

THE IMPACT OF THE COLD WAR LEGACY ON US-RUSSIA BILATERAL RELATION*

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Abstract

In the nature of US-Russia relations, we see a model of bilateral relationship that fosters confrontation and rivalry much stronger than harmony and cooperation. In the quest for a new foreign policy identity in the post-Cold War era, the emergence of such a political geography has narrowed Russia's foreign policy alternatives, consolidating the geopolitical notion in her foreign policy. As the Cold War legacy has determined the positions of both sides; the US as a status quo power and the Soviet Union as the revisionist one, it has made the bilateral relations much easier to get into a confrontation.

Keywords: *The Cold War, bilateral relations, US foreign policy, Russian foreign policy, Soviet Union*

Öz

ABD-Rusya ikili ilişkilerinin doğasında uyum ve işbirliğinden çok çatışma ve rekabeti besleyen bir model görüyoruz. Soğuk Savaş zaferi ABD'ye dış politikasını değişim yerine sürekliliğe dayandırma şeklinde bir özgüven kazandırdı. Bunun sonucunda, böyle bir siyasi coğrafyanın ortaya çıkması Soğuk Savaş sonrası dünyada yeni bir dış politika arayışına giren Rusya'nın dış politika seçeneklerini daralttı ve dış politikasındaki jeopolitik nosyonu güçlendirdi. Diğer bir deyişle, Rusya adına dış politika geçmişinden kaçmak olanaksız hale geldi. Soğuk Savaş mirası ABD statükocu güç, Rusya da revizyonist güç olarak her iki tarafın da konumlarını sürdürmelerini kolaylaştırdıkça, ikili ilişkilerin çatışma ortamı içerisine girmesi daha kolay hale gelmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Soğuk Savaş, ikili ilişkiler, ABD dış politikası, Rus dış politikası, Sovyetler Birliği*

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INTRODUCTION

The Cold War may have ended but its legacy does not look like to disappear at least in the foreseeable future. An international order which could not achieve to make a healthy transition to a new equilibrium would not satisfy both antagonists of the Cold War. While it is possible to observe this legacy almost in every part of the world in varying dimension, there is no doubt that US-Russia bilateral relations bear the strongest traces of this legacy.

As obvious to everyone, US-Russia relations is the story of bilateral relations model regarding relations which cannot enjoy long period of stability. A bilateral relation with a Cold War past maintains its feature of ushering in contest and confrontation rather than harmony and cooperation. With such a past, the bilateral relations have gained a momentum of its own and gets harder and harder to change its tide. In the post-Cold War era, while the US-Russia bilateral relations have been influenced by a variety of dynamics, the Cold War legacy has kept its determinative significance in the course of the bilateral relations, because it is obvious to see that bilateral relations with a Cold War past has imposed a considerable restraints on both sides that has not vanished as yet. On behalf of illuminating this fact, this article is going to try to answer why despite the end of the Cold War, US-Russian relations could not achieve to escape the legacy of the Cold War.

ENDURING CONFLICTS AND THE LEGACY OF THE PAST

We can define bilateral relations as the harmonization of the foreign policies of the two states having foreign policy realities of their own. Since each side has different interests, goals and expectations, the future of the bilateral relations will depend on to what extent the two sides will achieve

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this harmonization. In this harmonization the legacy of the past may play a significant role in terms of inhibiting this harmonization.

We see the crucial weight of the past legacy in enduring conflictual cases. While the outbreak of conflict and crises situations is the most common dynamics in bilateral relations, bilateral relations might well be imprisoned into a state of enduring conflictual situation which is almost impossible to alter for a foreseeable future. Every move made by one side may be perceived by an act of aggression by the other and this makes the bilateral relations open to the eruption of crisis situations. Even the state of enduring conflict serves the foreign policy interests of both parties that the bilateral relations keep its permanent character as long as no radical change is observed in the positions of the sides. In such cases, the past of the bilateral relations plays a crucial role if it is strong enough to nourish mistrust. The causes underlying enduring state of conflict stems from the fact that interests of the two states inevitably collide with each other due to the foreign policy necessities of these states. That is to say, the permanent character of the conflicts is not necessarily the result of the animosity between two states because the defined foreign policy goals one side has no other way than clashing with goals of the other side. In other words, bilateral relations are imprisoned to a situation that the foreign policy variables do not allow the relations to overcome it, because the variables are too strong to imprison the bilateral relations into a permanent conflictual situation. The situation gains much more legitimacy as the state of enduring conflict serves to the foreign policy interests of both sides. US-Iran bilateral relations portray this phenomenon very well.

