

## **Russia-U.S. Relations: A Three Level Post-Cold War Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

For nearly 50 years after the end of World War II the international system was bipolar. The Soviet Union and the United States were the two major world players and they stood in stark economic, political, and cultural opposition to one another. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990's altered the balance of power in the international system and initially ushered in hope for closer ties between these former foes. However, those hopes were never realized. This paper seeks to answer the question of why the relationship between the U.S. and Russia remains fraught with tension and misunderstanding. Kenneth Waltz's levels of analysis is applied to illuminate the role that Russia and U.S. leadership, domestic pressures, and international obstacles have played in preventing a more cohesive and friendly relationship from emerging. The research suggests that relations remain strained because Russia is still viewed as the "unassemblable other," and differing domestic expectations and limitations for political leaders continue to foster misreadings of geo-political maneuverings. This lack of shared meaning at the individual and domestic levels has led the U.S. to hedge its bets against Russian democracy and remain invested in containment-style strategies at the international level.

“Every civilization sees itself as the center of the world and writes its history as the central drama of human history.”

-Samuel Huntington

### **Introduction**

The Russian-American relationship has undergone many changes over the past three decades. Since the end of the Soviet Union, there have been many attempts by both states to relieve lingering Cold War tensions and reorient Russian domestic conditions and government structures westward. The hope in the nineties on both sides was to produce a more democratic Russia government, to have more open and accessible markets and more fluid travel between Russia, Europe and the United States. There have been conferences and summits dedicated to the goal of reaching agreeable conclusions on post-Cold War matters. Despite those efforts, this period has primarily been characterized by missed opportunities to strengthen the relationship as a result of cultural misunderstandings and lackluster diplomacy from both Russia and the U.S.

Using Kenneth Waltz’s levels of analysis from the book, “Man, the State, and the State System in Theories of the Causes of War,” this paper will analyze the role of Russian and American leadership, domestic pressures, and international obstacles have played in bilateral relations. This research will examine these forces to better understand how the United States and Russia have missed some opportunities to build a more cohesive and working relationship since the end of the Cold War. Some questions this paper to addresses are: Why do attitudes between these global powers continue to be

negative? Are we entering a period of renewed Cold War tensions? What impact have different leadership styles had on the relationship? Is it Russia's strategy to maintain a sphere of influence, to restore its former glory or is President Vladimir Putin merely testing Western boundaries? Is Putin doing anything different than past Russian leaders? How might stark cultural differences be contributing to misunderstandings and tension? Another area of emphasis is the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the global chessboard and how it affects the relationship between these two powers. Lastly, what role is the international system playing?

Waltz's levels of analysis were chosen as the framework to understand and examine the Russian-American relationship, in part, because of his expertise and prominence in the field of international relations. In *Man, State, and War* he examines international relations at the individual leadership level, the domestic or state level, and international system level. He refers to "images," but for the purposes of this paper they will be referred to as levels. Waltz simplifies a complex multifaceted situation, and does so without compromising or ignoring realities. He also provides a structure that allows for a more complete understanding of the situation. In his view, activities of the state are driven by individual and domestic forces, which are then played out at the international level. So, all three levels of analysis are required to develop a coherent and comprehensive treatment of interstate relationships. It is with the application of this structure that post-Cold War Russia-American relations will be more logically and accurately examined. While Waltz does not address the Russian-American relationship

directly, the framework stands as a guide for understanding the complicated issues that underlie the history between these two nations.

### **Individual Level of Analysis**

Waltz's individual level theorizes that wars are a result of the choices of the political leader of a nation. Human behavior is an integral part of any nation's culture. It can dictate the direction a country is heading, who its closest allies will be, and the enemies it might make. "According to the first image of international relations, the locus of the important causes of the war is found in the nature and behavior of man. Wars result from the selfishness, from misdirected aggressive impulses, from stupidity."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the idiosyncrasies of leaders in a state are crucial to understanding why certain decisions are made. Since human nature is more or less static, and the anarchic nature of the international system demands formidable leaders, it should come as no surprise that Russia and American power legacies have not really changed. Russia's true power lies with the oligarchs, while the American moneyed elites continue to wield considerable influence. This background can be helpful to analyze the individual level of the international structure of the Russian Federation and the US.

### **The Yeltsin Era**

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<sup>1</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. *Man, the State, and the State: System in Theories of the Causes of War*. (Columbia Press: New York, 2001), Page 16

In the early 1990s Russia and the U.S. were experiencing a thaw in what was previously a very icy relationship between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. After many years of seeing the other as the ultimate enemy and the only true threat, the Soviet Union ended and Russia emerged in transition, both in culture and economy. America and Russia used this historical period to renew the relationship. Boris Yeltsin, the first leader of the Russian Federation, and George Herbert Walker Bush, President of the United States, met on multiple occasions to lay the foundation for a new chapter in Russia-U.S. relations.

In his address to the 46th session of the UN General Assembly Bush said, "You may wonder about America's role in the new world ... Let me assure you, the US has no intention of striving for Pax Americana. However, we will remain engaged. We will not retreat and pull back into isolationism. We will offer friendship and leadership. And in short, we seek a pax universalis built upon shared responsibilities and aspirations."<sup>2</sup> This address took place on Sept. 23, 1991, Just three months after the USSR dissolved.

Boris Yeltsin hosted American leadership and implemented the suggestions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with the utmost trust. Economic shock therapy was suggested and implemented to swiftly change the economy. Shock therapy was an IMF strategy for reconstructing the economy of a country. It involved the implementation of radical changes within the country including reforming the economy and ending government subsidies. The term was coined by American economist Jeffery Sachs. It was successfully implemented in Poland years earlier, but was not destined to have the same positive impact this time around. In Russia, the economy became unstable and conditions

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<sup>2</sup> McGrath, Jim. *Heartbeat* p.152-153, Citadel, 2003

were particularly bad for non-elite population who suffered a massive devaluation of currency and experienced food shortages. Shortly after it was implemented, the negative side effects were deemed too traumatic. Sachs was an economist consulting on the Russian economic reforms during this period from 1991 – December 1993. He wrote about his experience in *The Economist*:

