through NATO eastward extension. The alliance included several bordering states of Russia and extended proposals for other states. This continued under Trump who went ahead from his predecessors by providing Ukraine with weapons- a step that past US administrations have refrained by far. This aggravated Moscow's perception of self based on past understanding as a besieged citadel, a state repeatedly underwent attacks by external forces. US identity collided with Moscow's belief of self as NSM- a state vanguard of socialism to guide peripheral states towards modernity. Resultantly, the latter undertook a step that it seems legitimate to protect its identity by attacking neighbouring states that showed intentions for inclusion in NATO so, as a result of the clash of identities of US and Moscow relations took for downward trajectory.

The above study has revealed that rather than rationality identity and beliefs are more important in shaping reality. However, there are certain limitations to constructivist theory. A shifting Russian economy- its boom-bust cycle of economic growth and the US foreign policy response and behaviour influenced Moscow's

foreign policy. Initially, GDP fell in 2015, but it showed recovery and marginal signs of growth in 2017 and at the beginning of 2018, oil prices also increased. A similar shift was observed in the foreign policy of Moscow which shifted from confrontational Slavic nationalist narrative to great power balancing. Simply put, a period of low economic growth in Russia corresponded with the US's softer rhetoric and policy of cooperation towards the former, and a thaw in relation was witnessed. Thus material factors also constrained Putin's foreign policy behaviour. However, Putin never showed reluctance to use force. Second, identity cannot be regarded as a single source of behaviour there are several other factors including fear, status or reason. But material capabilities are of little use unless these are used properly. To exercise influence these resources be used properly in a way that is characterized as legitimate by other states.

Research has revealed that the personal identification of a large number of people shapes collective identification which in turn shapes the foreign policy of the nation. It is in line with Constructivism which asserts that civil society's perception of who I am? And what the other is? This creates identities which in turn define interest and shape relations with others. Constructivism rather than focusing on objective facts takes into consideration identity, belief and perception which are motivators of state action. Research is significant because it analyses why the change of mind during the Gorbachev period in the USSR moved relation move relations toward cooperation and ended Cold War, while Trump's willingness to move along with Russia failed to replicate the same results, and relations achieved new low since the end of Cold War. A theory or concept is mostly generic and tries to explain a general pattern. In this study, constructivism is employed in the case of the US-Russia

relation and has been argued original Cold War rhetoric by both Moscow and US negatively impacted the raging new Cold War. Moreover, the 2016 presidential election acted as a catalyst with inference allegations ensued by investigation further politicized as result tension brewed up.

There is, thus need for more research in this area whereby to understand the complex social phenomenon of the relation between both the US and Russia rather than applying overly generalized one size fit an all policy unique situations that need differently manufactured responses and new thinking. Social Constructivism provides sufficient analysis of complex social phenomena by which deep analysis and understanding can be achieved by an introspecting course of interactions in past with analysis of identities of various individuals, groups and political entities each having peculiar experiences, perceptions, idiosyncrasies, interests and ideologies. So, to understand the new cold war rather than looking toward power or ideology there is a need to look at inter-subjective interactions which provide entrenched world view and identity. Constructivism provides an optimistic positive alternative to realism by recognising the possibility for relational improvement, altering perception and behavioural adaptation. Based on the aforementioned finding some recommendations are warranted. The need is to rethink the norms established by the previous administration as well as the relative expectations and assumptions established by each side. Similarly, the myth of American own differences and the American superiority complex can push the entire planet to bear the repercussion of tantrums. Thus both need to stop for the interest of humanity and their selves. As Alexander Wendt put it, the Cold War would end by the day when both US and Russia start perceiving each other as enemy.

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