Why does not the state of permanent conflict come to an end in US-Iranian relations? The cause of this is obvious. The foreign policy of both states is under the pressure of strong foreign policy constants. Neither of the sides can ever think of stepping back from the positions which are the product of their foreign policy constants. On the part of Iran, the

regime's relying on anti-Western Islamic revolution has involved her to be a revisionist state. Khomeini believed that once the Shah had been ousted, the revolution would naturally have to confront imperialism face to face if it hoped to hold to its original path.¹ Khomeini even regarded U.S. embassy takeover as a second revolution even greater than the first one. The first one confronted the despotic dynasty and brought it down.² The second took a dead aim at the root of all our sufferings, the imperialist system itself. Iran apart from her anti-American stance had to tilt towards being a revisionist state against the status quo state powers of Saudi Arabia and Israel in order to stand as a pole in the Middle East. Anti-American discourses such as 'fighting against blasphemy' have become a *raison d'être* for the Islamic regime. Since United States chooses to make alliance with status quo powers, it makes Iran a troublemaker for the interests of the United States. Besides, since securing the interests of Israel in the Middle East is a constant of US foreign policy, the US will never come to the point of sacrificing Israel for the sake of a rapprochement with Iran, neither will Iran step back with the same rationalization. Such an impasse is the classical manifest of *dialogue de sourds* in bilateral relations. The past of the relations serves nothing more than nurturing 'evil' intentions of the other side. The confrontation gains its legitimacy from the past and from the political geography that the confrontation happened. A past with rivalry and confrontation sets the stage for a psychological environment which makes the outbreak of crises much easier. An erupting crisis renders it easier in the eyes of the foreign policy elites to make analogies with past experiences. If the memories in a common geography of a past conflict are fresh, it might set the stage for the reawakening of the revanchist sentiments. As long as the main actors of foreign policy on both sides continue to be nurtured by this legacy, the conflict an enduring one.

1 Kenneth M Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America*, Random House, New York, 2004

2 a.g.e.

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In the enduring bilateral conflicts, legacy of the past bilateral relations dictate geopolitics of its own drawing the boundaries of the bilateral relations. Without the formation of a common 'we', bilateral relations cannot help but be imprisoned into these geopolitics. The geopolitical legacy encourages conflict rather than cooperation just like sword of Damocles over bilateral relations.

Franco-German relations in the 'interwar period' could be one of the best examples shedding light on this fact. Following the Versailles settlement, the bilateral relations suffered from the legacy of pre-First World War geopolitics. France sought additional safeguards by offering changes to the frontiers and status of the Rhineland. Some Frenchmen argued that the natural frontier of Germany was the Rhine, and that the left bank territories or even the entire Rhineland should be incorporated into France. Historian Auland acknowledged the French dilemma: 'Either we annex the left bank of the Rhine and violate principles, or we do not annex it and France remains in perpetual danger of invasion'.³ Franco-German relations achieved a transformation as a result of a strategic necessity when following the Korean War. German's economic recovery became an inseparable element of France's security. Therefore, a true rapprochement was achieved as the security requirements of post-Second World European order harmonized the foreign policy interests of these two states.

THE COLD WAR LEGACY OR THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES OVER BILATERAL RELATIONS

Despite the end of the Cold War, a stable bilateral relationship could not be built between the United States and Russia. The dynamics that impel the two sides to a state of continuous confrontation are much stronger

³ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919*, MacMillan, London, 1991.

than harmony and cooperation and therefore it does not take much longer for the two sides to get into tense situations. What we observe in the nature of this confrontation in particular is that the bilateral relations can never achieve to escape the shadow of the past. This past is for sure the Cold War past and the legacy that they have inherited from this past has become a constant of their bilateral relation.

There is no doubt that the Cold War was the most crucial era in the history of the US-Russia bilateral relations since it played determinative role in shaping the nature of the current relations. The significance of the Cold War past in the bilateral relations is so significant that beyond its ideological dimension, it has determined the geopolitics and psychology underlying current bilateral relations. Even if ideological confrontation has ended, it has been observed that the basic nature of the bilateral relations has not undergone a real transformation. This is no more than the direct consequences of the foreign policy constants that the two states have.

More specifically, the current state of confrontation between the United States and Russia is the result of foreign policy constants that both sides have. Foreign policy constants and realities do not allow the two sides to cultivate stable relations. In this type of bilateral relations, even if neither defines foreign policy objectives by directly targeting the other side, neither side can help seeing that the one side's moves are hurdle on the other side's foreign policy path. Well beyond that, the goals that United States and Russia had set cannot help each side being perceived as aggressive moves in the each other's eyes, because the foreign policy realities of the two sides drift them automatically to a state of confrontation independent of the wills of decision makers.

It was thought that on behalf of the bilateral relations an entirely new era began with the end of the Cold War. Yet, the optimism with backing of the "Bill and Boris" personal relationship, has not lasted much longer. The real face of the bilateral relations has come to surface with Putin's

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coming to power. What Putin era in the post-Soviet Russia has signified is that how hard it was to liquidate the Soviet elite of the Cold War.