Russia and the other republics bear the deep economic cancer of seven decades of communism: over-extended heavy industry; bloated, bureaucratic enterprises; a starved service sector; and the absence of market institutions, in law, finance, and administration. Now, on top of systemic disease, the republics face a financial crisis . . . Inflation has become hyperinflation. The foreign-exchange coffers are empty. The old administrative structures have collapsed . . . A deeper need for industrial retrenchment and restructuring will last for years, even decades, as the former Soviet Union scale back its old heavy industry... The combination of falling oil earnings, balance of payments crisis, and soaring budget deficit, led to a combination of intense shortages, soaring black market prices, and a collapsing value of the ruble in the black market. The economy, in short, was spinning out of control, into high inflation, mass shortages, and a breakdown of production. Moreover, with the collapse of Soviet power, the forced allocation of resources by central planning was dead.<sup>3</sup>

The task of reform in Russia was woefully under supported by the international community and it was too large of a mission to be accomplished by Russia alone. Russia's new challenge of transition from communism to democracy and capitalism, although pursued sincerely, was not easy. Growth of Russia's private sector was hampered by a lack of open trustworthy financial institutions. This made it incredibly difficult for businesses to find adequate domestic or foreign investment. It may have seemed that the only choice for the Russian entrepreneur or businessperson was to

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<sup>3</sup> Sachs, Jeffery. "What I Did in Russia" [jeffersachs.com](http://jeffersachs.com) <http://jeffersachs.org/2012/03/what-i-did-in-russia/>

become involved in criminal activities. On top of economic and transitional problems, Yeltsin was openly wrestling with a very public battle with alcoholism. In December 1999, Yeltsin announced he would no longer continue as president. At that time he was widely viewed by Russians, and sometimes still is, as a weak, drunk, puppet of the West.

In his last public speech as president he said, “Today, on this day that is so extraordinarily important for me, I want to say just a few more personal words than usual. I want to ask for your forgiveness. For the fact that many of the dreams we shared did not come true. And for the fact that what seemed simple to us turned out to be tormentingly difficult.<sup>4</sup> This was an intensive transitional time for Russia. The nation needed strong governance, a type of leadership that Yeltsin did not provide. Russians wanted a president who reflected their values and did not make them feel unrepresented in the world. Yeltsin’s strength was his vision for changing the USSR from a dying closed system to a more open prosperous one. His strengths were viewed as weakness, however, and his era was perceived by many in the country to be an unwanted departure from the traditional style of Russian leadership.

### **The Putin Era**

On Dec. 31, 1999, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin took over the last few months of Yeltsin’s term. Putin was a drastically different leader from Yeltsin. In health and appearance Putin is the picture of masculinity, strong and virile. Putin was able to pay

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<sup>4</sup> New York Times, [Newyorktimes.com January 1<sup>st</sup> 2000, http://www.nytimes.com/2000/01/01/world/yeltsin-resigns-in-boris-yeltsin-s-words-i-have-made-a-decision.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2000/01/01/world/yeltsin-resigns-in-boris-yeltsin-s-words-i-have-made-a-decision.html)

back the IMF loans in a timely manner and balance the budget.<sup>5</sup> He was an excellent example of Russian strength and leadership. On May 7, 2000, “Putin had begun his presidency ready to find a way to reconcile Russia’s profound differences with the West and develop friendly relations. As they did, the policies of NATO would become an irritant for Putin.”<sup>6</sup> As that irritation grew, it can be argued that the once amenable Putin became increasingly anti-Western. These differing orientations of Putin fall somewhat neatly into two eras. The first era was from 1999 to around 2008, with the second era being 2008 to the present. From 1999 through 2008 Putin was more open to western cooperation and ideals. While U.S. President Bill Clinton and Putin did not see eye to eye on all issues like the anti-missile defense system, they did engage in some bilateral and international collaboration. On Aug. 12, 2000, during military training exercises, a Russian submarine encountered issues and sunk. At the same time this incident occurred, Putin was busy overseeing the Chechen War. Even with those serious problems closer to home, the U.S. and Russia attempted to work together to come to a resolution.

In the Soviet era, one could easily see how such an event could have resulted in damaged relations or even war, but under Putin’s leadership a friendlier and more cooperative relationship forged ahead. He took time to discuss entering NATO and opportunities to participate in other Western organizations. When President George W. Bush met with Putin after taking office, he spoke of his appreciation for Putin’s frankness and dedication to his people and to Russia. Bush could relate to and appreciate these

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<sup>6</sup> Levine, Steve. *“Putin’s Labyrinth: Spies, Murder, and the Dark Heart of the New Russia.”* (Random House, New York) pg 28



characteristics.

After Sept. 11, 2001, Putin was the first world leader to offer sympathy its assistance. When the Bush administration requested that assistance in the form of a military presence and stations inside of Russia's sphere of influence, Putin obliged. The U.S.-Russian relationship was on a path of reconciliation. The chaos of the Yeltsin years and the tension that defined bilateral relations during the Clinton era appeared to be dissipating. With the widely unpopular invasion of Iraq underway, without U.N. approval, the U.S. was under its own pressure. It withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which Putin offered to amend. In 2002 President Bush began talking with Poland and the Czech Republic for possible placement of a U.S. missile defense systems.<sup>7</sup>

Putin's actions since 2008 suggest that he no longer views Western cooperation and relations as positively. Russian troops were sent into Georgia in 2008. Russia turned off gas supplies to Ukraine the same year. New long-term economic deals were struck with China, and Russia intervened in Ukraine to annex Crimea. All of these activities underscored Putin's displeasure with his past dealings with the U.S. and other Western countries. Central to this displeasure was the enlargement of NATO and its influence on states along Russia's western border.

NATO is a sensitive issue for Russia and for Putin for three primary reasons. First, the organization is a holdover from the Cold War and was designed to band countries together against the Soviet Union. Second, Russian leaders have long defended the concept of a sphere of influence and NATO is increasingly operating within that sphere.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4445284.stm> [bbc.com](http://bbc.com) Nov 17th 2005

Third, Putin wanted to join NATO early in his presidency, but was turned away. Whether or not his desire to join NATO was genuine not giving Russia the benefit of the doubt does not foster a developing relationship.

The issue of NATO made Yeltsin look like a weak leader. The same fate could have awaited Putin if nothing changed. The US was gaining influence in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Putin's pivot to the classic strong Russian style of leadership was exactly why he was chosen by Russian leadership in the first place, and partly a product of personal political survival. The former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, Jack Matlock, said that Western pundits at the time [of Yeltsin] had an "attitude [that] led many Russians to conclude that "the West" would not accept Russia as a partner but only as a subservient appendage. Therefore, Russia needed a stronger central government to mobilize its resources and prove to the world that its interest could not be ignored. Enter Vladimir Putin."<sup>8</sup>

The current relationship between Russia and the U.S. has become icy once again. When president Barack Obama took office in 2009, he campaigned on reform for education, healthcare, and debt management. He said little on foreign policy. What he offered as a foreign policy agenda did not mention Russia but instead focused on ending the Iraq war, fighting terrorism, and securing nuclear weapons.<sup>9</sup> Unilateral intervention was removed as a central tenant of U.S. foreign policy. Much of Obama's agenda was focused domestically. According to Kimberly Marten, Putin has been similarly engaged.