Since Cold War defeat and the collapse of the Soviet Union has been a traumatic blow to Russia's global prestige, it was evident that sooner or later the revanchist sentiments of the Cold War defeat would find its spokesperson in the Russian domestic politics in post-Yeltsin years and the successor that Boris Yeltsin has chosen would be the spokesperson of these revanchist sentiments.

It was Vladimir Putin who expressed his regret that German Democratic Republic had not lasted longer and the Soviet Union withdrew so precipitously from Germany.⁴ Frankly, Vladimir Putin's famous portraying of the disintegration of the Soviet as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century has awakened doubts in the West over the return of Soviet minded leaders to Russia.⁵ We cannot deny Vladimir Putin's background's impact on the perception of the American political elites for sure. The remarks of former Republican presidential candidate Senator John McCain in 2008 are not something that can only be attributed to Republican senator: 'I looked into Mr Putin's eyes and I saw three things-a K and a G and a B.'⁶ No one can ever deny the fact that Vladimir Putin attributes himself a missionary role in order to secure the future of Russia in the global politics.

As the international order could not undergo a healthy transformation, it has paved the way for the Russian nationalist elite to question the position of Russia in the post-Cold War era. What Russia seeks is to find herself a prestigious position that will satisfy the political and the military elite and would suit her immense size on the world map. However, the problem is that the post-Cold War international order was far from meeting

4 Vladimir Putin, *First Person*, Public Affairs, New York, 2000, s. 69.

5 Putin deplores collapse of USSR, BBC, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4480745.stm>, (25.04.2005).

6 Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, Brookings Institution Press. Washington D.C., 2015, s.107.

this necessity. Putin's main concern is to ensure that Russia reaches to a strong position in global politics and economy so that Russia can look at her future with greater confidence. Aside from all, it is obvious to see that the rise of European Union and China as distinct models besides United States as the only real superpower has impelled Vladimir Putin to tend his foreign policy goals towards a civilizational path. In the eyes of Vladimir Putin, Ukraine is part of Russian or greater Russian world and as a result of this he regards sovereignty of Ukraine as an unfortunate historical accident. Putin did not run behind in seeing the fact that Germany utilized from European Union in terms of rising as a power, so ex-Soviet territories was tailored-made territory in terms rising as an economic actor.⁷

Yet the Putin era did not begin as a total break from the Yeltsin's foreign policy. As Angela Stent argues Putin was a pragmatist willing to engage with the United States on a transactional basis recognizing the great asymmetry in American and Russian economic and military power.⁸ Hence, Putin conveyed positive messages to the United States, bilateral relations could never return to the climate of the Yeltsin era. Following the September 11 attacks, Vladimir Putin was the first leader to contact Bush and offer Russian assistance in combating against al-Qaida in Afghanistan. In the subsequent UN Security Council Resolution of 1386 passed on December 20, Putin administration gave support to US military action in Afghanistan. Yet, the Bush administration remained indifferent to the positive approach of Vladimir Putin towards the US and did not hesitate to walk out of the ABM treaty for the sake of the ballistic missile defence in order to fend Iranian threat against Europe. As this rationality was not taken seriously by the Putin administration, it has strengthened doubts over the Bush administration's approach towards Russia in the eyes of the Russian political elite.

⁷ Michael McFaul, *From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia*, HoughtonMittflin Harcourt, New York 2018, s.393.

⁸ Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian relations in the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2014, s.53.

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It is widely admitted that the Munich Speech of Vladimir Putin has been the turning point in the evolution of the bilateral relations following the end of the Cold War. In this speech Putin denounced US unipolarity with the words 'there is one master, one sovereign.' The speech has become a manifest that the efforts to integrate Russia into the US-led Western international order were not realistic and unsustainable. According to Dimitri Trenin with the Munich speech Russia left the West. He interpreted this speech as:

*'Until recently, Russia saw itself as a Pluto in the Western solar system, very far from the centre but still fundamentally part of it.. Now it has left that orbit entirely. Russia's leader has given up on becoming part of the West and started creating their own Moscow-centred system.'*⁹

It has been realized that the Cold War legacy that Russia has inherited could not allow any successful integration. Vladimir Frolov has summarized the failure of these efforts as follows:

*'A consensus has formed in Russia, a national consensus and a consensus among the authorities to the effect that Russia cannot be integrated into Western structures. And there is no opening for us to be integrated into the East. This means that Russia is destined to remain and independent centre of power, whether it wants it or not. It will have to rely on its own code of civilization, doing its best to establish equally distant or equally close relations with other centres of power.'*¹⁰

To confirm this, former U.S. Ambassador to Moscow Michael McFaul argues that Putin is an expression of Russian culture and history.¹¹ As

9 Dimitri Trenin, "Russia Leaves the West", *Foreign Affairs* 85(4), 2006 Temmuz/Ağustos, s.87-96.

10 Lilia Shevtsova, *Russia-Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C. 2007, s.172.

11 McFaul, a.g.e., s.424

opposed to Yeltsin, Putin suffers the agony of the 'lost empire' and thus nurtures revanchist sentiments against the West. That is what confirmed Putin's faith civilizational path in his foreign policy. This indicates that civilizational sentiments get involved in a diplomatic conflict and this makes concrete issues on the agenda succumbed to cultural and civilizational sentiments. There is no doubt that inflexible transformation of the bipolar world has revived civilizational sentiments on the Russian part.

While a new international order had begun with the end of the Cold War, the emerging international order was constructed upon the defeat of the Soviet Union. With the triumph of the liberal ideology, the U.S. and/or the U.S.-led Western world has entered the emerging era one step ahead, and therefore had hoped and expected Russia to be fully integrated into the liberal international order. The main priority of the US as the hegemon of the emerging international order was to disseminate liberal values to the rest of international order. Since U.S. was in a quasi-unipolar position, she did not have any global equilibrium concern like the powers in the previous centuries following a hegemonic war. In other words, the U.S. foreign policy has tied the stability of the international order to her own leadership and benevolence. Therefore, the international system could not achieve to make a healthy transition, that in terms of allowing the emergence of an order that all the great powers could keep their prestigious position.

The burden of this on Russian foreign policy was putting Russia into a position that she has to make clear-cut and tough choices on her foreign policy path. Yet the end of the Cold War has signified a the victory of a certain value over the others which would inevitably convert the value of hierarchy to actor dimension. There could be excepted no other thing than such an hegemonic victory's inclination to subordinate the vanquished and the rest to itself.

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It is obviously seen that the greatest deficiency of the existing international order is that it has not permitted any high level of flexibility in terms of socialization. There is no doubt that when value criterions are raised on the part of an international order, it will usher in serious criterions in terms of behavioural rules so that a much more permanent and stable order could be formed. The current international order is a rigid order which raised the bar so that every actor will feel obliged to consent to a higher price of legitimacy. Each member was expected to have at least a certain level of parliamentary regime, a globalized liberal economy with least possible regulations, a human rights regime based on Western values and a harmonious foreign policy with the United States. It has sought to homogenize actors in terms of granting legitimacy and vice versa.

Instead of reacting to dynamic equilibrium to be replaced by another, the post-Cold War European international order has turned into an entity that either assimilates or rejects entrance in the sense of "access permitted or access denied". As opposed to this, the international order following the Vienna Congress of 1815 did not exclude limited use of force but it was an order that could produce much more alternatives. The emerging international order in Europe has minimized all these options that multipolar international system had previously granted to such a major power rich geography. The coalition building capability of the system, limited use of force to overcome the impasse, and the statesmanship quality are all gone.

Therefore civilizational dimension in the bilateral relations has come to the surface with the outbreak of the Ukrainian question. The Ukrainian question has raised the mutual distrust to its climax and the bilateral relations got into its most tense period since the end of the Cold War. The Ukrainian question has demonstrated how the bilateral relations could not achieve to overcome the legacy of the Cold War. The primary cause of

this fact was that the post-Cold War international order could not achieve to undergo a healthy transition which was far from promising an enduring stability for both the winner and the loser of the Cold War.

The post-Cold War international order was constructed on the defeat of the Soviet Union which was complementary with the objectives of US foreign policy. In the eyes of Russia, Ukraine as an ex-Soviet territory has become a question of a natural ally's being lost. As the US or the US-led Western world has entered the emerging era one step ahead, they hoped and expected Russia to be fully integrated into the US-led liberal international order as a status quo power and did not feel any obligation to care about the foreign policy expectations of Russia and her foreign policy elite.

The main priority of the US as the hegemon of the emerging international order was to spread liberal values to the entire emerging international order with the goal of increasing the number of the status quo defender states as a part of the 'Enlargement' policy of the Clinton administration. Since US was in a quasi-unipolar position, it did not have any concern to care about the global equilibrium.

Having won the Cold War, the United States has had enough reason to base her foreign policy on continuation. As today's US foreign policy is shaped by the dictates of Cold War, it is obvious that the constants and realities of US foreign policy would not allow any radical shift in the foreign policy of US. US foreign policy was not in the position to break up with the Cold War past if it intended to consolidate her unprecedented global position.

Therefore, NATO had to function as the military watchdog of the Western led international order. Japan had to continue to become the linchpin of US East Asia security and foreign policy. Turkey, Egypt and the Gulf States would maintain their geopolitical role in the Middle East. The

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US would continue to oppose totalitarian and authoritarian regimes as long as it did not contradict with her interests, because liberal regimes are more inclined to follow status quo foreign policies rather than revisionist ones.

It is an undeniable fact that among all the engagements of the US, the European political geography had a pivotal significance on behalf the United States to maintain her global leadership position. If United States ever loses her traditional influence in Europe, it may even signify the end of her leadership position in the world, because it has owed the stability in her global hegemonic position to such a naval cord with Europe. Therefore, the constants of US foreign policy do not allow to think herself apart from being a European power. As a corollary of this, as long as the United States regards herself as an European power, it makes every emerging serious conflict between Russia and the European powers, a conflict between Russia and the US at the same time.