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<sup>8</sup> Matlock, Jack F. *Super- Power Illusions*, United States: Yale University, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Whitehouse.com [http://change.gov/agenda/foreign\\_policy\\_agenda/](http://change.gov/agenda/foreign_policy_agenda/) February 20 2015

She argues that,

Putin is primarily focused on his domestic audience, not the international audience... He cares about the small group of elites that are in various circles of power in the Kremlin and immediately surrounding the Kremlin. And by his recent actions, he has shown that he no longer cares about the economic internationalists among the elites — the people who were pushing for Russia to join the World Trade Organization, the people who recognize that Russia's economy is in stagnation and that the only way to get it out of stagnation is to diversify beyond its petroleum dependence and to really become a player in the international economy. Putin has chosen, instead, to throw in his lot with ethnic nationalists...<sup>10</sup>

Since Obama took office, the relationship between the United States and Russia has continued to decline. The two countries have collaborated on very few international issues. What little has been exchanged has not been positive. Russia is often treated like it is a nuisance. Putin and Obama have not made any public attempts to reduce the increasing hostility. One of the turning points in US-Russia relations was in 2009 when a Russian lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, was found dead in prison under suspicious circumstances. He was imprisoned and held without trial for 11 months in monstrous conditions. He had been investigating tax fraud perpetrated by Russian officials before his arrest. In response to his death the U.S. Congress passed the Magnitsky Act in 2012, which froze U.S.-based Russian assets and banned 14 Russians from entering the country, including four who were suspected to have ties to Russian crimes.<sup>11</sup> In retaliation, Russia continued with the Magnitsky trial, posthumously, and eventually found him guilty. The

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<sup>10</sup> Marten, Kimberley. How Crimea's Annexations Plays to Russians Soviet Nostalgia NPR.org March 25<sup>th</sup> 2014 <http://www.npr.org/2014/03/25/294324006/how-crimeas-annexation-plays-to-russians-soviet-nostalgia>

<sup>11</sup> OFAC Enforcement April 12<sup>th</sup> 2013 <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20130412.aspx>

Russian Duma also voted, almost unanimously, to ban the adoption of Russian children to US' parents. Lastly, Russia came out with its own list, the Guantanamo List, banning 18 Americans from entering Russia on human right violations.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Putin said, "President Obama hasn't been elected by the American people in order to be pleasant to Russia, and your humble servant hasn't been elected by the people of Russia to be pleasant to someone, either."<sup>12</sup>

Putin makes decisions that are tactical in nature; he is studied and thoughtful but he thinks about the short-term goals, not the long-term strategies. He was an intelligence officer during his career in the KGB. He looks for opportunities to exploit weakness in his opponents or enemies. While studying his opponents he will test them and judge their reactions. As recently as 2008, he has begun openly working to curtail NATO expansion. He sees NATO as being opposed to his country's interests. Putin keeps the decision-making process closed, which makes it difficult to determine who exactly is involved and what the prime motivations are. This is a continuation of traditional Russian governing processes. During the Soviet Union, decisions and their stakeholders were hidden behind the Iron Curtain. At that time, and largely since, outsiders were not privy to the inner workings of the Russian governing process or the details of its true ideological underpinnings. The new Russian governing system that Putin has constructed is just as elusive as ever to those trying to understand how it operates. Many government officials and members of the DUMA are often not involved. Only those people who Putin believes

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<sup>12</sup> Greenblatt, Alan. *Frenemies Forever: Why Putin and Obama can't get Along* November 9 2013. Npr.org <http://www.npr.org/2013/09/12/221774010/frenemies-forever-why-putin-and-obama-cant-get-along>

are his associates and trusted advisors, like the oligarchs, are believed to have real influence.<sup>13</sup> Elected officials don't necessarily get an audience with the President and often spend more time involved in ceremonial decisions.

Another factor that impacts the individual level of analysis is that Russian culture and societal norms are different from those of the United States. In particular, in what they expect of leaders. In Russian culture it is important for men to appear very strong. Russia has had a long history with this figure from fairy tales to the Tsars and now Putin. It is very important to Putin's inner group of associates and to the Russian people that he shows strength to the West. Putin displays this characteristic proudly, almost comically. He has photos of himself with tigers, hunting, and with his shirt off riding horse back. By contrast, the Russian people view Gorbachev and Yeltsin as acting weak. Putin needs to look the opposite to cement his legacy and retain power. Understanding this cultural expectation and Putin's personality helps to clarify key decisions by the Russian state. Culture and other domestic forces do affect the actions of key individuals within states, but these differences deserve their own unique analysis.

### **Domestic Level of Analysis**

Waltz's second level is a state structure and the domestic make up of international states. Waltz theorizes that internal domestic structure of states can explain the actions they take. For example, democratic nations are statistically less likely to go to war with

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<sup>13</sup> Marten, Kimberly. Centre for International Policy Studies uOttawa "Dancing with a Wounded Bear: Russia and the West" Oct 8, 2014

one another than authoritarian regimes. The quality of the social distribution, the make up of the political system, and the nature of the common people and elites will determine if the state is more or less prone to go to war.<sup>14</sup> During the Cold War the international system was bipolar. Russia and the United States were the two global powers. Waltz argues that a bipolar system is actually more stable than a multipolar or unipolar. In his book, *Theory of International Affairs*, he says that a world with only two great powers will motivate those powers to maintain extra scrutiny and extra effort in managing domestic situations within their control. The idea is that a bipolar world creates predictable and stability by balancing. A multipolar world cannot offer this. Currently, the international system is multipolar, and therefore arguably less predictable and even less stable. Many challenges emanate from terrorists, other non-state actors, from multinational corporations and the like. So, what does this new arrangement mean for the US and Russia domestically, and what historical and cultural domestic differences are at play in this relationship?

Russia's system was heavily influence by socialism. In this system Lenin's theory of imperialism should be acknowledged. Lenin argued that the causes of war are rooted in the need for the capitalist states to continue opening up new markets to perpetuate their economies. Imperialism is the highest form of capitalism. Imperialism would divide the states into the oppressors and the oppressed. The oppressed--the working class--would struggle against the oppressors.<sup>15</sup> Russia is a descendant of Byzantium language and

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<sup>14</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. *Man, the State, and the State: System in Theories of the Causes of War*. (Columbia Press: New York, 2001), Page 80-124

<sup>15</sup> Imperialism is the highest form of capitalism. Lenin

culture. That is the way it understands and sees the world, it informs what Russians hold true. The Jirachek Line is an important concept to understanding the east-west divide. It's a cultural religious divide that is historically influenced by Latin culture in the north and Greek in the south. While it is not a real line and is not widely referred to in literature, it is observable. This thought process seems to be supported by the annexation of the Crimea and the fact that many of the Commonwealth Independent States, CIS countries have faced ethnic and cultural misunderstandings based on where their religious and cultural backgrounds originated. When the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia broke up into smaller countries, it was because countries and people who could not live together were forced together. The stress was unbearable because of monetary and religious strain, in addition to Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic's power-crazed nationalist embrace.

Russia has long been viewed by the U.S. through the lens of Samuel Huntington's "unassemblable [sic] other." This is the idea that there is no chance of reconciliation of Eastern and Western civilizations. "It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation-states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future."<sup>16</sup> If this is true, then Russia and U.S. are likely to remain opposed indefinitely.

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<sup>16</sup> Huntington, Samuel, "Clash of Civilizations" *Foreign Affairs*. 1993

Russia understands the world differently than the U.S. Does Russians have a different way of thinking. Russians still have relatively limited exposure to other cultures, and other cultures have limited exposure to them. It is easy to see how these cultures struggle to understand each other. Furthermore, there is the added obstacle in Russia's case that the government has moved away from democracy towards competitive authoritarianism. The US cares deeply for democracy and seeing it fail to take hold in the former Soviet Union is difficult. During this period of increased authoritarianism in Russia there have been fleeting moments of understanding in bilateral relations, but for the most part deep-rooted differences remain apparent. Putin had a decent relationship with President George W. Bush. Bush once commented upon meeting Putin that he could tell Putin was upfront and cared deeply for Russia and the Russian people. However, by the end of Bush's term, Putin had become less than cooperative. While the two leaders had history and understanding they had met many obstacles. They ran into disagreements on Iran nuclear weapons issues and Georgia's 2008 war. During the Georgia conflict, Russia recognized a section of the county, South Ossetia's independence. Georgia was already looking for NATO membership was now allowing for increased NATO influence in the country.<sup>17</sup>

Putin once demonstrated his clear lack of cultural and political understanding when he asked Bush why he could not just change the U.S. Constitution and run for a third term. This demonstrates a clear misunderstanding of the way the U.S. government

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<sup>17</sup> Baker, Peter. The Seduction of George W Bush. Foreign Policy, November 06, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/06/the-seduction-of-george-w-bush/>



functions, but something Putin found acceptable to do in his own country. He also made suggestions to Bush on other matters such as firing people in private companies or offering high paying/high power jobs to friends.<sup>18</sup> It demonstrates clearly that political power in Russia is a mixture of managed democracy and authoritarianism, and lately it leans heavily to the latter. Managed democracies historically have suffered from weak institution. While they can yield positive results in the short term they are often unfeasible in the long term. Russia is still a closed system with a few powerful people at the top. There is one person, Putin, who is the face of the system and the group makes the majority of the decisions. How the decisions are made, how they will affect citizens, and what information is considered in the process remains unclear. What is clear is that the business cultures and governing structures of the U.S. and Russia seem incompatible. These differences have a major impact on relations and create misunderstandings because cultures shape of the way we view the world.

The Russian poet Fyodor Tyutchev wrote, “Russia cannot be understood with the mind, or measured with the common yard stick, she has a unique stature, one must simply believe in Russia.”<sup>19</sup> Russian culture is a unique mix of old and new in every aspect. It blends both in a way no other in the world could be. The land has been conquered and revolutionized, closed and opened. Russian literature reflects the contradiction and darkness they have endured. Solzhenitsyn and Dostoevsky are both artists who reflect the Russian soul in their works of art. In Tolstoy’s masterpiece, *Anna Karenina*’s opening line

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<sup>18</sup> Baker, Peter. *Days of Fire* (New York: Random House) 2013

<sup>19</sup> Dabar, Zita. *The Russian Way: Aspects of Behavior, Attitudes, and Customs of the Russians*. McGraw- Hill New York 2002 Pg 76

was, “All happy families are alike, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”<sup>20</sup>

This is an apt Russian thought. It evokes the feeling of being doomed and alone together. The idea behind the Russian soul is closely related to the Russian Orthodox Church. It is connected to everything and it is everywhere. The Russian soul is light and darkness, suffering, and love. Gogol and Solzhenitsyn had the same sentimental understanding.

Today Russia is more stable and richer than it has been in the past but, it is still volatile and corrupt. Human nature still has a large role to play in the action of leaders, and the long history and powerful culture continue to have considerable influence on how the government operates and the motivations of its stakeholders. Consider the following contemporary case study.

### **Case Study 1: Ukraine Crisis as a Domestic Issue**

The Ukraine has long ties to Russia beginning before the Soviet Union. Kiev was the first recorded place of the Russian people, known as the Rus. It has undergone many changes in leadership since then but its importance to Russian leadership has always remained the same. The addition of the territory known as Crimea provides the Russian military with a warm-water port and an added buffer against the West. This is incredibly beneficial for Russia. Ukraine also is strategic because it houses the pipeline that Russia uses as a route to deliver energy to Europe. The turmoil in Ukraine is being presented to the Russian people as a humanitarian effort because of the large ethnic Russian population. When Nikita Khrushchev gave Crimea to Ukraine as a symbol of unity and

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<sup>20</sup> Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina*, Penguin Classics: New York New York. 2002

respect six decades ago, he thought that the USSR would never dissolve. This did not sit well with most Russians initially, and they liked it even less after the Soviet Union ended and the ethnic Russians were scattered among the newly independent countries. It caused much suffering. Khrushchev also attempted to place missiles in Cuba at the height of the Cold War, but President John Kennedy found out and the U.S. blockade forced Khrushchev back. This miscalculation cost him his position as soviet leader and the respect of his people because he had not thought through his decisions. This was a considerable embarrassment to Russia. Khrushchev legacy was ruined.