Without any doubt, if the United States would remain as a European power, that would involve maintaining and strengthening her most significant political as well military link with Europe: The North Atlantic Alliance. This has involved the US administrations to give much more comprehensive role to the North Atlantic Alliance in the creation of a new political geography in Europe.

The Clinton administration chose to integrate the former East Bloc into the Transatlantic security system and the North Atlantic Alliance has expanded to include all Warsaw Pact members except Russia. In adopting this policy, the Clinton administration regarded ex-Warsaw Pact geography as a space that must be filled lest no security vacuum emerges. While stressing the significance of the enlargement of NATO, Bill Clinton writes in his memoirs:

*'I was determined to do everything I could to create a Europe that was united, free, democratic and secure for the first time in history. I had to make sure NATO expansion did not simply lead to a new division of Europe farther to the East.'*¹²

Victory for US in the Cold War also signified victory for NATO, there was no other way than rewarding the organization by promoting it to the primary security guarantor for the future of new Europe. Therefore, it was not hard to understand that the United States and her European allies would not allow the Transatlantic Alliance to end its mission. A military organization founded for defence purposes in the early years of Cold War initiated an unprecedented enlargement. While in 1999 Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic became NATO members against Russia's opposition; in 2004 Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Slovenia gained membership status and in 2009 Albania and Croatia became members.

Furthermore, during the Bucharest Summit in 2008, the North Atlantic Alliance did not hesitate to give Ukraine and Georgia green light for future membership. With the recent participation of Montenegro, NATO member states have risen to 29. As the US Ambassador to Moscow during Reagan and Bush administrations Jack Matlock has emphasized, just as the Cold War has ended, the Bush administration promised Gorbachev that the West would not abuse it if he let Eastern Europe free.¹³ Besides, US President Bill Clinton did not hesitate to give Russia extra assurances. Following Boris Yeltsin's re-election in July 1996, Clinton and Yeltsin met in in March 20-21, 1997 in Helsinki for a summit meeting. In that summit, against the anxieties of Yeltsin on NATO's eastward expansion, Clinton gave him assurances. Clinton mentions this in his memoirs as follows:

¹² Bill Clinton, *My Life*, Arrow Books, London 2005, s.569.

¹³ Jack Matlock, 'The Mistakes We Made with Russia and How to Stop Making Them' [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmP513n78YE); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmP513n78YE>, (17.05.2019)

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*'He reminded me that unlike the United States, Russia had been invaded twice-by Napoleon and by Hitler-and the trauma of those events still coloured the country's collective psychology and shaped its politics. I told Yeltsin that if he would agree to NATO expansion and the NATO-Russia Partnership, I would make a commitment not to station troops or missiles in the new member countries prematurely, and to support Russian membership in the new G-8, the World Trade Organization, and other international organizations. We had a deal.'*¹⁴

It was a naked truth that while the bipolar international order converted into a Western liberal order, the West could never dare to quit embracing NATO as the legacy of the Cold War. Because NATO was one of the icons of the Western values in defeating communism and besides NATO a military assurance in terms of the protection of the Western values. Therefore, it would be a liberal international order, yet it would evolve within the restraints of the legacy of the Cold War geopolitics.

Having been promoted to the status of a constructive role in new Europe, the security organization of the Cold War had every reason to do everything it can not to remain functionless in the emerging international order. Since the North Atlantic Alliance has gained a new legitimacy, it has got her into a state of strict conditionality to ask the question: "What is the greatest threat against us?" or "What is the next threat against us?"

This has been one of the preeminent legacies of the Cold War in terms of US-Russian relations. With such a military alliance, you have an organization who feels obliged to bring military alternatives in order to protect itself from a possible 'closing down'. But this has ushered in an enormous cost on European security that the more the North Atlantic Alliance expands, the more it strengthens the notion on the part of Russia

¹⁴ Clinton,a.g.e.s,750.

that the alliance poses a threat to her with a pistol in her hand. The fallacy of this approach was understood with the outbreak of the Russian-Georgian War in August 2008. Just prior to this, US Secretary State Condoleezza Rice visited Tbilisi in July and reaffirmed the US support for the membership of Georgia to NATO.¹⁵ Many believe that this has played a significant role in giving courage to Georgian leader Saakashvili in a hot confrontation with Russia.¹⁶ The support given to George has done nothing else than provoking Russia to give Saakashvili an intimidation.

The alliance is currently the world's largest military alliance with three members of the nuclear club and for sure it has gained much more self-esteem with an annual € 1.16 billion military and € 222 million civilian budget as of 2016.¹⁷ It is obvious to see that Putin's Russia cannot rescue itself from a siege psychology as a military alliance that does not give her foreign policy enough breathing space that it needs. Just watching popular debate programs on Russian televisions is enough to understand this psychology of siege.¹⁸

The orientation of both sides in choosing their allies was illuminating enough to confirm the significance of Cold War legacy on the foreign policies of both sides. When the United States had every reason to strengthen her relations with Cold War allies, Russia had no other choice than maintaining and strengthening her relations with her conventional anti-American allies and other regional powers. Venezuela increased her arms purchases from Russia following the failed coup against Hugo Chavez, which Chavez believed to be backed by the United States.¹⁹ Even Venezuela hosted Russian armed forces for joint military exercises in

15 Nikolas K., Gvosdev-Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, CQ Press, Los Angeles 2014, s.177.

16 a.g.e.

17 Funding NATO, NATO, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm, (3.06.2019)

18 a.g.e.

19 a.g.e.

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2008.²⁰ Iran would also be natural client for Russia as long as US-Iranian relations do not promise permanent stability at least for the foreseeable future. As for Syria, Tartus naval base is the only military facility of Russia outside the ex-Soviet territories. When the Syrian uprising began in March 2011, nearly 100.000 Russian citizens were living there.²¹ According to *RIA Novosti*, Russia lost nearly \$4 billion of arms sales contract as a result of the fall of the Qaddafi regime.²²

Therefore, it is obvious that it will do everything in order to not face the same outcome in Syria. For sure, this is one of the significant legacies of the Cold War on the US-Russia bilateral relations that has strengthened the confrontation in the logic of "Where were we?" As Russia continues her business with her old customers, the ill-communication between Russia and the United States has been legitimized. While NATO does not hesitate to enlarge, Russia finds it quite rational to tighten her relations with her Cold War ex-clients. Therefore it would by no means a rational foreign policy on behalf of Russia to cut off her ties with Assad's Syria especially when the US maintains her Cold War ties with the Middle Eastern powers.

The Soviet Union has always been remembered with her catastrophic end; but it is a common overlooked fact that the Soviet legacy has left Russia such a valuable legacy that it cannot have the luxury to reject.

It is obvious that the US has behaved indifferently in terms of building a sustainable and broad security concept for the security of Europe. Besides, in the founding of Act of Russia-NATO Council no binding guarantees were given to Russia regarding the non-deployment of nuclear weapons in the East.²³ A foreign policy identity that would take the

20 a.g.e.

21 Russia's Many Interests in Syria, The Washington Institute (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/russias-many-interests-in-syria>)(January 24,2013)

22 a.g.y.

23 Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2002, s.106.

Soviet legacy into consideration was not something that the hegemonic international order would perceive correctly and react positively.

While the Cold War is not a direct consequence of the emergence of the Soviet Union, it has been an obsession on behalf of US foreign policy to evaluate economic and military integration movements of Russia in the ex-Soviet territories with the quest to revive the Soviet Union. Since the Soviet Union was the revisionist side whose policies played much greater role in the outbreak of the Cold War, Russia's moves in this political geography inevitably causes an alarming effect on behalf of the objectives of US foreign policy. The main problem stems from the fact that the United States since the collapse of the Soviet Union has regarded integrationist moves within the framework of CIS as a sign of 'sovietisation'.

As a result of this, Russia has perceived American foreign policy behaviour in the typical Cold War logic of 'rolling back Russian influence in the region.' In other words, on behalf of keeping the stability of the hegemonic order, US policy towards Russia was shaped by 'the concern of the reawakening of the Soviet Union' in the *postsovetskoe prostranstvo*. This has turned into an obsession of focusing on 'real intentions' of Russia in this geography. In this sense, it was clear that the Eurasian Union project was the last thing that US would like to hear even if it did not intend a political notion. In April 2012, speaking before the Duma, Vladimir Putin defined the creation of a common economic space as the most important event since the collapse of the Soviet Union.²⁴ Having achieved economic integration, Eurasian Union aims at reaching a political integration.²⁵ While reviving the Soviet Union is not realistic for anyone, the reason why it causes concern on behalf of the US is that an economic integration is seen identical with the name of sovietisation in the *postsovetskoe prostranstvo*. In his annual televised press conference

24 Gvosdev, a.g.e., s.188.

25 Gvosdev, a.g.e., s.188.

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in December 2015, Vladimir Putin emphasized that they did not target any state with the formation of the Eurasian Union.²⁶ Yet, the question here is that the formation of Eurasian Union will directly serve to the formation of a new geopolitical map if it succeeds and it will automatically be conditioned to become a pole on its own. If Ukraine is lost, there will be no big appeal for Eurasian Union.

Since NATO has a vitality for the US and the ex-Soviet territories for Russia, we can easily conclude that NATO and the ex-Soviet territories have turned into the 'sword of Damocles' swaying over the bilateral relations.