Putin made a very calculated decision to interfere in Ukraine because he believed that he was losing a valued asset to the West. His decision, illegal and reckless as it was, was born out of the desire to save his legacy and secure his role as the Russian president. In his mind this moment was similar to the downfall of past leaders like Khrushchev, Gorbachev, and Yeltsin. The extent of Russia's direct involvement in the Ukrainian uprising is still not clear, but this could be a turning point for any European country that may be still inclined to ally with Russia. If Russia was involved in the uprisings in Ukraine, and specifically the Malaysia flight that was shot down, the tides could turn against him both inside and outside of Moscow.

Ukraine is a central playing field today in the East -v- West paradigm. Western countries would like to see Ukraine join NATO and the European Union, while Russia resists that shift of orientation. The country has tremendous economic and geopolitical importance for both sides. However, the most critical issue in the conflict is the desire of the Ukrainian people. It is impracticable to hold a country from going after its goals

forever. The conflict itself disrupts the transitions that were being discussed regarding Ukraine joining the European Union and NATO. However, it is important to remember that the United States cannot be solely responsible for Putin's reactions. The Ukraine requested to join NATO, as did Georgia and some other ex-Soviet countries. And while this may be hard for Russia to come to terms with, it is a bed of their own making. The experience that some countries had under Soviet rule has led them to consider Westernization, especially in cases where the alternative is Russian rule or influence. Russia and Putin consider Ukraine to be of ethnic and cultural significance to Russia. Moreover, the history of Russia's domestic structures and governing processes directly contributed to the emergence of this conflict. The domestic level of analysis helps to clarify why Russia values Ukraine. If one pays close attention to this and previous similar conflicts, a pattern emerges that has the potential to improve future decision making and reduce misunderstandings.

### **International Level of Analysis**

The international level of analysis examines the activities of states at the system level. It is not focused on what is happening within a state, or on what is happening within the mind of a state's leader. Rather, it emphasizes how states react to each other in the international system. Of course, the individual and domestic levels are the driving forces behind how states participate on this stage. Waltz's theory of the international system is based on anarchy. The threat of violence is always present. The main idea is that a state will use force to attain its goals and implement policies. As a result, all states

must be ready to use force or confront force, because weakness will come at a high cost. Nation states cannot rely on one another and there are few, if any, repercussions for unilateral actions. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and multinational corporations (MNCs) are regarded as having little to no influence. States naturally act in their own best interest. These actions tend to build very little trust among states or allies. Relationship status between states is directly derived from power based on military and economic proficiency.

Waltz categorizes the two ways in which the structure of the international system limits cooperation. The first is "the condition of insecurity--at the least, the uncertainty of each about the other's future intentions and actions--works against their cooperation. ... A state worries about a division of possible gains that may favor other more than itself."<sup>21</sup>

The second, "a state also worries lest it become dependent on others"<sup>22</sup> through trade and/or cooperation, and therefore also chooses to limit its cooperation with other states.

"States do not willingly place themselves in situations of increased dependence. In a self-help system, considerations of security subordinate economic gain to political interest."<sup>23</sup>

There is virtue in anarchy, in that states work to preserve their autonomy above all. In Waltz's view, the structure of the system is the cause of the state's behavior. So, while the individual and domestic forces influence actions at the international level, so too does the international level influence domestic and individual actors. They are constrained by the

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<sup>21</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. *Man, the State, and the State: System in Theories of the Causes of War*. (Columbia Press: New York, 2001), Page 105-106

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, page 106

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, page 107

realities of the global state system. There are a wide range of policies and strategies that have served to guide and justify US and Russian actions at this level. One such policy is pre-emptive war.

### **Foreign Policies**

During Bill Clinton's first term as president, Madeline Albright was U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Her first role was building support for the war in Kosovo. This intervention would define the role of NATO and the United States in the world for that time. When making an argument in favor of intervention she said, "'What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?'"<sup>24</sup> Later, when she became the Secretary of State under Clinton, she argued that a stable Europe was central to U.S. interests.

Pre-emptive war later became a theme in the Kosovo-Yugoslavia war. It was argued that the intervention was needed to provide political stability and humanitarian aid. U.S. president Clinton was slow to respond to the conflict because of what it would mean for the U.S.-Russian relationship. And it did created considerable tension between the U.S. and Russia because Moscow wanted a greater role in the peace-keeping mission, was allied with the Serbs and did not want NATO operating in its sphere of influence. Since the end of the U.S.S.R. Much of U.S. foreign policy has been focused on the

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<sup>24</sup> Madeline Albright, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,24446,00.html>

Middle East. Whereas President Bush advocated pre-emptive war, President Barack Obama has opted for a different strategy.

The alternative has been a shift to a balance-of-power strategy in which the United States relies on the natural schisms that exist in every region to block the emergence of regional hegemony and contain unrest and groups that could threaten U.S. interests... The new strategy can be seen in Syria, where rather than directly intervening the United States has stood back and allowed the warring factions to expend their energy on each other, preventing either side from diverting resources to activities that might challenge U.S. interests.<sup>25</sup>

In some ways, this is an extension of the Cold War grand strategy of containment that was used against the Soviet Union. Rather than intervene directly, the US seeks to influence outcomes using other methods, and in doing so tries to manage potential threats.

Much of the way the U.S. has been keeping the peace or preventing disaster has been through a careful balancing of regional powers or by leveraging natural schisms that exist as a result of religious and culture differences. The idea being that no one group gains too much power or influence. More recently in Ukraine, we have seen a more hands-on approach, with the help of Victoria Nuland. The US has been meddling in the political affairs with less finesse. This either shows a lack of leadership or a strategy that cannot endure the fight that it is meant to win.

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<sup>25</sup> Friedman, George New Dimensions US Foreign Policy Toward Russia. Stratfor.com <https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/new-dimensions-us-foreign-policy-toward-russia> Feb 11th 2014

Russia's grand strategy has until recently been defensive and largely reactive. It is worth repeating that a sphere of influence is central to Russia's foreign policy. A sphere of influence is a geographical area around a country's border that the state claims exclusive international influence over. Russia has no natural defensive boundaries, no mountains or rivers. This creates strategic vulnerabilities for Russia. A country wishing to invade would have a relatively easy time gaining access. This reality has led generations of Russian leaders to pursue a buffer zone or sphere of influence to insulate the nation from attack. This involves a zone that is at the very least Russia friendly or influenced, if not Russia controlled. Unlike the Soviet Union and Russia, which had a relatively static approach to foreign policy, the U.S. has gone through various iterations.