Besides, while examining the potential on behalf of both sides to achieve the harmonization, domestic politics-foreign policy dimension must not be neglected. In this dimension, military-industry complex plays a significant role as a component of the bureaucratic variable. With its unshakable position within the Russian state, the Russian military-industry complex keeps being as a vested interest in Russian foreign policy. Russia prefers anti-American clients for the benefit of its arms industry.²⁷ Since the existence of Russian arms industry is indispensable for Russian economy it becomes a constant for Russian foreign policy and makes a confrontation with the United States easier.

RETURN OF THE DIALOGUE DE SOURDS

The Poland issue was one of the crucial issues that played a determinative role in the outbreak of the Cold War. The loss of Poland would signify the loss of a strategic bastion for both sides on behalf of the values of the Western powers and the Soviet Union. Thus, the dispute over Poland has signified the beginning of the *dialogue de sourds* long years to last.

²⁶ Vladimir Putin Annual Press Conference, youtube 17 Aralık 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58IHMW1g2J0>,(31.05.2019)

²⁷ Gvosdev and Marsh,2014, s.56

While Russia was in the position of a revisionist power in the Cold War, in the post-Cold War era it could not rescue itself from a revisionist position either. Russia had such a geographical position that even a minimal increase of power for herself is enough to make an alarming effect on the United States since Russia seeks to form a foreign policy identity in a political geography that has already lost its ability to overcome a zero-sum game in which Russia was defeated and US and the Western Europe won. This fact impels Russia to lean on much more strongly to geopolitical responses in order to legitimize her new foreign policy identity.

To shed light on the Cold War legacy on bilateral relations, the outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict has demonstrated the European political geography has come to. It has demonstrated how the European political geography reacted intolerantly of any sign that it has perceived as *sovietisation*. The geopolitics of post-Cold War Europe has brought Russia to such a critical level that Russia can never quit Ukraine as one of the main arteries of her foreign policy. Before all, Ukraine occupies a central place in Russian conception of identity, culture and history.²⁸ Through a strategic perspective, as Bobo Lo has stressed, viewed from Moscow whoever controls Ukraine dominates Eastern Europe and exerts a larger influence across Europe and Eurasia. Besides, the Russian and Ukrainian military-industrial complexes have been intertwined since Soviet times.²⁹

Therefore, Russia had no other choice than regarding Ukraine as a complementary element of her power and could never imagine renouncing this organic link. Consequently, it is an undeniable fact that Ukraine's integration into the West will definitely strike a huge blow to Russia's strategic position since it will reduce Russia's influence on the European political geography to a minimum. There is no doubt that Russia cannot quit European political geography as the main geography on which her foreign policy outputs are directed.

²⁸ Lo, 2015, a.g.e., s.107.

²⁹ a.g.e.

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The tension between US and Russia following the Ukrainian Crisis has finally turned Washington's project of ballistic missile defence system into a reality. US has finally activated a land-based missile shield system in Romania in May 2016 that will be operated by NATO. Kremlin spokesman Peskov reacted to this harshly by stating that; *"To begin with the explanation we were given was a potential rocket attack from Iran... Now the situation has changed dramatically"*.³⁰

The Bush administration had argued that ballistic missile defence system had intended to counter the missile threat posed from Iran against Europe and had not targeted Russia. At the G-8 Summit in Germany in 2008, Putin proposed the creation of joint US-NATO-Russia radar system that would be controlled from the Gambala radar installation in Azerbaijan. But this proposal was rejected by the Bush administration.³¹ This clearly demonstrates that US has long-term strategic expectations from the project. The remarks of US defence minister Robert Gates not to activate the system until there is a concrete proof of the threat from Iran could be an alleviating solution to the problem, but the Obama administration had no such real intention as the US has never taken the concerns of Russia on the topic as a real concern for herself.³²

While Russia believes that it is a complete breach of the INF Treaty signed between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1987 eliminating intermediate range missiles in Europe, Washington accuses Russia of violating the treaty by the tests of R-500, known as the Iskander. What we observe it that US-Russia rivalry has eliminated the political geography having emerged just after the Cold War. Both sides are were drifted to an indifference which can well ignore an arms control agreement that made a significant contribution to the end of the Cold War.

30 a.g.e.

31 Gvosdev and Marsh,2014, s.97

32 a.g.e

It is clear enough to see that what the foreign policies realities have impelled US-Russia bilateral relations is that, we have one power who has no other way than status quo and another power no other way than making revisionist moves. Even if Russia is not a revisionist power it cannot rescue herself from becoming one. The fact that the US has committed itself to preventing increase of Russian influence in the ex-Soviet territories as a question of its basic national interest has made zero-sum game a reality of bilateral relations. Therefore, defending or promoting legitimate interests on behalf of Russia has signified aggressive moves in the eyes of the US administrations and the bilateral relations have turned into *dialogue de sourds*.