Until the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. grand strategy was George Kennan's containment policy. According to Gen. Jim Mattis at the Hoover Institution, the U.S. has been without much of a grand strategy since the end of the Cold War.<sup>26</sup> That is not to say it has been without strategy, just not a worldwide version. A grand strategy might be more difficult to construct today due to a more diverse set of threats. The world is complex and danger does not come from an evil empire but from non-state actors, the environment, untraceable hackers and other threats. The United States like much of the rest of the world is behind in developing a strategy to address these problems. Most of Obama's foreign policy is focused on the Middle East and the Asian pivot, in addition to issues that demand direct attention. His approach has been met with countless interpretations and

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<sup>26</sup> Mattis, General Jim. "A New American Grand Strategy" *The Hoover Institute*, February 26<sup>th</sup> 2015. <http://www.hoover.org/research/new-american-grand-strategy>



critiques by domestic and international observers and they have not always been positive. For example, in Putin's 2013 New York Times Op-Ed he referred to American exceptionalism as dangerous and said,

I would rather disagree with a case [Obama] made on American exceptionalism, stating that the United States' policy is "what makes America different. It's what makes us exceptional." It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation. There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor, those with long democratic traditions and those still finding their way to democracy. Their policies differ, too. We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord's blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal.<sup>27</sup>

## **NATO**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a body that governs the political and military interactions between autonomous nation states. Normally when a state signs an agreement or treaty (i.e., The EU, IMF, World Bank) it is bound to some action or non-action, but it also gives up some sovereignty in the process. Unfortunately, states that end up in frozen conflicts or war are often faced with little international recourse, but if a state applies and is approved for NATO membership, the rest of the organization will come to the aid of that member on security issues.

The end of the Soviet Union has often been misunderstood. The Soviet Union ended as a result of economic, domestic, and structural problems and the Cold War was not a war of will that was won by force or wit. These were two separate events. The Cold War ended as result of meetings and treaties between Gorbachev and Reagan. Yes, Russia was facing troubles and the United States was pouring money into a war into the Iraq and

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<sup>27</sup> Putin, Vladimir, "A Plea for Caution From Russia: What Putin has to say to Americans about Syria." New York Times. September 11 2013. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/opinion/putin-plea-for-caution-from-russia-on-syria.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/opinion/putin-plea-for-caution-from-russia-on-syria.html?_r=0)

Afghanistan war. To curb the threat that NATO posed to Russia, the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was created in 2002 to help with strategy and mutual understanding. It has since been suspended as a result of the conflict in the Ukraine.

It was at this time, in combination with the end of the Warsaw Pact, that Western powers agreed not to expand NATO. While it was not written down and nothing was signed, it was at the very least a guideline for future trust and the direction of the relationship. However, even if there had been a signed agreement, it would be difficult and perhaps unethical to prevent another country from joining NATO voluntarily. In fact, that is exactly what happened and NATO did expand to the east. In early 1990's, the Soviets withdrew from Germany and allowed for reunification between East and West Germany. January of the same year the West German foreign minister said publicly that there would be no NATO expansion. While the U.S. did not publically say anything, it was the basis for the discussions. Gorbachev said that further expansion of NATO was not acceptable and Secretary James Baker agreed.<sup>28</sup> However, the situation and history of these two countries is complicated and not filled with the degree amounts of trust. That is at least partially why NATO was formed in the first place.

George F. Kennan was an American diplomat and a former American ambassador to the Soviet Union. His work entitled "Long Telegram" became the basis for the U.S. foreign policy strategy of containment. He viewed the Soviet Union as a power along the lines of Napoleon in France and Nazi Germany. His prescription was containment and

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<sup>28</sup> Itzkowitz Shifinson, Joshua r. *Put It in Writing: How the West Broke Its Promise to Moscow*. Foreign Affairs. October 29<sup>th</sup> 1014

balancing of power.<sup>29</sup> In his view, the U.S. was largely dependent on a balance of power between Europe and Russia. A balanced multipolar system keeps the U.S. involved and strong and Russia contained. It keeps the peace.

A closed system like the Soviet Union, and to a lesser degree modern Russia, needs an enemy to fight. During the Cold War the US was that enemy. Since the end of the Cold War, the Russian perception of the US has waned from warm to indifferent to opposition. Misunderstandings and geopolitical maneuverings on both sides have resulted in a return of Cold War rhetoric in Russia and a return to containment on the part of NATO. The United States fundamental objective is the security of its nation, the welfare of its people and continued prosperity. While complete perfection of the security system is unobtainable, the direction of policy, strategy, and implementation is controllable. This is where NATO and the E.U. can provide structure and European security without direct confrontation with Russia. This can be implemented if the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) want the Western influence and assistance. This does present a problem with US-Russia relations as this is and will be considered a direct threat to the Russian sphere of influence.

On Sept. 5, 2014 President Obama addressed the NATO summit and reaffirmed the central mission of the alliance. In addition, NATO will increase air patrols in the Baltics and additional forces will have training and exercises in Eastern Europe. There has been a new Readiness Action Plan (RAP). NATO expansion is essentially seen as a lack of trust for Russia and framing Russia as still being the other, or even the enemy.

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<sup>29</sup> Kennan, George F. *American Diplomacy*, (University of Chicago. Chicago), 1979

This began with Clinton's effort in Yugoslavia in 1999, and then it continued in 2008 with Georgia, and was followed up with the crisis in Ukraine. Western intervention in CIS countries like Georgia and Ukraine makes Russia anxious. These actions on the part of the U.S. and NATO do not encourage better relations with Russia or invite cooperation. These policies are a form of containment.

Can containment work today? Can Russia be politically and economically isolated? No. Russia can and will form even stronger ties with China and other countries. There is too much flow of information and trade in the world today. Interdependence makes this policy difficult. You cannot contain Russia in any form over the long-term. Additionally, military bases set up throughout Eurasia has caused some countries in the region to be uncomfortable. Not even Israel currently agrees with the United States foreign policy in this area.

Russia wants to be more than just a regional power with broader influence. Russia is massively rich in land and minerals and wants to be a respected world power. It is a security-conscious country. As a result of a lack of natural geographically boundaries Russia historically desires to have influence over buffer countries. France in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Germany in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The CIS countries do not need to be part of Russia but it would be easier for all states if Russia were friendly or neutral. When NATO moves into these countries it shows that it does not understand or respect Russia's position, fears or needs. The Russian perception is that Russia is a country that needs to be managed. This is unquestionably a source of conflict. It should be noted the Partnership for Peace (PFP) was invented in part to curb this issue. The Georgia conflict

could be construed as a warning that if Russia wished to be taken seriously it would need to develop a formidable military force. Russia has since reformed and invested heavily in this area. When this situation presented itself again in Ukraine, Russia did not appear as weak. On the other hand, to the U.S. Georgia and Ukraine merely wanted to be a part of NATO, and the U.S. was taking steps to make this a reality. Meanwhile, Russia was seen as unjustifiably wielding power and force. Which side is right?