CONCLUSION

The post-Cold War international order could neither achieve to undergo a stable transformation, nor it could delete the remnants of bipolar international order. The rigidity that the current international order has not allowed Russia to be fully integrated into Western hegemonic international order, because the emerging international order was set upon the victory of the values and the institutions of the Cold War international order.

The criterions set by the U.S. led Western international order was enormously costly for Russia on behalf of finding a prestigious position for herself. Therefore, it has increased the cost of producing a foreign policy output enormously for a genuine foreign policy. In other words, the post-Cold War international order has got Russia into a position that it had to make tough choices. Even the new Russia under Yeltsin administration realized how it was a luxury for Russia to adopt a break with the Soviet past because it was easy to construct a new Russian foreign policy identity on the Soviet legacy rather than constructing entirely a new one. More accurately, the Soviet legacy has not allowed Russia to break up with the ex-Soviet republics so easily if Russia is going to exist as an independent actor in international politics.

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It was understood in a short time that it was by no means realistic that the political geography of ex-Soviet Union would give way to an independent political geography suddenly. Therefore, one of the main reasons of the instability in the bilateral relations derives from the fact that Russia maintains the foreign policy heritage that it has inherited from the Soviet Union. One of the strongest impact of the Cold War on Russian foreign policy has been the awakening civilizational quests in Russian foreign policy. Putin's Russia has tended towards looking its relations with the U.S. through the lens of civilizational perspective, definitely a result of Russia with a Soviet and Cold War past.

Regardless of the collapse of the Soviet experience, it has left Russia a civilizational legacy that post-Soviet Russia would never hold itself exempt from.

It is obvious to see that the Cold War legacy has a determinative significance in the course of the US-Russia bilateral relations because continuation has a greater rationality than change in foreign policy path of both states. The Cold War legacy underlying the current US-Russia relations has stemmed from the fact that neither side was not in the position of quitting constructing their foreign policies on the Cold-War legacy.

We need to admit that since the macro balances in their foreign policies³³ had been formed during the Cold War, a radical shift in their foreign policies *would* be costly for both sides. Both sides had trustable clients that they would benefit from in order to keep their global status.

33 By macro stability, I mean the general political and economic and communitarian well-being of a state in the international order. In other words, macro stability in foreign relations is simply the harmonization of political, economic and communitarian interests for a stable foreign policy. In order to keep this macro stability, a state must not take steps that would jeopardize her position in the international order. This includes her relations that it owes her current position, her vital international engagements, economic factors such as energy and other raw materials procurement, foreign trade, tourism revenues and also her responsibilities as a member of the international community.

In the post-Cold War bilateral relations, we have witnessed how one-sided bilateral relations has imposed costs on the international order. When the new international order was constructed on the victory of the Western values and institutions, it was obvious that every move of Russian foreign policy which has not shown a full adaptation to it, would be regarded as revisionist.

In other words, the emerging political geography whose boundaries were set by the US-led international order has not recognized Russia an equal status with the West. Therefore, it is obvious enough to see that the irresponsible behaviour of US administrations has played significant role in the deterioration of the bilateral relations.

This has demonstrated the fact that the relation between the US and Russia will not be able to overcome zero-game situation in the foreseeable future, given the fact that the foreign policy constants and realities of both sides are not apt to undergo a radical change. To make the matters worse, state of permanent conflict serves the foreign policy interests of both parties that the bilateral relations keep its permanent character.

This article, has tried to emphasize how a rigid international order demonstrates a legitimate realist foreign policy orientation of a great power as aggressive. All these have stressed the fact that the current political geography in Europe could not easily rescue itself from the geography of the Cold War.

Since the political geography is the geography of the Cold War, the NATO zone reacts to every sign of *sovietisation* news with counter moves thereby impelling the political geography with Russia. Therefore, in the emergence of this fact we need to admit that the European political geography has made the Cold War legacy much easier to reawaken because as we have emphasized the Cold War past has brought this geography a toughness that every power increase in one side makes polarization much easier.

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This is the question that the current international order must find an urgent answer to. An expanding NATO and the EU as a centre of attraction has rendered this political geography extremely rigid on the part of Russia to keep and promote her national interests. The red line that shows where the legitimate foreign policy interests of an actor end has become ambiguous and this poses great threat to European security.

Despite all, this must not impel us to believe that the international order is on the verge of a new Cold War. This because the Cold War legacy is not strong enough to put the two sides into the state new type of confrontation.

Notwithstanding this, the real danger stems from the fact that similar to the pre-First World War Europe, both sides are drifted to a line from where they will regard stepping back a question of national honour due to the rigidity of current European geopolitics.

Therefore, the cardinal rule of international relations must be kept in mind that as that no power must be drifted into a situation that it will be regarding to remain unresponsive as an act of humiliation. Given the lack of restraining elements as the constructive component of the Cold War, its legacy is likely to drift the bilateral relations to a state of indifference that no side will feel any sense of responsibility in terms of precluding a hot confrontation.

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