Stephan F. Cohen, Professor of Russian history, asserted that U.S. foreign policy is responsible for the continuation of Cold War hostilities. He argues is that NATO's eastward expansion is evidence for his hypothesis. The Kremlin sees NATO as a Cold War relic that reinforces the notion that Russia is the “unassemblable other” and still a threat. U.S. foreign policy-makers continue to treat Russia and its people with suspicion. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor to Jimmy Carter, has been influential in the American grand strategy. He sees U.S – Russia relationship differently. He is a supporter of the Mackinder theory of the Eurasia Pivot. He who controls the heartland controls the world island and he how controls the world island controls the world.<sup>30</sup> Brzezinski was also vocal in the 1979 campaign in Afghanistan training of the Mujahedeen to repel Soviet forces. Brzezinski argues NATO is an instrument through which the United States prevents collusion and maintains security dependence among NATO members. NATO can also keep “barbarian” states from creating alliances. The idea is to keep the “barbarian” states from becoming a threat. Also, Brzezinski stated that

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<sup>30</sup> Mackinder, H. J. *The Geographical Pivot of History*, (The Geographical Journal, The Royal Geographical Society), 1904

the Russia membership into NATO should require that Russia recognize United States primacy in Europe.<sup>31</sup>

In a 1997 Foreign Affairs article, Brzezinski called America “The Indispensable Power” and said it is not likely that any other state will match America in “military, economic, technology, and culturally.” It is important that the U.S. stay involved and supportive in Europe and Eurasia. Russia is uncertain and unstable therefore, it is important for the West to create an environment that is “congenial” for Russia to feel less threatening. It is undeniable that Russia is fragile and its future uncertain. Russia has more influence and power than it has since the Soviet Union. American relations have gone through three resets, and it is not clear that another reset will more relations. The verdict may well still be out as to which side has the stronger claims. But what impact home NATO policies and expansion had on the relationship among these states?

### **Case Study NATO 1 –**

NATO came into existence April 4, 1949, as a result of the North Atlantic Treaty. The idea behind the treaty was collective security. “As the power of the Soviet Union spread to several Eastern European countries, there was concern among Western European countries that the USSR would impose its ideology and authority across Europe.”<sup>32</sup> After the Cold War ended, NATO either misinterpreted how Russia would feel

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<sup>31</sup> Eisenhower, Susan. *NATO at Fifty*. (Center for Strategic Studies, 1998), book page 35

<sup>32</sup> “NATO”, accessed February 20<sup>th</sup> 2015. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_67656.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_67656.htm)

about it or did not care, but the results to the relationship have been negative. Under the Clinton administration, the decision was made to extend NATO's influence into previous Warsaw Pact countries. Putin requested to join NATO, but was ignored by the Clinton administration. "Putin pointed out that he suggested Russian membership of NATO [2000] but was rebuffed by Madeleine Albright, then the US Secretary of State."<sup>33</sup> Russia's inquiry of interest was placed on hold, so the Kremlin realized that it would be necessary to expand Russia's military capacity. To alleviate the desire to join NATO, NATO commissioned the NATO-Russia Council to address issues relating to the two powers. When Serbia erupted in civil war the U.N. Security Council, where Russia would have a veto in the conflict, was not consulted. Instead, the U.S. bypassed the Security Council and persuaded NATO to carry out the humanitarian efforts.

Today's NATO, according to former President Clinton, should be about military collective defense and collective security.<sup>34</sup> But there are many problems that its mission presents. Security is important to the world, and the alliance allows for many countries to be involved and feel a sense of unity and security they might not otherwise have. An expanded NATO must remain powerful to keep its military commitments because it can become weakened. A weakened NATO would undermine the long-term United States and European security interest. Since the foundation of Kennan's containment policy was curbing a powerful U.S.S.R., the challenge of a strategy, can it contain a country like Russia today? The first round of new NATO made during Clinton's presidency strained

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<sup>33</sup> Traynor, Ian. Soviets tried to join NATO in 1954, TheGuardian.com, June 16, 2001, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/jun/17/russia.iantraynor>

<sup>34</sup> Eisenhower, Susan. *NATO at Fifty*. (Center for Strategic Studies, 1998), book page 46

relations with Russia. NATO expansion indicates that the West does not believe that Russia is going to become democratic. NATO's policy shows that the members have abandoned hopes for Russian democracy and are placing their bets on containment.

For the United States it is important to balance the relationship with Russia and the relationship with the CIS countries. The security and Westernization of CIS countries is in the best interest of the United States. A working relation with Russia is also desirable, though it may be difficult to achieve. The initial interest for NATO membership in the ex-Soviet countries was so strong that they created the Partnership for Peace (PFP). Partnership for Peace was created to be the first step to NATO membership. The main goal of the PFP was to create trust and nurture Western values among the countries. This is a building block to future partnership, to foster lasting ties with these countries. If the countries could meet these qualifications and display characteristics they could eventually join NATO. Though Russia has had minimal recourse and success in preventing NATO expansion, it does have one way to buck US authority, and that is the UN Security Council.





## UN Security Council and Russian Power

The U.N. Security Council is made up of five permanent members: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The U.N. charter states:

“The Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.”<sup>35</sup>

Russia has a permanent seat and as such it has a say in the security process of the world. It affects the chessboard of the global world. It is one place Russia’s voice carries weight.

When the US was struggling to respond to the present crisis in Syria 2013 and follow through on removing weapons of mass destruction commitments, Putin made the decision to involve the United Nations in removing the chemical weapons from Syria. This diplomatic maneuver was clever and gave Putin a rare win. This became known as the September surprise. Also, he also took the opportunity to speak out about a lack of American exceptionalism. “The reality is that the U.S. and Russia look at Syria through entirely different lenses. While Obama sees the situation as a humanitarian crisis, Russia worries that the U.S. is looking for one more excuse to intervene in its geopolitical sphere.”<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile Syria still remains a point of contention between the two countries.

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<sup>35</sup> [http://www.russiaun.ru/en/russia\\_n\\_un/sovet\\_bezopasnosti](http://www.russiaun.ru/en/russia_n_un/sovet_bezopasnosti)

<sup>36</sup> Greenblatt, Alan. <http://www.npr.org/2013/09/12/221774010/frenemies-forever-why-putin-and-obama-cant-get-along>

Now there is added tension in the relationship due to Putin getting a symbolic political victory over the U.S.

### **Developing A New Strategy**

The U.S. sees the world through its own historical and cultural understanding. It helps others as it sees fit. Often the help Washington does provide is seen as a side effect of pursuing self-interest. In military terms the international system is unipolar. While there are many influential military powers, none is as powerful as the United States. America as the sole military superpower has and former hegemon has developed many partnerships through international institutions like the World Trade Organizations (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the U.N. Russia is now looking eastward for allies because the results of dealing with Western institutions have not been fruitful. Russia has turned to economic competition instead of economic cooperation. It has turned eastward to build alliances and relationships with China, India, and Iran. This decision is both predictable and logical for a Russia that is heading down a less democratic path. Domestically the sentiment in Russia has grown increasingly anti-Western. The Western sponsored sanctions in reaction to the war in Ukraine and Russian government propaganda has been fanning the fire within Russia.

### **Cooperation and Conflict**

Though it is easy to forget Russia and the US have a long history of cooperation as well as conflict. The U.S. and Russia cooperate on such issues as the International Space

Program, Iran, Afghanistan after Sept. 11, 2001, and many other issues. Why has this cooperation been possible while other forms have not? Terrorism affects every corner of the world. Russia is no exception to this threat. Russia has encountered and resides closer to terrorist threats to the United States. The U.S. has taken terrorism and security as a high priority and Russia has, over time, offered its support. Since Russia deals with it close to home it would seem that increased cooperation would benefit both sides.

In 2003, the issue of missile defense was studied. Theatre Missile Defense (TMD) was implemented to study dangers and availability of ballistic weapons. In 2006, the two militaries collaborated on the Cooperative Airspace Initiative (CAI) which was designed to prevent terrorists from repeating a 9/11-type attack, which was specifically important to the United States. Russia and the US also worked together on the STANDEX project, which was a flagship initiative of the NATO- Russia Council that was important for developing technology to detect explosives in transportation situations.<sup>37</sup> “However, on 1 April 2014, NATO Foreign Ministers decided to suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia.”<sup>38</sup> This happened as a result of war in Ukraine.

What is important to understand from these examples is that U.S.-Russian cooperation is achievable. There are common issues that affect people of all nations, regardless of background or culture. There are transnational threats that cannot be

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<sup>37</sup> NATO”, accessed February 20<sup>th</sup> 2015. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_106924.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_106924.htm?selectedLocale=en)

<sup>38</sup> NATO”, accessed February 20<sup>th</sup> 2015. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/recruit-hq-e.htm>

addressed by any nation. It will take many nations, leaders and cultures to curb the threats that are affecting the future of the world. Russia, being a regional power, can play an important part of that future.

## **Conclusion**

This research shows that Waltz's levels provides the best framework for a comprehensive analysis of the Russia-US relationship. One must resist single factor analysis and examine the forces at all three levels: individual, domestic, and international. No single aspect can fully explain the dynamics of the relationship. To understand why opportunities for stronger bilateral relations were or are being missed; consideration must be given to the idiosyncrasies of past and present leaders. Domestically, both countries norms, histories, values, and political structures must be taken in account. Lastly, the International level shows how chaotic geopolitics can be and the various driving forces behind why states interact with each other the way they do. Over the past couple of years there has been an increase in Cold War rhetoric and behavior. With Russia and the United States openly meddling in the Ukrainian elections and the war breaking out, the groundwork has been laid for an even more hostile relationship to develop. At such a sensitive time it is easy to see that one worse move by the US or Russia could lead to war.

For example, the United States training troops in Ukraine is open Cold War behavior.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, Russia has been leaning on nationalist language to unite its

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<sup>39</sup> Roth, Andrew, *U.S. Army Trainers Arrive in Ukraine*, New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/18/world/europe/us-army-trainers-arrive-in-ukraine.html>

people behind Kremlin leadership. These developments are a call back to the era of Kennan's containment policy. For the US, it was a progression of events that leads to the decision to send troops. In Russia's eyes, the United States is interfering in Russia's sphere of influence, which it regards as an intolerable form of imperialism. Russia's decisions over the past three decades were not reached overnight. Its increasingly disagreeable and uncooperative posture should have been predicted by any Western policy maker. Russia has a tumultuous history and is still working through its obstacles for becoming a regional power. In truth, part of the issue that these countries wrestle with is the illusion that people, habits, and cultures change quickly. Change usually takes generations to have an effect and people need reasons to alter what they know and believe. The people who fought the Cold War are for the most part still alive, in good health, and are very influential in both countries. It is likely that these individuals have long memories. Each believes the other was the enemy then. It is likely they still view it that way. Money and government have been shuffled, renamed and redistributed but the power is still centered with the same people who have access.

Russians still view the world through a similar lens. Their realities may be slightly better and they may be more optimistic, but it is still the Russia they once knew. Internationally, Russia still faces the stigmatism that they are Huntington's, "unassemblable other." Europe still feels threatened by Russia. With all the changes that the Russia have made they still have a very long way to go if they are to see a new era. It will be generations of slight changes in perspective before they will be a new Russia. That can be difficult they can fall back to comfort of what they once knew. Russia is a

strong destiny-driven country with tough people who do not give in on principal. They need a strong supportive international community to guide and help them in a new era. Democracy is not an easy path. They chose it once, and if they wish to return to, it cannot be done by force. The US should know this lesson by know, but it seems to be in a constant struggle to come to terms with the limits of its power.

Today, Russia is on a path the leads to an authoritarian government and poor relations with the rest of the world. It is a path of misunderstandings and missed opportunities. Russia is testing its limits with military maneuvers in the air, land and sea. It can be said that the US-Russia relationship is the world's largest frozen conflict. NATO expansion in the region was at best a miscalculation. It both angered Russia and weakened the alliance, showing weakness in both Georgia and Ukraine. Sanctions on key Russia figures have done little to improve relations or alter behavior. The best action to take might be continued negotiations and culturally aware diplomacy. This is a lengthy and cumbersome process and one that might not yield result for a long time. But if it should work, it will help to build relations that last. It will create a bond with trust and understanding. Negotiations are what truly brought about the end of the Cold War and while the relationship has suffered since then, hopefully negotiations can reverse the tension and help Russia and the United States move forward.

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